

Playing Notrump Contracts

When the opening lead has been made and the dummy has been laid on the table

STOP

Now is the time to

THINK

Many hands, if not most, are won or lost on the first several tricks.

What to Think About When Playing Notrump Contracts

1. How many tricks do I have?
2. How many more do I need?
3. Where can I get them? What is my primary source of tricks?
4. What does the lead mean?
5. How will I set up my source of tricks? How will the hand play out?
6. Do I face any dangers?
7. Can I do something to make myself safer?
8. Could I win some extra tricks? If so, how?
9. Call for dummy's first card.
10. Get down to business on the plan. Don't do anything else except what your plan calls for.
11. If a surprise comes, you may need to think it through again.

A.

NORTH

♠ J 8 2
♥ A 6 3 2
♦ K 4 2
♣ A 8 4

WEST

♠ Q 10 4
♥ Q 10 8
♦ J 8
♣ Q 10 7 5 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

EAST

♠ K 7 6 3
♥ J 9 7 5
♦ Q 10 9
♣ J 9

SOUTH

♠ A 9 5
♥ K 4
♦ A 7 6 5 3
♣ K 6 3

S	W	N	E
1♦ P		1♥ P	
1NT P		2NT P	
3NT			

Lead is the 5 of clubs.

B.

NORTH

♠ 9 4
♥ A 8 5
♦ 10 7 4
♣ A K 6 4 2

WEST

♠ Q J 10 8
♥ J 7 4 3
♦ J 9 6 3
♣ 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

EAST

♠ 6 5 3 2
♥ 10 9 6
♦ K Q
♣ Q J 10 9

SOUTH

♠ A K 7
♥ K Q 2
♦ A 8 5 2
♣ 8 7 3

S	W	N	E
1NT P		3NT P	
P	P		

Lead is the Q of spades.

- A.
1. I have 7 tricks off the top.
 2. I need 2 more.
 3. I will try to get my 2 tricks in diamonds because it is my longest suit.
 4. The lead is probably 4th down in a long club suit.
 5. Since I must lose diamond trick, I can lead a small diamond from both hands and let the opponents win the 1st diamond trick. Then, if the diamonds are divided 3 and 2, I will be able to cash the king (short side first) and ace and then run the entire suit.
 6. If the diamonds do not break 3 and 2, then I cannot get 9 tricks.
 7. There is nothing I can do about a bad break of the diamonds.
 8. There is no obvious nor reasonable way to win any overtricks.
 9. Call for dummy's ace of clubs.
 10. Upon winning the ace of clubs, immediately lead a small diamond from dummy and play a low card from your hand, allowing either opponent to win the trick. Do not bother yet with hearts or spades. The opponent who wins the diamond trick will now lead another club. Win it in your hand with the king and lead a small diamond to dummy's king. Now return a diamond to your ace and run your diamonds until they are all gone. Now take your top honors in spades and hearts and concede the remainder of the tricks.
- B.
1. I have 8 tricks off the top.
 2. I need only one more.
 3. I will try to get my final trick in clubs since that is my longest suit.
 4. The lead looks to be top of a sequence. The leader could have 4 or more spades.
 5. When I get in, I will lead a small club and also play a small club from dummy. If the clubs are dividing 3-2 in the opponents' hands, then my club suit will be immediately set up and I can win 4 club tricks.
 6. There is a danger. The club suit may not divide 3-2. If it divides 4-1, then I will have to lose two club tricks before my club suit is set up. This will not be a problem if both of my opponents have 4 spades, since then they will win 2 clubs and 2 spades. But if one of them holds 5 spades and the other only 3, then they could take 3 spades and 2 clubs to defeat me.
 7. I can make myself safer if I duck the first spade lead and then take the 2nd. That way, if I have to lose 2 club tricks, then perhaps I can lose the 2nd one to East. And if East started with only 3 spades, she won't be able to lead a spade back to West, who will be holding good spades. Therefore I must duck the lead.
 8. If the clubs do divide 3-2, I will make an overtrick. But if they divide 4-1, I will not get any overtricks.
 9. Call for a low spade from dummy.
 10. Let West hold the first trick. Win the spade continuation and play a small club, also playing small from dummy, allowing the opponents to win the trick. Win the spade continuation. Lead a small club toward dummy. When West shows out, play small from dummy, allowing East to win. Now East leads yet another spade, which West wins. But now West must lead a suit that you can win. So win it, cash your 3 clubs, and then the rest of your high cards, making 3NT.