



Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015.

VB#22 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West ♠ T8752 ♥ K8 ♦ T983 ♣ Q4		East ♠ K64 ♥ J9742 ♦ Q ♣ JT95
North ♠ AJ9 ♥ 653 ♦ AJ752 ♣ 82		
South ♠ Q3 ♥ AQT ♦ K64 ♣ AK763		

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...

Hand 1 is easy to bid. Is it as easy to play, though?

What do you make of the first few tricks?

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

Lead: ♠ 5

Bidding.

As South we open 1♣ and rebid 2NT over North's 1♦ response to show a balanced hand in the range of 18-19 points. North is happy to raise us to 3NT, hoping that his Diamond suit is of some use.

Play.

West leads the ♠5 against 3NT. A quick study of the hand tells us that we have six *top tricks* (with at least one extra in Spades) and our best hope relies on making extra tricks from the Diamond suit.

With this Spade lead we'll either be getting one or two additional tricks, depending on where the ♠K lies. We follow with the ♠9 from dummy (of course) and, after East takes his ♠K, our top trick count bumps up to seven. A Spade is returned to our Queen and the obvious source of tricks is the long suit – Diamonds. Something interesting happens when we cash the ♦K – East plays the ♦Q. What could this mean?

With dummy's ♦A J exposed on the table, East wouldn't have played the ♦Q unless it were a singleton. And if it is a singleton West's ♦10 9 8 3 prevents the run of the suit. There are two ways we can establish the Diamond suit for four tricks – we can either duck one completely or we can cash the ♦A and the ♦J and follow by conceding the fourth round of Diamonds.

When deciding between these plays we must consider dummy's entries. Although the ♠A still resides in dummy we no longer have a Spade left in our hand to reach it. So, to keep our communication with dummy, the right play is to **duck** the second round of Diamonds. This establishes the Diamonds for four tricks while maintaining a small Diamond in hand to allow access to the long Diamonds and the ♠A.

West takes his Diamond trick and returns a Spade, which may cause someone to claim that ducking the Diamond is unnecessary – West would give us access to the table anyway. Hold your horses! West has only played a Spade

because he can count the Diamonds as well; he knows we've got an entry to the table.

You can bet your house that if we were to play four rounds of Diamonds West would rather jump through the nearest window than lead another Spade and give dummy the lead.

We make nine tricks from two Spades, one Heart, four Diamonds and two Clubs.



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VB#22 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3H
Date: 24/01/2016	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

<p>West</p> <p>♠ K92</p> <p>♥ A952</p> <p>♦ T6</p> <p>♣ 8653</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ 753</p> <p>♥ KQ84</p> <p>♦ AKJ83</p> <p>♣ K</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ AT86</p> <p>♥ 7</p> <p>♦ 9542</p> <p>♣ JT92</p>	<p>South</p> <p>♠ QJ4</p> <p>♥ JT63</p> <p>♦ Q7</p> <p>♣ AQ74</p>	

Many defenses use very simple principles for success.

How simple is this deal?

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	X
1♥	1♠	3♥	P
P	P		

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

Over East's 1♦ opening bid we do best to make a take-out Double. Although we'd prefer to have 4-4 in the majors it just doesn't pay to wait a long time to be dealt such an ideal hand. Here, South's hand (nearly) fits the pattern for a textbook take-out Double: short in the opponent's suit and support for all unbid suits.

Over our Double, West bids 1♥ and North competes with 1♠. He has a weak hand but nice shape. East, with 16 points (how much weight should he give to that singleton ♣K, though?) raises to 3♥ and West decides he can bid no higher – so that ends the auction.

Play.

Partner leads the ♣J to the ♣K and our ♣A. With dummy displaying strength in Hearts and Diamonds it is logical for the defense to attack dummy's weak suit and here, after winning the ♣A, we must follow with a switch to the ♠Q.

The ♠Q holds the trick and we continue the good work with the ♠J covered by the King and partner's Ace. As partner cashes the ♠10 we are pleased with ourselves that the defense has taken the first four tricks. With our ♥J 10 6 3 we are bound to have a decisive fifth defensive trick, provided that we are not too careless.


If at any point declarer leads a low Heart from dummy, remember to insert one of our Heart honors. Should declarer hold the ♥9 we simply could not take the risk of playing a low Heart, for declarer may be tricky and insert the ♥9 for an "impossible" finesse. Impossible because the defense should not be playing low with ♥J 10 × × and it would be embarrassing if West were to read the hand and make a cheap trick.

Anyway... quite often dummy's weakness is the feature that the defense can use to their advantage. The phrase that is frequently used is: **"Lead through strength and round to weakness"**. This deal is a good illustration of that hoary principle.



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VB#22 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ AQ53	
	♥ Q986	
	♦ AK75	
	♣ 3	
West		East
♠ K942		♠ 87
♥ A3		♥ T52
♦ 96		♦ T84
♣ AK864		♣ Q9752
	South	
	♠ JT6	
	♥ KJ74	
	♦ QJ32	
	♣ JT	

When partner asks your opinion and you have something of a choice what should you opt for?

Sometimes it's bidding at the right **level**, sometimes it's bidding the right **strain**.

Or even both...

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

Lead: ♣ A

Bidding.

Responding to a take-out Double can be tricky because not only must we show our best suit but we should also show our strength.

Here, partner has the perfect, textbook hand for a take-out Double of West's 1♣ opener. Holding 9 points our duty is to tell partner about our strength by making a jump bid. A reply at the one-level (provided that it's not 1NT) shows about 0-7 points. With more than that we are obliged to jump the bidding; a jump bid to the two-level promising approximately 8-11 points.

That's the **strength** covered, but what about the **strain** – which suit should we bid? When responding to a take-out Double, we should always give priority to the major suits. The *Equalities Act* does not apply in bridge – minor suits are definitely second-class citizens. Here, we have four Hearts so we ignore the Diamonds and bid 2♥, showing a better than minimum response and four or more Hearts.

After showing our values along with our Heart suit, partner can now upgrade his hand a tad (that singleton Club just has to be worth something extra) and takes us all the way to 4♥.

Play.

The play to make the game is relatively straightforward. West leads the ♣A and switches to the ♦9. We play on trumps immediately to drive out the Ace and to start the process of drawing trumps.

After West takes the ♥A he continues optimistically with another Diamond so we take that (on table) and pull the remaining trumps.

Now we can come to hand with another Diamond and have the luxury of trying the Spade finesse by running the ♠J. Here, the finesse succeeds (it was likely to as West opened the bidding, so is strong favorite to hold the ♠K).

As a result we make an overtrick, losing only to the ♣A and the ♥A.



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VB#22 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: East
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

<p>West</p> <p>♠ K5</p> <p>♥ AKJ6</p> <p>♦ AQJ98</p> <p>♣ T5</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ Q42</p> <p>♥ 85</p> <p>♦ T63</p> <p>♣ AQ832</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ A9763</p> <p>♥ T932</p> <p>♦ K2</p> <p>♣ 74</p>		<p>South</p> <p>♠ JT8</p> <p>♥ Q74</p> <p>♦ 754</p> <p>♣ KJ96</p>

This may appear (at first) to be a dull deal.

You may, however, be surprised at a point when you least expect it.

Our words of advice? Keep your focus!

There is an important lesson for you in this hand! (Editor)

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

Lead: ♠ J

"What should I lead?" is a question that players are often faced with. So what *do* you lead against 3NT on this deal?

Bidding.

West opens 1♦ and sees his partner reply 1NT. Holding 18 points and a very good suit West wastes no time in raising to 3NT. Note that he has no reason to bid 2♥ as East has denied holding four of them.

Play.

It's your lead... The traditionalists might say, "fourth-best-from-your-longest-and-strongest-suit" and they are right most of the time. However, rather than following rules blindly, you should always consider the auction before deciding.

Here, West opened 1♦ and later raised East's 1NT to 3NT. The question you should be asking yourself here is, ***what has declarer shown?***

East responded 1NT so he must have 6-9 points, no four-card major, and quite likely no four-card Diamond support. If we *do the math*, East cannot have more than three cards in each of Spades, Hearts, and (probably) Diamonds. Logically speaking, this must mean that East has at least four Clubs; quite often he will have five.

Therefore, we can see that East's 1NT response *implicitly* shows a natural Club suit. Using this information we can eliminate a Club lead (into declarer's suit) from amongst our logical options.

A better lead here would be one of the major suits and, comparing our Spades to our Hearts, Spades look to be the better choice as we have the ♠J 10 8 semi-sequence.

The ♠J lead strikes gold on this deal. Dummy's ♠K is trapped and, soon enough, North's Spades get established. The ♦K in North's hand proves to be a later entry as declarer is not able to collect nine tricks without taking the Diamond finesse into North.

"Fourth-best" and "sequence leads" are usually

attractive options for the opening lead, but always remember to look at the auction first to gather any extra evidence that might help you solve the opening lead problem.



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VB#22 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/01/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

West ♠ J8 ♥ AK62 ♦ 975 ♣ KJT3		East ♠ AQT94 ♥ 5 ♦ T43 ♣ AQ94
North ♠ 7653 ♥ 843 ♦ AQ86 ♣ 86		
South ♠ K2 ♥ QJT97 ♦ KJ2 ♣ 752		

Sometimes when it is clear that this is not your hand you can nod off and let the opponents get on with it.

However, the auction can sometimes be a healthy source of information to you as a defender.

In these cases try to ensure you use this evidence to your advantage

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

Lead: ♦ 2

Another opening lead problem...

Bidding.

Since East-West's bidding is the key to this deal we are laying it out with explanation below.

East opens 1♠: Self-explanatory; Spades are his best suit.

West responds 2♣: West says he has four-plus Clubs with at least 10 points.

East rebids 3♣: East has Club support and a minimum hand (12-14 points, more or less).

West bids 3♥: West is showing something in Hearts, possibly a four-card suit but equally possibly just some high cards, allowing 3NT to be bid and played from East's side.

East bids 3♠: East has five strong Spades, possibly six Spades. Also, East has no enthusiasm for 3NT. Nothing in Diamonds, maybe?

West bids 4♠: A delayed Spade raise, most likely showing a doubleton honor in Spades.

Play.

Now, have you realized the implications of the auction?

How could we resist the Heart lead against 4♠? If the ♥Q flew out of your hand (metaphorically speaking) we quite understand and we sympathize.

The ♥Q is the "obvious" and "routine" lead against most contracts and against most auctions – but this auction isn't one of them!

In order to understand that, we have to read the above analysis of the bidding. From this dialogue, we can deduce that the opponents are lacking values in Diamonds otherwise somebody, surely, would have bid 3NT... Without the Diamonds controlled the opponents opt to play in the only available game: 4♠ on a strong 5-2 fit.

If we have understood the auction, then it becomes quite clear that a Diamond lead is best as it is important to grab our tricks in the suit before the rats get at them.

On this deal, that's just what happens. On a "routine" Heart lead, declarer would have an easy time cashing the ♥A K, dumping a Diamond, followed by a Spade finesse. After the Spade finesse loses the defense could not come to more than two Diamonds and a Spade.

On a Diamond lead, however, the defense can collect their three Diamond tricks before the declarer gets a look in. With the ♠K in the South's hand, declarer is destined to go one down.



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VB#22 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

West ♠ AQT96 ♥ K72 ♦ JT ♣ J82		East ♠ J52 ♥ 5 ♦ KQ864 ♣ T753
North ♠ K43 ♥ J98 ♦ 97532 ♣ A4		
South ♠ 87 ♥ AQT643 ♦ A ♣ KQ96		

What is your hand really worth?

Much may depend on whether there is a *fit* or not.

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

Lead: ♦ J

Bidding.

We open 1♥ as South, West overcalls 1♠ and partner raises to 2♥. What should we say now as South?

Although we may hold "only" 15 points our hand increases in value after hearing North raise our suit. With an attractive 6·4·2·1 shape we are fully justified in taking a pot at game, knowing that as little as the ♥K and ♠A from partner would give us an easy ten tricks.

Play.

West starts off the proceedings with the ♦J lead (the ♦J 10 forms a sort of mini-sequence. Call it a micro sequence) and it is immediately obvious that 4♥ is an excellent contract. Indeed, if we were to replace the ♠K on table with a low Spade 4♥ would still be a good spot.

After winning the Diamond opening lead with the ♦A the decision is which suit to play first. Spades, Hearts or Clubs? Intuitively, it may feel as though we want to ruff a Club first because dummy may be out of trumps if trumps are drawn immediately.

More careful study, though, suggests that we have sufficient control in Hearts. We can certainly afford to cross to dummy with the ♠A and try our luck with a Heart finesse. Even if the Heart finesse were to lose (as indeed it does) a trump return from West would not prevent us from ruffing a Club on table.


As it happens, West continues with another Diamond after taking his ♥K (from his point of view, he is trying to defeat the contract by obtaining a Diamond ruff – if possible). We ruff, cash one top trump and arrange a Club ruff. We return to hand with a Diamond ruff, draw the outstanding trump and we are in a position to claim ten tricks and the contract.

In fact, we make an overtrick by the simple expedient of playing a Spade towards dummy's ♠K 4 3. When West takes his ♠A the ♠K is the eleventh trick.



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VB#22 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 2S
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

		North		
		♠ AJ64		
		♥ J5		
		♦ Q763		
		♣ AQ8		
West		East		
♠ 92		♠ K7		
♥ AKT92		♥ Q63		
♦ A94		♦ T82		
♣ J96		♣ K7532		
		South		
		♠ QT853		
		♥ 874		
		♦ KJ5		
		♣ T4		

Here is a deal that shows typically competitive bidding. Which side will win the auction?

Play on and find out.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	P
1♥	X	2♥	2♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding.

West opens 1♥ and partner makes a textbook take-out Double. (He is 4-4-3-2 with short Hearts, four cards in the other major and an opening bid. Perfect). East raises obstructively to 2♥ but this shouldn't stop us from competing with 2♠.

It's true that, had East Passed, our response to the take-out Double would have been 1♠ (showing 0-7 points rather than 2♠ showing 8-11 points) but, with the auction becoming competitive, these point ranges alter slightly. Why? Well, firstly there is a need to compete (bridge is a bidder's game, not a Passer's game) and, secondly, we have been relieved of our obligation to bid with a heap of trash.

So with 0-4 points, for instance, we would probably Pass over 2♥. If we make a minimum call (2♠ in this case) we are simply saying that we wish to contest the auction, often because we want to push the opponents beyond their comfort zone.

Slightly surprisingly, our 2♠ bid takes the pot. We say "surprisingly" because there are players out there who would bid 3♥ as West after this auction every time they are dealt thirteen cards. This West is more restrained (we call it "sensible") with his minimum opening bid and poor shape. Note that our partner also has no temptation to bid on either – he said his piece when he Doubled 1♥.

Play.

There is nothing fancy to the play here. With a maximum of five losers we should try to go for both finesses in the black suits if possible. However, lacking an entry to South's hand may prove to be an obstacle.


As it happens, after West cashes his top two Hearts, there is a switch to the ♣6. This allows us to try the Club finesse by putting in the ♣Q. Now, whether this wins or loses, we are still well placed. Here it loses, and East returns a Club. So we ruff a Club in the closed hand to gain an entry there and take the Spade finesse.

Of course, as we can see with hindsight, it is futile to go on the finessing milk run as East (surprisingly) has both black Kings. On a good day, though, both black Kings might be on our left and we might have been able to take ten tricks instead of eight.



Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015.

VB#22 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ 63		
		♥ Q92		
		♦ T74		
		♣ A8653		
West			East	
♠ KQT97			♠ J852	
♥ 6			♥ T743	
♦ QJ93			♦ K62	
♣ JT7			♣ Q9	
		South		
		♠ A4		
		♥ AKJ85		
		♦ A85		
		♣ K42		

The problem on this deal can be solved if you take your time and think it through.

There's no rush here; all you have to do is to find an extra trick (or two).

There, that's not asking too much, is it?

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

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding.

We open 1♥ as South after three Passes. West, who couldn't open the bidding, remember, now decides to join in with a 1♠ overcall; partner raises to 2♥ and East supports his partner with 2♠. What should we say now as South?

Well, with 19 points and a known Heart fit it seems to us to be dithering to bid anything other than 4♥. Why mess about?

Play.

West leads the ♠K and we have to **Count** and **Plan**. With four potential losers (one Spade, two Diamonds and a Club) we have to find a way of getting rid of at least one of them. We might be able to **dump** one on the long Clubs – we certainly can't **trump** one anywhere.

In fact, the fate of this contract hinges on the Club suit. A 3-2 break is essential for success but we must be careful about how we handle the suit.

If the ♠A K are both cashed early we would be able to set up the Clubs by playing a third round but we would find those Club winners stranded in dummy.

Sure, we have a trump entry on the table but what if we have drawn trumps first? Even if we haven't played off the Hearts early, what if trumps were 4-1? How could we draw trumps and reach the dummy? An insuperable problem.

The solution to this type of puzzle is easy once you **see** it; we must duck a round of Clubs, either on the first round or after cashing the ♠K. As long as we have a small Club left in our hand we have the all-important entry to dummy's long Clubs.

So the order of play here should be: Win the ♠A, draw the necessary rounds of trumps (four here, with the 4-1 break) and **duck** a Club (or we could cash the ♠K and then duck the next – it amounts to the same thing).

The opponents take their Spade winner and try their luck in Diamonds; we win that with the Ace, cash the ♣K and – with everybody following – confidently cross to the ♣A and cash the long Clubs, dumping Diamond losers.

With the happy Club split we end up with an overtrick. Had Clubs broken 4-1 we would have gone down. *C'est la vie.*