

Deal 1
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ Q J 10 9 3
 ♥ K 7 6 4
 ♦ A
 ♣ J 10 3

7
 11 2
 20

♠ K 7 6 2
 ♥ 5
 ♦ K J 8 7 4 3
 ♣ 7 2

♠ 5
 ♥ Q 10 9 8 2
 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ 9 8 6 5 4

♠ A 8 4
 ♥ A J 3
 ♦ Q 10 6 5
 ♣ A K Q

West	North	East	South
			2 NT
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦
Pass	4 ♦	Pass	5 ♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

5 ♦ by South
 Lead: ♣ Q

Partner's 3 ♣ bid is Stayman; with no 4-card Major you respond 3 ♦. Partner now bids 4 ♦. What do you bid?

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Partner wouldn't bypass 3 NT unless he was pretty distributional. His bid is invitational and you have excellent ♦ help so you try 5 ♦.

You may be wishing partner had said 3 NT. But at 3 NT West might have led a ♥, then you'd be wishing you were in 5 ♦.

This looks so easy let's check it by trying a winner count as well. Five ♦s (after ♦ A is gone), the ♣ A K, the ♥ A and the ♣ A K Q. Yes that adds up to 11 winners.

Is there ANY danger here at all?

Whenever a hand looks easy you should ask yourself what could go wrong. And here the only thing that could go wrong is if one of your ♣ winners gets ruffed. So how can you prevent that possibility?

If East has a singleton ♣, and West has the ♦ A you might go down if you win the first trick in your hand. West will take his ♦ A and play the ♣ J. If you go up with dummy's ♣ K East will ruff and you will still have a ♣ loser.

The simple solution is to win the first trick with dummy's ♣ K. Now when West wins the ♦ A and leads another ♣ it's a different situation. East may well ruff, but if he does you will just play a low card - East will have ruffed your ♣ LOSER.

But you are very lucky that you took the time to read this hand so you know how to play safely!

Deal 2
South Deals
None Vul

♠ Q 7
♥ K 10 9 2
♦ 7 6
♣ K Q J 8 2

16
11 1
12

♠ A J 6
♥ A Q 5 4
♦ K Q 8 2
♣ 7 3

♠ 10 9 5 4
♥ J 8
♦ 9 5 3
♣ 10 9 6 5

♠ K 8 3 2
♥ 7 6 3
♦ A J 10 4
♣ A 4

West North East South
Pass 2 ♣ Pass 2 ♥
Pass 3 NT Pass Pass
Pass
3 NT by South
Lead: ♣ K

You have 12 points and a 4-card ♠ suit. To find a possible 4-4 fit you bid 2 ♣, the Stayman convention. Partner bids 2 ♥.

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You were hoping for a ♠ response, but so be it. You now bid 3 NT, knowing partner will correct to 4 ♠ if he was 4-4 in the Majors, or pass if he doesn't have 4 ♠s. He passes.

The contract would be 3 NT played by South.

To make North the declarer ROTATE.

North plays 3 NT.

East leads the ♣ K, West follows with the ♣ T. Do you hold up or not?

It makes no difference whether you hold up or not, (unless their ♣s are 7-2), so go ahead and take the first trick.

Either the ♥ Q or the ♠ J MIGHT become your ninth trick.

If you try either finesse and it wins you will make your contract. If you try either finesse and it loses you will be set immediately with ♣s. Each finesse is a 50% shot.

Is there anything you can do to improve your chances?

Of course - otherwise the question wouldn't have been asked! You can combine two chances. Obviously you cannot take both finesses, but you can try to drop the ♠ Q in two pulls, and if she doesn't drop you still have the ♥ finesse to fall back on. So win the ♣ A, play 4 ♦ winners and the ♠ A K, then see whether you have to try the ♥ finesse.

But if she hadn't, you'd still have a 50% chance in ♥s.

Deal 3	♠ A 7 3		
North Deals	♥ J 6		
None Vul	♦ A J 7 6 2		
	♣ A 6 3		
♠ Q 9 5	♠ J 10 8 4		
♥ 10 9 8 4 2	♥ K 7 5 3		
♦ K 8	♦ Q 10 9 3		
♣ 10 5 4	♣ 8		
14 5 6 15	♠ K 6 2 ♥ A Q ♦ 5 4 ♣ K Q J 9 7 2		
West	North	East	South
	1 NT	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	4 ♣	Pass	6 ♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	
6 ♣ by South			
Lead: ♥ 10			

You are thinking slam; your first step is a jump to 3 ♣.

Partner says 4 ♣; what do you bid?

You are thinking slam; your first step is a jump to 3 ♣.

Partner says 4 ♣; what do you bid?

With partner agreeing ♣s, one possibility would be for you to cue-bid your ♥ A. Another would be just to bid 6 ♣. You choose the second approach.

East plays low and you win the ♥ Q.

Your best chance at another winner is the ♦ suit. West MAY have both the ♦ K Q, if not you will have to establish the suit.

At trick 2 pull just one round of trumps with the ♣ K. Then play a small ♦, finessing the ♦ J when West plays low. East takes the ♦ Q and returns the ♣ J.

Go up with your ♠ K, you may need the entry to dummy later. Pull one more trump with the ♣ Q, then play a small ♦ to dummy's ♦ A. Ruff a ♦ with a high trump, West discarding.

Enter dummy with the ♣ A, pulling West's last trump as you do, and ruff one more ♦, establishing the fifth ♦. Enter dummy with the ♣ A and discard your losing ♠ on the good ♦.

If the suit splits evenly perhaps you can be a little sloppy and still get by.

But in cases like this one, with a 4-2 split, you cannot afford to waste an entry too early.

Deal 4
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ Q J 9 8 ♥ K J ♦ Q 9 8 5 ♣ Q J 3	♠ A 10 5 2 ♥ 8 6 ♦ A K 3 ♣ A 9 6 2
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W	N
S	E

♠ K 7 4 3 ♥ Q 10 9 4 ♦ J 10 ♣ K 10 7

15 12 9 4	♠ 6 ♥ A 7 5 3 2 ♦ 7 6 4 2 ♣ 8 5 4
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West	North	East	South
			1 NT

Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥
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Pass	Pass	Pass	
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2 ♥ by South

Lead: ♠ Q

This situation comes up a lot. You don't have enough points to advance partner's 1 NT opening, but you have a "long suit" that might play better than notrump. If "long suit" is 6 ♥s or 6 ♣s then pretty clearly you should transfer partner to that suit and then pass. But with only 5 of the Major it is tougher to say that 1 NT would be an inferior contract. Here's a suggestion - with fewer than 9 points and a 5-card Major, transfer to that suit when you have a singleton or void, otherwise pass 1 NT. So here you bid 2 ♦ and partner says 2 ♥.

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Of course you pass, that was the whole point of the transfer.

The contract would be 2 ♥ played by South.

To make North the declarer ROTATE.

North plays 2 ♥. East leads the ♠ Q, West playing the ♠ 7.

We will all agree that you win the first trick with your ♠ A.

In suit contracts it is usual to count losers. Sometimes in low level suit contracts it makes things clearer if you count winners. Here you have 4 high card winners in your hand plus the Ace of trumps in dummy.

Your plan will therefore be to make as many of dummy's small trumps as you can.

At trick 2 ruff a ♠ in dummy. Pull one trump with the ♥ A. Play a ♣ back to your ♣ A and ruff another ♠.

Got the idea? Play a ♦ to your ♦ K and ruff your last ♠ in dummy. Then play the ♦ A. If you've been counting you have taken the first 8 tricks. A good thing, too, because you aren't going to take any more.

Here is an example of when that principle is NOT correct; when you need to get several ruffs with small trumps.