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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #4 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A4	
	♥ KJ863	
	♦ 43	
	♣ K643	
West		East
♠ QJT93		♠ 87
♥ A92		♥ 754
♦ 87		♦ JT952
♣ JT5		♣ A97
	South	
	♠ K652	
	♥ QT	
	♦ AKQ6	
	♣ Q82	

**Here are eight general practice hands. There is no particular theme to them.**

On this deal, you reach a good normal game contract. The play needs a little thought and many would fail without pausing to **count & plan** before rushing to **execute**.

It's a simple matter of planning your entries correctly.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1NT
P	2♦	P	2♥
P	3♣	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ Q

### Bidding.

We reach 3NT after a classic transfer auction.

Partner Passes as dealer and we open 1NT with a balanced 16 points. North bids 2♦, forcing 2♥ from us, and follows with 3♣.

Now we have to choose the right game. With Clubs off the menu and lacking three-card Heart support we retreat to 3NT.

### Play.

West leads the ♠Q, suggesting length and strength there.

We can count five *top tricks* (three Diamonds and two Spades) and can see that Hearts offer three or four extra tricks depending on the distribution. It looks like knocking out the ♥A is the way to go but before starting to play the hand we ask ourselves what could go wrong.

If the ♣A is on our right it will be over dummy's ♣K and the ♠A is our only entry to the long Hearts once we have set them up. Having thought it through we should realize the need to play low in dummy to the first trick and preserve the ♠A as an entry. Also, we may need some luck in Hearts in order to set the suit up.

This is the play: We play low from table on the opening lead to preserve the vital Ace of Spades as an entry to dummy. Winning in hand with the King we immediately attempt to knock out the ♥A by leading the ♥Q.

When that holds (aren't the opponents stubborn?) we play the ♥10 and are relieved to see the ♥9 appear. This makes it safe to overtake the ♥10 with the ♥J (we were probably going to do that anyway), to be in the right hand at the right time to continue with Hearts.

The defenders win the third round of Hearts and continue to attack Spades, forcing out the ♠A from dummy. Now we can see enough tricks for the contract. As the cards lie we could play a Club to set up a trick there, but that would be

dangerous – if the opponent with long Spades could gain the lead we would be defeated. Essentially a Club lead risks losing three Spades, a Heart and a Club.


It is best simply to cash out our top tricks (the remaining Hearts and the top Diamonds) to ensure the contract. We are happy to make two Spades, four Hearts and three Diamonds.



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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #4 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ A7643		
	♥ T97		
	♦ A		
	♣ A764		
West		East	
♠ T5		♠ J982	
♥ QJ84		♥ K2	
♦ Q52		♦ JT743	
♣ QJT9		♣ 53	
	South		
	♠ KQ		
	♥ A653		
	♦ K986		
	♣ K82		

This is another deal where you have to untangle your tricks.

Straightforward? Maybe, maybe not.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	2♥	P	2♠
P	3♣	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ Q

### Bidding.

We reach 3NT after another classic transfer auction.

East Passes as dealer and we open 1NT with a balanced 15 points. North bids 2♥, forcing 2♠ from us, and follows with 3♣.

Now we have to choose the right game. With Clubs off the menu and lacking three-card Spade support we retreat to 3NT.

### Play.

West leads the ♣Q against 3NT, presumably from the top-of-a-sequence.

We can count eight *top tricks* (three Spades, one Heart, two Diamonds and two Clubs) and therefore need to find one more. We have seven Spades between the closed hand and dummy – including the top three honors. If the defenders have three Spades each we could make five Spade tricks. Even if one defender has four Spades we could surrender the fourth round of Spades and set up a fifth Spade as our ninth winner.

We need to be careful because we only have two entries to dummy (we cannot afford to overtake the ♠K or ♠Q) so we should play low from dummy on the first trick allowing us time to unblock the Spades before crossing to dummy.

Having thought it through we must execute the plan. We win the first trick in hand with the ♣K and unblock the Spades by cashing our ♠K Q. Next, we cross to dummy with the ♦A and continue playing Spades. When our left-hand opponent shows out on the third round of Spades it doesn't deter us because our plan allowed for this. Four Spade tricks are sufficient to make the contract so we surrender the fourth round of the suit in order to establish the baby Spade.


We immediately regain the lead with the ♣A and head for home by cashing our last Spade, the ♥A and the ♦K.

Nine tricks emerge from four Spades, one Heart, two Diamonds and two Clubs.



Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #4 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ J74		
	♥ 752		
	♦ QT743		
	♣ K5		
West		East	
♠ 865		♠ QT93	
♥ KJ4		♥ T986	
♦ 98		♦ A652	
♣ QJT87		♣ 9	
	South		
	♠ AK2		
	♥ AQ3		
	♦ KJ		
	♣ A6432		

You are about to play in another game contract. Remember, though, that good hands facing weak ones often have problems with **entries**.

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

Lead: ♣ Q

### Bidding.

We have an obvious opening bid of 2NT (showing a balanced hand of 20 to 21 points).

North has an easy raise to 3NT.

### Play.

We get the ♣Q lead from West, which is surely the top-of-a-sequence, and pause for thought.

We can count five *top tricks* (two Spades, one Heart and two Clubs). Diamonds will give us the four extra tricks we need once we have knocked out the ♦A, provided we can reach them. Note that if we were to play the ♣K on the first trick and the defenders then refused to play the Ace on the first round of Diamonds we'd have no access to the table.

Avoiding the small trap of taking the ♣K at trick one we win the ♣A in hand and immediately set about Diamonds by leading the ♦K. When that wins (more stubborn opponents!) we follow with the ♦J.

Ducking that on table would be poor play as we'd have no entry (the ♦J would be allowed to win and then what?) The fortunate fall of West's ♦9 8 has suddenly promoted the ♦7 on table so we are able to overtake the ♦J with the Queen to set up the suit. East realizes it's futile ducking any more Diamonds so he takes his ♦A and tries his luck with a Heart shift.

We have nine top tricks now (two Spades, a Heart, four Diamonds and two Clubs) but it is quite safe to try the Heart finesse for an overtrick as we have control of all suits. No luck today, though, as West takes his King over our Queen and reverts to Clubs.


We now cash out the long Diamonds and the high cards in our hand and have nine tricks for our contract.



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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #4 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ T32		
	♥ A8		
	♦ A32		
	♣ T9765		
West		East	
♠ Q76		♠ J984	
♥ 632		♥ QJT9	
♦ JT		♦ Q987	
♣ KQJ32		♣ 4	
	South		
	♠ AK5		
	♥ K754		
	♦ K654		
	♣ A8		

Here you play in 3NT and West has what looks to him like a good lead to make. What can you do to create extra tricks from this deal?

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

Lead: ♣ K

### Bidding.

In fourth seat we are happy to open 1NT (a balanced hand with 17 points). North raises that to 2NT and, with a maximum, we go on to game.

### Play.

The ♣K looks like being a good lead to West and we pause to study the dummy.

We can count seven top tricks (two Spades, two Hearts, two Diamonds and the ♣A), leaving us with two more to find. Which suit offers the best prospects of "extras"?

It might be easy to overlook Clubs as our source of extras since the defense have just led them, but that would be an oversight. With our ♣10 9 8 7 6 5 we have six of the top remaining eight Clubs and knocking out the remaining ♣Q J will leave us with the two extra winners we need.

Taking advantage of our good fortune (a lead in any other suit would give us little chance of fulfilling our contract) we win the ♣A and immediately play one back, remembering to overtake the ♣8 with the ♣9 when West plays small. When the Nine holds we play another Club.

West, with a grimace, takes his ♣J to shift to Diamonds but we are one step ahead in the race. We take the ♦A on table and mercilessly continue with the Club attack, forcing out the ♣Q. We are now in a position to claim the contract – we have three Club tricks, and two tricks in each of the other three suits. The ♥A, of course, remains as an entry to dummy to cash the Clubs.


West was desperately unlucky with his opening lead. It was devastating only in that it devastated his own hand. The world and his wife would lead the ♣K against 3NT but the fact remains that a high Club is the only lead to give us the contract.

Bridge can be a tough game sometimes.



Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #4 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ AQ4	
	♥ K532	
	♦ QT9	
	♣ 832	
West		East
♠ J952		♠ KT73
♥ 9		♥ 84
♦ 8643		♦ J752
♣ A974		♣ QJT
	South	
	♠ 86	
	♥ AQJT76	
	♦ AK	
	♣ K65	

We have been stressing the need to **plan** before executing and to **count** before **planning**. In other words to "look before you leap".

Here, you are playing in a game contract and have to assess the opening lead. What do you make of it and what do you do about it?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ 2

### Bidding.

We open 1♥ in third seat and partner raises us to 3♥.

Well, how could we refuse such an invitation? With a good hand, far from minimum, we accept by going on to 4♥.

### Play.

West (you can see now that he has a pretty horrible choice of leads) chooses to kick off with the ♠2.

Well we all know the routine: **Count – Plan – Execute**. We should start by attempting to *Read the Lead* and should realize that it suggests a four-card holding headed by an honor. (Well, all right, in other circumstances the ♠2 could be a singleton, but is that credible, given that East has Passed in second seat? Not really).

Note that we can count ten top tricks and this should influence our line of play. In an earlier deal (Hand 3) we had an example of a "safe finesse" – in that case we could take a speculative finesse secure in the knowledge that it would do us no harm should it lose. Here, though, we have to ask: "Is there a risk if we were to try the ♠Q at trick one and East were to win the ♠K?"

Well, with 20-20 hindsight and a view of all hands we can see the answer. If East could take his ♠K at trick one, then at trick two he'd have the ♣Q on the table at the speed of light (maybe quicker) and our ♣K would be blown away. One down before we start. Ugh.

Reason (and **counting**) should prevail. With ten top tricks and an "unsafe finesse" we must take the ♠A. True, we are giving up the chance of an overtrick should the ♠K be on our left (with the opening leader) but if it is on our right we would be sitting there, gnashing our teeth, watching the defense take the first four tricks. Disaster is painful and best avoided, self-inflicted disaster doubly so.



There are entry problems with the Diamond blockage and the fact that there is only one Heart entry to dummy so we need to tread a careful path. Specifically, we take the ♠A, cash the ♥A Q (the ♥K needs retaining for a later entry) to draw trumps, unblock the ♦A K, cross to dummy with the ♥K and chuck a black card (any low black card) on the ♦Q. Now we can play for an overtrick in complete safety by leading a Club up to our ♣K.


With this lie of the cards that doesn't work, but the defense have only three tricks to take and we have our game. That's all that matters.



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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #4 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ K542		
	♥ 642		
	♦ A86		
	♣ 875		
West		East	
♠ T983		♠	
♥ 93		♥ KT87	
♦ KQJ9		♦ T7532	
♣ Q92		♣ KT64	
	South		
	♠ AQJ76		
	♥ AQJ5		
	♦ 4		
	♣ AJ3		

Here, in a trump contract you have the familiar dilemma - do you draw trumps immediately, or not?

If not, what else should you be doing instead?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♠
P	2♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ K

### Bidding.

After East Passes we open 1♠ with a lovely looking 19 point hand.

Partner delights us by raising Spades so we bid 4♠ immediately.

### Play.

We get the ♦K lead from West, clearly from a sequential holding. Naturally, we take dummy's ♦A and play...?

Well, yet again we must **Count** and **Plan**. We have five Spade tricks, at least two Heart tricks (although we may have to lose to the ♥K *en route*) and two Aces. That's nine tricks so we need a tenth trick from somewhere. The Heart finesse might do it, a 3-3 Heart break might do it and finally, we could ruff our last Heart on table having cleared trumps.

Now, what to do at trick two? Without doubt the worst play is to ruff a Diamond in hand. **Don't ruff in the long hand!** All we would do by this ill-starred manouever would be to shorten our trumps and weaken our hand.

Should we draw trumps then? Well, it may look tempting but we have higher priorities. The Heart finesse needs taking sometime or other and entries to table are thin on the ground. The best play is to try our luck in Hearts at trick two and see what happens. On this layout of the cards the finesse wins, so things look bright. The clouds roll in again when trumps prove to be 4-0 (ruffing the last Heart in dummy now looks a remote possibility) but we still have ten tricks.


Best play is to draw all the trumps, making sure we finish on the table with the ♠K. Now we take the Heart finesse again and we find ourselves with the requisite ten tricks (five Spades, three Hearts and two minor suit Aces).

When Hearts prove to be 4-2 (and East clings grimly onto his long Hearts), we have three losers – but that is all.



Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #4 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ K94		
	♥ JT4		
	♦ J54		
	♣ AQ92		
West		East	
♠ QJ5		♠ AT763	
♥ K82		♥ 653	
♦ T982		♦ 73	
♣ K86		♣ 743	
	South		
	♠ 82		
	♥ AQ97		
	♦ AKQ6		
	♣ JT5		

On this deal you have two lines of play to choose from. One is safe, one is certainly not.

Make sure you choose the safe option.

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

Lead: ♦ T

### Bidding.

We arrive in 3NT after a simple 1NT – 3NT auction.

### Play.

West leads his long suit, Diamonds, which doesn't hurt us one bit. We can all see now that the ♠Q lead would beat 3NT, but then we are all better players with 20-20 hindsight. West had no reason to try anything other than the ♦10 as his opening shot and now we have to decide what to do.

Pausing to **Count** and **Plan** (you may just have heard this advice before), we should be able to see six *top tricks* (four Diamonds and two Aces) and either the Heart or the Club finesse will bring us three extra tricks, if it works.

We are, however, wide-open in Spades if the lead comes from our left (from the West hand). Therefore we must choose to take the Club finesse, because if that does lose it will leave our right-hand opponent on-lead and the ♠K protected from attack.

If we were to take the Heart finesse instead West might take the ♥K and, if in form, make the devastating shift to the ♠Q.

So we win the Diamond lead in hand and run the ♠J. When it wins we repeat the finesse twice more to pick up four Club tricks and secure our contract. If we even think of taking the Heart finesse we could only be accused of greed. West would win and defeat us with a Spade shift, despite there being nine top tricks. Not good thinking.


Note that if East were to turn up with the ♠K we'd have to take the Heart finesse to generate the ninth trick. If that failed we'd have to hope that either West had the Ace of Spades or that he failed to lead one.

If the ♥K lay with West and the other key cards (the ♠K and the ♠A) lay with East then we could count ourselves pretty unlucky.



Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #4 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 954	
	♥ K3	
	♦ Q972	
	♣ 9742	
West		East
♠ JT7		♠ Q862
♥ AT862		♥ J95
♦ 5		♦ K643
♣ Q865		♣ JT
	South	
	♠ AK3	
	♥ Q74	
	♦ AJT8	
	♣ AK3	

On this deal you have to time the hand well and to play the critical suit to best advantage.

Good luck.

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

Lead: ♥ 6

### Bidding.

After three Passes we open 2NT and partner has an easy raise to game.

### Play.

West leads the fourth-highest-of-his-longest-and-strongest, to wit: the ♥6. Naturally, we take a long look at dummy as we **Count** our tricks and formulate a suitable **Plan**. Dummy is no better or worse than we have any right to expect and we can tell that this one is going to be tight.

Our initial **Count** and **Plan** isn't too promising. We have one Heart trick, two Spades, three Diamonds (could we make that four?) and two Clubs. Not good – five top tricks only and some work to do to develop the extra tricks in the red suits.

The first play is to try dummy's ♥K at trick one. Firstly, we need the entry to dummy (we need to play Diamonds from the table) and secondly, if it wins, the ♥Q is retained and makes it awkward for West to get his suit going.

Having succeeded in this venture, and won trick one on the table, we now need to play the Diamonds for as many tricks as possible. We have to take care, though. Running the ♦Q might work but we may end up in the wrong hand (the ♦Q holds, we play a Diamond to the ♦10 and then what? Dummy is bereft of entries).

We can get away with leading the ♦Q but only if we remember to chuck the ♦10 on it. Now we could lead the ♦9 and underplay it with the ♦8. We'd still be on table and could lead another Diamond for a third finesse.

Slightly neater (and the way we have played it here) is to lead the ♦9 as the first play. We now run that through East, hoping the King is well-placed for us. When the Nine holds (some finesses work!) we now lead the ♦Q and – as before – the lead is where we want it: on the table. We are content for East to cover the Queen with the King or to play small; whatever

he does we can always pick up four Diamond tricks this way.

Since the Diamond finesse is right for us we have four Diamond tricks and sufficient overall for the contract. In total that's two Spades, one Heart, four Diamonds and two Clubs.