

Defending No Trump Contracts

When do I start planning the defence?

- ✗ When dummy goes down. No.
- ✗ At the opening lead. No.
- ✓ **As soon as the auction starts. Yes!**



Clues from the Bidding

West	East	What do we know?
1NT	3NT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East will have announced west's point range. • East-West have a combined 25+ HCP • East did not transfer so is unlikely to have a long suit. • East did not use Stayman so is unlikely to have a four card major. • Can West have a five card major? Ask.
Pass		

West	East	EW play a 15-17 1NT and use simple Stayman. What do we know?
1NT	2♣	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West has 16-17 HCP because the game invitation was accepted. • East has 8-10 HCP, enough to invite and no more. • West has four hearts. • East is likely to have four spades. Else why use Stayman? • East is very unlikely to have four hearts.
2♥	2NT	
3NT	Pass	

West	East	EW play a 15-18 1NT and use extended Stayman. What do we know?
1NT	2♣	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West has 17-18 HCP as indicated by the 3♣ bid. • East has at least 8 HCP. • West has no four card major. • East is likely to have at least one four card major.
3♣	3NT	
Pass		

West	North	East	South	EW play a 15-18 1NT and use extended Stayman. What do we know?
1♥	2♣	2NT	Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West has five hearts and 14+ HCP. (He accepted the invitation.) • East has 10-12 HCP and less than three hearts. • East has a club stopper. Doesn't she? Ask! • East is unlikely to have four spades. (No negative double.) • North will have at least five good clubs and 10-15 HCP.
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass	

Overcalling

Not Vulnerable

Overcall at the one level with 8-15 HCP
Overcall at the two level with 10-15 HCP

Vulnerable

Overcall at the one level with 10-15 HCP
Overcall at the two level with 12-15 HCP

Suit Quality Test

1. Your suit must contain one of the top three honours.
2. Count the length of the suit.
3. Add the number of honours in the suit.
4. Overcall if the total is equal to or exceeds the number of tricks you are contracting to make.

In other words...

If the total is seven or more, you can overcall at the one level.

If the total is eight or more, you can overcall at the two level.

NB Suit quality can be reduced slightly with maximum HCP. Conversely, HCP can be reduced slightly if the suit is extremely good.

RHO opens 1♦

♠ K J 6 4 3
♥ 9 4
♦ A J 2
♣ Q 9 4

HCP = 11
Suit quality = 7
Overcall 1♠ at any
vulnerability.

RHO Opens 1♠

♠ 4
♥ A K J T 2
♦ 6 5 3 2
♣ K 9 4

HCP = 11
Suit quality = 9
Overcall 2♥ at any
vulnerability.

RHO Opens 1♥

♠ J 9 7 4 2
♥ 6 5 2
♦ A 4 2
♣ A Q

HCP = 11
Suit quality = 6
Pass

RHO Opens 1♠

♠ K Q 4
♥ 3 2
♦ Q 5 2
♣ A J 9 7 4 2

HCP = 12
Suit quality = 8
Overcall 2♣ at any
vulnerability.

Choosing the Right Suit to Lead

West

♠ Q 8
♥ K 9 5
♦ J T 8 7 3
♣ Q 7

North: 1♣
East: 1♠
South: 1NT
North: 2NT
South: 3NT

West should respect partner's overcall.

Lead the ♠Q. (High card from a doubleton.)

West

♠ T 8 6 5 2
♥ K Q J 9
♦ J 9 7
♣ 9

South: 1♣
North: 1♦
South: 1NT
North: 2NT
South: 3NT

Usually length is better than strength but not this time. The heart suit is far too good.

Lead the ♥K. (Top of a sequence.)

West

♠ Q T 8 2
♥ K 9
♦ Q T 8 2
♣ J 9 6

South: 1NT
North: 3NT

They have shown no interest in the majors.

Lead the ♠2.

West

♠ Q 7 6 3 2
♥ 9 7 5
♦ J 2
♣ K Q 4

North: 1♦
South: 1♥
North: 3♦
South: 3NT

They have five or six instant tricks in diamonds. An attacking lead is needed.

Lead the ♣K. Spades will be too slow.

West

♠ 8 3 2
♥ T 7 5 3 2
♦ 9 2
♣ K 9 3

South: 1♣
North: 1♥
South: 1NT
North: 2NT
South: 3NT

Hearts would be hopeless even if North had not bid them.

Partner has points and had the chance to overcall in spades. South didn't so may well have length in diamonds.

Lead the ♦9.

Deal 1

	North	
	♠ K J T ♥ A T 9 8 ♦ T 9 ♣ A K 8 4	
West		East
♠ A 8 4 ♥ Q J 7 6 5 3 ♦ 6 5 3 ♣ 7		♠ Q 9 6 5 2 ♥ 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q 9 6 5 2
	South	
	♠ 7 3 ♥ K 2 ♦ K Q J 8 7 2 ♣ J T 3	

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East should lead the ♠5. Prefer the major to the minor.

The ♦A is the entry to cash the winning spades.

On a club lead, the contract makes with ease.

Deal 2

	North	
	♠ T 9 8 ♥ T 9 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ A K 6 3 2	
West		East
♠ K J 3 2 ♥ A K 6 3 ♦ 9 6 ♣ J 9 7		♠ A Q 5 ♥ J 4 ♦ A J T 5 4 ♣ Q 5 4
	South	
	♠ 7 6 4 ♥ Q 8 7 5 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ T 8	

West	North	East	South
		1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

When leading from rubbish, look for partner's suit. North must have some values but didn't overcall in spades. Clubs looks the best bet. South should lead the ♣T.

When west leads a diamond, north should play Q or K to force the ace. That will guarantee an entry to the winning clubs

Deal 3

		North		
		♠ 8 3 ♥ 7 6 ♦ A Q J 7 6 5 2 ♣ J 3		
West			East	
♠ J 6 5 4 2 ♥ A K 5 ♦ 8 ♣ Q 7 5 4			♠ Q 9 7 ♥ T 8 4 3 2 ♦ K 4 ♣ T 9 8	
		South		
		♠ A K T ♥ Q J 9 ♦ T 9 3 ♣ A K 6 2		

West	North	East	South
	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

When they bid a speculative 3NT with a long suit, an attacking lead is called for.

An ace is particularly good, because you still have the option of shifting to another suit.

Lead the ♥A.

Deal 4

		North		
		♠ A Q 6 2 ♥ T 4 3 ♦ K 8 3 ♣ 7 6 3		
West			East	
♠ K T 7 ♥ A 9 8 ♦ A Q J 5 ♣ Q J 5			♠ 9 8 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ T 7 4 2 ♣ T 8 4	
		South		
		♠ J 3 ♥ K J 7 5 2 ♦ 9 6 ♣ A K 9 2		

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♥
1NT	Double ^(a)		All Pass

(a) Penalty double

There is a lot of excitement here.

Double is for penalties with NS holding most of the points

Lead the ♥3 (low from an honour). "Top of partner's suit" gives away an extra trick.

North must be careful not to try and unblock with the ♥T. South opened the bidding and is sure to have entries.

South should play ♣A or ♣K before finally clearing hearts suit. Partner will then know to return a club.

After cashing hearts, a lead of the spade jack rubs salt into declarer's wounds.

When the double is left in by south, west could redouble for rescue. If east picks diamonds, the disaster will be minimised.

