

Developing Tricks—Promotion and Length

Deal 1

South Deals	♠ K 8 2		
None Vul	♥ K Q 10 3		
	♦ 10 5 2		
	♣ 6 4 2		
♠ Q J 10 7 3	♠ 9 4		
♥ 9 8 5 2	♥ A 7 6		
♦ K 3	♦ Q J 9 8		
♣ Q 7	♣ K J 10 5		
	♠ A 6 5		
8	♥ J 4		
8 11	♦ A 7 6 4		
13	♣ A 9 8 3		
West	North	East	South
1♠	Dbl	Pass	1♦
All pass			1NT
1NT by South			
Lead: ♠Q			

Bidding. South, dealer, holds 13 points and should open the bidding. With four diamonds and four clubs, South chooses to open 1♦.

If West passes, North has eight points and should respond. He bids 1♥; only a four-card suit is required for responding. South must bid again after a response in a new suit. South chooses 1NT with a balanced hand without four hearts or four spades.

If West overcalls 1♠, North should instead double (*negative double*) to indicate that she wanted to respond 1♥. South should rebid 1NT for the same reasons as above.

Defense. West leads the ♠Q, highest touching honor of a sequence. East discourages with the ♠4.

Declarer play. Declarer (South) considers that the objective is seven tricks.

Declarer counts four sure winners: two in spades, one in diamonds, and one in clubs.

Declarer next considers alternatives for three additional tricks. A promotion in hearts will yield three extra tricks. A length trick in both diamonds and clubs is possible if the outstanding cards in those suits divide three and three.

Declarer sees that hearts are a sure opportunity for three extra tricks, enough to fulfill the contract.

Declarer now puts it all together: win the opening lead and promote three heart tricks by starting with the ♥J (high card from the shorter side) so as not to strand the heart winners. Declarer notices that once the heart tricks are promoted, he may need an entry to dummy to take them if the defenders don't win the ♥A right away. That entry can only be the ♠K, so declarer takes care to win the opening lead with the ♠A.

Key point. As you plan to make your contract as declarer, you usually find that you don't have the necessary number of sure tricks needed to make the contract. One way to develop extra tricks is through promotion. Promotion is as simple as playing your high cards in order to drive out the opponents' high cards. You sacrifice tricks in order to gain tricks.

Tricks are only good, however, if you can get to them. You need to be careful to keep high cards in the same hand as your eventual winning tricks, so that you can get to the winning cards.

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Deal 2

North Deals
E-W Vul
 ♠ Q 10 6 5
 ♥ J 8 4
 ♦ K J 3
 ♣ A Q 6

♠ 9 2
 ♥ K Q 6 5 2
 ♦ 10 6
 ♣ 10 8 4 3

13
5 9
13

N ♠ 8 7
W ♥ A 9 7
S ♦ A 8 5 4 2
E ♣ J 9 5

♠ A K J 4 3
 ♥ 10 3
 ♦ Q 9 7
 ♣ K 7 2

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
All pass			
4♠ by South			
Lead: ♥K			

West to continue playing hearts by playing the ♥9, the highest spot card. The defense continues with two more rounds of hearts.

Declarer play. Declarer (South) considers that the objective is ten tricks. Declarer counts eight sure winners: five in spades and three in clubs.

Declarer next considers alternatives for extra tricks. A promotion in diamonds will yield two extra tricks, enough to fulfill the contract. Ruffing the third round of hearts will not increase the trick total since those spades are already counted for winners, but ruffing does keep the opponents from taking more than two heart tricks.

Since declarer is in a trump contract, declarer should also count the fast losers: two in hearts and one in diamonds. Declarer can afford to lose three tricks, so there is no problem with losers.

Declarer now puts it all together: assuming the opponents play three rounds of high hearts, declarer ruffs the third round, pulls trumps (trumps are not otherwise needed for ruffing), and forces out the ♦A. The only snag will occur if one opponent has all four spades, in which case declarer must promote the diamonds before pulling all the trumps.

Key point. Whenever you play a hand in a suit contract, you have to decide when to draw the trumps. It's usually a good idea to draw them right away, especially if you have the number of losers you can afford. You don't want to create an extra loser for yourself by having the opponents use one of their trumps on a trick you hadn't intended to lose.

Bidding. North, dealer, has 13 points and should open the bidding. North chooses 1♣ since 1♠ would show five spades and 1♦ would show four diamonds (unless exactly 4=4=3=2).

South holds 14 points and knows that his side belongs in game. South begins a search for a fit in spades by responding 1♠, which shows four or more spades and requires opener to bid again.

With four spades, North knows that a fit exists and plans to raise spades. North reevaluates his hand as a dummy, but with no shortness the hand remains at 13 points. This is in the minimum range (13–16 points), so North just raises spades one level by bidding 2♠. South concludes the auction by jumping to game in spades.

Defense. West leads the ♥K. Only a two-card honor sequence is required for leading against suit contracts. East holds an equivalent honor and so encourages

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Deal 3

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ J 8 2

♥ A 6 3 2

♦ K 4 2

♣ A 8 4

♠ Q 10 4	♠ K 7 6 3
♥ Q 10 8	♥ J 9 7 5
♦ J 8	♦ Q 10 9
♣ Q 10 7 5 2	♣ J 9
12	♠ A 9 5
7 7	♥ K 4
14	♦ A 7 6 5 3
	♣ K 6 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♦?
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT

All pass

3NT by South

Lead: ♣5

Bidding. Dealer (South) has 15 points and should open. Some will open 1NT (15–17 balanced) and some will discount the fifth diamond in a weak suit and open 1♦.

After a 1NT opening, North should drive the hand to game, but should check for a fit in hearts on the way by bidding 2♣ Stayman. South will deny a four-card major by rebidding 2♦, and North can then go directly to 3NT.

After a 1♦ opening, North, with 11 points, should respond. He chooses 1♥ as only a four-card suit is required for responding. With a minimum-range, balanced hand without four hearts or four spades, South rebids 1NT.

North knows that South may have 14 points, enough for game, so invites with his balanced hand by rebidding 2NT (11–12 points). South, with a maximum for his previous bidding, bids the game in notrump.

Defense. West has no sequence to lead, so chooses to start with clubs in an effort to promote tricks there. West chooses the ♣5, the fourth-best club, by convention ("fourth-best from your longest and strongest").

Declarer play. Declarer (South) considers that the objective is nine tricks.

Declarer counts seven sure winners: one in spades, two in hearts, two in diamonds, and two in clubs.

Declarer next considers alternatives for two extra tricks. Two length tricks in diamonds are possible if the outstanding cards divide three and two. No other extra tricks are likely elsewhere, but two extra tricks are enough for the contract.

Declarer now puts it all together: win the opening lead and promote two extra diamond tricks by first giving up a diamond (best to give up tricks you must lose first). Declarer regains the lead in any suit and takes one spade, two hearts, four diamonds (leading the ♦K next), and two clubs to fulfill the contract.

Key point. When declarer knows that more tricks need to be developed, one of the best sources of tricks can be found in long suits. If declarer plus dummy hold at least seven cards in a suit, or if either declarer or dummy hold at least five cards in a suit, the could provide a source of extra tricks. Of course a suit of more than seven cards combined offers an even more likely source of extra tricks.

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Deal 4

North Deals	♠ K J 7		
Both Vul	♥ J 7 2		
	♦ A 7 6 2		
	♣ 10 8 2		
♠ 9 6 3	♠ 10 5		
♥ A K 10 6 3	♥ Q 9 8 5		
♦ J 8 5	♦ Q 10		
♣ J 4	♣ Q 9 6 5 3		
	♠ A Q 8 4 2		
9 9 6 16	♥ 4		
	♦ K 9 4 3		
	♣ A K 7		
West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All pass	
4♠ by South			
Lead: ♥A			

Bidding. Dealer (North) and East do not have enough points to open, but South, with 17 points, should do. With an unbalanced hand, South chooses 1♠, showing at least five spades.

West needs both a good five-card suit and opening values to overcall at the two-level, and so passes.

North knows that his side has a fit in spades, so reevaluates his hand as a dummy. With no shortness, North has nine points, a minimum-range response (6–10 points), and so raises spades one level to 2♠.

South, with an intermediate-range opening hand, now knows that his side may have enough points for game, and so bids 3♠. North has nearly a maximum for a simple raise, and so proceeds to the spade game.

Defense. West should lead the ♥A, highest of an honor sequence. A two-card sequence is adequate when defending a suit contract. East holds an equivalent honor to West's presumed ♥K, so encourages a heart continuation by playing the ♥9. West should continue with the ♥K since East might hold a doubleton heart, looking to ruff.

Declarer play. Declarer (South) considers that the objective is ten tricks.

Declarer counts eight immediate winners: four in spades, two in diamonds, and two in clubs.

Declarer next considers alternatives for two extra tricks: a length trick is likely in spades if the outstanding cards divide three and two (3-2) or four and one (4-1). A promotion of one trick in diamonds is possible if the outstanding diamonds divide 3-2, as is likely. No other extra tricks are likely elsewhere, but two extra tricks are enough to fulfill the contract.

Since this is a trump contract, declarer counts the immediate losers: just one in hearts, so no problem with losers.

Declarer now puts it all together: assuming that the opponents persist with high hearts, ruff the second heart, pull the opponent's trumps, and promote another winner in diamonds.

Key point. Long suits come in handy, not only in notrump but in suit contracts. Once the trumps are drawn, in fact, a suit contract is very much like playing in notrump. Often all that is required is a normal division of the missing cards and declarer's ability to take advantage of it.