




Eight assorted deals. ACOL version. Updated spring 2015.

VB Y1 #4 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ 764		
	♥ AK5		
	♦ KJ84		
	♣ A65		
West		East	
♠ A32		♠ 985	
♥ JT974		♥ 83	
♦ 973		♦ AT62	
♣ J2		♣ QT93	
	South		
	♠ KQJT		
	♥ Q62		
	♦ Q5		
	♣ K874		

Here are eight general practice hands on the themes that we have been looking at in VuBridge. They are in no particular order, just enjoy them as they come...

Here, in Hand 1, you reach everyone's favourite contract of 3NT. The play needs a little thought and planning as you need to diagnose which suit to play on first.

Additional tricks can be established by various ways and here we will be focusing on *knocking out high cards*, where you establish your extra tricks by **strength**.

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

Lead: ♥ J

Bidding.

We reach 3NT after a typical 1NT – 3NT auction.

Play.

On the ♥J lead from West we can count five *top tricks* (three Hearts and two Clubs) and we therefore need to search for an additional four tricks. Where do we go for "extras"?

The two obvious choices are Spades or Diamonds. The suit that offers more tricks should be the suit to play on first. Since Spades offers three slow winners and Diamonds offers only two slow winners the first focus of attention should be on Spades. However, even three Spade tricks is not enough as we need a total of nine tricks for 3NT so a Diamond trick (or two) will have to be added into the mix.

So we will need to play on both Spades **and** Diamonds in order to secure the contract. After winning the opening lead we should play on Spades immediately to set up three extra tricks. Note that cashing easy Club and Heart winners is the wrong play.

"Grabbing tricks" is not the way to play this game. True, there are low-hanging fruit in the guise of the ♥A K Q and the ♣A K but they should remain firmly on the tree while we develop the "extras". Why? Because they are needed to regain the lead after we have forced out the ♠A and the ♦A. If we were to snatch them too early we might never regain the lead once it is lost.

So at trick one we take one of the easy tricks (you have to follow suit to the opponents' lead) and choose to win the ♥K. Yes, with the ♥A K Q all being **equals** we could just as easily have won the ♥A or the ♥Q; it makes no odds.

At trick two we switch the line of attack and play a Spade from the dummy towards the closed hand (we may as well try the tempting ♠K as bait as we **want** it to be taken). West duly takes his ♠A and continues with Hearts, which we choose (on a whim) to win in the closed hand with the ♥Q.

Now we turn our attention to our second suit, Diamonds, by leading the ♦Q to dislodge the ♦A. After the ♦A has been forced from its hidey-hole there are copious winners in all four suits. Note that East has nothing good to lead when he takes the ♦A simply because we have retained all that low-hanging fruit on the trees.


We take his actual Club lead and can run off Spade and Diamond winners to make the contract with an overtrick.



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VB Y1 #4 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 97	
	♥ J74	
	♦ KQJ854	
	♣ A7	
West		East
♠ K64		♠ JT83
♥ K932		♥ Q8
♦ 7		♦ A962
♣ QJT92		♣ 843
	South	
	♠ AQ52	
	♥ AT65	
	♦ T3	
	♣ K65	

The bidding on this deal is yet another straightforward auction, at least from your side of the table.

Partner's dummy may cause you to raise an eyebrow but he does know what he's doing. Yes, really!

In the play you will need to take precautions so you can take all the tricks that you are entitled to.

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

Lead: ♣ Q

Bidding.

East Passes as dealer and we open 1NT (13 points and a 4·4·3·2 shape). North raises to 3NT directly, without stopping to pick the daisies.

This 3NT raise is a good shot. In theory, partner could have shown his Diamonds but when he knows that the most likely contract is 3NT, why bother bidding a minor suit at all? It would only give away unnecessary information.

True, North only has 11 points but he has compensation in the long Diamonds. Long, strong suits often provide a rich source of tricks in No-trumps.

Of course, North-South *might* belong in 5♦ but that would be a rarity since it is usually a lot harder to take eleven tricks than it is to take nine. It is a common theme in bridge.

Play.

West kicks off with the ♣Q lead (top of a sequence) and here is a classical deal where playing hastily might prove fatal. If we were instinctively to play dummy's ♣A, then we would soon be saying *adieu* to those lovely Diamonds.

We need to recognise the possibility that the opponents could (and would) delay taking their ♦A for one or two rounds and, were they they to do so, we would need to have access to dummy in order to get to that luscious long suit.

By the way, the correct play in the Diamond suit is to play the ♦10 first – "*Play the honours from the short side first*". Although the ♦10 is on the borderline of being an honour card it is certainly effectively such when dummy has the ♦K Q J. Therefore, to protect ourselves from a bad Diamond break, we must play the ♦10 on the first round of Diamonds and on the second round play the ♦3 to dummy's ♦J.

Notice that East (our Right Hand Opponent) retains his ♦A until the second round of Diamonds just to cut the links between the closed hand and dummy. Good defence!


Fortunately, by virtue of the fact that we won trick one with the ♣K, we still have the ♣A as means of reaching the table to enjoy the long Diamonds. Was that fortune, though, or good ***Planning?***

With five Diamonds in addition to our three outside Aces and the ♣K the contract makes.



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VB Y1 #4 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 76	
	♥ KQ5	
	♦ QJ852	
	♣ K87	
West		East
♠ A8542		♠ 93
♥ 964		♥ JT32
♦ A4		♦ K7
♣ 953		♣ QJT64
	South	
	♠ KQJT	
	♥ A87	
	♦ T963	
	♣ A2	

Knocking out high cards is not only restricted to Aces.

Sometimes you might find a situation where you need to knock out *two* honours to set up a particular suit.

Try this deal out as an example.

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

Lead: ♠ 4

Bidding.

Once again we arrive in our favourite contract (3NT), this time after an invitational sequence of 1NT – 2NT – 3NT.

Play.

West (in all innocence) chooses a low Spade as his opening lead and that gives us some breathing space. A Club lead would make life awkward but take a look at the West hand – he isn't gifted with second sight and has no reason to select a Club lead.

Here, with just five top tricks, we need to combine the length and strength in Diamonds in order to establish extra tricks there. Although we are missing the two top Diamonds, we can use the combined ♦Q J 10 9 and ♦8 to do the job of turning dummy's long suit into three tricks.

We could play a Diamond to dummy's ♦J as the first play but it is marginally better to lead the ♦10 first, getting into the habit of *playing the honours from the short side first*.

East takes the ♦K and returns his partner's suit by leading the ♠3. West takes the ♠A and, finally realising that Spades is not his side's best suit, switches to a Club. Too late! We could win that in either hand (we actually choose the ♣A) and plug away in Diamonds, driving out the ♦A and setting up three winners in the suit.

Three Spade tricks, three Diamonds, three Hearts and two Clubs adds up to eleven tricks. Unfortunately, before we can cash them all, the opponents take the ♠A and the ♦A K so we actually make just ten tricks.

A point of interest on this deal: On the Spade opening lead we try the effect of winning the first trick with the ♠K. The Spades are all equals so it doesn't matter which one we select. Sometimes (as here) this "false-carding" creates a miasma for the opponents as to how strong our Spades are and, as a result, they continue playing Spades to our advantage (rather than switching to Clubs).



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VB Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

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

Lead: ♥ 3

Bidding.

Here we reach 3NT after another invitational sequence of 1NT – 2NT – 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♥3 and the good news is that we appear to have nine top tricks (four Spades, one Heart and four Diamonds). The bad news is that the suits are tangled (or, technically speaking, **blocked**).

The ♥A is knocked out at trick one, leaving us wide open in that quarter (and wide open in Clubs, too). We need to cash the next eight tricks or suffer defeat.

To do this we must first untangle (or **unblock**) the Spades by cashing the ♠Q J. Having done this we need to return to the closed hand with the ♦Q to cash the remaining Spade honours. Finally we revert to Diamonds, taking dummy's ♦A K J for the seventh, eighth and ninth tricks. After that we don't care – the opponents can fight over the scraps.

Any alteration in this precise sequence would lead to defeat.

North

♠ QJ
♥ 854
♦ AKJ7
♣ 7642

West

♠ 93
♥ KJ732
♦ 9432
♣ AT



East

♠ T8542
♥ QT
♦ T86
♣ KQ9

South

♠ AK76
♥ A96
♦ Q5
♣ J853


This hand contains some awkwardly placed suits. Can you sort them out in the correct order?

Perhaps you should pay heed to that hoary advice: "*Play the high cards from the short suit first!*"



Eight assorted deals. ACOL version. Updated spring 2015.

VB Y1 #4 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 2H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AK73	
	♥ 98	
	♦ AJ43	
	♣ Q54	
West		East
♠ T98		♠ QJ62
♥ AQJ		♥ KT
♦ 9862		♦ T
♣ AT6		♣ KJ9873
	South	
	♠ 54	
	♥ 765432	
	♦ KQ75	
	♣ 2	

Here you have a miserable hand and are fully prepared to watch the opponents bid and make something.

Nope, wrong again! Yet again you are thrust into the spotlight as declarer.

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

Lead: ♠ T

Bidding.

Partner opens 1NT as dealer (the traditional 12-14 points) and we have a fine responding hand (!)

However, it is important to make the correct contribution to proceedings and not to Pass. This hand is all but worthless in No-trumps; it may well play reasonably in Hearts.

A bid of 2♥ is a "weakness take-out" or sign-off, telling partner (in no uncertain terms) to go away. North, being well brought up, does precisely what he is told and Passes, arranging the dummy neatly.

Play.

The play is fairly straightforward, provided that we don't blench too much at the thought of playing a hand where we are missing the A K Q J 10 of trumps. Notice that all these glittering honours are only worth three tricks to East-West, provided that we lead Hearts whenever we can, forcing the honour cards to fall together.

In fact, our losses on the hand are just four tricks, the ♣A and three trump tricks, so we emerge with an overtrick.

Now look at what would happen to North in 1NT, should we fail in our duty to remove it. East would lead a Club and North would lose the first six Club tricks and the next three Heart tricks. Three down.

What is preferable? An overtrick in 2♥ or the score of 1NT down three?


That's a rhetorical question...



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VB Y1 #4 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ J2	
	♥ AK	
	♦ 532	
	♣ QJT942	
West		East
♠ AT75		♠ Q943
♥ T942		♥ J76
♦ QT8		♦ K96
♣ 86		♣ A75
	South	
	♠ K86	
	♥ Q853	
	♦ AJ74	
	♣ K3	

Here dummy is a little unusual.

Still, all you can do is follow general principles and hope to make your contract.

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

Lead: ♠ 5

Bidding.

We bid 1NT – 3NT and dummy is a little unexpected – a six-card suit and only 11 points. Still, partner is working on the principle that nine tricks are easier than eleven (5♣ normally has no chance on hands like this) and that his long suit may well provide a useful source of tricks in No-trumps.

Play.

West starts off with a low Spade lead (the fourth highest of his longest and strongest) and we can see that the opponents have hit us in our weak spot. Still, there's nothing we can do but to carry on and keep smiling.

We make a brave attempt to win trick one with the ♠J (West might have led from the ♠A Q – you never know) but East covers that with the ♠Q. We have little choice but to take that with the ♠K and attempt to set up the Clubs. This can only be done by leading the ♣K first (*play the high cards from the short suit first*).

The ♣K wins the first trick but East takes the second Club to lead back a Spade, faithfully returning his partner's suit. Now comes the moment of truth. If West has started with a five-card (or even six-card) Spade suit 3NT would fail. We'd simply have to grin and bear it as the Western opponent gleefully reeled off his Spades.

As the cards lie, though, West only has three more Spades to cash. We have plenty of rubbish to put in the bin as this is going on (those low Diamonds are worthless) and we can wait until West runs out of steam.

When West leads a Diamond we are in a position to take that with the ♦A, cross to a Heart on the table and run off the established Clubs. Even the lowly ♣4 takes a trick on this deal.


Nine tricks come from one Spade, **two** Hearts, one Diamond and five Clubs. The ♥Q, you may note, is superfluous to requirements.



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Eight assorted deals. ACOL version. Updated spring 2015.

VB Y1 #4 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 2S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ T4		
	♥ AJ75		
	♦ AKQ4		
	♣ 832		
West		East	
♠ 76		♠ AK2	
♥ KQ8		♥ T6432	
♦ T976		♦ J	
♣ KQJT		♣ A964	
	South		
	♠ QJ9853		
	♥ 9		
	♦ 8532		
	♣ 75		

Another miserable hand. This hand has nothing to do with you so all you can do is Pass throughout and stare out of the window, right?

Well.... not exactly.

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

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

Over North's 1NT opening bid we bid 2♠. This isn't a forward-going move at all, it is in fact a *weakness take-out bid* and partner is obliged to Pass – if he wants to remain our partner.

Remember we are **boss of the auction** once partner has made a *limit bid* as we are the only player at the table able to calculate the combined worth of the partnership hands. In point of fact our hand could actually be worse than this, a real "bag of nuts".

Bidding 2♠ does not promise any points – it is merely stating that we think Spades will play much better than No-trumps, and that is unarguable with this hand.

After all, How useful do you think our Spade suit will be in 1NT? Probably zero tricks. And in 2♠? Maybe three tricks, maybe even four. That's a big difference.

Play.

Against 2♠, West leads the ♣K, the top-of-a-sequence. We can count four quick losers (two Spades and two Clubs), and that may well be all. Maybe we can make four Diamond tricks, who knows?

We follow low to the first two rounds of Clubs and ruff the third. What is our first priority? *To extract the opponents' trumps.*

However tempting it may be to go for the low-hanging fruit in the shape of the ♦A K Q it is a temptation that must be resisted. Someone may well ruff one of these tricks and that is something we cannot afford. We don't mind (indeed, cannot avoid) losing tricks to the ♠A and ♠K but it is downright humiliating to lose a trick to the ♠2!

Also, it is entirely wrong to play off the ♥A and trump a Heart. We should aim to maintain as many trumps as we can in the closed hand. By trumping Hearts we'd reduce the length of our Spades and that is not good news. They've already been reduced by being forced to ruff a

Club; we shouldn't aim to aid the opponents by shortening them any more.


So... We play a Spade to the ♠10 (*play the honours from the short side first*) and East takes his ♠K. Too late, he leads his Diamond. You take than on table and play another trump, won by East's ♠K. East can do nothing now. He desperately wants West to be on lead so that his partner can lead a Diamond for a ruff. Sorry, but there's just no way across. No – ahem – bridge.

In the fullness of time we pull trumps and enjoy that fruit that is still dangling from the low branches. True, West makes a trick with his ♦10 at the end but by then we simply don't care. 2♠ making on the nose.



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VB Y1 #4 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 2H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ K7	
	♥ A64	
	♦ 853	
	♣ AK972	
West		East
♠ JT96		♠ AQ832
♥ KQT		♥ J2
♦ A742		♦ 96
♣ T8		♣ QJ53
	South	
	♠ 54	
	♥ 98753	
	♦ KQJT	
	♣ 64	

What should you do here when partner opens 1NT?

Pass it or remove it? If the latter – into what?

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

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

Over North's 1NT opening bid should we consider bidding 2♦ as a *weakness take-out* on a four-card suit? After all, our Diamonds are so much stronger than our feeble Hearts.

The answer is **No**. A firm No. Despite our Diamond strength, we should always prefer *length over strength* and hence must bid 2♥. If Hearts are trumps the very good Diamonds will act as a useful side-suit.

Play.

West leads the ♠J which immediately sets up two Spade tricks for the opponents. With neither opponent having undue trump length we only lose five tricks on this deal – two Spades, two Hearts and one Diamond. Let's look at this in detail.

West leads the ♠J and that traps the ♠K on table, reducing the monarch to a commoner. We have no trick there... East cashes the ♠A Q and follows with the ♦9. He can't see our hand, remember, so he is just following general principles of *leading though strength and around to weakness*, the weakness in this case being the three low Diamonds on table.

West takes his ♦A and, equally obviously, continues Diamonds. We take that with the ♦J and now are (finally) on play. Our primary focus is to play trumps as early as we can to remove them from the opponents' hands. To that end we play off the ♥A and follow with another Heart.

Had we played a third Diamond instead, East would have scored a trick with the ♥2 and boasted about it for weeks. West sullenly cashes the ♥K and tries to take the ♠10. No sir! We trump that and have only winners left. 2♥ made.

Now imagine playing in a Diamond contract. This would be decidedly tricky because playing in a seven-card trump fit (when the opposition have six trumps, of course) takes great skill and a lot of luck. 2♦ can always be defeated in fact.

Strength in a suit is a good thing, but **length**

usually prevails. Partner's 1NT opening here promises a balanced hand and, based on this, we should plump for our longer suit to be trumps.

We know that partner could have three or even four-card trump support and we try to play in a suit where we have definite numerical superiority over the opponents. Should we bid Diamonds we might play in a disastrous 4-2 fit.

Never mind the quality, feel the length!