



Eight General Hands. ACOL version. Updated winter 2015/6

VB#11 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 2S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

<b>West</b> ♠ A4 ♥ QJT5 ♦ A862 ♣ 953		<b>East</b> ♠ KQ2 ♥ K74 ♦ T4 ♣ JT762
<b>North</b> ♠ 753 ♥ A93 ♦ KQ75 ♣ KQ8		
<b>South</b> ♠ JT986 ♥ 862 ♦ J93 ♣ A4		

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...

Although this first hand might seem dull it does get more interesting.

Don't relax too much otherwise you will miss some important points.

**Control** is the key topic on this deal.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

### Bidding.

North opens with a weak 1NT (14 points and a 4-3-3-3 shape) and catches us with a poor hand, a 5-3-3-2 hand with just 6 points. What to do?

Well, we might Pass, arguing that the South hand is essentially balanced but experience suggests that it is better to remove 1NT into the haven of the five-card suit. Accordingly, we bid 2♠ – a *weakness take-out* – telling partner to shut up and display the dummy. Hearing the message loud and clear North duly Passes and 2♠ ends the auction.

### Play.

West leads the ♥Q (top of a sequence) and a routine **Count** and **Plan** shows that we have rather too many losers. We have three top losers in trumps, one in Diamonds and – after the attacking Heart lead forcing our ♥A – we have two top losers in Hearts.

With a total of six quick losers staring us in the face we have to find a play that will rid us of at least one of those losers – and pronto. After winning the ♥A we certainly cannot afford to play a trump (or a Diamond) because it would be fatal to allow the opponents on lead.

The best way of disposing of a loser is to **dump** a Heart on one of dummy's top Clubs. So we play off three rounds of Clubs (starting with the ♣A, of course). On the third round of Clubs we pitch a Heart from the closed hand and hope that neither opponent can ruff.

After that passes off peacefully we turn our attention to the trump suit and attempt to *draw trumps*. Sure, we are missing the ♠A K Q but the principle of removing them from the opponent's tight grip remains. Lead them out!

West wins the first round of trumps and **forces** us with Heart leads (by which we mean: makes us ruff in the closed hand). It is poor play to ruff in the long trump hand voluntarily; it is good defence to make us do it.

Having ruffed the third round of Hearts we must delay drawing trumps and must instead knock

out the ♦A.


After forcing out the ♦A the opponents cannot do anything to harm the contract and we are in control of the hand.

We have to lose three trumps, a Heart and the ♦A but can manage the rest. Eight tricks come from two Spades, one Heart, two Diamonds and three Clubs.



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Y1 VBlue #11 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ T732		
		♥ KJ75		
		♦ A3		
		♣ QJ2		
West		East		
♠ QJ5		♠		
♥ T986		♥ AQ42		
♦ Q652		♦ JT98		
♣ A9		♣ T8654		
		South		
		♠ AK9864		
		♥ 3		
		♦ K74		
		♣ K73		

Here is a refresher deal – on the topic of counting.

You need to count trumps and count your tricks.

Counting potential losers isn't a bad idea either.

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

Lead: ♥ T

### Bidding.

We start the auction by opening 1♠ in second seat which North raises to 3♠, showing four-card trump support with invitational values (about 10 to 11 points).

Now, with "only" 13 points there are some who might want to Pass the hand out in a part-score. We VuBridge players are made of sterner stuff, however. A six-card trump suit and an attractive 6-3-3-1 pattern more than compensates for anything missing in the points department and we should be happy to advance to game.

### Play.

West kicks off with the ♥10 lead against 4♠ and, after thanking partner, we see that we have two quick losers (the two missing Aces). It is unlikely that we have a loser in Spades (the odds strongly favour a 2-1 trump break) but there is a possibility of a trump loser if we are unlucky. We also have to consider what to do in Diamonds.

Cashing a top trump from hand reveals the annoying 3-0 trump break. So we have to make sure that we hold the losers to three – one Spade, one Heart and the ♣A.

The solution to this hand should come to light once we note the Diamond shortage in dummy – we can ruff our third Diamond on the table.

So, just dotting the *is* and crossing the *ts*... the full play is as follows:

We put the ♥J up at trick one (West cannot have the ♥A but he might just have the ♥Q). East wins and plays the ♦J. We take that on the table with the ♦A (*play the high cards from the short suit first*) and play off the two top trumps. This leaves West with the master trump but that's of little concern. Now we cash the ♦K and ruff a Diamond before turning our attention to Clubs, driving out the ♣A.


After West takes the ♣A he can take his winning trump but we can claim the rest.

Note (once again) that the crucial ruff is taken in the *short trump hand*. Ruffing Hearts in hand (*the long trump hand*) is a waste of time. By playing along the indicated lines we make **six** Spades (five in hand, one ruff on table), two top Diamonds and two "slow" Clubs.



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Y1 VBlue #11 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ A93		♠ K542	
♥ Q852		♥ 43	
♦ J853		♦ KT62	
♣ J4		♣ A97	
			
South			
♠ 76			
♥ AKJT976			
♦ A			
♣ Q82			
West			
♠ QJT8			
♥			
♦ Q974			
♣ KT653			

Here you get a pleasant surprise in the bidding.

How should you plan the play?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

### Bidding.

Here we open 1♥ as South and are both surprised and gratified when partner raises that to 2♥. Now what?

Well, avid point-counters may simply Pass ("I only held 14 points and all you did was make a simple raise!") but the knowledge of a wonderful trump fit should encourage us to be more ambitious. Sometimes these hands have too many losers but equally often we can make game on "thin air". In short, we should take a punt at 4♥ and hope the sun shines.

### Play.

Here, North obliges with a decent hand for his 2♥ raise – an Ace, four juicy trumps and a *ruffing value* in the form of a doubleton Club. West leads the ♠Q from his sequence and, naturally enough, we immediately count winners and losers.

We can see one Spade loser and two Club losers – and that's all you have to lose. On the other side of the coin you can see one Spade winner, seven Heart winners, the ♦A and...? Well, that's only nine winners. Nine winners and three losers – this does not compute!

The anomaly is because we haven't counted our tenth trick – partner's faith in his ruffing value (the Club shortage) is not misplaced. We can concede two Club tricks and ruff a Club on the table (in the *short trump hand*, you should note). Ruffing Diamonds in the closed hand is a complete and utter waste of time – we'd be *ruffing in the long hand*. That gains nothing.

The play is very easy – we win the Spade, draw the two outstanding trumps (as the suit breaks 2-0 we need to play two rounds of Hearts) and then give up a Club. The defenders cash a Spade and play another. We ruff and patiently give up another Club. That's all East-West can take – we win the return and ruff the last Club on the table. With only trumps left in hand the rest are ours.

Note that we would also have made the contract had our Clubs been the ♣4 3 2 facing ♣6 5 rather than the ♣Q 8 2 facing ♣J 4. The 3 points in Clubs played no relevant part in the hand at all.



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Y1 VBlue #11 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

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

Lead: ♥ 5

### Bidding.

West opens a weak 1NT (14 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape) and is raised to 3NT by East.

There's no need for East to introduce his Diamonds and he also shouldn't be too concerned about his weak holdings in Hearts and Clubs.

Why? Because East, holding 15 points, knows that there should be a game somewhere. With a balanced hand opposite a balanced hand the most likely game is 3NT – all too often it is easier to take the nine-trick game in 3NT than the eleven-trick game in five-of-a-minor.

Having said that, game doesn't always make when holding 25 points between declarer and dummy. On a bad day 3NT will fail with 26, 27, even 28 points. Here is a **very** bad day for East-West – they have 29 points but cannot make 3NT. (They can't make 5♦ either). Save your tears, spare your sympathy – just make sure you take your plus score.

### Play.

North leads the ♥5 against 3NT to which we must, of course, contribute the ♥K (*third player plays high*). Being too mean to put the ♥K up (and playing the ♥10 instead) would have disastrous consequences. Partner wouldn't stop telling us off for at least a week.

Once declarer follows with the ♥J, the distribution of the Heart suit should be quite clear. Declarer either has ♥Q J doubleton or ♥A J doubleton (and is withholding his Ace for some reason). With any other Heart holding declarer would not have willingly played the Jack.

Regardless of which Heart combination declarer has, we should next follow it up with the return of the ♥10, not the ♥3. This follows the rule of "*when returning partner's suit, lead back the higher of a doubleton*".

Here, it is very clear that we must return the ♥10. If the ♥3 were returned, declarer's ♥Q would force partner's Ace and, although the Heart suit would be established, the ♥10 would

North

♠ 953  
♥ A9852  
♦ 953  
♣ K5

West  
♠ K86  
♥ QJ  
♦ Q742  
♣ AQ43



East  
♠ AQJ  
♥ 764  
♦ AKJ86  
♣ 87

South

♠ T742  
♥ KT3  
♦ T  
♣ JT962

Here's your chance to defend a hand.

If you follow general principles you should bring home the bacon.

**block** the suit. We would be on lead at trick three with the ♥10 and there would be an icy silence. North would break it through gritted teeth, "*It's your lead, partner!*" Oops. We'd have no Heart to lead.

After the ♥10 return at trick two, though, North is in seventh heaven. He wins the trick and starts running his long suit from the top.


After North cashes the first five tricks declarer claims the balance. No matter, one down is a fine result from where we are sitting.





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Y1 VBlue #11 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

North			
♠ T762			
♥ JT974			
♦ KT84			
♣			
West		East	
♠ KQ8		♠ A94	
♥ A53		♥ K82	
♦ 76		♦ Q9	
♣ KQ953		♣ AT764	
South			
♠ J53			
♥ Q6			
♦ AJ532			
♣ J82			

Here is another defensive deal – a tricky one this time.

Look carefully at the small cards...!

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

Lead: ♦ 3

### Bidding.

East-West take the fast route to game by bidding 1NT – 3NT.

### Play.

We naturally lead the ♦3 (the fourth-highest-of-our-longest-and-strongest). Dummy is depressingly strong so we realise we may need five fast tricks to beat this one.

Partner pleases us by producing the ♦K at trick one and by playing back the ♦4 at trick two. Declarer pops the ♦Q on that and things are looking good.

However...

It is very tempting to play the ♦J at trick three is it not? Now study the hand carefully and see what the effect of that would be. North would be unable to get out of our way – the Diamonds would become **blocked**. We would take four Diamond tricks in defence and four tricks only. North would be left on lead at trick four and our (winning) fifth Diamond would wither on the vine.

You would then ask the £1,000,000 question:  
**How could I tell?**

Let's study this carefully and reabsorb the lesson of Hand 4. *With a remaining doubleton play back the higher*. Here, though, at trick two North plays back the ♦4, clearly his lowest Diamond. That is enough to show that North does not have two Diamonds left – he must have three.

(He can't have started with ♦K 4 alone – we will leave it to you to work out why).

So we must trust North and *underplay* the ♦J to his ♦10 at trick three. Then we have to overtake the ♦8 with our ♦J at trick four in order to cash the fifth and final Diamond at trick five. That's one off and East-West are welcome to the rest.

Elementary my dear Watson...





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VB#11 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

<b>West</b> ♠ K86 ♥ 75 ♦ QT2 ♣ QJT83		<b>East</b> ♠ QT75 ♥ A63 ♦ J53 ♣ 972
<b>North</b> ♠ AJ3 ♥ T98 ♦ 9874 ♣ AK5		
<b>South</b> ♠ 942 ♥ KQJ42 ♦ AK6 ♣ 64		

What is your best chance of making your contract on this deal?

If you don't pay attention and count the cards, you may miss the boat completely.

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

Lead: ♣ Q

### Bidding.

North opens a weak 1NT over which we jump to 3♥ to show five Hearts and a game-forcing hand. Partner, with three-card support in Hearts, raises to 4♥.

### Play.

West leads the ♣Q against 4♥ and we need to **Count** and **Plan**.

We first count our losers and see that there is one top loser in Hearts. There are three other potential losers: two in Spades and one in Diamonds, so we must find a way to reduce those losers by one.

Counting winners we can see one Spade, four Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs – just the nine. At least the arithmetic balances: nine winners and four losers. So we need to find an extra winner from somewhere.

The best bet on this hand is to set up the Diamonds hoping for a 3-3 break.

We win the opening Club lead and first begin by drawing trumps. When East takes the ♥A he might find the killing but difficult defence of switching to the ♠5 but, not having x-ray vision, he chooses to return partner's suit by leading the ♣9. You can't blame him. Really, you can't.

We win the ♠A, draw the last trump and play the ♦A, ♦K and a small Diamond. We should, of course, carefully watch both opponents to see if they follow to all three rounds of Diamonds. When they do (as here) we can subsequently cross to dummy with the ♠A and cash the fourth Diamond to pitch a losing Spade from the closed hand.

Lucky? Yes, indeed (a 3-3 break is against the odds at 36%) but we must make the most of any chances we have.

Ten tricks come from one Spade, four Hearts, three Diamonds and two Clubs.



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Y1 VBlue #11 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

<b>West</b> ♠ J953 ♥ T9873 ♦ K54 ♣ 9		<b>East</b> ♠ K7 ♥ 642 ♦ AJ92 ♣ JT75
<b>North</b> ♠ QT4 ♥ QJ ♦ Q6 ♣ AK8632		
<b>South</b> ♠ A862 ♥ AK5 ♦ T873 ♣ Q4		

When a contract looks easy, always be on the lookout for what might go wrong.

Once you can see the dangers you may have a way to avoid them.

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

Lead: ♥ T

### Bidding.

We open 1NT (13 points and a balanced hand) and North raises to 3NT holding those six lovely Clubs. A good choice too, because nine tricks are generally easier to take than eleven tricks (had the contract been 5♣).

### Play.

West leads the ♥10 and at first sight our contract seems to be in a good shape. If the Clubs come in for six tricks (which will happen if Clubs break 3-2), we will have a total of ten tricks (six Clubs, three Hearts, one Spade).

Now, knowing that our contract is absolutely safe if Clubs break 3-2, the next thing we should be thinking about is: *What if Clubs break 4-1?*

It's not impossible to guard against a nasty Club split. We would need to give up a trick in the suit in order to set up five tricks in Clubs. Remember, we only need five Club tricks for our contract so giving up a Club trick is not going to wreck the contract.

So, what's the next hurdle? Well, if Clubs are breaking 4-1, after setting the suit up we'll need an entry back to dummy to cash them.

The only sure entry that we can see, is of course, a Heart, so we must take care at trick one. We must win West's Heart lead in hand with one of the big Hearts (to preserve dummy's ♥Q as an entry). We are certainly not sacrificing a Heart trick since we only ever have three tricks in the suit.

At tricks two and three we cash the ♣Q and ♣K, West discarding a Heart and revealing the 4-1 break. At this point we could either cash the ♣A and then play a small Club to establish the suit or we could simply duck the third Club, forcing East to win the trick.

There is no advantage either way so we decide to concede a Club at trick four and allow East to win. East now tries his luck with a low Diamond switch but luckily the ♦10 protects us from the

defenders running four Diamond tricks.

East actually switches to the ♦2 and East-West hopefully cash three rounds. A fourth round of Diamonds is taken by the ♦10 and it's plain sailing from there. We play the ♥5 to dummy's ♥Q and run the Clubs. Nine tricks all told.



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Y1 VBlue #11 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

<b>West</b> ♠ A962 ♥ J4 ♦ 952 ♣ 6542		<b>East</b> ♠ 87 ♥ QT52 ♦ QT74 ♣ AK3
<b>North</b> ♠ KQ53 ♥ AK986 ♦ KJ8 ♣ T		
<b>South</b> ♠ JT4 ♥ 73 ♦ A63 ♣ QJ987		

On the final deal we finish with an intriguing play problem.

You have to cope with limited ways of reaching the closed hand – how well can you juggle your entries?

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

Lead: ♠ 2

### Bidding.

North opens 1♥ to which we respond 1NT to show 6 to 9 points and no four-card Spade suit. A 2♣ response is not an option as we'd need 10 points or more to hoist the bidding to the two-level.

By default, almost all hands with less than 10 points have to respond 1NT to partner's 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid (unless we have a fit for partner, of course).

North, with 16 points, now makes a pushy raise to 2NT. That may seem a little odd with a 5-4-3-1 pattern but remember that partner knows we don't have four Spades (so bidding 2♠ is pointless) and knows that we may just have the values for game.

8 points is at the upper-end of our 6 to 9 point range and we do have a useful five-card suit, so we accept the invitation and advance to game.

### Play.

Against our 3NT contract, West leads the ♠4. The way to tackle this hand should become evident the moment we count our top tricks and potential winners.

We start off with four top tricks (the ♥A K and the ♦A K), hence we require five additional winners.

West has led a low Spade – showing an honour in the suit – so we may presume that he has the ♠A, but it has hit one of our strong suits. Establishing three Spade tricks (while welcome) is still not enough for the contract.

However, the Club suit can provide three tricks too, provided that we force out the Ace and King. Is that possible?

It certainly is, assuming we don't play too quickly to the first trick.

Owing to the lack of entries in the closed hand, we must first win the opening lead in **dummy**. Next, we play the ♣10 and, if East plays low, make sure to *overtake* with the ♣J (or

♣Q). We don't want to be stranded in dummy if both opponents follow with small Clubs.

After our ♣J wins the trick we continue with another Club. East wins and innocently returns a Spade, allowing us to force our way back to hand with the ♠J 10. This way we are able to knock out the other Club honour and still have the ♦A with which to reach the long Clubs.

A little surprisingly we take ten tricks on this deal – three Spades, two Hearts, two Diamonds and three Clubs.