

# Basic Beginning Bridge Lesson 2 – Supplemental

More information: <https://bridge.careytutor.com>

# Playing Probabilities

- Rule of Thumb: “Eight ever, nine never.”
  - This means “finesse with AKJ and 8 total in the suit, don’t finesse with 9 in the suit (play the AK and hope to drop the Q).”
- Rule of Thumb: “An odd number missing breaks evenly; an even number of missing breaks oddly.”
  - For example: “If there are six cards (even) missing, assume they’ll break 4 – 2 rather than 3 – 3; with five missing, assume 3 – 2 rather than 4 – 1.”
- Exceptions: when the bidding or the play tells you the distribution is skewed.
- Combine your chances – allow for multiple opportunities.
  - For example: play A, K, Q in a 7-card suit to check for the 3 – 3 split first (36% chance); only then take a 50% finesse in another suit if there’s no split.

# Other Playing Options

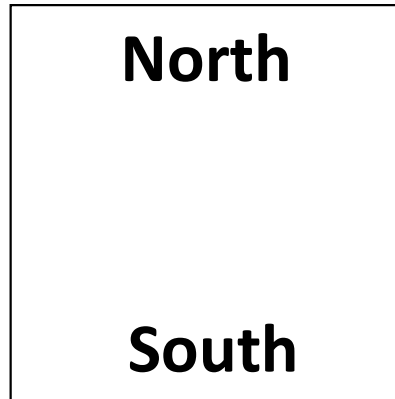
- Holdup play
- Loser on loser
- Safety play
- Elimination/throw-in plays
- End plays

# Plan the Play – Example Hand #1

**3 NT Contract - South**

**♠KT32   ♥A87   ♦A63   ♣K74**

♦ Q led by West



East

**♠A54   ♥K32   ♦K4   ♣A6532**

**Bidding:**

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
1C	pass	1S	pass
1NT	pass	3NT	pass
pass	pass		

# Example Hand #1 - Analysis

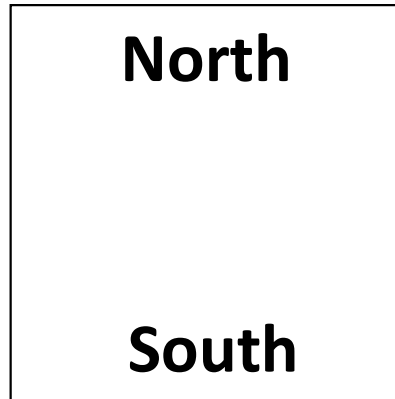
- Hand evaluation
  - Both hands are balanced with 14 high card points. There are stoppers in each suit.
  - Count your winners: we have 8 top tricks (AK in each suit). We need at least one more trick.
  - The opponents did not bid – no clues available.
  - The Q of diamonds lead is dangerous – we are short in diamonds. They could take perhaps 6 tricks if they can drive out our AK.
- Plan
  - Our best chance is to set up the club suit. Lead the A and K and then a low club.
  - If clubs split 3 – 2, our two lowest clubs will win the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> tricks. We'll get a 3 – 2 split about 68% of the time.
  - If clubs don't split (4 – 1), win the third diamond and lead another club.
  - If the opponent who wins the club has no more diamonds (they'd need more than 3), we survive and take 9 tricks.
  - Otherwise – that's bridge!

# Plan the Play – Example Hand #2

**1 NT Contract - South**

♠T32    ♥AJ72    ♦A63    ♣74

♦Q led by West



East

♠A54    ♥K32    ♦K4    ♣A6532

**Bidding:**

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
1C	1D	1H	pass
1NT	pass	pass	pass

# Example Hand #2 - Analysis

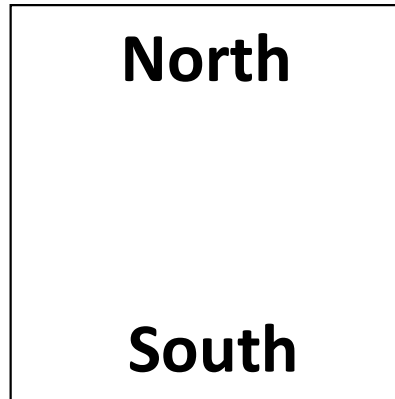
- Hand evaluation
  - Both hands are balanced with 14 and 9 high card points. There are stoppers in each suit. Spades is weakest (thank goodness they didn't lead it!).
  - Count your winners: we have 6 top tricks (AK in hearts and diamonds, A in spades and clubs). We need at least one more trick.
  - West bid diamonds and then led the Q. Probably has at least 5 diamonds headed by the QJ or QJT.
  - The Q of diamonds lead is dangerous – we are short in diamonds. They could take perhaps 5 tricks if they can drive out our AK. Plus they'll attack spades.
- Plan
  - The clubs suit is weak and 5 – 2. It will take at least three rounds to drive out the K, Q, and J.
  - Our best chance is to try the heart finesse.
  - First, lead the K of hearts. If you're extremely lucky, the Q will drop. Always give yourself multiple chances.
  - Then, lead a small heart and finesse the J of hearts. If the finesse works, we have at least 7 tricks.
  - If the finesse fails (50% chance), we still have a smaller chance – if the hearts split 3 – 3.
  - When the opponents lead diamonds, wait to win the third diamond. Then lead to the A of hearts.
  - If hearts split 3 – 3, you can win the 4<sup>th</sup> round of hearts. A 3 – 3 split is found about 36% of the time.
  - Otherwise – that's bridge!

# Plan the Play – Example Hand #3

**4 H Contract - South**

♠852 ♥JT8 ♦AK876 ♣64

♠ K led by West



East

♠A63 ♥AKQ93 ♦954 ♣AQ

**Bidding:**

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
1H	pass	2H	pass
4H	pass	pass	pass

# Example Hand #3 - Analysis

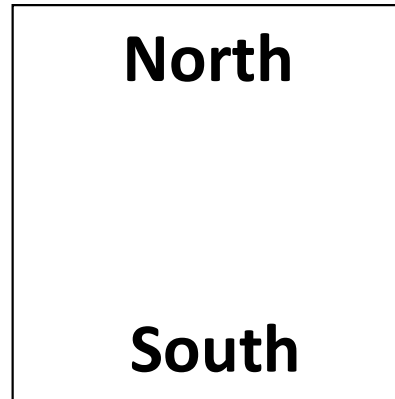
- Hand evaluation
  - South's hand is strong (20 total points) and balanced. North's hand is weaker (8 high card points – plus a little extra for the doubleton).
  - Count your losers: we have two spade losers, a diamond loser, and a potential loser in clubs. We need to eliminate one of those losers.
  - The opponents did not bid – no clues available.
  - We could try the club finesse (50% chance), but we might be able to try another option.
- Plan
  - The K of spades lead removes our A. We draw trumps in three rounds.
  - We start by playing a small diamond from each hand. That loses our diamond trick early rather than later. Why does that matter? Because we have few entries (high cards) into the North hand.
  - East wins and returns a small club. Do we finesse the Q (50% chance)?
  - The percentage play is to play the A of clubs, and then lead to the A and K of diamonds.
  - If diamonds split 3 – 2 (68% chance), our two lowest diamonds will win the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> tricks.
  - Otherwise – that's bridge!

# Plan the Play – Example Hand #4

**2 S Contract - South**

♠K732 ♥A875 ♦963 ♣T7

♣Q led by West



East

♠AT954 ♥K43 ♦K4 ♣A62

**Bidding:**

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
1S	pass	2S	pass
pass	pass		

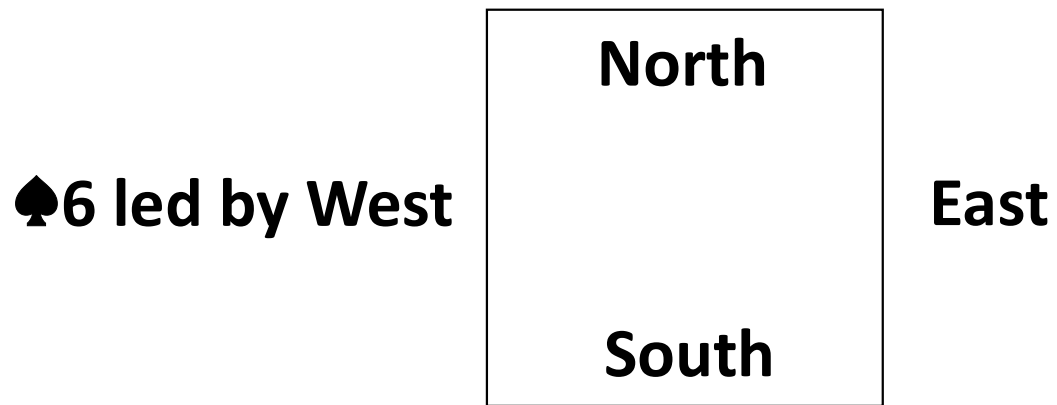
# Example Hand #4 - Analysis

- Hand evaluation
  - South has 15 total points; North has 7 high card points. We have no long suits outside of spades.
  - Count your losers: we have a loser in hearts and potentially two losers in clubs, potentially two losers in diamonds, and potentially two losers in spades (if there is a 4 – 0 split). We need to eliminate as many as two losers.
  - The opponents did not bid – no clues available.
  - The 4 of clubs lead attacks our weak clubs.
- Plan
  - With no long suit upon which to discard losers, we'll plan for some ruffs.
  - First, let the Q of clubs hold. They are leading toward our K of diamonds – no need to help them out. West leads a small club, and we take the Ace.
  - Lead two rounds of spades to see about the split: in this case, East has 3 and the Q. So, only one loser in spades.
  - Now, ruff the third club. One loser eliminated.
  - Play the A, K, and a small heart. If West is forced to take the Q, they'll lead into our K of diamonds.
  - In any case, 8 tricks for sure and maybe one more.
  - No problem!

# Cross-Ruffing Example

*4S contract*

♠AK32 ♥A87 ♦A8532 ♣4



♠QJ54 ♥K632 ♦4 ♣A652

# Cross-Ruffing Example - Analysis

- Hand evaluation
  - North has 16 total points (15 high card points plus 1 length point); South has 10 high card points plus 3 distribution points (singleton diamond). We have no long suits outside of spades.
  - Count your losers. In North we have 1 heart loser plus as many as 4 diamond losers. In South we have 2 heart losers plus as many as 3 club losers. North is short in clubs, and South is short in diamonds.
  - The opponents did not bid – no clues available.
  - The 6 of spades lead attacks our trumps, potentially limiting our ruffs. We see only 8 winners if we draw trumps immediately.
- Plan
  - With shortness in both clubs and diamonds, this hand looks like a great candidate for a cross-ruff – ruffing in both hands.
  - Win the first trick with the Ace of spades.
  - First, play out top winners – then Ace of clubs, the Ace of diamonds, the Ace of hearts, and then the K of hearts.
  - If no opponent ruffs any high cards, you're now ready to begin the cross-ruff. Start with the shortest suit – clubs.
  - Lead a club from South, ruffing low in the North hand. Then lead a diamond, ruffing low in South.
  - Next lead another club, again ruffing low (fairly low probability of an over-ruff). You have 8 tricks so far.
  - Now continue the cross-ruff with a low diamond, ruffing high (Q), and ruff a club high (K). Finish by ruffing a diamond with the J. 11 tricks taken. Contract made.

## Further Reading

- The ACBL robot-based playing tool is available at <http://www.learn2playbridge.com/map>. Continue with any of the remaining “Play of the Hand” hands.
- The bridgebears.com website offers an extensive overview of Declarer play:
  - <https://www.bridgebears.com/bridge-card-game/declarerplay/>
- Karen Walker has a summary of basic Declarer play at <https://kwbridge.com/decl.htm>.