



This is the introduction to opening 1NT (12-14) in VBlue issue 1. Updated spring 2015

VB#1 Y1 Opening 1NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West ♠ 9872 ♥ QJT742 ♦ Q5 ♣ T		East ♠ 643 ♥ 653 ♦ AKJ ♣ 8742
North ♠ KQT ♥ K8 ♦ 9842 ♣ KQJ9	South ♠ AJ5 ♥ A9 ♦ T763 ♣ A653	

This set of six deals is a gentle introduction to VuBridge and focuses on the opening bid of 1NT. In ACOL style (also known as *Standard English*) this opening bid promises a balanced hand of 12-14 points. In this context "balanced" means a hand with a suit pattern of 4-3-3-3 (the most balanced hand you can have) or 4-4-3-2 or even 5-3-3-2

Hand 1 is an easy start to VuBridge.

You reach a contract in straightforward fashion and should find it simple to make. The object of the exercise here is to familiarise yourself with the way that VuBridge operates and the way that you control the play.

When you are ready click on **Play**.

A bidding box will appear whereupon you should click on "Start Bidding"

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

We (sitting South as always in VuBridge) have a classic hand to open 1NT after East has Passed. We are balanced (4-4-3-2, in point of fact) and have the requisite number of points (13 in this case).

Partner (North) can add up what we have shown (12-14) to what he can see in his hand (14) and can deduce that our partnership has a combined total of 26-28 points. Partner has a balanced hand as well so realises that No-trumps is the best spot for our side. Using the Rule of 25 he raises to game by bidding 3NT.

[The Rule of 25 is a fancy way of saying that if we know our partnership has upwards of 25 points between the two hands it's worthwhile having a shot at game].

Play.

West leads the ♥Q against 3NT. It is customary to lead from a long suit against No-trumps and West duly leads from his six-card Heart suit. As his suit is headed by a sequence (the ♥Q J 10 in this case) he leads the top card. This tells his partner (and us!) what is going on in the suit.

When dummy is displayed we should always preserve the harmonies of the game. Firstly we say "Thank you, partner" for the dummy (not actually necessary when staring at a computer screen but, still, we do like to point out the correct etiquette) and then, secondly, we should sort out our thinking.

This period of cogitation generally revolves around **Counting** and **Planning**. We should count our tricks and plan how to play the hand. Thinking at this stage is important:

Only lunatics and geniuses play quickly to the first trick!

Here, we can **count** three Spades (true, we have all of the ♠A K Q J and the ♠10 but we still only have three Spade tricks), two Hearts, no Diamonds and four Clubs. When we add that little lot up it comes to nine, handy in a contract that requires – um – nine tricks (!)

So, all we have to do is to take our tricks. We win the Heart lead (it doesn't matter where – we could win with either the ♥A or the ♥K) and then switch our attention to our suit – in this case Clubs. We play off all four of those, then we switch to our next best suit (Spades) and finally we go for the other top Heart.


We win the first nine tricks and concede the last four to East-West. Contract made.

Note that we do not “butterfly” by switching from suit to suit. We stick to the same suit until we have finished with it.



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Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AQJ4	
	♥ T87	
	♦ KQ8	
	♣ J97	
West		East
♠ 92		♠ T865
♥ KJ62		♥ Q543
♦ 973		♦ T52
♣ K853		♣ AT
	South	
	♠ K73	
	♥ A9	
	♦ AJ64	
	♣ Q642	

Here you again play in game and have to take the first nine tricks.

Can it be done? Of course! However, you just have to play the hand with a little care and attention.

When you are ready click on **Play**.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ 2

Bidding.

We have a classic hand to open 1NT after East has Passed as dealer. As in Hand 1 we are *balanced* (4·4·3·2) and have the requisite number of points (14 in this case).

North (our cherished partner) can add up what we have shown (12-14) to what he can see (13) and can work out that North-South have a combined total of 25-27 points.

North has a balanced hand as well so can see that No-trumps is the right strain for our side. This is sufficient information for partner to take a pot at 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♥2 against 3NT. It is customary to lead from a long suit against No-trumps and West has two equally long suits. Here, he chooses the stronger of his two suits – Hearts. With a broken suit (it isn't headed by a three-card run) he selects a low card, trusting that his partner will help him out by playing a high card.

On the sight of dummy we begin by **Counting** and **Planning**. Here, we can count four Spade tricks, one Heart, four Diamonds and (probably) no Clubs. In any case, we have nine tricks so all we need to do is to take them in the correct order.

We win the Heart lead with the ♥A over East's ♥Q and set about our suits. We have two equally strong suits – Spades and Diamonds. We might play either of these – here at VuBridge we chose to play on Diamonds first.

Now, there is an important lesson here. When playing off suits such as these (ones where they split unequally between the closed hand and dummy).

The rule is “**Play the high cards from the short suit first**”.

Look at the Diamonds. If we (wrongly) start with the ♦A we'd tangle the suit up. The first three Diamonds would be won with the ♦A, then the ♦Q, then the ♦K and the lead would be where

we don't want it – on table with the ♦J somewhat stranded in the closed hand.

Correct technique saves the day. Play off the ♦K first (the ♦Q will do if you feel strongly about it) then the ♦Q and then a Diamond to hand. In this way we will always find ourselves in the right place at the right time.

Once we have finished with Diamonds we turn our attention to Spades. How? By playing the ♠K first. Why? Allow us to repeat what we have just said.


“Play the high cards from the short suit first”.

In this case that's the ♠K rather than the ♠A, ♠Q or ♠J. Having taken the ♠K we now (easily) make the ♠A Q J that are lying in wait for us on the table.



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VB#1 Y1 Opening 1NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North			
♠ K42			
♥ A7			
♦ J86			
♣ AQT65			
West		East	
♠ T853		♠ QJ6	
♥ Q542		♥ T983	
♦ KQ52		♦ A97	
♣ 2		♣ 984	
South			
♠ A97			
♥ KJ6			
♦ T43			
♣ KJ73			

This deal shows you that some suits simply aren't worth showing.

Displaying in the dummy – Yes. Bidding during the auction – No.

When you are ready click on **Play**.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ 2

Bidding.

We have another textbook hand with which to open 1NT, this time as dealer.

Here we are completely balanced (4-3-3-3) and actually have a minimum opening bid (12 points). Our partner, sitting North, duly does the arithmetic of adding up what we have announced to what he can see in front of his face and calculates that we have a combined total of 26-28 points. Without further ado, North raises to 3NT.

Did someone ask why North failed to bid his Clubs? Well, the response is "Why bother?" The vagaries of the scoring method make minor-suit contracts unappealing.

To make game in Clubs or Diamonds we need to rake in eleven tricks. Far better to try and take nine tricks in No-trumps than eleven in a trump suit. Remember that 5-3-3-2 hands play well in No-trumps and experienced players always count them as balanced hands.

Play.

West leads the ♦2 against 3NT. Here West, having a 4-4-4-1 pattern, has three equally long suits to choose from so he chooses the strongest of the three – Diamonds. With a broken suit (one not headed by a three-card sequence) West selects the fourth-highest card.

On the sight of dummy we must begin by **Counting** and **Planning**. Here, we can count two Spade tricks, two Hearts, no Diamonds and five Clubs. That's nine tricks – provided East-West can't cash five tricks before we get a look in.

In point of fact we have no Diamond *stopper* so have to sit and wait while the opponents have their fun in Diamonds. If the defenders can take five Diamond tricks, beating 3NT before we get a foot in the door (so to speak), well *c'est la vie*. These things happen.

As the cards lie, however, the defence can only take the first four tricks. We are careful **not** to


throw a Club away from dummy (we must protect our long suits – they are useful) on the last Diamond. West switches to a Spade and at long last we are in. We take the ♠A, rake in five Club tricks and only need three more from the remaining ♠K and ♥A K.

No problem, contract made.



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VB#1 Y1 Opening 1NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 1N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ T42	
	♥ 75	
	♦ T86	
	♣ AJT65	
West		East
♠ J863		♠ KQ5
♥ AQT43		♥ 982
♦ K95		♦ AQ72
♣ 2		♣ 984
	South	
	♠ A97	
	♥ KJ6	
	♦ J43	
	♣ KQ73	

Here there are three Passes to you so you "know" partner must have something useful.

Well, maybe...

When you are ready click on **Play**.

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ 4

Bidding.

We have a 4-3-3-3 hand with 14 points and have an obvious opening bid of 1NT in *fourth seat*.

Our partner doesn't have much in the way of fancy arithmetic to do. Adding his dismal 5 points to our 12-14 he comes up with a total of 17-19, meaning that North knows that East-West actually have the balance of the high cards.

With a 5-3-3-2 hand North decides to Pass 1NT and hopes the sun shines. East-West, meantime, could make a contract of their own but neither hand is quite strong enough to enter the fray (nor open the bidding, of course) so we are allowed to win the auction cheaply in 1NT.

Play.

West leads his longest suit against No-trumps – in this case that's Hearts. Holding a broken suit West selects the fourth-highest card, the ♥4. The usual rule in these cases is to lead the "fourth-highest of your longest and strongest". We have already seen one exception to this "rule", when the long suit is headed by a sequence.

On the sight of dummy we thank partner for his fine hand (!) and get down to some **Counting** and **Planning**.

Here, we count one Spade trick and five Clubs, if we can gain the lead. West's Heart lead will definitely build up a trick for us in Hearts, regardless of who has the ♥A. So we can see seven tricks but we may have to wait a while before we can collect them.

As it happens, though, East cannot help his partner in Hearts – all he can produce is the feeble ♥8. Heartened by this we grab a cheap trick with the ♥J and switch our attention to our suit – Clubs. We play off the ♣K Q and then a low Club to dummy's ♣A J 10. That's six tricks and we have the ♠A for the seventh.

That's all we need and that's what we take, pronto – letting the opponents gain the lead might have dire consequences for us.

Having taken the first seven tricks we sit back quietly and watch as East-West mop up the remainder.



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VB#1 Y1 Opening 1NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

<p>West</p> <p>♠ AQ</p> <p>♥ KT864</p> <p>♦ 942</p> <p>♣ 943</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ T873</p> <p>♥ A97</p> <p>♦ 87</p> <p>♣ JT87</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ 9642</p> <p>♥ Q2</p> <p>♦ AQJ</p> <p>♣ KQ52</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ KJ5</p> <p>♥ J53</p> <p>♦ KT653</p> <p>♣ A6</p>		

Your bidding is becoming a well-oiled machine!

Here you reach the right contract in a matter of seconds – will the play take much longer?

When you are ready click on **Play**.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ 6

Bidding.

We have a 5-3-3-2 hand with 12 points and might think of opening 1♦. However, it is usually best to open with 1NT as this type of hand generally plays better in No-trumps than in a suit. Also, Diamonds score a measly 20 points a trick – who wants them as trumps?

North has an easy raise to 3NT as he knows the combined point-count for the North-South hands exceeds 25. (He can see 14 points in his own hand and we have announced 12-14, so the partnership must have 26-28).

Play.

West leads his longest suit against No-trumps – in this case that's Hearts. Holding a broken suit West selects the ♥6. As in the previous deal West is following the usual practice of leading the “*fourth-highest of his longest and strongest*”.

On the sight of dummy we thank partner for his bidding and get down to some **Counting** and **Planning**.

Here, we count five Diamond tricks and three Club tricks. We might make a Spade sometime or other but the ♠A would have to get played before we did so. What about Hearts? Well, this is a most unpromising suit but we are sure to make a trick here if we keep our powder dry. In this case, “keeping our powder dry” means **not** playing dummy's ♥Q at trick one.

Instead, we call for a low card from table on the first trick and look to see what East does. If he were to play a low card we would pounce on the trick with the ♥J and rush to make lots of tricks in Clubs and Diamonds. If East were to take the ♥K (or the ♥A) and play a Heart back we'd develop a slow trick in the suit. *Everything comes to he who waits*.


As it goes in practice, East takes the ♥A and, following standard practice, *returns his partner's suit* by playing a second Heart. West takes his ♥K and continues with the – ahem – Heart-attack. Now we take our ♥J and we are in, on lead, able to take our tricks in the minor suits.

Five rounds of Diamonds followed by three rounds of Clubs makes a total of nine (when added to the ♥J already in the bank).



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VB#1 Y1 Opening 1NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 1N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

		North			
		♠ K8			
		♥ 8742			
		♦ 82			
		♣ KQJT2			
West				East	
♠ 962				♠ QT743	
♥ AKQT9				♥ 6	
♦ Q74				♦ AJ9	
♣ 74				♣ 9853	
		South			
		♠ AJ5			
		♥ J53			
		♦ KT653			
		♣ A6			

Here your partner has a slightly tricky hand to bid.

Trusting the excellence of your card-play he elects to be dummy. Can you justify his faith?

When you are ready click on **Play**.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding.

We have a 5·3·3·2 hand with 13 points and, as in Hand 5, might think of opening 1♦. However, it is usually best to open such hands with 1NT. Remember, as Diamonds score a miserable 20 points per trick, it is often better to play in the higher scoring No-trumps.

North has an awkward call over our 1NT bid – he has 9 points (so knows that our partnership has under 25 points) but doesn't quite have a No-trumpy shape (5·4·2·2).

Rightly or wrongly partner Passes 1NT and leaves us in it.

Play.

West leads his longest suit against No-trumps – in this case that's Hearts. Holding a strong suit headed by the ♥A K Q West selects his highest card, the ♥A. As his suit is headed by a sequence West abandons the rule of leading "fourth-highest" and leads the top of the run.

On the sight of dummy we thank partner for his (lack of) bidding and get down to some **Counting** and **Planning**.

Here, we can count five Club tricks and two Spade tricks. So we may feel confident about our prospects but we are at the mercy of the opponents for a while. As the cards lie West has five Heart tricks to take. Having done so he then tries his luck in Diamonds. East takes the ♦A and plays one back but we are able to take the ♦K and make the rest of the tricks.

Although we might count eight tricks (five Clubs, two Spades and a Diamond) we lose the first six so can only emerge with seven tricks – and the contract.