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A set of eight beginners' hands for VB#3, year 1 that are all about setting up suits by knocking out Aces and playing high cards from shortage. Updated spring 2015

VBY1 #3 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KJ8		
	♥ A63		
	♦ 74		
	♣ QJT95		
West		East	
♠ 652		♠ AQ43	
♥ T9874		♥ 2	
♦ A63		♦ JT98	
♣ 74		♣ A863	
	South		
	♠ T97		
	♥ KQJ5		
	♦ KQ52		
	♣ K2		

This set of deals maintains the themes that you have met already. The bidding will be centred around opening 1NT and the play techniques are all about setting up your suits.

Oh yes... you haven't forgotten that a necessary preliminary is to *Count* and *Plan*, have you?

Hand 1 is an old friend – maybe you recognise him immediately?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ T

Bidding.

We reach 3NT as South after the invitational sequence 1NT – 2NT – 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♥10. This lead happens to be a poor one for East-West but we can't blame West for that; he is following sound principles. West is leading his long suit and is leading the top card of a sequence. On better days that would bring reward for his side. Today... unlucky.

Our **Count** and **Plan** shows there to be just four *top tricks*, all in Hearts. We have a shortfall of five tricks with the main source of extras being Clubs, once the ♣A has been knocked out.

However... there are two important points of technique to this hand. One is that we must retain the ♥A in the dummy (we need a way of crossing over to the table later in the play) and, secondly, we must play the Clubs in classical fashion. This last involves leading the ♣K first (Why? *Play the high cards from the short side first*). If we didn't do that we'd go down!

*(You don't believe us? Well, we play a Club to the ♣9, which wins and a Club to the ♣K, which wins, and then what? We are in the wrong hand at the wrong time. Note how **not** taking the ♣A is a winning move for the defence).*

Anyway... back to the plot.

We win the ♥J in hand (yes, we could have won with the ♥Q or ♥K, they are all *equals*) and immediately set about Clubs by leading the ♣K. That holds the trick; these defenders are stubborn (aren't they just?), and want to hold on to their high cards.

We continue with another Club to the ♣9 (or any Club – they are all equals) and this time East takes his ♣A and has a think. East might like to return his partner's suit but, having no Hearts remaining, natural causes prevent him from leading one. So the natural switch is to the ♦J (the top of a sequence). East is hoping that

West has the ♦A Q and that our ♦K could be trapped.

Well, if wishes were horses beggars would ride and East-West are not riding this one. With a nod to East we cover with the ♦K and force West's ♦A. A Diamond return (nothing is any better) is won by our ♦Q. This sets up our ninth trick.

In dummy are three winning Clubs so we go over to the table with a Heart (now do you see why the ♥A was left there?) and cash the Clubs. It only remains to wrap the hand up by taking the ♥K Q to make our nine tricks.


The rest are scraps for the bird-table.



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VBY1 #3 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ QJT7	
	♥ 743	
	♦ AKJ3	
	♣ 73	
West		East
♠ K63		♠ 8542
♥ KT852		♥ J9
♦ 4		♦ 8762
♣ K642		♣ AQ5
	South	
	♠ A9	
	♥ AQ6	
	♦ QT95	
	♣ JT98	

Firstly, partner invites you to the ball – do you want to dance?

Secondly, how are you going to fulfill your obligations in the play of the hand?

Perhaps it all centres around **Counting** and **Planning**..?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ 5

Bidding.

We open 1NT with 13 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape. Partner raises to 2NT to give us a small problem. With 12 points we would Pass and with 14 we would advance to game. What do we do with 13 points?

Well, we should let other factors sway our judgement. Being 4-4-3-2 is better than being 4-3-3-3 (hands which usually play poorly). And then there is the question of the Tens and Nines, which are not noted by the point-count. However, they can prove extremely useful in the play.

So, having given due weight to our intermediate cards we venture 3NT, knowing it is a close decision.

Play.

West kicks off with the reasonable but unfortunate (for his side) lead of the ♥5, the fourth highest of his best suit.

Counting our tricks we see that we have one Spade, two Hearts (after this lead into our ♥A Q *tenace*) and four Diamonds. That totals seven so we need to develop two more. These can be established in Spades and, as usual, we should set about developing our slow tricks immediately

We win the opening lead cheaply with the ♥Q and play off the ♠A and another Spade. Note that we must not cash our Diamonds early, no matter how tempting. This suit is there to act as a line of communication between our hand and the dummy.

West eventually takes the ♠K and, realising that he has struck muck with his opening lead, (or whatever the opposite of "struck gold" is) tries his luck with his other suit: Clubs. Now our faith in the worth of our intermediate cards is vindicated. East-West can cash three Club tricks but no more; the ♣J 10 9 8 proving an impassable barrier to our opponents' hopes.

After the enemy have taken their Clubs we easily have the rest of the tricks and can claim


our contract.



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

	North		
	♠ A53		
	♥ A74		
	♦ KQT76		
	♣ 97		
West		East	
♠ J9762		♠ KT8	
♥ J8		♥ QT92	
♦ 53		♦ A82	
♣ KJT6		♣ 532	
	South		
	♠ Q4		
	♥ K653		
	♦ J94		
	♣ AQ84		

Another day, another deal.

How should you go about your **count** of your tricks?

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

Lead: ♠ 6

Bidding.

This time we are given no choice in the bidding as partner raises our 1NT opener (12 points, 4-4-3-2 shape) directly to 3NT.

Play.

West leads the time-honoured *fourth-highest-of-his-longest-and-strongest* (the ♠6) and we stop to contemplate dummy (having thanked partner for his contribution, naturally).

What can we see? Well, we have one Club, two Hearts and a Spade “on top” and can easily set up four “slow” Diamond tricks after knocking out the ♦A. That makes eight. What else?

Let's look more closely at this Spade suit. This (very common) position is referred to as a *split tenace*. (Remember that a holding of, say, the ♠A Q in the same hand would be a normal tenace holding). When the opponents oblige by leading the suit we can usually ensure two tricks for ourselves.

Here, we simply call for a low card from dummy at trick one and patiently await the outcome. If West has led away from the ♠K (actually quite likely) East would have little to contribute and we would win trick one cheaply with the ♠Q. If, as here, East is able to win the ♠K at trick one it is of little consequence. We still have the ♠A and the ♠Q in reserve for two tricks.

So the count of our tricks is **two** Spades, two Hearts, four (slow) Diamonds and the ♣A. That's nine.


East takes the ♠K at trick one and, naturally enough, returns a Spade. We take the ♠Q and immediately attack Diamonds by leading the ♦J (play the high cards from the short side first). East refuses to take his Ace but eventually has to take his ♦A as we continue to lead the suit. On lead, East clears the Spades. This is no problem; we run for home by cashing all of the remaining Diamonds, the ♥A K and the ♣A.

Contract made.



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VBY1 #3 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 1N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 874	
	♥ K62	
	♦ QJ75	
	♣ T82	
West		East
♠ KJ953		♠ T6
♥ J93		♥ QT84
♦ A3		♦ K82
♣ Q74		♣ KJ65
	South	
	♠ AQ2	
	♥ A75	
	♦ T964	
	♣ A93	

Here you are in a dull part-score.

Still, just because you are eating bread-and-butter rather than beluga caviar doesn't mean you can turn off your thinking processes and relax.

Part-scores still matter in this game.

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

Lead: ♠ 5

Bidding.

Here, we open 1NT (14 points, 4-3-3-3 shape) and no one else has anything to say.

Play.

After an anxious moment or two dummy displays 6 points so we know that the points are split 20-20 between the two sides. This, then, is likely to be a close race between declarer and the defence.

West starts with a low Spade lead (the ♠5) so we begin our **count** and **plan**. The lead, into our Spade tenace, gives us two Spade tricks and we have two Hearts and a Club outside. So we are two tricks short of the seven we require, meaning that we have to develop Diamonds. That's all right – we do have two slow tricks in the suit, once we can force out the ♦A K.

Putting our plan into action we win the Spade lead (cheaply, with the ♠Q) and immediately play on Diamonds. East takes the ♦K and, naturally enough, plays back his partner's suit by leading a Spade. We take the ♠A and doggedly continue with our Diamond attack.

West now takes his ♦A and enjoys himself by cashing his established Spades. Don't worry when things like this happen – there is plenty of rubbish to put in the bin as this is going on.

Eventually, West has to lead something else (a Club as it happens) so we are in a position to win that and cash our tricks. We take the ♣A, the last two Diamonds and the ♥A K before conceding the final trick to the opponents.



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VBY1 #3 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 2N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North

♠ AKQ
♥ J85
♦ JT985
♣ T8

West

♠ 7632
♥ 74
♦ A74
♣ Q964



East

♠ JT8
♥ QT96
♦ K63
♣ AJ3

South

♠ 954
♥ AK32
♦ Q2
♣ K752

Here, partner invites you to bid game. Are you – um – game to do so?

How should you play the cards?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1NT
P	2NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ 4

Bidding.

Here, we open 1NT and partner raises to 2NT. With a bare 12 points and little in the way of compensating values (a five-card suit or lots of Tens and Nines), we should have little hesitation in rejecting partner's advances and playing in a part-score.

Play.

West leads a low Club (the ♣4) and our **Count** and **Plan** begins. We can see three Spade, tricks two Hearts and a Club. The Club trick is guaranteed after the lead from West, regardless of the location of the ♣A.

The suit that must be developed is Diamonds, of course, so we need to get working on those. East turns up with the ♣A at trick one and returns the ♣J. We take that with the ♣K and play the ♦Q (*play the high cards from the short suit first*).

Rather surprisingly, that wins the trick as neither West nor East wants to use up a Diamond honour. This is good defence, you should note, as it makes the task of establishing Diamonds that much harder.

Gritting our teeth we play another Diamond and this time East takes the ♦K to play back his third Club. West cashes the last Club before switching to a Heart. This places the lead in our hand, where there are no Diamonds. So we have to cross to dummy with a top Spade and, following Plan A, persevere with Diamonds. West takes his ♦A and plays another Heart but by now we have enough tricks.

We cash the ♥A, the remaining Spades and Diamonds and we have our contract. Meanwhile, East-West have three Clubs and two Diamonds for five defensive tricks.



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VBY1 #3 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ T

Bidding.

We open 1NT with 14 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape. Partner raises to 2NT and we decide to bid 3NT. The hand is maximum in terms of points but is worryingly short of intermediate cards such as Tens and Nines.

Play.


Counting our tricks we discover, to our surprise, that we have nine "on top". This is rare – usually we have to set a suit up for "extras".

However, we have to be careful, the suits where we have our tricks (Hearts and Clubs) are a little awkwardly placed. The Hearts are the most tangled up; there is no way of cashing four consecutive Heart tricks. Try it and see. We *can* cash four consecutive Clubs (provided we take the elementary precaution of *playing the high cards from the short suit first*).

When we have a tangled up suit (Hearts in this instance) it is best to play it first, to untangle it while we can still get between the closed hand and dummy in the other suits. Here, West actually aids the process by leading a Heart from his sequence of ♥10 9 8 7.

Right – our plan.... We must cash the ♥A Q first to untangle the suit. Then we cross to dummy with the ♣K to enjoy the rest of the Hearts. Then we revert to Clubs (by cashing the ♣A first) and take the remainder of the Club suit. Finally we cash the ♣A as our last trick and the job is done.

Nine tricks and the contract.

	North		
	♠ T83		
	♥ KJ42		
	♦ 974		
	♣ AK5		
West		East	
♠ KQ4		♠ 9765	
♥ T987		♥ 653	
♦ T8		♦ AKQJ	
♣ 8742		♣ T9	
	South		
	♠ AJ2		
	♥ AQ		
	♦ 6532		
	♣ QJ63		

Here (for a change) you have nine tricks in your 3NT contract.


However, can you work out how to get at them?



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VBY1 #3 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ KQ3	
	♥ Q42	
	♦ KJ2	
	♣ Q754	
West		East
♠ 97		♠ AT865
♥ JT986		♥ 753
♦ T983		♦ 65
♣ 92		♣ AKJ
	South	
	♠ J42	
	♥ AK	
	♦ AQ74	
	♣ T863	

Here, you are in the world's favourite contract – 3NT.

Can you bring it home?

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

Lead: ♥ J

Bidding.

We reach 3NT by the fastest route (1NT – 3NT) and dummy has precisely what the doctor ordered – a balanced 13-count.

Play.

West leads the ♥J (the top of a sequence) and we begin (as ever) by **Counting** and **Planning**. We can see seven top tricks in the red suits (four Diamonds and three Hearts) and so need two more. These are readily available in Spades as soon as the ♠A has been knocked out.

So we win the Heart lead, performce, and immediately play a Spade to force out the ♠A. East stubbornly refuses to play it so we continue the suit to make sure he does exactly that. On the second round of the suit East takes the ♠A and plays one back, setting up his suit. Now East has winning Spades and, as such, is a danger to the contract.

Still, we can see the harbour so should row for home. We can take five more tricks in the red suits. However, we do need to untangle the Hearts first. We must cash the ♥A, cross to the ♦K, cash the ♥Q and then take the remaining Diamonds.

Two Spades, three Hearts and four Diamonds makes nine. Don't worry about the rest; East-West can have them.



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VBY1 #3 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

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

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding.

Again, as in the previous deal, we reach 3NT by the fastest route (1NT – 3NT) and partner displays a useful dummy with its 14 points.

Play.

A preliminary (and very necessary) count shows there to be nine top tricks (one Spade, four Hearts, three Diamonds and a Club). So what's the problem?

Well, problem there most certainly is on this hand and it's all down to the fact that two of the suits are tangled up (Hearts and Diamonds). A suit is tangled, remember, when we cannot run it off in successive tricks. Here we can't run four successive Heart tricks and we can't run three successive Diamonds. So this hand needs definite care and attention.

With tangled suits it is wise to play them first – but do we play Hearts or Diamonds? If you work it out you'll find that the only successful play is to play on Diamonds first.

Having taken the ♠A we must take the ♦K Q as the first part of our careful Plan. Then we cross to the ♥A Q on the table to take both of those tricks and the ♦A. Then we return to hand with the ♣A to cash the last two Hearts. Any variation in timing leads to defeat.

Phew! A tricky one, this and a difficult hand to finish with. Well done if you got this one right first time.

North

♠ A753

♥ AQ

♦ A53

♣ 9732

West

♠ KQJT

♥ 72

♦ 976

♣ KJT8



East

♠ 96

♥ T9863

♦ JT842

♣ Q

South

♠ 842

♥ KJ54

♦ KQ

♣ A654

Another easy hand (!?).

You reach 3NT and have to make sure you can reach your nine top tricks.

Are you up to the task?