

Developing Tricks—Promotion and Length

Deal 1

North Deals
None Vul

♠ A 6 5
♥ J 4
♦ A 7 6 4
♣ A 9 8 3

♠ 9 4
♥ A 7 6
♦ Q J 9 8
♣ K J 10 5



♠ Q J 10 7 3
♥ 9 8 5 2
♦ K 3
♣ Q 7

13
11 8
8

♠ K 8 2
♥ K Q 10 3
♦ 10 5 2
♣ 6 4 2

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	Dbl
Pass	1NT	All pass	
1NT by North			
Lead: ♠Q			

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

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

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

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

Declarer play. Declarer (North) 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 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ J 8 2
♥ A 6 3 2
♦ K 4 2
♣ A 8 4

♠ Q 10 4
♥ Q 10 8
♦ J 8
♣ Q 10 7 5 2

W N
S E

♠ K 7 6 3
♥ J 9 7 5
♦ Q 10 9
♣ J 9

12
7 7
14

♠ A 9 5
♥ K 4
♦ A 7 6 5 3
♣ K 6 3

West	North	East	South
			1♦?
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
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, they 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

South Deals
Both Vul

♠ A Q 8 4 2
♥ 4
♦ K 9 4 3
♣ A K 7

♠ 10 5
♥ Q 9 8 5
♦ Q 10
♣ Q 9 6 5 3



♠ 9 6 3
♥ A K 10 6 3
♦ J 8 5
♣ J 4

16
6 9
9

♠ K J 7
♥ J 7 2
♦ A 7 6 2
♣ 10 8 2

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	Pass
Pass	3♠	Pass	2♠
All pass			4♠
4♠ by North			
Lead: ♥A			

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

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

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

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

Defense. East should lead the ♥A, highest of an honor sequence. A two-card sequence is adequate when defending a suit contract. West holds an equivalent honor to East's presumed ♥K, so

encourages a heart continuation by playing the ♥9. East should continue with the ♥K since West might hold a doubleton heart, looking to ruff.

Declarer play. Declarer (North) 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.