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A series of declarer-play deals, intended for V-Blue. The difficulty level is suitable for second-year students

V-Blue Year 1 deals (ACOL) Issue 3	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

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

Lead: D

Sometimes it is not so easy to score all the top cards that you have in a suit, even when they include the Ace, King and Queen. Here the diamond suit is *blocked*

After playing the ♦A and ♦K, you need to cross to dummy in a different suit to score a trick with the ♦Q. If you draw trumps prematurely, therefore, you will go down in 4♠.

Best play is to win the Diamond lead, cash the ♠A and ♠Q (leaving the ♠K as an entry to dummy) and then *unblock* the ♦K. Now you can cross to dummy with the ♠K which has the dual effect of drawing the last trump and of reaching the otherwise stranded ♦Q.

North
 ♠ K53
 ♥ 853
 ♦ Q862
 ♣ J96

West
 ♠ 8
 ♥ QT97
 ♦ JT94
 ♣ KT53



East
 ♠ 742
 ♥ KJ6
 ♦ 753
 ♣ AQ82

South
 ♠ AQJT96
 ♥ A42
 ♦ AK
 ♣ 74

Sometimes you can "see" enough tricks for your contract but you can't get at them very easily. At moments like this you need to stop and think before making a reflex play - such as drawing trumps.



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V-Blue Year 1 deals (ACOL) Issue 3	Contract: 4H
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	2♥
P	2NT	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: D

When you are ruffing a loser in dummy, ruff with a top trump if you can afford to do so. In other words, ruff high provided you will still have enough high trumps left to draw the defenders' cards in the suit.

By ruffing high you avoid the risk of an overruff.

Here you need to ruff the third Diamond in your hand (the ♦8) with one of dummy's Hearts before drawing trumps. You could try ruffing with the ♥6 but here it would be overruffed with the ♥8. True, that would be unlucky (Diamonds don't have to split 6-2) but you can prevent bad luck from having any influence by ruffing the losing Diamond with the ♥J.

Old time whist players had a phrase for this:

"Don't send a boy on a man's errand"

North
 ♠ QJ953
 ♥ J6
 ♦ 92
 ♣ Q963

West
 ♠ A8
 ♥ 73
 ♦ QJT643
 ♣ JT5



East
 ♠ KT762
 ♥ 98
 ♦ 75
 ♣ AK82

South
 ♠ 4
 ♥ AKQT542
 ♦ AK8
 ♣ 74

When you make a plan for your contract, you must try to make it as safe as possible. Try to imagine how the defenders might beat you.

In the bidding you pick up that rarity - an opening two-bid.



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V-Blue Year 1 deals (ACOL) Issue 3	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W


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

Lead: H

On most deals you will draw trumps as soon as you can. Sometimes there is a pressing need to do something different.

How do you know what to do? Well most of the time it comes through a count of winners and losers. Here, after the ♥A has gone, there are four losers staring declarer in the face (two Hearts, the Ace of trumps and a Club). In these circumstances declarer needs to find a way of disposing of one of his losers - in this case by discarding one on a top Diamond.

So the top priority on this deal was to discard one of the Heart losers. If you had played trumps straight away, you would have gone down.

	North	
	♠ Q9432	
	♥ 764	
	♦ AQ85	
	♣ 8	
West		East
♠ A7		♠ 5
♥ QJT3		♥ K98
♦ T73		♦ J942
♣ J943		♣ AKT75
	South	
	♠ KJT86	
	♥ A52	
	♦ K6	
	♣ Q62	

When you hold all the top trumps, it is usually right to draw trumps straight away. When the opponents hold the Ace of trumps (or the King and you are planning to finesse), you must consider whether the defenders can damage you if you play trumps immediately.

Perhaps it is a higher priority to play on some other suit.



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V-Blue Year 1 deals (ACOL) Issue 3	Contract: 3N
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

North
 ♠ 83
 ♥ AK8
 ♦ QJ93
 ♣ QT76

West
 ♠ KQJ94
 ♥ T73
 ♦ 876
 ♣ 32



East
 ♠ T75
 ♥ QJ54
 ♦ 542
 ♣ A98

South
 ♠ A62
 ♥ 962
 ♦ AKT
 ♣ KJ54

This deal illustrates perhaps the most important technique when playing a No-trump contract.

You have to disrupt the communications between the defenders.

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

Lead: S

The *hold-up* is one of declarer's most powerful technique in a No-trump contract. The aim is to remove all the cards in the suit held by one of the defenders. He then becomes the **safe hand**, or **safe defender**. You can afford him to win the lead later in the play, as you develop the extra tricks that you need. He will have no card to play in the suit that was led.

Here, West leads Spades against 3NT and South has to decide what to do. Of he wins the ♠A and attacks Clubs East will take the ♣A and return a Spade, giving West four Spade tricks. As it is, by ducking until the third round of the suit East has been denuded of Spades so that when he wins the ♣A he is unable to return his partner's suit.

Note that cashing four rounds of Diamonds only delays the inevitable. It would be wishful thinking to take the ♠A early and then hope that West would throw a Spade on the run of the Diamonds. No chance!


Suppose, incidentally, that East had held another spade when he won with the ♣A. Spades would then have broken 4-4 and would pose you no problem. The defenders would score only three spades and the ♣A.



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V-Blue Year 1 deals (ACOL) Issue 3	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 63	
	♥ A764	
	♦ Q84	
	♣ 8732	
West		East
♠ 97		♠ 54
♥ QJT5		♥ K98
♦ AT73		♦ KJ52
♣ J94		♣ KT65
	South	
	♠ AKQJT82	
	♥ 32	
	♦ 96	
	♣ AQ	

This is another deal where it is essential to make an early plan.

Do you regard 'making a plan' as too much like hard work? Do you call for dummy's first card immediately, muttering "I like to **enjoy** my bridge"? It's a fair enough approach, I suppose, but not the right one if you want to become a good player!

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

Lead: H

There are various situations where it is not right to draw trumps straight away. This is one of them. The opening Heart lead puts you in dummy for the first and last time and you must think about using this to the best purpose.

A count of tricks shows there to be nine sure winners (seven Spades, the ♥A and the ♣A) and three sure losers (two Diamonds and a Heart. Everything boils down to the position in Clubs - is that ♣Q a winner or a loser?

Well, as usual when you have a *tenace*, it's all in the lap of the gods and the position of the opposing cards. If your right-hand opponent has the ♣K then the Club finesse will win - if your left-hand opponent has it then the Club finesse will lose. C'est la vie.

Still, you must use this entry to take the Club finesse; if you don't take it at trick two you will never get another chance.

If, instead, you were to draw trumps, you could never get back to dummy. You would have to surrender the lead in one of the red suits and hope that the defenders made a mistake by playing Clubs for you.



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V-Blue Year 1 deals (ACOL) Issue 3	Contract: 4H
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

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

Lead: C

Playing in 4♥ you win the Club lead and see that five Hearts, three Diamonds and two black Aces will bring your total to ten. How can anything go wrong?

Nothing will go wrong, provided you draw trumps straight away. The defenders are welcome to win with the ♥A and cash a Club trick. You will win their next lead, draw trumps and score three Diamond tricks, throwing one of your potential Spade losers.

The only way to go down is to attempt to play three rounds of Diamonds before drawing trumps. You throw away your Club loser on the third top Diamond but, disaster! West ruffs with the ♥9. You will lose two trump tricks and, later, two further tricks in the Spade suit.

There is no point whatsoever in trying to discard a Club before drawing trumps. It will be just as good to discard a Spade **after** drawing trumps.

How can you tell? It's all down to counting...

North
 ♠ J64
 ♥ 8764
 ♦ AKQ8
 ♣ 87

West
 ♠ Q972
 ♥ A9
 ♦ 73
 ♣ QJT94



East
 ♠ KT3
 ♥ 5
 ♦ JT542
 ♣ K653

South
 ♠ A85
 ♥ KQJT32
 ♦ 96
 ♣ A2

You will encounter countless deals where it is essential to make a **plan** right at the start.

These deals occur all over the place - at your local club, in the neighbours' house, in international tournaments, even in the V-Blue Newsletter.