

Opening the Bidding

Improving Your Judgment



Teacher's Manual

by
Audrey Grant

ALL RIGHT RESERVED

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher.

Copyright © 2000 Better Bridge
247 Wanless Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4N 1W5
Canada

Phone: (416) 322-2123
Fax: (416) 322-0420
Website: www.BetterBridge.com
Email: BetterBridge@BetterBridge.com

Table of Contents

Lesson One Opening at the One Level — In First and Second Position

Hand 1-1 - Opening the Bidding in First Chair	1
Hand 1-2 - Opening the Longer Minor	14
Hand 1-3 - Opening Balanced Hands	19
Hand 1-4 - Opening the Longest Suit First	30

Lesson Two Opening at the One Level — In Third and Fourth Position

Hand 2-1 - Opening the Bidding in Third Chair	35
Hand 2-2 - Opening for the Lead	49
Hand 2-3 - Opening the Bidding in Fourth Chair	54
Hand 2-4 - Opening Using the Rule of 15	61

Lesson Three Obstructive Opening Bids

Hand 3-1 - Opening with an Obstructive Bid	65
Hand 3-2 - Opening with a Preempt at the Three Level	79
Hand 3-3 - Opening with a Preempt in Third Chair	85
Hand 3-4 - Opening a Weak Two-Bid	97

Lesson Four Strong Opening Bids

Hand 4-1 - Opening Two Notrump	103
Hand 4-2 - Opening a Strong Balanced Hand	115
Hand 4-3 - Opening a Strong Unbalanced Hand	125
Hand 4-4 - Opening with a Strong Two-Suited Hand	139

Lesson 1 - Opening at the One Level — In First and Second Chair

Hand 1-1 - Opening the Bidding in First Chair

Play of the Hand



Bid and play the first hand. When you have finished, turn the cards face up, dummy-style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? What is a reasonable auction?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠(?)	Pass	2♠/3♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
HAND: 1-1 DEALER: NORTH VUL: NONE	NORTH ♠ K 9 7 5 2 ♥ Q 6 ♦ K Q 9 6 4 ♣ 10	EAST ♠ Q 10 3 ♥ J 10 9 3 ♦ A 7 2 ♣ K 8 6	SOUTH ♠ A 8 6 4 ♥ A 8 4 ♦ J 8 ♣ J 9 3 2

DECLARER: North
OPENING LEAD: ♥J by East

This shouldn't take long. Some tables may pass the hand out. Some North-South pairs will reach 2♠, 3♠, or 4♠, and there isn't much to the play. Give the students 5-6 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Q. What is a reasonable contract?

A. 2♠ or 3♠.

- Bidding is a matter of judgment. There are no 100% rules, only guidelines.
- On this hand, some players would choose to open the North hand, others would not.
- Some players might open one of the other hands.
- If North does open the bidding 1♠, South's choice of response won't be universal. Some players will raise to 2♠, treating the South hand as a minimum, 6-10 points. Others will make a limit raise to 3♠, treating the hand as medium strength, 10-12 points.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose North is declarer in a contract of 2♠ or 3♠. Who makes the opening lead?

A. East.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What would you lead?

A. A reasonable lead would be the ♥J, top of a sequence.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. Look at the hand from declarer's point of view. How many tricks is declarer likely to take?

A. Nine.

- Declarer has to lose 1 spade trick (because the trump divide 3-1), 1 heart, 1 diamond (because the suit divides 3-3), and 1 club.

Observation

- It would be a good idea for North-South to get into the bidding on this hand. The partnership can make a small partscore. Not everyone would agree with opening the North hand, however, so let's take a closer look at the criteria for opening the bidding in first or second chair.

A Closer Look at Opening in First and Second Chair

Leave the North hand face up on the table. North, cover the cards with your arms! Now take the cards from the East, South, and West hands and sort them into suits. Each person at the table take charge of one suit. Focus on the North hand remaining on the table.

The instructions to North can be made in a light-hearted manner. If the cards in the North hand aren't protected, you might find all fifty-two cards sorted into suits.



Spades:
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ K 9 7 5 2
♥ Q 6
♦ K Q 9 6 4
♣ 10

NORTH SOUTH
1♠(Pass)

Q. Would you open the bidding with hand? Would you be happy if partner opened the bidding with this hand?

A. Yes/No.

- We would probably all agree on the high-card value of this hand—there are 10 high-card points.
- The distributional value is a little more controversial. We could give 1 point for the extra length in both the spade and diamond suits, giving us a total of 12.
- Or, we could give 2 points for the singleton spade and 1 point for the doubleton heart, giving us a total of 13 combined points.
- Is this a 12-point hand or a 13-point hand? Is it an opening bid? It's all a matter of judgment. Point count methods are only guidelines. The important thing is to have the same perspective as your partner.

- With borderline hands, a popular way of determining whether to open the bidding is to use the *Rule of 20*.

Rule of 20

In first position (dealer) or in second position (when the player on your right has dealt and passed) add the high-card points to the number of cards in the two longest suits. If the total is 20 or more, open the bidding; otherwise, pass.

- Using this guideline, North should open 1♠ ($10 + 5 + 5 = 20$).



Spades:

Hearts: Add a low card.

Diamonds: Take away a low card.

Clubs:

NORTH
♠ K 9 7 5 2
♥ Q 6 2
♦ K Q 9 6
♣ 10

NORTH	SOUTH
Pass	

Q. Would you open the bidding with this hand?

A. No.

- $10 + 5 + 4 = 19$.



Spades: Take away two low cards.

Hearts:

Diamonds:

Clubs: Add the ♣Q and a low club.

NORTH
♠ K 9 7
♥ Q 6 2
♦ K Q 9 6
♣ Q 10 2

NORTH	SOUTH
Pass	

Q. Would you open the bidding with this hand?

A. No.

- Two more high-card points, but not enough to open the bidding (although those who play weak 1NT as 12-14 may disagree).
- $12 + 4 + 3 = 19$.



Spades: Add a low card.
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs: Take away a low club.

NORTH
♠ K 9 7 2
♥ Q 6 2
♦ K Q 9 6
♣ Q 10

NORTH SOUTH
1♦

Q. Would you open the bidding with this hand?

A. Yes.

- Still only 12 high-card points but the 4-4-3-2 distribution rather than 4-3-3-3 would influence some players to open.
- $12 + 4 + 4 = 20$.
- Note that the *Rule of 20* applies only when you have a *borderline hand*, not a hand in which you were always planning to open the bidding. It applies only in *first or second position*. There are other guidelines for third or fourth chair.



Spades: Take away a low card.
Hearts: Add the ♥K.
Diamonds:
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ K 9 7
♥ K Q 6 2
♦ K Q 9 6
♣ Q 10

NORTH SOUTH
1NT(1♦)

Q. What would you open with this hand?

A. 1NT or 1♦.

- One decision the partnership must make is the range for an opening bid of 1NT.
- Many players still use a range of 16-18 points.
- A more aggressive approach is to use a range of 15-17 points. This is especially popular among club and tournament players in North America, so it's the style we're going to recommend in this lesson series.
- Don't worry if you want to stick with the 16-18 range . . . or use a range of 12-14 points. Don't let a point or two come between friends . . . but be sure that you and your partner are on the same wavelength.



Even when you have an agreed range for your notrump bids, there's still room for judgment.

Spades: Take away the ♠K.
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs: Add the ♣A.

NORTH
♠ 9 7
♥ K Q 6 2
♦ K Q 9 6
♣ A Q 10

NORTH SOUTH
1NT(1♦)

Q. What's your opening bid with this hand?

A. 1NT or 1♦.

- There used to be a guideline to avoid opening 1NT with a *worthless doubleton*. Most of today's experts ignore that piece of advice and recommend opening 1NT any time you have a balanced hand that falls within your notrump range.
- There's a good reason for this. 1NT accurately describes both your strength and distribution. If you open one-of-a-suit, you're likely to have a more difficult time describing your hand on the rebid.
- If you open 1♦, for example, what are you going to rebid if partner responds 1♠? A rebid of 1NT would say you have a balanced hand too weak to open 1NT. A jump rebid to 2NT would say you have a balanced hand too strong for 1NT. You don't want to rebid 2♦ on a four-card suit, and a rebid of 2♥ would make the auction uncomfortable. It would actually be a *reverse*—a topic for another lesson—but you can see how it is likely to lead to an awkward situation if partner has a minimum hand with no fit for hearts or diamonds.



Spades:
Hearts: Add a low heart.
Diamonds: Take away a low card.
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ 9 7
♥ K Q 6 3 2
♦ K Q 9
♣ A Q 10

NORTH SOUTH
NT(1♥)

Q. What are you opening with this hand?

A. 1NT or 1♥.

- Even though you have a five-card major—and a worthless doubleton—modern expert opinion favors opening this hand 1NT.
- If you open 1♥, you'll have a rebid problem if partner responds 1♠.
- Better to make the descriptive opening bid of 1NT. You might still get to play with hearts as trump . . . the auction isn't over.



Q. What if you play in notrump and the opponents lead spades?

A. Not necessarily a problem.

- You may still make your contract.
- Opening 1NT won't always work best. After all, it's a matter of judgment. On balance, however, you'll be ahead of the game.

	NORTH	SOUTH
Spades:	Take away a low card; add the ♠J.	♠ J 9
Hearts:		♥ K Q 6 3 2
Diamonds:		♦ K Q 9
Clubs:		♣ A Q 10

Q. What's your opening bid with this hand?

A. 1♥ or 1NT.

- If your notrump range is 15-17 points, this hand is actually too strong for 1NT. Don't forget to add 1 point for a five-card suit when valuing your hand. This hand has 17 high-card points plus 1 length point for a total of 18.
- Open the bidding 1♥, intending to jump in notrump on your rebid, showing a hand too strong to open 1NT. If partner responds 1♠, for example, you would jump to 2NT.

Q. Would the jump rebid to 2NT be forcing?

A. Yes/No.

- Partnerships that use a range of 16-18 points for 1NT and 22-24 points for an opening bid of 2NT tend to treat a jump rebid of 2NT as forcing, since it shows a hand of 19-21 points. If responder has as few as 6 points, there should be enough combined strength for game.
- When you move to a range of 15-17 points for 1NT, you usually change the range for an opening bid of 2NT to 20-21 points at the same time. This is sometimes linked to the use of weak two-bids and using an artificial 2♣ opening bid for all strong hands of 22 or more points.
- We won't get into that subject in this lesson, but accept for now that your opening bid of 2NT shows 20-21 points. That means a jump rebid to 2NT shows a hand of 18-19 points—too strong for 1NT but not strong enough for an opening 2NT. If responder has as few as 6 points, there won't be enough combined strength for game, so the jump to 2NT is treated as non forcing in this situation.



Spades:

Hearts:

Diamonds: Add two low diamonds.

Clubs: Take away the ♣A and ♣Q.

NORTH
♠ J 9
♥ K Q 6 3 2
♦ K Q 9 3 2
♣ 10

NORTH SOUTH
1♥

Q. What's your call with this hand?

A. 1♥.

- Only 11 high-card points but, if you add 1 point for each five-card suit, you come to a total of 13—enough to open the bidding.
- If you still think it's a borderline decision, you can apply the *Rule of 20*. $11+5+5 = 21$, more than enough.
- With two five-card suits, the guideline is to open the higher-ranking. The reasoning behind this is to try to make it easy to show both our suits. If we open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠, 1NT, or 2♣, we'll have an easy time showing the second suit by bidding 2♦.



Spades:

Hearts:

Diamonds: Take away the ♦K, ♦Q and two low cards.

Clubs: Add the ♣K, ♣Q and two low clubs.

NORTH
♠ J 9
♥ K Q 6 3 2
♦ 9
♣ K Q 10 3 2

NORTH SOUTH
1♥

Q. What's your opening bid with this hand?

A. 1♥.

- You still open the higher-ranking suit, hearts.

Q. Will this always work best?

A. No.

- It'll be fine if partner responds 1♠ or 1NT. You can then show your club suit.
- If partner responds 2♦, it's awkward to show the clubs since you have to go to the three level on a hand where there may be no fit. You might prefer to rebid 2♥, even though it's only a five-card suit.
- Nothing's perfect. If you knew in advance partner would bid diamonds, it might work better to open 1♣. Then you could show both suits without going beyond the one level.
- Since you can't know what partner is going to respond, it's best to fall back on the

guideline and open 1♥, hoping the auction will go smoothly most of the time.



Spades: Add the ♠A and two low spades.
Hearts: Take away the ♥Q and two low hearts.
Diamonds:
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ A J 9 3 2
♥ K 6
♦ 9
♣ K Q 10 3 2

NORTH SOUTH
1♠ (1♣)

Q. What are your choices this hand?

A. 1♠ or 1♣.

- Expert opinion is divided on this particular combination of five-card suits.
- The guideline says to open the bidding 1♠, the higher-ranking.
- This will work well if partner responds 1NT since you can next bid 2♣.
- It won't work so well if partner responds 2♦ or 2♥ since you'll have to go to the three level to show the second suit.
- Since two of the three likely responses will prove awkward, some players prefer to open the type of hand 1♣. They'll be well-placed if partner responds 1♦ or 1♥. If partner responds 1NT, they'll have to bid 2♠ and hope the bidding continues smoothly from there.
- It's a matter of judgment. Some partnerships prefer to open 1♣ with a weak opening bid—hoping to get both suits in at a low level—and 1♠ with a medium or strong opening bid—when there isn't as much danger if you have to introduce clubs at the three level. For most players, the simplest arrangement is to stick with the guideline and always open the higher-ranking of two five-card suits. At least that's consistent.



Spades:
Hearts:
Diamonds: Take away the low diamond.
Clubs: Add a low club.

NORTH
♠ A J 9 3 2
♥ K 6
♦ —
♣ K Q 10 4 3 2

NORTH SOUTH
1♣

Q. Is this hand straightforward?

A. 1♣.

- You should prefer to open your longest suit, even when you hold a five-card major suit.
- The way you plan to describe this hand to partner is to open the bidding 1♣ and then bid and rebid your spades.
- Suppose the auction starts 1♣ by you, 1♦ by partner, and you bid 1♠. If partner bids 1NT, you can complete the description of the hand by rebidding 2♠.

- Partner can work out that you have five spades since you bid them twice without support and, since you started with 1♣, your clubs must be longer than your spades—at least six cards. Now partner will have an accurate description of your hand and can choose the best contract.
- Of course, this assumes that you would always open the higher-ranking of two five-card suits. If you might open 1♣ holding five spades and five clubs—as on the previous hand—then partner can't be sure whether you have five spades and six clubs or five spades and five clubs when you bid in this manner. That's one advantage of having the agreement that you always open the higher-ranking of two five-card suits. But it's a matter of partnership style, or judgment.



Spades: Take away two low spades.
 Hearts:
 Diamonds: Add four low diamonds.
 Clubs: Take away two low clubs.

NORTH
 ♠ A J 9
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ 5 4 3 2
 ♣ K Q 10 4

NORTH SOUTH
 1♦(1♣)

Q. You're the dealer. What's your call with this hand?

A. 1♦ or 1♣.

- It actually doesn't make much theoretical difference which minor suit you open in this situation. What's more important is the partnership agreement.
- With four diamonds and four clubs, the most common practice is to open 1♦.
- Some partnerships prefer to always open 1♣. Some prefer to open the better minor.
- If you find yourself defending on this hand and your partner is on opening lead, you'll certainly feel uncomfortable if you opened 1♦. Nonetheless, that's the price you might have to pay for having a firm agreement about this situation.



Spades:

Hearts: Add the ♠A and a low heart.

Diamonds: Take away a low diamond.

Clubs: Take away the ♣K.

NORTH

♠ A J 9
♥ A K 6 2
♦ 5 4 3
♣ Q 10 4

NORTH SOUTH

1♣



Spades: Add a low spade.

Hearts:

Diamonds:

Clubs: Take away a low club.

NORTH

♠ A J 9 2
♥ A K 6 2
♦ 5 4 3
♣ Q 10

NORTH SOUTH

1♦

Q. What do you do with this hand as dealer?

A. 1♣.

- Playing five-card majors, open your longer minor.
- With three cards in both minors, standard practice is to open 1♣. This is where the term *short club* comes from, but it's a poor choice of terminology. The more appropriate term for standard practice in this situation is the *longer (or better) minor*.



Spades: Take away two low spades.
Hearts: Take away a low heart.
Diamonds: Add the ♦J and two low diamonds.
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ A J
♥ A K 6
♦ J 6 5 4 3 2
♣ Q 10

NORTH SOUTH
1NT(1♦)

Q. What do you do as dealer with this hand?

A. 1NT or 1♦.

- If you treat this as an unbalanced hand—because you have two doubletons—and open 1♦, you'll have a difficult choice of rebid if partner responds 1♥ or 1♠.
- You have 15 high-card points plus 2 length points, for a total of 17. A rebid of 2♦ will underestimate the strength, but a jump to 3♦ will overstate the quality of the diamond suit.
- A more practical approach is to open 1NT, treating this as a balanced hand. After all, that's what you'd open if one of your low diamonds were in any other suit.



Spades:
Hearts: Take away a low heart.
Diamonds: Take away two low diamonds.
Clubs: Add three low clubs.

NORTH
♠ A J
♥ A K
♦ J 6 5 4
♣ Q 10 4 3 2

NORTH SOUTH
INT(1♣/1♦)

Q. How would you exercise your judgment on this hand?

A. 1NT, 1♣, or 1♦.

- You could treat this as an unbalanced hand and open your longest suit, 1♣. However, you'll have a tough choice of rebid if partner responds 1♥ or 1♠ . . . or even 1NT.
- You might consider opening 1♦, planning to rebid 2♣ to show both your suits without making a reverse bid, but that gives partner a false impression of the relative length of your suits.
- Perhaps the best choice is to treat this as a balanced hand and open 1NT. Partner will know your strength, within 1 point, and your approximate distribution.
- If you have to put this hand down as dummy, you can always put one of the clubs in with the spades. Partner is likely to forgive you for poor eyesight, rather than poor judgment if your bid doesn't work out.



		NORTH
Spades:	Take away the ♠A and ♠J. Add the ♠K.	♠ K ♥ A K Q 2 ♦ J 6 5 4 ♣ Q 10 4 3
Hearts:	Add the ♥Q and a low heart.	
Diamonds:		
Clubs:	Take away a low club.	

NORTH SOUTH
1♦/INT/1♥

Q. What's your choice of opening bid with this hand?

A. 1♦, 1NT, 1♥.

- Nothing is clear cut. It's a matter of judgment.
- The standard opening bid would be 1♦. If partner responds 1♠, you'll then have an awkward choice of rebid . . . 1NT, 2♣, 2♥?
- Anticipating this, you might choose to open 1NT . . . that's a very close description of your hand.
- Or you might choose to open 1♥ . . . those hearts sure look like a five-card suit.
- The point is that any call could work well on this hand. Even experts would disagree on the best choice. So, feel free to exercise your own judgment if you hold this hand . . . and don't be too quick to criticize partner's choice if it is partner who picks up this hand as dealer.

Conclusion

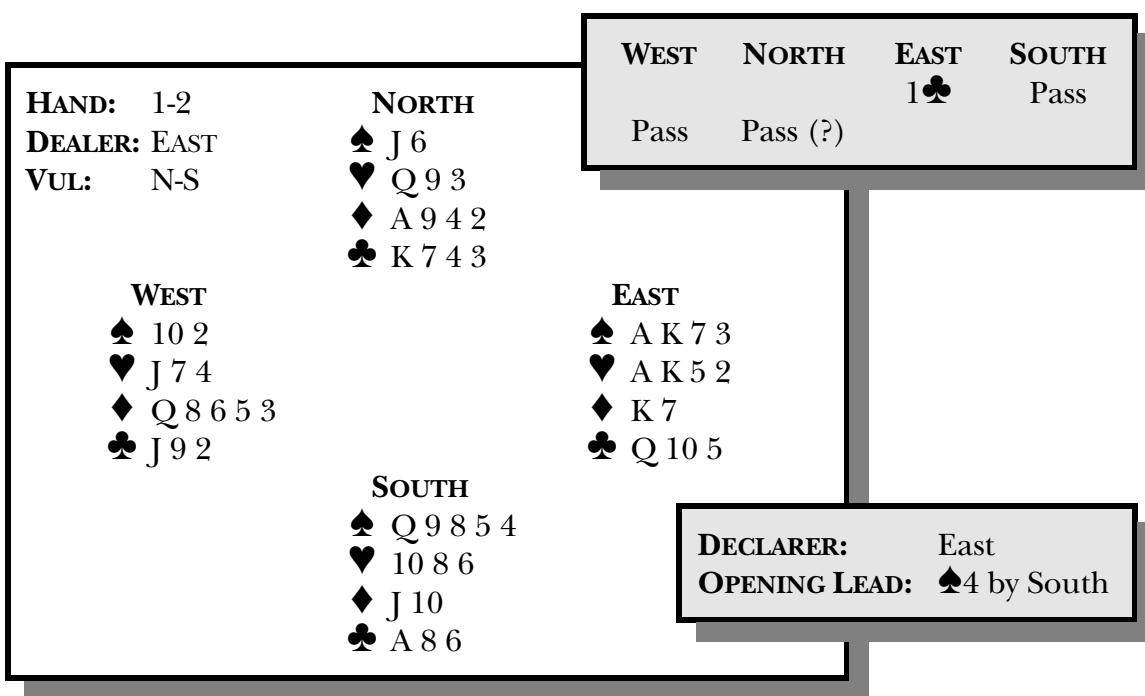
- Opening the bidding in first or second position is a matter of judgment. First you must choose whether to open the bidding. Hand valuation isn't an exact science, but partner is entitled to expect something consistent with the partnership style when you do choose to open the bidding. With a borderline hand, the *Rule of 20* is a useful guideline.
- Once you decide you're going to open the bidding, you have to choose the opening bid. There are a number of guidelines available but the decision isn't always clear cut. You're trying to make the best bid possible, not the best possible bid . . . and there's a difference. Practical considerations—such as the location of your high cards or the availability of a suitable rebid—can cause you to deviate from the 'standard' rules.

Hand 1-2 - Opening the Longer Minor

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 1-2. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and talk about the hand. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?



Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the East hand.

Q. East is the dealer. What call would you make?

A. 1♣.

- East has a balanced hand with 19 high-card points . . . too strong for 1NT but not strong enough for 2NT.
- With no five-card major, East opens the longer minor suit.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What does West respond?

A. Pass.

- West has only 4 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit. Responding with fewer than 6 points is likely to get the partnership overboard.
- West should not be *afraid* of passing 1♣. The 1♣ opening is not a forcing bid.

Q. If West were to respond 1♦, what contract would East-West be likely to reach?

A. 2NT.

- East would likely rebid 2NT to show a balanced hand with 18-19 points. West will then pass since the 2NT rebid is not forcing if the partnership's opening range for 1NT is 15-17 and a jump rebid in notrump is limited to 18-19.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What would North do if West passed over 1♣?

A. Pass (1NT).

- With only 10 points and some length in the opponent's suit, North should probably pass in this situation.
- A *balancing* bid of 1NT can be made with less than the values for a direct 1NT overcall, but most partnerships would expect at least 11-12 points for that bid.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose East is declarer in a contract of 1♣. Who makes the opening lead?

A. South.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What would South lead?

A. ♠5, ♦J, or ♣6.

- South has no clear-cut opening lead and will probably start with the ♠5, fourth highest, hoping to develop some tricks in the suit.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. Look at the hand from declarer's point of view. Is 1♣ a good contract?

A. Not exactly.

- Playing in a 3-3 fit isn't much fun, but it isn't always a terrible spot. It isn't clear what the best contract is for East-West. Perhaps 1♦ or 1♥ . . . but it's difficult to get there.

Q. Is East likely to make the contract after a spade lead from South?

A. Yes.

- East has two spade tricks, and two heart tricks. East can promote a winner in diamonds and at least one winner in clubs. East might also be able to ruff at least one spade in the dummy.
- Declarer's best plan is to try to get some winners from the club suit by ruffing the spade losers. After winning the ♠K, declarer can take the ♠A and lead a spade, ruffing in dummy.

Q. What must declarer be careful to do when ruffing a spade?

A. Ruff with the ♣9 or ♣J.

- When ruffing spade losers, East should be careful to ruff *high* in the dummy. If North follows suit, declarer still has at least one more club trick through promotion. If North overruffs, it will have to be with the ♣K or ♣A which promotes an extra club winner for declarer. By ruffing high, declarer guarantees at least two tricks from the club suit.

Q. What is North's best defense if declarer ruffs a spade high in dummy?

A. Overruff and lead a trump.

- North should overruff with the ♣K and lead another club to prevent declarer from ruffing another spade loser in dummy.
- If North doesn't do this, declarer can ruff the last spade loser high and is likely to get *three* tricks from the trump suit.
- If the defenders do lead trumps to prevent East from ruffing the last spade, declarer will still get two club tricks and can establish a diamond winner to go along with the ♠A-K and ♥A-K.

Observation

- All roads lead to at least seven tricks for declarer. Even if the defenders were to lead three rounds of trumps initially to prevent declarer from ruffing any spades, declarer could establish one extra winner in hearts—thanks to the 3-3 division—and one in diamonds.

Conclusion

- Sometimes you have to settle for the best contract possible, not the best possible contract. 1♣ on a three-three fit may not be a great spot, but it is a makeable contract. If West were to respond 1♦, the next resting spot is likely to be 2NT. That contract is very likely to be defeated after a spade lead. Declarer may well be held to six tricks.
- Don't be afraid to open the bidding on a three-card minor suit. You are unlikely to be left to play there and, even if that happens, it may be the best spot. And don't be afraid of passing partner's opening bid of 1♣ with a weak hand, even with two or three low clubs. 1♣ is not forcing. It may be the best spot; bidding something may get you to a worse spot; or the opponents may come to the rescue.

If the students seem unconvinced and still feel compelled to bid in response to partner's 'short' club, you might go through the following series of questions.

Q. What is the most likely number of clubs partner holds for an opening bid of 1♣?

A. Four.

Q. What is the second most likely number of clubs that partner will hold?

A. Five.

Q. What is the third most likely number of clubs?

A. Six.

Q. What is the fourth most likely number of clubs?

A. Three.

- Yes, three clubs are more common than seven . . . but not more common than four, five, or six!

Hand 1-3 - Opening Balanced Hands

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 1-3. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

HAND:	1-3	NORTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
DEALER:	SOUTH	♠ Q J 4 ♥ 10 8 5 3 ♦ A 6 4 ♣ 6 5 3	Pass	1♥ Pass	Pass	1♦ 2NT Pass	
VUL:	E-W			3NT(?)			
			Pass				
WEST	♠ A 9 6 2 ♥ K 9 4 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ A 9 7	EAST	♠ 10 5 3 ♥ J 7 6 2 ♦ J 3 ♣ K 10 8 4	DECLARER:	South	OPENING LEAD:	♠2 by West
SOUTH	♠ K 8 7 ♥ A Q ♦ K Q 10 9 5 ♣ Q J 2						

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the South hand.

Q. South is the dealer. Is South's hand balanced?

A. Yes.

- Balanced hands contain no voids or singletons and at most one doubleton. The three classic balanced hand patterns are 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, and 5-3-3-2. So a balanced hand can have a five-card suit.

Q. What is the South hand worth?

A. 18 points.

- There are 17 high-card points plus 1 for the 5-card suit.

Q. What is South's call as dealer?

A. 1♦ or 1NT.

- If the partnership is using a range of 15-17 points for 1NT, South's hand is too strong and should be opened 1♦. If the range is 16-18, South can open 1NT.

Q. What is likely to happen if South opens the bidding 1NT?

A. Pass—Pass—Pass.

- If North assumes that partner can have at most 17 points, North will likely pass and that will end the auction.
- If the partnership is using a 16-18 point range, North might choose to bid, but it's a close decision.
- Since it's not clear that North-South can make a game on these cards, playing in 1NT might be a reasonable contract . . . but you'd miss out on the fun of trying to bring home a more challenging contract.

Q. Let's assume that the partnership is using the 15-17 range. In that case, how would South open the bidding?

A. 1♦.

- With a hand too strong for an opening 1NT bid, open one-of-a-suit.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. Does West have enough to enter the auction?

- A. Not really.
- West doesn't have a good suit and doesn't have quite enough for a takeout double.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What does North respond?

- A. 1♥.
- With 7 points, North has enough to keep the bidding open and should bid the four-card heart suit . . . even though it's not particularly attractive.
 - Playing five-card majors, it's quite possible that South has a decent four-card heart suit and that would be the best spot for the partnership.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. After North responds 1♥ and East passes, how does South describe the hand?

- A. 2NT.
- South jumps to 2NT to show a balanced hand too strong for an opening bid of 1NT . . . 18 or 19 points.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What does North do now?

- A. 3NT or Pass.
- The 2NT rebid isn't forcing, so North could pass.
 - North has a close decision but should probably take a chance on game. North has 7 points and South could have as many as 19, giving the partnership the magic total of 26.
 - Even if the partnership has only 25 combined points, game is a reasonable gamble.
 - As you can see, both North and South's judgment will affect the choice of contract. The partnership might rest in a safe 1NT or reach a close game contract.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose South does become declarer in 3NT, who would be on lead?

A. West.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What would West lead?

A. ♠2.

- With nothing better to go on, West can start with the old reliable *fourth from longest and strongest*.



Turn the East and West hands face down. Focus on the South hand and pretend that you are declarer. Discuss with the others at the table how you would plan to play the hand.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the play.

Q. How many tricks do you need in 3NT?

A. Nine.

Q. How many sure tricks do you start with?

A. Four.

- The only sure tricks are the ♥A and the ♦A-K-Q.

Q. You need to find five more tricks. How many tricks can you expect from the spade suit?

A. Two.

- You can get two tricks through promotion in the spade suit. That's quite likely to happen, since the opponents have already led the suit.

Q. What about the diamonds?

A. Five.

- Provided the diamonds divide favorably, 3-2, or the ♦J falls singleton, you'll get five tricks in the diamond suit.
- If West shows out on the first or second round of diamonds, you might still be able to get five diamond tricks, but you'll have to be careful to be in dummy at the right time. It's good to keep this in mind, even though it's not a problem on the actual hand.

Q. You need to develop one more trick. Where's that going to come from, hearts or clubs?

A. Clubs.

- At first glance, it might seem that the heart suit offers the best chance for a ninth trick. If East holds the ♥K, you can take a finesse.
- Strange though it may seem, the club suit offers a better chance.

Q. What are the odds of the heart finesse being successful?

A. 50-50.

- Either East or West could hold the ♥K, so you'll make the contract half the time by relying on the heart finesse.

Q. What are the odds of the club suit providing an extra trick?

A. 3-1 . . . 75%.

- The club suit actually offers a 75% chance of success. Let's see why.

This is likely a new concept for most students and is the focus of discussion for the remainder of this hand.

Turn all the North-South cards face down except for the club suit. Turn only the club suit face up in the East-West hands.

	NORTH	
	♣ 6 5 3	
WEST		EAST
♣ A 9 7		♣ K 10 8 4
	SOUTH	
	♣ Q J 2	

Q. This is the actual layout of the club suit. Can declarer get a trick from the club suit?

A. Yes.

- Declarer starts by leading a low club from dummy toward the ♣Q-J-2.
- If East plays second hand low and declarer tries to win a trick with the ♣J, South wins the ♣A. South's first 'finesse' loses to South's ♣A.
- After regaining the lead, however, declarer can *repeat the finesse* by leading another club from dummy toward the ♣Q.
- If East plays low, South wins the trick with the ♣Q and has developed a trick in the suit.
- If East plays the ♣K, South's ♣Q is now a winner that can be taken when declarer regains the lead.
- So, in this situation, East can develop a trick in the club suit by leading twice toward the ♣Q-J-2.
- You might be wondering what would happen if the ♣A and ♣K were located differently. Let's see.

Give East's ♣K to West and West's ♣A to East.

	NORTH ♣ 6 5 3	
WEST ♣ K 9 7		EAST ♣ A 10 8 4
	SOUTH ♣ Q J 2	

Q. If we exchange the ♣A and ♣K, can we still develop a trick in the suit?

A. Yes.

- It works exactly the same way.
- You lead a club from the North hand and the first finesse loses to West's ♣K.
- When you regain the lead, you can lead another club from the North hand and, whether or not East plays the ♣A, you get a second trick in the suit.
- So, you have seen two locations of the ♣A and ♣K, and in both cases you can develop a club trick with the help of the finesse.

Give East's ♣A to West.

	NORTH ♣ 6 5 3	
WEST ♣ A K 9 7		EAST ♣ 10 8 4
	SOUTH ♣ Q J 2	

Q. What happens if West holds both the ♣A and ♣K?

A. No extra trick.

- You lead a club from the North hand and try the ♣J, but West wins with the ♣K.
- When you regain the lead and try leading another club from dummy toward the ♣Q, West wins with the ♣A.
- So, both your finesse losses lose and you don't get a trick from the club suit. Now it's only 2-1 in your favor for getting an extra trick. But there's one more case.

Give West's ♣A and ♣K to East.

	NORTH ♣ 6 5 3	
WEST ♣ 9 7		EAST ♣ A K 10 8 4
	SOUTH ♣ Q J 2	

Q. What happens if East holds both the ♣A and ♣K?

A. Declarer gets a trick.

- If East plays a low club when you lead a club from the North hand you play the ♣J and immediately get a trick.
- If East plays the ♣K or ♣A on the first trick you play a low club from the South hand and don't even need to lead the next round of clubs from the dummy. After regaining the lead you can lead the ♣Q or ♣J to promote a winner in the suit.

Q. So, in three of the four cases, you can develop a winner from the club suit. What does that make the odds for developing a trick from the club suit?

A. 3 out of 4 . . . 75%.

Q. Which is the better choice for the ninth trick: the heart finesse or the club suit?

Clubs.

- Let's see how to put this knowledge to work on the complete hand.

Give East's ♣A to West and turn all four hands face up. Put the ♠2 in front of West as the opening lead and focus on the South hand.

Q. You are declarer with the South hand and West leads the ♠2. Since you want to develop a trick in clubs, in which hand do you want to be?

A. Dummy.

- Declarer should play the ♠J or ♠Q from dummy, hoping to win the first trick in the North hand.
- Since West holds the ♠A, the ♠J wins and you are in the right place to lead a club.

Play the ♠J from dummy, the ♠3 from East and the ♠7 from South. Turn the first trick face down. (**♠2-♠J- ♠3- ♠7**)

Q. What now?

Lead a club.

- You want to go after the clubs right away while you still have high cards in the other suits.
- Assuming East plays a low club, you try the ♠J and this loses to West's ♣A.

Turn the second trick face down. (**♣3-♣4-♦J-♦A**)

Q. What is West likely to do after winning the ♣A?

A. Lead another spade.

- West will probably continue by leading another spade.
- On this hand, it won't do West any good to switch to any other suit, so let's assume West plays the ♣A. West might lead a low spade to preserve communication with the East hand, but it won't make any difference.

Q. West plays the ♣A, North and East play low spades. What should South play?

A. ♠K.

- Since declarer wants entries to dummy to lead clubs, it's not a bad idea to play the ♠K so that dummy's ♠Q will win the next round of the suit.
- It doesn't really matter since you still have the ♦A in dummy, but it's good technique nonetheless.

Turn the third trick face down. (♠A-♠4-♠5-♠K)

- Let's assume West leads another spade.

Turn the fourth trick face down. (♠6-♠Q-♠10-♠8)

Q. Now what?

A. Lead a club.

- Back to work on the club suit. Declarer leads another club from dummy.
- If East plays low, you'll play the ♣Q and take your nine tricks, so let's suppose East wins the ♣K. You play a low club and so does West.

Turn the fifth trick face down. (♣5-♣K-♣2-♣7)

Q. What if East now leads a heart?

A. Win the ♥A.

- Don't undo all the good work by finessing the ♥Q. You already have nine tricks if diamonds behave.
- If you were to take the heart finesse and it lost, the defenders would get two spade tricks, a heart trick, and two club tricks.

- Instead, play the ♡A as West and North follow suit.

Turn the sixth trick face down. (♡2-♡A-♡9-♡3)

Q. You now have two spade tricks, a heart trick, and a club trick. You only need to be sure to get five diamond tricks. How should you play the diamond suit?

A. The ♦K or ♦Q and then a low diamond to dummy's ♦A.

- Just in case East started with four diamonds including the ♦J, you want to start by taking two high diamonds ending in dummy.
- On the actual hand, both defenders follow suit on the first two rounds of diamonds, so you have no further worries.

Give two of West's low diamonds to East.

- If East started with four diamonds including the ♦J, you would be in the right place at the right time to take a diamond finesse, since West would show out on the second round.

Q. What would have happened if South staked everything on the heart finesse?

A. The contract would be defeated.

- If declarer took the heart finesse and it lost, it would be too late to establish a club winner.
- The defenders would set up their spade winners and have two spade tricks to go along with the ♠K and ♣A and ♣K.

You may want to skip the next part of this discussion if pressed for time.



You've seen how the Queen, Jack, and a low card offer a 75% chance of developing an extra trick as opposed to the 50% chance of an extra trick from the Ace-Queen combination. Are there any disadvantages to going for the 75% chance as opposed to the 50% chance? Discuss with others at your table.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss this question with the others at their table.

Q. What are the disadvantages of going after the Queen-Jack combination?

A. Entries. Giving up the lead.

- One problem is that you need two entries to lead twice toward the Queen and the Jack. If you have only one entry, you may be forced to rely on the Ace-Queen combination.
- A second disadvantage is that you have to let the opponents in twice—with their Ace and King—to develop a trick from the Queen-Jack combination. If you can't afford to let the opponents gain the lead twice, your only play might be the 50% finesse.

The next point may be too much for basic students.

Q. On the actual hand, how do you know it's reasonably safe to try to develop a trick from the club suit?

A. The lead of the ♠2.

- Assuming the defenders lead their fourth highest card against notrump contracts, the lead of the ♠2 indicates that West doesn't hold more than four cards in the suit.
- The defenders won't be able to set up enough tricks in the spade suit to defeat you if you lose the lead twice.
- Besides, it can't hurt to start by leading a club first. If things turn ugly and it looks as though West actually has more than four spades, you can still fall back on the heart finesse.

An advanced student might point out that East-West can actually defeat the contract if East plays the ♠K on the first round of the suit and leads a heart. This is an unlikely defense—even if East does win the first club trick, East is more likely to return partner's suit than switch to hearts. Nevertheless, you should commend the student on finding this 'double-dummy' defense and use it as a reason why North-South might want to stop in a conservative contract of 1NT rather than the aggressive 3NT game.

Conclusion

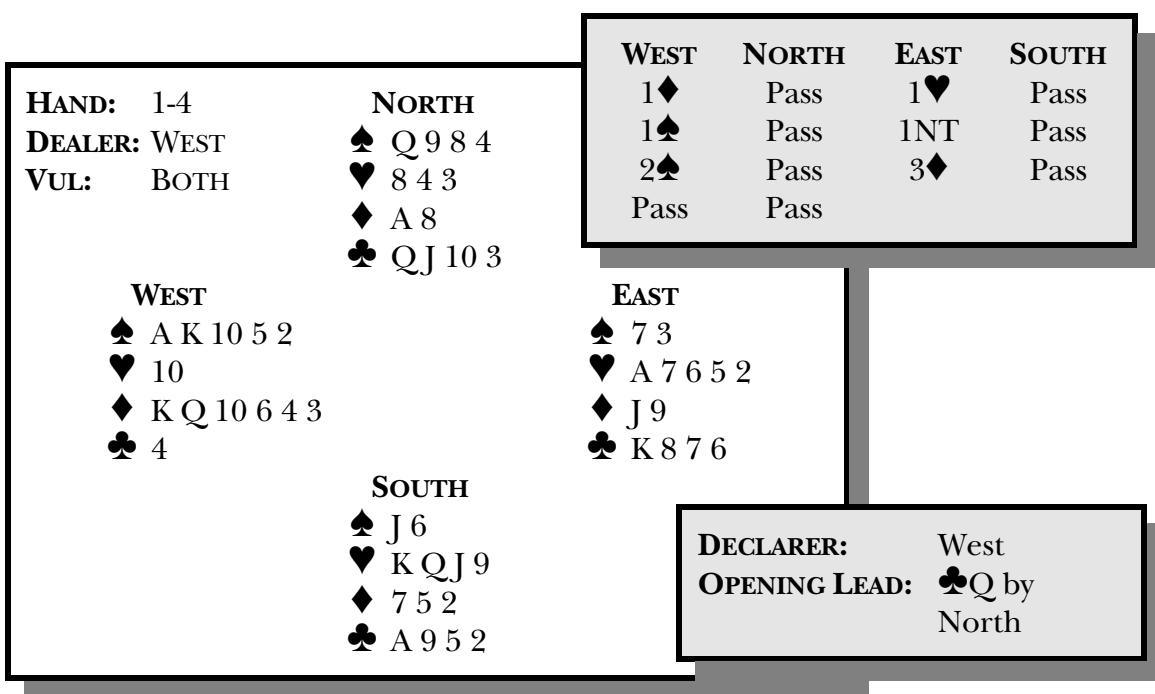
- This hand illustrates that your choice of opening bid may well affect the final contract. That's part of what makes the game so fascinating. There's no right answer. You use your judgment to try to reach a reasonable contract during the bidding. You then have to use your judgment during the play to formulate a reasonable plan. Even then, the result may be in doubt. The opponents' cards may lie in a friendly or unfriendly manner.

Hand 1-4 - Opening the Longest Suit First

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 1-4. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy-style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?



Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the West hand.

Q. West is the dealer. What is the opening call?

A. 1♦.

- Even though your partnership style is five-card majors, you still generally open the longest suit first when you have 6-5 distribution.
- Opener, as describer, wants to paint a picture of the hand so that partner can choose the best trump fit.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What will East respond?

A. 1♥.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What is West's rebid?

A. 1♠.

- West now shows the second suit.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What is East's rebid?

A. 1NT.

- At this point, East is unaware that West has a very distributional hand. West might bid the same way with four diamonds and four spades.
- With no fit for either suit, East will probably choose to bid 1NT rather than rebidding the weak five-card heart suit.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What does opener do now?

A. 2♠.

- West finishes the description by rebidding the spade suit.
- By bidding spades twice, West is showing a five-card suit.
- By inference, West must hold at least six diamonds. With five spades and five diamonds, West would start with the higher-ranking suit, spades.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What does responder do now?

A. 3♦.

- Opposite a very unbalanced hand, a notrump contract is unlikely to fare well.
- East should give *preference* back to 3♦, putting the partnership in its eight-card fit.
- Passing 2♠ would leave the partnership one level lower but in a seven-card fit, which could be disastrous if the trump suit breaks badly.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What does West do now?

A. Pass.

- Having fully described the hand and receiving no encouragement from partner, West should settle for partscore.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose West does become declarer in 3♦, who would be on lead?

A. North.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What would North lead?

A. ♣Q or ♦A.

- The top of the *solid sequence* seems to stand out. If the defenders have tricks in the club suit, declarer might run out of trumps if forced to ruff the defenders' club winners at every opportunity.
- If North has been listening carefully to the auction, however, a trump lead might be a good idea.
- North knows that West has at least five spades and that East prefers diamonds to spades. East has at most two spades and could have fewer.
- Looking at potential winners in spades, North should probably lead diamonds.
- The lead of the ♦A might catch South with a singleton ♦K but has the advantage that North can lead a second round of diamonds right away.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. How many tricks will declarer make if the defenders lead two rounds of diamonds right away?

A. Nine.

- Declarer won't be able to ruff any spade losers in the dummy.
- With the defenders' spades divided 4-2, declarer can establish one extra spade winner by giving up two tricks in the suit.
- Declarer should finish with two spade losers, a diamond loser, and a club loser.

Q. What would happen if the defenders don't lead trump early on?

A. Declarer can make an overtrick.

- Declarer can ruff at least one spade loser in the dummy and perhaps two.
- Declarer may lose only one diamond and one club trick.

Q. What might happen if West plays in a spade contract?

A. Declarer is likely to be held to at most eight tricks.

- Against a spade contract, North should lead clubs, hoping to make declarer ruff.
- Since North holds four spades, the defenders will have as many trumps as declarer once West has ruffed once.
- The play will become uncomfortable for declarer since declarer can't afford to draw all the defenders' trumps. Declarer would then have no trumps left to stop the defenders from taking their club winners.
- Declarer is likely to be held to five spade tricks, one heart trick, and one or two diamond tricks.

Conclusion

- Opener should attempt to give the best possible description of the hand to responder. Responder will then be in the best position to determine both the denomination and the level of the contract.

Lesson 2 - Opening at the One Level — In Third and Fourth Position

Hand 2-1 - Opening the Bidding in Third Chair

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 2-1. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	Pass	1♠ (?)
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

HAND: 2-1 **DEALER:** NORTH **VUL:** NONE

NORTH
♠ J 7
♥ A K Q 9 4
♦ 10 6 3
♣ 9 4 2

WEST
♠ Q 10 9
♥ J 3 2
♦ A Q J 8
♣ 10 6 3

SOUTH
♠ A 8 6 5 3
♥ 10 6 5
♦ K 7
♣ A 8 5

EAST
♠ K 4 2
♥ 8 7
♦ 9 5 4 2
♣ K Q J 7

DECLARER: North
OPENING LEAD: ♣K by East

At some tables, the hand may be passed out. At other tables, the students may get to game. Students are encouraged to turn all fifty-two cards face up and discuss the hand while the other tables are finishing the bidding and play. Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Q. Why is this hand of interest?

- A. It illustrates the effect of light third hand openings.
- This hand would probably be of little interest to rubber bridge players since there is no game or slam. If anything, only a small partscore is at stake.
 - No one at the table has a sound opening bid and the hand could easily be passed out.
 - It is possible, however, for one side to make a small partscore. Scores like these add up over the long run, so you don't want to throw away such opportunities.
 - Getting a small plus score in duplicate bridge can make the difference between winning and losing, so you need to pay some attention to this type of hand.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. As dealer, does North have an opening bid?

- A. No.
- North's hand doesn't qualify as a first chair opening bid, even using the *Rule of 20*...
 $10 + 5 + 3 = 18$.

A student might mention the possibility of opening a weak 2♥ bid with the North hand. You can mention that opening weak two-bids with a five-card suit is a tactic that may work but it isn't usually used in first or second position. For now, they should be willing to accept pass as a reasonable bid with the North hand.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. Does East have an opening bid?

- A. No.
- With only 9 high-card points, East will pass.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. Does South's hand qualify as a sound opening bid in first or second chair?

A. No.

- South has only 11 high-card points plus 1 for the length in the spade suit. That's fewer than the 13 points usually required to open the bidding.
- Even if you apply the *Rule of 20*, South's hand fails to qualify . . . $11 + 5 + 3 = 19$.
- If you used the old idea of quick tricks, you'd open this hand with two aces and a king, but you can see that it's a borderline opening bid.



Should you open this hand in third position? Take a moment and discuss with the others at your table some of the pros and cons of opening this hand.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the hand.

Q. What is the main disadvantage of opening with a borderline hand?

A. May get too high.

- If you don't have the full values for your opening bid, the partnership may get too high.
- Partner can't know right away whether you have a regular opening bid or a substandard one, and by the time partner finds out, you may already be overboard.
- If you keep opening with less than full values, partner is going to start worrying every time you open the bidding and hold back when you actually have a good hand . . . the 'Peter and the Wolf' syndrome.

Q. What are some of the advantages of opening this type of hand?

A. Making a partscore; helping the defense; confusing the opponents.

- If neither partner ever opens an 11 or 12 point hand, the partnership may lose out on a lot of partscore contracts when they have a combined total of 22-24 points . . . almost enough for game. Since you don't usually open *light* in first or second position, you need to occasionally open a little lighter in third or fourth position if you want to get those small plus scores.
- If the opponents win the contract, your opening bid may help your side find the best defense. If partner is on lead, for example, you may have directed the best opening lead. For this reason, most players prefer to open light in third or fourth chair when they have a good suit—one they would like partner to lead if the opponents buy the contract.

- Another advantage of opening light in third position is that it may cause the opponents to misjudge . . . bidding too much or too little. If they think that you have a sound opening bid, they may not enter the auction or they may stop short of bidding to game. If they think you are trying to prevent them from getting to their best contract, they may overbid . . . only to find that you actually have full values for your opening. In other words, the very possibility that you could open light in third position can create uncertainty in the minds of the opponents.
- So, even though there are some risks, on balance it is a reasonable tactic for South to open 1♠ with this hand in third chair. Let's see what happens from there.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What will West do if South opens 1♠?

- A. Likely pass.
- If South had passed, West would pass also, ending the auction.
 - South's opening bid has created some interest at least.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What does North respond?

- A. 2♥.
- Unless North-South have some special methods to deal with light opening bids, North will make the standard response of 2♥, unaware that South has opened light.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What does South do now?

- A. Pass.
- Here we come to one of the safeguards that makes opening light in third or fourth position a workable tactic.
 - Since North passed originally and South doesn't have a full opening bid, South knows that the partnership is unlikely to have enough combined strength for game.
 - Because North is a passed hand, South is free to pass a new suit response and settle in partscore. This is an important concept:

Bidding Opposite a Passed Hand

A new suit response by a passed hand is not forcing.

- Opposite an opening suit bid in first or second chair, responder's bid of a new suit is 100% forcing, even at the one level. Responder's strength is unlimited and opener must find a rebid to keep the auction going unless the next player comes into the bidding.
- However, a new suit response by a player that passed originally is obviously limited to 12 points or fewer. So, opener is no longer obligated to bid again.
- Opener should bid again with a sound opening bid, since the partnership may still belong at the game level; and opener should bid again if the response is likely to have put the partnership in a poor contract . . . if opener has a singleton or void in responder's suit, for example.
- On this hand, South should pass North's 2♥ response. It's unlikely that the partnership has enough for game and 2♥ should be a reasonable contract. After all, one of South's objectives in opening light in third position was to try for a small partscore. Stopping in 2♥ accomplishes this goal.
- By passing, South warns partner that the opening bid was substandard. If the opponents now decide to compete, North shouldn't get too carried away.
- On the actual hand, West doesn't have any reason to come into the auction at this point, so 2♥ should be the contract.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Who's on lead against 2♥?

A. East.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What would East lead?

A. ♣K.

- West's natural lead is the ♣K, top of the three-card sequence.



Leave East's ♣K face up on the table but turn all the remaining East-West cards face down. Focus on the North hand. You are declarer in a 2♥ contract. Discuss with the others at your table how you think the play should go.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the hand with the others at the table.

Q. In a contract of 2♥, how many losers can declarer afford?

A. Five.

Q. How many losers does North have?

A. Six.

- If hearts behave reasonably—dividing 3-2 or with the ♥J favorably located—declarer has one spade loser, three diamond losers, and two club losers . . . one too many.

Q. There isn't too much that can be done about the spade or club losers—especially since the defenders are about to drive out the ♣A—but what possibilities does declarer have in the diamond suit?

A. Finesse; ruffing.

- One possible plan is to lead toward the ♦K, hoping East holds the ♦A. That's a 50% chance.
- Even if the finesse loses, North may be able to give up a second trick in the suit and ruff the remaining diamond loser in dummy.

Q. Is there any flaw in this plan?

A. Yes.

- Declarer will have to use the trump suit as an entry to the North hand to take the diamond finesse. With only three trumps in dummy, it's possible that declarer may run out of trump before getting to ruff the diamond loser. Let's see what might happen.

Turn all the East-West cards face up.

- Suppose West leads the ♣K and declarer wins the first trick with South's ♣A.

Turn the first trick face down. (♣K-♣A-♣3-♣2)

Q. Where was the first trick won?

A. South.

- Cross to the North hand by playing a heart as both defenders follow suit.

Turn the second trick face down. ($\heartsuit 5-\heartsuit 2-\heartsuit Q-\heartsuit 7$)

- North leads a low diamond, East plays low, and the $\spadesuit K$ is played from dummy. The finesse loses as West wins with the $\spadesuit A$.

Turn the third trick face down. ($\spadesuit 3-\spadesuit 2-\spadesuit K-\spadesuit A$)

Q. Who won this trick?

A. West

Q. West might lead a club at this point, but there's no hurry. What else might West consider doing?

A. Leading a trump.

- West can see that dummy has only one diamond left. Looking at the $\spadesuit Q$ and $\spadesuit J$, West might decide to lead a trump to prevent declarer from ruffing diamonds in dummy.
- Even if West does lead a club and East takes two club winners, East may come to the same conclusion and lead a heart.
- To simplify matters, suppose West leads a heart right away and declarer wins in the North hand as East and South follow suit.

Turn the fourth trick face down. ($\heartsuit 3-\heartsuit K-\heartsuit 8-\heartsuit 6$)

- Declarer can lead another diamond to get rid of the last diamond in dummy, but West can win this trick.

Turn the fifth trick face down. ($\spadesuit 6-\spadesuit 4-\spadesuit 7-\spadesuit 8$)

Q. Who is on lead?

A. West.

Q. What will West do now?

A. Lead a heart.

- If West leads a heart, look what happens.
- The last trump in dummy disappears and declarer still has a diamond loser.
- Declarer eventually loses a spade trick, three diamond tricks, and two club tricks . . down one.

Turn all the cards face up so the complete hand is visible.

Q. What can declarer do to avoid being defeated on this hand with the unlucky lie of the diamond suit?

A. Lead a diamond from dummy immediately.

- The ♦K actually creates an illusion on this hand. Declarer would have an easier time if there were two low diamonds in dummy.
- After winning the ♣A, declarer would then have no option except to immediately lead a diamond, planning to ruff a loser before playing any rounds of trump.
- To make this contract, you have to ignore the ♦K.
- Let's see how this works.
- East leads the ♣K and declarer wins the first trick with South's ♣A.

Turn the first trick face down. (♣K-♣A-♣3-♣2)

Q. Which hand won the first trick?

A. South.

- Now, instead of crossing to the North hand to lead a diamond toward dummy's ♦K, suppose declarer immediately leads a low diamond—or the ♦K—from the South hand. West wins this trick.

Turn the second trick face down. (♦7-♦J-♦3-♦2)

- West can lead a heart, which North wins.

Turn the third trick face down. ($\heartsuit 2-\heartsuit Q-\heartsuit 7-\heartsuit 5$)

- Declarer, North, leads a second diamond, which West wins.

Turn the fourth trick face down. ($\diamondsuit 6-\diamondsuit 4-\diamondsuit K-\diamondsuit A$)

- West can lead another heart, which is won by North.

Turn the fifth trick face down. ($\heartsuit 3-\heartsuit K-\heartsuit 8-\heartsuit 6$)

Q. Who is on lead?

A. North

- This time, declarer wins the race. Dummy has no diamonds left and there is still a trump. Declarer can ruff the diamond loser in the dummy.
- Declarer still has to lose a spade trick and two club tricks, but will eventually get back to the North hand to draw the last trump and make the contract.

A student might question whether it is still worth the risk of crossing to the North hand to lead a diamond toward the $\diamondsuit K$. If the $\diamondsuit A$ is favorably located, declarer may make an overtrick—which could be important at duplicate. Point out that it is unlikely that East holds the $\diamondsuit A$. East passed originally and has shown up with the $\spadesuit K$ and $\spadesuit Q$ —and likely the $\spadesuit J$ as well. East isn't a heavy favorite to hold the $\diamondsuit A$ —although it's still possible. Against good defenders, it's probably best to give up on the diamond finesse and go for the ruff. There are other potential complications on the hand, so it's best to avoid this type of discussion if you can.

Observation

- Players who routinely pass out this type of hand are missing a lot of excitement. There's the possibility of a tactical light opening bid in third position, passing a new suit response, a challenge for declarer, and a challenge for the defenders. All sorts of mental exercise to keep everyone alert.

A Closer Look at Opening Light in Third and Fourth Chair

Leave the South hand face up on the table. Take the cards from the North, East, and West hands and sort them into suits. Each student take one suit. Focus on the South hand remaining on the table.



Spades:

Hearts:

Diamonds:

Clubs:

SOUTH
♠ A 8 6 5 3
♥ 10 6 5
♦ K 7
♣ A 8 5

W	N	E	S
P	P	1	♠

Q. Would you open the bidding with this hand in first or second chair?

A. No.

- This hand probably wouldn't be opened in first or second chair, since it fails to satisfy the *Rule of 20* — $11 + 5 + 3 = 19$.

Q. What about opening in third or fourth chair?

A. Yes/Maybe.

- You might open 'light' in third or fourth position.
- There are additional considerations for fourth position openings which will be discussed a little later, but the tactic of opening light can be used in either third or fourth position.
- For now, let's assume everyone holds the South hand in third chair following two passes.
- Hopefully, everyone is now going to open 1♠. It's a good tactic . . . but make sure partner agrees before getting carried away.



Spades:
Hearts: Take away a low heart.
Diamonds:
Clubs: Add a low club.

SOUTH
♠ A 8 6 5 3
♥ 10 6
♦ K 7
♣ A 8 5 2

W N E S
P P 1♠

Q. Would you open this hand in third chair?

A. Yes.

- You would open in first or second position since it meets the *Rule of 20*— $11 + 5 + 4 = 20$.
- So, it's just a standard opening bid in third position.



Spades: Add the ♠J.
Hearts: Take away a low heart.
Diamonds: Take away the ♦K.
Clubs: Add a low club.

SOUTH
♠ AJ 8 6 5 3
♥ 10
♦ 7
♣ A 8 5 3 2

W N E S
P P 1♠

Q. Do you open this hand in third position?

A. Yes.

- Only 9 high-card points, but the *Rule of 20* would suggest opening 1♠ even in first or second position— $9 + 6 + 5 = 20$.

Some students may suggest opening a weak 2♠ bid. That's reasonable but, since this hand qualifies as a one-level opening bid, 1♠ is probably a better choice.



Spades: Take away a low spade
Hearts: Add the ♦J and a low heart.
Diamonds:
Clubs: Take away a low club.

SOUTH
♠ A J 8 6 5
♥ J 10 2
♦ 7
♣ A 8 5 3

W N E S
P P 1♠

Q. Would you open this hand in first or second chair?

A. No.

- This hand doesn't meet the *Rule of 20* criterion for an opening bid in first or second chair— $10 + 5 + 4 = 19$.

Q. What about third chair?

A. Yes/Maybe.

- It's borderline, but the tactical advantages of light opening bids in third position should sway you toward opening 1♠.

Spades:
Hearts: Take away the ♦J and add a low heart.
Diamonds:
Clubs:

SOUTH
♠ A J 8 6 5
♥ 10 3 2
♦ 7
♣ A 8 5 3

W N E S
P P P(?)



How few points can you have to open the bidding in third position? It's a good topic to discuss with your partner. Take a moment to discuss with the player opposite you whether you would open this hand.

Give the players a couple of minutes to discuss this hand with their partner.

Q. Would you and your partner both open this hand in third position?

A. Maybe/No.

- It's a matter of judgment and both partners should agree on their style with this type of hand.
- Opening 1♠ may work well but, if partner responds 2♦, where are you going next?



Spades: Take away the ♠A and add the ♠K.
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs:

SOUTH

♠ K J 8 6 5
♥ 10 3 2
♦ 7
♣ A 8 5 3

W	N	E	S
P	P	P	

Q. How far are you willing to go with light opening bids in third chair? Would anyone open this hand 1♠?

A. No/Maybe.

- Most partnerships won't go this far . . . but there are those who would!
- If you're going to open this type of hand in third chair, perhaps you should be looking at some conventional methods to avoid getting too high.
- The Drury convention is a very popular and quite effective method for dealing with third and fourth chair openings . . . but it does add some complexity to the partnership methods and will be left for another time.



Spades: Take away two low spades; add the ♠A.
Hearts:
Diamonds: Add the ♦K and a low diamond.
Clubs: Take away the ♣A.

SOUTH

♠ A K J 8
♥ 10 3 2
♦ K 7 2
♣ 8 5 2

W	N	E	S
P	P		

1♠(?)

Q. What call would you make with this hand in third position?

A. 1♠, 1♣, 1♦, or Pass.

- You don't have to open with 11 points in third position, so there's nothing wrong with a pass.
- If you do decide to open, you might want to consider 1♠ rather than 1♣. It's true that 1♠ tends to promise a five-card suit, but the spades feel like a five-card suit and the alternative of making the standard opening bid of 1♣ on three low clubs is unattractive.
- Since partner has passed already, it's quite possible the opponents will buy the contract and you'd certainly rather have partner lead a spade than a club.
- Even an opening bid of 1♦ would be preferable to 1♣.
- Opening 1♠ isn't too dangerous. After all, you can pass any response that partner makes and hope to land in a reasonable spot.

Conclusion

- There's more to opening the bidding than counting points. There may be tactical considerations to consider—such as opening light in third or fourth position or getting partner off to the right lead on defense.

Hand 2-2 - Opening for the Lead

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 2-2. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

HAND:	2-2	NORTH		
DEALER:	EAST	♠ K J 7	WEST	NORTH
VUL:	N-S	♥ A 8 6	1♥ (?)	1NT
		♦ K Q 8 5	Pass	Pass
		♣ A 6 2	Pass	Pass
WEST	♠ A 5 2 ♥ K Q J 9 3 ♦ 10 6 ♣ 9 7 5	EAST		
SOUTH	♠ Q 6 3 ♥ 10 4 2 ♦ A J 4 3 ♣ Q J 8	♠ 10 9 8 4 ♥ 7 5 ♦ 9 7 2 ♣ K 10 4 3	DECLARER: North OPENING LEAD: ♥7 by East	

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the West hand.

Q. Assuming East and South pass, should West open in third position?

A. Yes/Maybe.

- West's hand doesn't qualify as an opening bid in first or second, even using the *Rule of 20* — $10 + 5 + 3 = 18$.
- With a good heart suit, however, West might choose to open *light* in third position for tactical reasons.
- East-West may be able to buy the contract cheaply or might push North-South overboard.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What would North open if West passed?

A. 1NT.

- North has a balanced hand with 17 high-card points.

Q. If West were to open 1♥, would that prevent North from making the same opening bid?

A. No.

- North could still overcall 1NT to show a balanced hand with 15-17 points. North has some strength in West's suit.
- North would also have the option of making a takeout double but, with only three-card support for spades, 1NT is the more descriptive bid.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What would East do if North bids 1NT?

A. Pass.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What would South respond to the 1NT bid?

A. 3NT.

- With a balanced hand and 10 high-card points, South can take the partnership directly to the game level.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose North is declarer in a contract of 3NT. Who makes the opening lead?

A. East.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What would East lead if West did not bid during the auction?

A. ♠10 or ♣3.

- East would either lead top of the solid sequence in spades or the fourth highest club.

Q. What would East lead if West opened the bidding 1♥?

A. ♥7.

- Unless there is a clearly better alternative, it's a good idea to lead partner's suit. Partner is likely to have length in the suit bid and one or more entries.



Put the ♥7 on the table in front of East. Focus on the North hand. If East leads a heart, what will happen to North's contract of 3NT? Take a moment to discuss with the others at your table how the play is likely to go.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the hand with the others at the table.

Q. How many sure tricks does North have in 3NT?

A. Six.

- North has one heart trick, four diamond tricks, and a club trick.

Q. Declarer needs to develop three more tricks. Where will they come from?

A. Spades and clubs.

- Declarer can promote two extra tricks in spades through promotion.
- Declarer can develop a second trick from the club suit, either through promotion or the finesse.

Q. Should declarer win the first heart trick?

A. No.

- Declarer should hold up with the ♡A until the third round of the suit.
- Declarer is going to have to let the defenders in with the ♠A and will have to hope that the defenders won't be able to take enough heart tricks to defeat the contract.

Q. Will the hold up play be effective on this hand?

A. No.

- Declarer will have to go after the spade suit to make the contract. When West wins the ♠A, the defenders will be able to take enough tricks to defeat the contract . . . the ♠A and four heart tricks.
- It won't help declarer to start by taking the club finesse. That will develop one extra trick—and East won't be able to lead hearts upon gaining the lead—but declarer will still be two tricks short.

Q. What would happen if East's opening lead was the ♠10 instead of a heart?



Put the ♠ 10 on the table in front of East. Focus on the North hand. If East leads a spade, what will happen to North's contract of 3NT? Take a moment to discuss with the others at your table how the play is likely to go.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the hand with the others at the table.

Q. Can declarer now make the contract?

A. Yes.

- If West wins the ♠A and leads another spade, declarer can win and drive out East's ♣K. Declarer gets two spade tricks, one heart, four diamonds, and two clubs.
- If West wins the ♠A and switches to a heart, declarer can hold up with the ♥A and then take the club finesse. Even though the club finesse loses, East has no more hearts to lead and declarer has the same nine tricks.

Q. Would it make any difference if East's opening lead were the ♣3 instead of a spade?

A. No.

- Declarer would have two club tricks after the opening lead and could drive out the ♠A to promote two winners in that suit. Together with the ♥A and four diamond tricks, declarer would have nine tricks.

Conclusion

- The only lead to defeat a contract of 3NT by North is a heart. East is very unlikely to find that lead unless West takes advantage of the tactical situation and opens light in third chair. East-West don't get to buy the contract, but the 1♥ opening does get the defense off to the best opening lead.
- There's little danger in the 1♥ opening bid. Even if West were doubled for penalties in that contract, West could probably scramble to get one spade trick, four heart tricks, and a trick with the ♣K. Down one would be little compensation to North-South for their potential game contract.

Hand 2-3 - Opening the Bidding in Fourth Chair

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 2-3. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass (?)	Pass

HAND: 2-3 **DEALER:** SOUTH **VUL:** E-W

NORTH
♠ K 7 4 2
♥ Q 10 7 5
♦ 10 4 2
♣ K 5

WEST
♠ 9 8
♥ A J 9
♦ K J 5
♣ Q 10 9 7 2

SOUTH
♠ A J 10 6 5
♥ 8 3
♦ 9 6
♣ A 8 6 3

EAST
♠ Q 3
♥ K 6 4 2
♦ A Q 8 7 3
♣ J 4

DECLARER: South (?)
OPENING LEAD:
♣ 10 by West

This hand might not take very long if the students actually pass the hand out. That's unlikely, however. Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the South hand.

Q. Does South have enough to open the bidding in first position?

A. No.

- There are 9 high-card points and the *Rule of 20* suggests passing this hand in first or second position— $9 + 5 + 4 = 18$.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. Does West have enough to open the bidding in second position?

A. No.

- West's hand isn't quite enough for an opening bid in second position— $11 + 5 + 3 = 19$.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. Does North have enough to open in third position?

A. No.

- Only 8 high-card points and no good suit.
- The hand isn't suitable for a light opening bid.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. That leaves everything up to East. Does East have a sound opening bid if sitting in first, second, or third position?

A. Yes.

- East has 12 high-card points plus 1 for the five-card suit. It also satisfies the *Rule of 20* — $12 + 5 + 4 = 21$.



If East does open the bidding 1♦, what do you think the final contract will be? Which side will win the auction? Take a moment to discuss with the others at your table how the bidding is likely to go.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the auction after East opens 1♦.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. Suppose East opens the bidding 1♦ in fourth chair. What is South likely to do now?

A. Overcall 1♠.

- Having passed originally, South is likely to overcall 1♠ on the good five-card suit.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What will West do after South overcalls 1♠?

A. 2♣.

- West has enough to bid 2♣.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What call will North make?

A. 2♠.

- With four-card support for partner's suit, North is likely to raise to 2♠.

Q. Which side is likely to buy the contract?

A. North-South.

- You see what's likely to happen at this point. East and West are going to get pushed around by the spade suit.
- To compete in diamonds or clubs, East-West have to go to the three level.
- Even if East-West do push on to 3♦, North-South may compete to 3♠.



Focus on the North-South hands. How many tricks are North-South likely to take in a spade contract? Take a moment to discuss the play with the others at your table.

Give the students a few moments to discuss how the play will go.

Q. How many tricks can North-South make in a spade contract?

A. Nine.

- With the 2-2 division of the missing spades, South will lose only two heart tricks and two diamond tricks. South's club losers can be trumped in the dummy.



Focus on the East-West hands. How many tricks are East-West likely to take in a diamond or a club contract? Take a moment to discuss the play with the others at your table.

Give the students a few moments to discuss how the play will go.

Q. How many tricks can East-West make in a club or diamond contract?

A. Eight (or nine).

- East-West have two spade losers and two club losers. In addition, they will lose a heart trick if South leads hearts early on. North's ♦Q can be established as a winner.

Q. Which side is likely to finish with a plus score at the end of this hand?

A. North-South.

- North-South are likely to buy the hand in a contract of 2♠ or 3♠ which they can make.
- If East-West push on to the three level or higher, good defense by North-South will defeat them and North-South will score points.
- Opening the bidding with the East hand is likely to result in a minus score for East-West, rather than a plus score. East would be better off to have passed the hand out.



What are the advantages and disadvantages of opening in fourth position with a borderline hand? Take a moment to discuss this with the others at your table.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss with the others at their table the merits of opening borderline hands in fourth position.

Q. Are there advantages to opening the bidding with a borderline hand in fourth position?

A. Yes.

- There are the same advantages as in third chair.
- You may make a small partscore or push the opponents too high and get a plus score for defending.

Q. What is the disadvantage to opening a borderline hand in fourth chair?

A. May get a minus score.

- If you open the bidding, it may be your side that gets too high or—as on this hand—you may open the door to let the opponents back into the auction and make a partscore. In either case, you could have done better by passing.

Q. When you have an opportunity to open the bidding, what option do you have in fourth chair that you don't have in any other chair?

A. You can pass the hand out.

- Fourth position is the only position in which you can end the auction by passing the hand out.
- You have a choice. If you choose to open the bidding, you want to be fairly sure of getting a plus score.

Q. Which is the critical suit when it comes to auctions in which the opponents are likely to compete?

A. Spades.

- If both sides have a fit in a trump suit, the side that has the fit in spades has an advantage.
- To compete in any other suit, you have to go up one level.
- So, when it comes to opening borderline hands in fourth position, some players like to use the guideline of *Pierson points*, more commonly known as the *Rule of 15*:

Rule of 15 (Pierson Points)

In fourth position, add your high-card points to the number of spades you hold. If the total is 15 or more, open the bidding; otherwise, pass.



Leave the East hand face up on the table. Take the cards from the North, South, and West hands and sort them into suits. Each student take one suit. Focus on the East hand remaining on the table.

Spades:
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs:

EAST
♠ Q 3
♥ K 6 4 2
♦ A Q 8 7 3
♣ J 4

W	N	E	S
P	P	P(?)	

Q. Applying the *Rule of 15* to this hand, should East open in fourth position?

A. No.

- Although this would be a standard opening bid of 1♦ in any other position, it doesn't satisfy the *Rule of 15* for an opening bid in fourth position— $12 + 2 = 14$.
- The guideline suggests passing and, if East-West didn't get a plus score on the last hand, you can see why this might be a good idea.



Spades: Add the ♠J and a low spade.
Hearts:
Diamonds: Take away the ♦Q and a low card.
Clubs:

EAST
♠ Q J 3 2
♥ K 6 4 2
♦ A 8 7
♣ J 4

W	N	E	S
P	P	1♦(?)	

Q. You have fewer high-card points than the previous hand, but should this hand be opened in fourth position?

A. Yes.

- It satisfies the *Rule of 15*— $11 + 4 = 15$.
- Take a chance on opening the bidding 1♦, hoping for a small plus score.



		EAST
Spades:	Take away the ♠Q, ♠J, and a low spade.	♠ 3
Hearts:		♥ K 6 4 2
Diamonds:		♦ A 8 7
Clubs:	Add the ♣K, ♣Q, and a low club.	♣ K Q J 4 2

W	N	E	S
P	P	P(?)	

Q. Would you open this hand in first, second, or third chair?

A. Yes.

- A full 13 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit is a sound opening bid in first, second, or third chair.

Q. Would you open this hand in fourth chair after three passes?

A. No.

- The *Rule of 15* suggests passing the hand out— $13 + 1 = 14$.
- This is an extreme example and most players would probably open the bidding anyway. But don't be too surprised if you open the bidding and finish with a minus score when you could have passed the hand out. It might happen.

Conclusion

- Opening the bidding is a matter of judgment, especially when you hold borderline hands. There are many factors to consider, including the quality of your suit and the position at the table. You generally want to have a sound opening bid in first or second chair, but can open a little lighter in third or fourth chair. In fourth chair, however, keep an eye on the spade suit. You don't want to open the bidding and finish with a minus score.

Hand 2-4 - Opening Using the Rule of 15

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 2-4. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

HAND: 2-4

DEALER: WEST

VUL: BOTH

NORTH
♠ Q 10 8 3
♥ A 9 3 2
♦ 6
♣ K J 7 6

WEST
♠ A 5
♥ J 8 7 5
♦ K Q 5 2
♣ 8 3 2

SOUTH
♠ J 9 7 6 2
♥ K 4
♦ A 10 9
♣ Q 9 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠ (?)
Pass	3♠/4♠ (?)	Pass	Pass
Pass			

EAST
♠ K 4
♥ Q 10 6
♦ J 8 7 4 3
♣ A 10 4

DECLARER: South
OPENING LEAD: ♦K by West

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the West hand.

Q. Does West have enough to open the bidding in first chair?

A. No.

- West's hand doesn't satisfy the *Rule of 20* — $10 + 4 + 4 = 18$.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. Does North have enough to open the bidding in second chair?

A. No.

- North's hand doesn't qualify under the *Rule of 20* — $10 + 4 + 4 = 18$.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. Does East have enough to open the bidding in third chair?

A. No/Maybe.

- East has 10 high-card points plus one for the five-card suit.
- East might consider opening light but, with such a poor quality diamond suit, it is probably best to pass and hope the hand gets passed out.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. Does South have enough to open the bidding in fourth chair?

A. Yes.

- With only 10 high-card points South might be tempted to pass the hand out and hope for a more exciting deal on the next hand.
- However, the hand does satisfy the *Rule of 15* — 10 points + 5 spades = 15.
- If South always passes such hands, the partnership is going to miss a lot of partscore opportunities in the long run.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. If South does open 1♠ what will West do?

A. Pass/Double.

- West is likely to pass but might consider a takeout double. West passed originally, so East won't be expecting too much.



Focus on the North hand. Assuming West passes, what does North respond to the 1♠ opening? Take a few moments to discuss your choice with the others at the table.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss responding to fourth position opening bids.

Q. What is the North hand worth in response to a 1♠ opening bid?

A. 13 points.

- With four-card support for opener's suit, North can revalue the hand using *dummy points*.

Dummy Points

With support for partner's suit you can revalue your hand counting *dummy points* instead of length points:

Void — 5 points Singleton — 3 points Doubleton — 1 point

- North's hand is worth 13 points in support of spades — 10 high-card points plus 3 *dummy points* for the singleton.

Q. What disadvantage does North have when choosing a response?

A. A new suit isn't forcing.

- A new suit response by a passed hand is not forcing. North can't afford to bid a new suit, such as 2♣, planning to show the spade support later because South might pass.
- Unless North-South have some conventional agreements to deal with third and fourth hand openings, North will simply have to choose whether to make a *limit raise* to 3♠ or take the partnership right to the game level.

Q. Is there any reason not to take the partnership to the game level when North holds 13 points?

A. Yes. South may have opened light.

- If South has opened with fewer than 13 points, a jump to the game level by North might get the partnership overboard.
- Even though North's hand is worth 13 points, it might be better to make a limit raise to give partner a little leeway in case partner has opened light in fourth position.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. Whether North bids $3\spadesuit$ or $4\spadesuit$, what will be South's next call?

A. Pass.

- South has opened light and is only trying to get a small plus score. South won't expect that the partnership can make game when North passed originally.

Q. How many tricks will South take in a spade contract?

A. Ten.

- South has two spade losers, two diamond losers, and a club loser.
- Both diamond losers can be trumped in the dummy, reducing South's losers to three.

Conclusion

- If South were to pass this hand out, North-South would miss at least a partscore contract in spades and, on a lucky lie of the cards, a potential game contract. With a borderline hand in fourth position, consider the advantages and disadvantages of opening the bidding. If the advantages appear to outweigh the disadvantages, don't be too anxious to throw the hand in and get on with the next deal. A lot of excitement might be missed.

Lesson 3 - Obstructive Opening Bids

Hand 3-1 - Opening with an Obstructive Bid

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 3-1. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

HAND: 3-1 **DEALER:** NORTH **VUL:** NONE

NORTH
♠ A K 6 3
♥ 6
♦ Q 10 5
♣ J 9 7 3 2

WEST
♠ Q 7 5
♥ 10 2
♦ A 8 4 3
♣ A K 10 8

SOUTH
♠ 8 4 2
♥ K Q J 9 8 7 5 3
♦ J 6
♣ —

EAST
♠ J 10 9
♥ A 4
♦ K 9 7 2
♣ Q 6 5 4

DECLARER: South
OPENING LEAD: ♣A by West

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the North hand.

Q. As dealer, does North have an opening bid?

A. No.

- North's hand doesn't qualify as a first chair opening bid, even using the *Rule of 20*...
 $10 + 5 + 4 = 19$.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. Does East have an opening bid?

A. No.

- East's hand doesn't qualify as an opening bid using the *Rule of 20*... $10 + 4 + 4 = 18$.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. Does South's hand qualify as a one level opening bid?

A. No.

- South has only 7 high-card points plus 4 length points for the eight-card suit.



Would you like to say something with this hand? Take a moment and discuss with the others at your table some of the advantages and disadvantages of opening this hand.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the hand.

Q. If you could insist on hearts as the trump suit, how many tricks are you likely to take with the South hand without any help from partner?

A. Seven.

- You can assume the five missing hearts are reasonably evenly divided among the other three players. That gives you seven *playing tricks* since you should lose only one trick in the suit to the ♦A.

Q. With this hand, how many tricks would you expect to take on defense without any help from partner if the opponents reach a contract in another suit?

A. Zero or one.

- Assuming the five missing hearts are reasonably divided among the other three players—perhaps 2-2-1—and the opponents have the ♠A, you won't take any tricks on defense.
- Even if partner has the singleton and the opponents each have a doubleton so that you can establish a heart winner, you have no entry to your hand to take your winner. The opponents can likely discard their heart loser on one of the other suits.

Q. Since you have seven tricks in your own hand it doesn't seem right to pass, but what are the disadvantages of opening the bidding 1♥ with this hand?

A. Misleading partner; leaving room for the opponents.

- If you were to open 1♥, you would have a difficult time convincing partner about the type of hand you have. Partner would imagine that you have a normal opening bid with 13 or more points.
- Also, your hand has no defensive value. Partner might double an opponent's contract expecting you to contribute one or two tricks in light of your opening bid.
- Your hand will take tricks only with hearts as trump. It's likely that the opponents will want to make any suit, except hearts, the trump suit. The more hearts you have, the fewer they have.
- If you were to open 1♥ it would leave lots of bidding room for the opponents to find their best spot.
- As a result, such hands are best described with a *preemptive* or *obstructive* opening bid:

Preemptive Opening Bids

A preemptive opening bid at the three level (3♣, 3♦, 3♥, or 3♠) shows:

- a long, strong suit, typically seven cards in length;
- a weak hand, less than the values for a one level opening bid.

With a longer suit, you can open at a higher level:

- with a weak hand and a good eight-card suit, open at the four level.
- with a weak hand and a good nine-card suit, open at the game level.

- With a weak hand and a good eight-card suit, South can open 4♥.

Some of the students may want to open the South hand 3♥ rather than 4♥. You can explain that the level at which you open a preemptive bid will be discussed in more detail shortly. In the meantime, have them accept the 4♥ opening bid.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. If South were to open the bidding 4♥, what would West do?

A. Pass, Double(?)

- West was planning to open the bidding at the one level, but South's preemptive opening makes that impossible.
- West might consider doubling. The meaning of double at this level depends on the partnership agreement. Typically, a double of 4♥ is cooperative. It shows enough high-card strength to (likely) defeat the contract, but allows partner to bid with a distributional hand if partner feels there's more to gain from bidding than passing.
- Since East has already passed, West should probably pass at this point. West can't be sure of defeating the contract and doesn't really want to invite partner to come into the auction at the four level.
- Already you can see the type of challenge that a preemptive opening bid presents to the opponents.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. Assuming West passes, what call does North make?

A. Pass.

- South has shown a weak hand with an eight-card suit that will only take tricks with hearts as the trump suit. North has no reason to look for a better spot.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What will East do at this point?

A. Pass.

- East has no reason to come into the auction at the four level.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Who's on lead against 4♥?

A. West.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What would West lead?

A. ♣A.

- West would start with one of the high clubs, hoping to take tricks in that suit.



Leave West's ♣A face up on the table but turn all the remaining East-West cards face down. Focus on the South hand. You are declarer in a 4♥ contract. Discuss with the others at your table declarer's plan for the play of the hand.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the hand with the others at the table.

Q. In a contract of 4♥, how many losers does South have?

A. Four.

- Assuming hearts behave reasonably, there should be only one loser in that suit. There are also a spade loser and two diamond losers.

Q. How can South eliminate one of the losers?

A. A spade loser can be discarded.

- Declarer can promote a diamond winner in dummy on which to discard a spade loser.

Q. After ruffing the first club trick, should declarer start by drawing trump?

A. No.

- Declarer can't afford to lead trump right away. The defenders might then be able to establish a spade winner before declarer can establish a diamond winner.
- Let's see what would happen if declarer leads a trump at trick two.

Turn all the East-West cards face up.

- Suppose West leads the ♣A. A low club is played from dummy. East might play the ♣6 as an encouraging signal or a count signal, depending on the partnership style. (It won't make any difference on this hand.) Declarer ruffs the first trick.

Turn the first trick face down. (♣A-♣2-♣6-♥3)

- Suppose declarer leads the ♥K at trick two to drive out East's ♥A.

Turn the second trick face down. (♥K-♥2-♥6-♥A)

Q. What should East do after winning the ♥A?

A. Lead the ♠J.

- East can see that there is no future in the club suit.
- Even if West holds the ♦A, that's only two more tricks for the defense. A trick is needed from the spade suit.

A student might point out the additional possibility of leading a diamond hoping that West has a doubleton ♦A and can get a ruff. That's a possibility, but it is unlikely that South has a four-card diamond suit in addition to an eight-card heart suit. However, it is a possibility and would be a reasonable alternative to leading a spade.

- Let's assume East leads a spade at trick three which declarer wins in dummy.

Turn the third trick face down. (♠J-♠2-♠5-♠K)

- Declarer might now try leading the ♦5 from dummy, starting to promote a diamond winner. East plays low. South plays the ♦J, and West wins the ♦A.

Turn the fourth trick face down. (♦5-♦2-♦J-♦A)

Q. What will West do after winning the ♦A?

A. Lead a spade.

- West will follow East's line of defense, hoping to establish a spade winner before South can establish a diamond winner.
- Since East led the ♠J, showing the ♠10, West can lead the ♠7 at this point.

Turn the fifth trick face down. (**♠7-♠A-♠9-♠4**)

Q. What will happen if declarer leads another diamond from dummy?

A. West will win and lead a spade.

- West takes the ♦K and leads another spade.
- Declarer loses a spade trick, a heart trick, and two diamond tricks . . . down one.

Turn all the cards face up so the complete hand is visible.

Q. What must declarer do to avoid being defeated?

A. Lead a diamond immediately after ruffing the first trick.

- Declarer must go about establishing a diamond winner before giving the defenders an opportunity to establish a spade winner.
- Let's see how this works.
- West leads the ♣A and declarer ruffs the first trick.

Turn the first trick face down. (**♣A-♣2-♣6-♥3**)

- Declarer now leads the ♦J right away. Suppose West plays low and East wins this with ♦K.

Turn the second trick face down. (**♦J-♦3-♦5-♦K**)

- West leads the ♠J, which declarer wins in dummy with the ♠K.

Turn the third trick face down. (♠J-♠2-♠5-♠K)

- Declarer leads the ♦10 from dummy, which West wins with the ♦A.

Turn the fourth trick face down. (♦10-♦2-♦6-♦A)

- West can lead another spade, which is won by North.

Turn the fifth trick face down. (♠7-♠A-♠9-♠4)

- Declarer wins the race. Declarer can play dummy's ♦Q and discard the spade loser.
- Now declarer can lead hearts.
- Declarer loses two diamond tricks and the ♥A, but that's all.

A Closer Look at Preemptive Opening Bids

Leave the South hand face up on the table. Take the cards from the North, East, and West hands and sort them into suits. Each student take one suit. Focus on the South hand remaining on the table.



Spades:
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs:

SOUTH
♠ 8 4 2
♥ K Q J 9 8 7 5 3
♦ J 6
♣ —

W	N	E	S
P	P	4	♥

Q. South is non vulnerable on this hand. If South opens 4♥ and the opponents were to double for penalty, what would be the penalty if partner couldn't provide any tricks?

A. 500 points.

- Assuming the opponents hold the ♥A but the five missing hearts divide reasonably—perhaps 2-2-1—South should have seven playing tricks with hearts as the trump suit.
- Down three doubled and non vulnerable is 500 points ($100 + 200 + 200$).



Would the loss of 500 points necessarily be a disastrous result for North-South? Take a moment to discuss this with the others at your table.

Q. If partner can't contribute any tricks in the 4♥ contract, what does that imply about the opponents offensive possibilities if left room to find their best contract?

A. They can likely make a game or a slam.

- If you have no tricks on defense and partner has no tricks, the opponents can make a small slam, or even a grand slam.
- Even if partner has one or two tricks that are of no value to you in 4♥—the ♣K and ♣Q, for example—the opponents are still likely to make at least a game level contract.

Q. What is the approximate value of a game for the opponents?

A. 500 points.

- If the opponents are non vulnerable and bid and make a contract of 5♣, for example, they will receive a score of 400 points in duplicate-style scoring—a trick score of 100 plus a bonus of 300 for the non vulnerable game.
- If the opponents are vulnerable and bid and make a contract of 5♣, for example, they will receive a score of 600 points in duplicate-style scoring—a trick score of 100 plus a bonus of 500 for the non vulnerable game.
- The average value of the opponents' game is approximately 500 points $(400 + 600)/2$.
- Even in rubber bridge, where the bonus isn't awarded until the rubber is complete, the value is approximately the same. The rubber bonus is either 500 or 700 points, and part of this can be attributed to each game that is made.

Q. If your side is vulnerable and you are doubled, how many tricks could you afford to go down and lose only 500 points?

A. Two.

- The penalty for being defeated two tricks when doubled and vulnerable is 500 points ($200 + 300$).

- The theory behind preemptive opening bids is that you can afford to ‘sacrifice’ up to 500 points if the opponents can make at least a game if left to play in their best contract.
- The guideline for making a preemptive opening bid is often referred to as the *Rule of 500* or the *Rule of Two and Three*.

Rule of 500 (Rule of Two and Three)

When making a preemptive opening bid, you can afford to overbid by:

- *two* tricks when your side is vulnerable since the penalty would be 500 points if you are doubled;
- *three* tricks when your side is non vulnerable since the penalty would still be only 500 points if you are doubled.

Q. What is the point in *overbidding* when making a preemptive opening bid?

A. To take room away from the opponents.

- You are making a descriptive bid—showing a long suit and a weak hand—so that partner will have an idea of how to respond. Partner can assume that you have overbid by approximately two tricks when vulnerable and three tricks when non vulnerable.
- You have taken away room from the opponents and they may then misjudge the auction, bidding too little or too much, or landing in the wrong denomination.
- If partner has a couple of tricks—enough to prevent the opponents from making game or slam—then you may make your contract or suffer only a small defeat.



Spades:

Hearts: Take away the ♡Q; add the ♡A.

Diamonds:

Clubs:

SOUTH

♠	8 4 2
♥	A K J 9 8 7 5 3
♦	J 6
♣	—

NORTH **SOUTH**

4♥

Q. Suppose you are vulnerable. What would be your opening bid with this hand?

A. 4♥.

- If the five missing hearts are evenly divided (2-2-1), you should take eight tricks with no help from partner. That's down two . . . falling within the *Rule of 500*.

Q. What if you were non vulnerable and had an opportunity to open the bidding?

A. 4♥.

- You don't need to bid beyond the game level just to meet the *Rule of 500*. After all, you may be able to make exactly 4♥ if partner comes up with a couple of tricks and you don't want to miss the game bonus.



Spades:

Hearts: Take away the ♥J.

Diamonds:

Clubs: Add a low club.

SOUTH
♠ 8 4 2
♥ A K 9 8 7 5
♦ 3
♣ J 6
♦ 2

NORTH SOUTH
3♥

Q. What would be your opening bid with this hand if your side is non vulnerable?

A. 3♥.

- With a good seven-card suit, you usually make a preemptive opening bid at the three level.
- If the six missing hearts are reasonably evenly divided among the remaining three hands—3-2-1 perhaps—you can expect to take at least six tricks with this hand, so it falls within the *Rule of 500* guideline.

Q. Would you open this hand 3♥ if you were vulnerable?

A. Maybe.

- This is a judgment call.
- You can take the optimistic view that this hand will be worth seven playing tricks if the missing hearts are divided 2-2-2 around the table.
- Or, you can take a more pessimistic view that you could go for a penalty of 800 or 1100 if the missing hearts are unfavorably divided—perhaps with one opponent holding ♥Q-J-10-6.
- Most players would favor 3♥ over passing, feeling that the potential gain outweighs the risk. Even if the opponents could collect 800 or 1100, they are more likely to misjudge the situation and extract the maximum penalty. Given the limited amount of room left for them to explore, they are more likely to underbid or overbid.



Spades: Take away a low spade.
Hearts: Take away the ♠A; add a low heart.
Diamonds: Add the ♦A.
Clubs:

SOUTH
♠ 8 4
♥ K 9 8 7 5 3 2
♦ A J 6
♣ 2

NORTH **SOUTH**
Pass(?)

Q. What would you call with this hand in first or second position?

A. Pass/3♥.

- The suit isn't very good and it's difficult to estimate how many playing tricks this hand is worth.
- It would be very risky to open 3♥ if your side is vulnerable. You could easily go for a penalty of 800 or more points.
- Also, the more high cards you have outside your suit—the ♦A and ♦J on this hand—the less likely that the opponents can make a game or slam. With this hand, you could go for a penalty of 800 or more when the opponents can't even make a game.
- Some players might open 3♥ if non vulnerable. They would take the optimistic view that, if partner has a couple of low hearts and there is an entry to partner's hand, they might be able to get five or six tricks from the heart suit by leading toward the ♥K. Together with the ♦A, the hand might fall within the guideline of the *Rule of 500*... difficult to judge.
- Partner might expect a better suit if you do open 3♥ and may misjudge what to do.
- If you pass, you are likely to get an opportunity to show your hearts later in the auction.

Q. What about third position?

A. Pass, 3♥, 1♥.

- Once partner has passed, you have more freedom to exercise your imagination.
- You could pass, but most players would take some action with this hand on the assumption that the opponents are quite likely to have a game contract since partner didn't have enough to open the bidding.
- You could start with a preemptive opening of 3♥—even vulnerable—or you might try a *light* opening bid of 1♥ since you do have the ♦A-J on the side. It's very much a judgment call. You have the tools available and need to decide which one best fits the situation.



Q. What about fourth position?

A. Pass.

- In fourth position you have the additional option of passing the hand out, so you rarely start with a preemptive opening bid. Only if you think you can make your contract and keep the opponents out of the auction at the same time would you open with a preemptive bid in fourth chair.
- This hand doesn't qualify since you have no idea if you can take nine tricks with hearts as trumps and you might simply be giving the opponents another chance to get into the auction.

Spades:

SOUTH

♠ 8 4

Hearts: Take away four low hearts.

♥ K 9 8

Diamonds: Add the ♦K and three low diamonds.

♦ A K J 6 4 3 2

Clubs:

♣ 2

NORTH SOUTH

1♦

Q. You're the dealer. What's your call?

A. 1♦.

- Although you have a good seven-card suit, this hand qualifies as a normal one-level opening bid.
- You don't want to preempt your own side out of a constructive auction.
- With this hand, you might belong in a partscore of 2♦, a game contract of 3NT, or even a slam. Give the partnership the maximum amount of bidding room to explore the possibilities.



Spades:

SOUTH

♠ 8 4

Hearts: Take away the ♡K and a low heart.

♥ 9

Diamonds: Add two low diamonds.

♦ AKJ765432

Clubs:

♣ 2

NORTH SOUTH

5♦

Q. What is your call with this hand?

A. 5♦.

- With only four missing diamonds, this hand is worth about nine playing tricks.
- Although this hand could qualify as a one level opening bid—8 high-card points plus 5 length points—it has no outside strength and opening 1♦ would leave lots of room for the opponents to compete to their best contract.
- Opening 5♦ would satisfy the *Rule of 500* whether non vulnerable or vulnerable. Non vulnerable, you would expect to go down at most two tricks if doubled for a penalty of 300 points (100 + 200). Vulnerable, if you went down two tricks doubled the penalty would be only 500 points (200 + 300).

Conclusion

- Preemptive opening bids add a whole new dimension to the game. If used judiciously, there is very little risk involved.
- When you have a good suit and little defense outside, an opening preemptive bid will be very descriptive for partner and very obstructive for the opponents.
- Provided you keep an eye on the vulnerability, the guideline of the *Rule of 500*, and your position at the table, you can make effective use of this tool.

Hand 3-2 - Opening with a Preempt at the Three Level

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 3-2. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		3♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

HAND: 3-2 **DEALER:** EAST **VUL:** N-S

NORTH
♠ K 8 4
♥ A 7 6
♦ Q 5 3
♣ A 8 4 3

WEST
♠ Q 7 2
♥ K Q 8 5 2
♦ 4
♣ K 9 5 2

SOUTH
♠ A 9 6 3
♥ J 9 4
♦ 9 7
♣ Q J 10 7

EAST
♠ J 10 5
♥ 10 3
♦ A K J 10 8 6 2
♣ 6

DECLARER: East
OPENING LEAD: ♣Q by South

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the East hand.

Q. Approximately how many playing tricks is the East hand worth?

A. Six or seven.

- Assuming the six missing diamonds are reasonably evenly divided among the other three hands—2-2-2 or 3-2-1—East should lose at most one diamond trick.
- East may lose no diamond tricks if the ♦Q falls singleton or doubleton.
- East has no playing tricks outside the diamond suit.

Q. What could East open?

A. 3♦.

- With less than the values for an opening bid but 6-7 playing tricks in diamonds, East should open 3♦.
- This satisfies the *Rule of 500*. East is non vulnerable and won't be defeated more than three tricks even if the ♦Q doesn't fall.

Q. Would East make the same bid if vulnerable?

A. Yes/Maybe.

- If the ♦Q falls, East has seven playing tricks, so it is reasonable to assume that the penalty is unlikely to be greater than 500 points if the opponents were to double the 3♦ opening.
- A further point in favor of opening 3♦ would be that North-South are vulnerable on this hand, making the risk worth taking.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What call would South make after the 3♦ opening?

A. Pass.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What would West respond to the 3♦ opening bid?

A. Pass.

- East has described a weak hand which is likely to take about six tricks with diamonds as trumps. West has no reason to take the partnership any higher.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What would North call when the 3♦ bid is followed by two passes?

A. Pass.

- Although North has enough to open the bidding at the one level, it would be dangerous to bring the partnership into the auction at the three level.
- With length in East's suit and only three-card support for both majors, North's hand isn't very suitable for a takeout double.

An experienced player might suggest a 'balancing' 3NT call with the North hand. That's a reasonable choice, although it carries a high level of risk. On the actual hand, North might fare well in notrump if East leads diamonds, but might be defeated two tricks if East chooses to lead a heart. Preemptive opening bids sometimes propel the opponents into contracts they wouldn't usually reach . . . for better or worse.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose East is declarer in a contract of 3♦. Who makes the opening lead?

A. South.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What would South lead?

A. ♣Q.

- South could start with the ♣Q, top of a sequence.



Put the ♣Q on the table in front of South and turn the remaining North-South cards face down. Focus on the East hand. After the lead of the ♣Q how would East plan to make the contract? Take a moment to discuss with the others at your table how the play is likely to go.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the hand with the others at the table.

Q. How many losers does East have in a contract of 3♦?

- A. Five.
- There are two spade losers, a heart loser, a diamond loser, and a club loser.

Q. Declarer needs to eliminate a loser. Which suit offers the best opportunity?

- A. Diamonds.
- There's nothing that can be done about the losers in spades, hearts, and clubs if the defenders choose to take their high cards in those suits.
 - In diamonds, declarer can hope to avoid losing a trick to the ♦Q.

Q. Should declarer plan to play the ♦A-K hoping the ♦Q will fall or take the finesse?

- A. Finesse.
- When declarer is missing the queen of a suit and has a choice between playing the Ace and King or taking a finesse, the basic guideline is *eight ever, nine never*.

Eight Ever, Nine Never

- When missing the queen in a combined holding of nine or more cards in a suit, play the Ace and King—hoping the Queen will fall singleton or doubleton —when there is no clue to the opponents' distribution from the bidding or play.
- With eight or fewer combined cards, take the finesse for the missing queen, if possible, when there is no clue about the location of the queen from the bidding or play.

If a student isn't convinced that taking the finesse in this situation is the better play, you can point out that the odds on the finesse are about 6-5. It works in the six cases when South holds ♦9-7, ♦9-5, ♦9-3, ♦7-5, ♦7-3, or ♦5-3. It loses in the five cases when South holds ♦Q, ♦Q-9, ♦Q-7, ♦Q-5, ♦Q-3. In all other cases it doesn't matter. (The actual percentage advantage is only 4% since all cases aren't equally probable.)

Q. What will East need to do before taking the diamond finesse?

A. Create an entry to dummy in the heart suit.

- Declarer needs to lead a diamond from the dummy.
- With no sure entry to dummy, the heart suit offers the possibility of creating an entry to dummy.
- Let's see how the play would go.

Turn all the cards face up and put the ♣Q in front of South as the opening lead.

Q. Should declarer put the ♣K on the ♣Q?

A. No.

- It is very unlikely that South holds the ♣A because players rarely lead *away* from an ace on opening lead against a suit contract.
- If North holds the ♣A, there's no advantage in covering the ♣Q with the ♣K—although it won't make much difference on the actual hand.

This might seem like a minor point but students are often uncertain about what to do in this (common) situation.

- Declarer plays the ♣2 from dummy, North likely plays the ♣8 as an encouraging signal, and South plays a low club.

Turn the first trick face down. (♣Q-♣2-♣8-♣6)

- Suppose South continues with the ♣J, declarer again plays a low club from dummy, North plays a low club, and South ruffs this trick with a low diamond.

Turn the second trick face down. (♣J-♣5-♣3-♦2)

- Declarer now needs to cross over to dummy. Declarer starts by leading a low heart, South plays low, the ♥Q is played from dummy, and North wins the ♥A.

Turn the third trick face down. (♥3-♥4-♥Q-♥A)

- The defenders might take their spade winners at this point—with declarer hoping that they can't also get a spade ruff—but whatever they choose to do, declarer will eventually reach dummy with the ♠K and can take the diamond finesse.
- On the actual hand, the finesse works and declarer can then draw the remaining trumps.
- Declarer gets seven diamond tricks to go with the heart trick and an eventual spade trick, making 3♦.

Conclusion

- Preemptive opening bids serve a twofold purpose. They make the auction difficult for the opponents while also describing opener's hand to partner. While opener should be prepared to go down if left to play the contract that won't always be the case. Opener has overbid by two or three tricks but partner may hold enough strength to give opener an opportunity to make the contract. Once the auction is over, your task is to try to make the contract.

Hand 3-3 - Opening the Bidding in Fourth Chair

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 3-3. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	3♣ (?)	3NT (?)	Pass
Pass		Pass	

HAND: 3-3 **DEALER:** SOUTH **VUL:** E-W

NORTH
♠ 7 6 4
♥ J 8 3
♦ 4
♣ K Q J 9 8 3

WEST
♠ K 5 3
♥ A 9 4
♦ K 8 7 5 2
♣ 5 2

SOUTH
♠ A J 10 8
♥ Q 10 5 2
♦ 10 3
♣ 7 6 4

EAST
♠ Q 9 2
♥ K 7 6
♦ A Q J 9 6
♣ A 10

DECLARER: East
OPENING LEAD: ♣ 4 by South

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the South hand.

Q. Does South have enough to open the bidding?

A. No.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. Does West have enough to open the bidding in second position?

A. No.

- West's hand isn't enough for an opening bid in second position— $10 + 5 + 3 = 18$.



Focus on the North hand. Does North have the right type of hand to do something other than pass? Take a moment to discuss North's call with the others at your table.

Q. Does North's hand qualify as a preemptive opening bid of 3♣ if following the usual criteria?

A. No.

- North has only a six-card suit.
- North's hand is worth about five playing tricks.
- North-South are non vulnerable but the penalty for down four doubled would be 800 ($100 + 200 + 200 + 300$) which is more than the *Rule of 500*.

Q. Are there any factors that might justify opening 3♣ with the North hand?

A. Yes.

- Partner has already passed, so North doesn't have to be concerned that South will want to conduct a constructive auction.
- Since partner has passed and North has a weak hand, the likelihood is high that East-West can make at least a game contract.
- North-South aren't vulnerable but East-West are. Even a penalty of 800 points would not be a great disaster. If South can't contribute a trick, East-West can probably make a slam.

- The situation is similar to a light opening bid in third position. The advantages of overbidding tend to outweigh the disadvantages. North might buy the contract; North might disrupt the opponents' auction; North might help partner get off to the best opening lead.
- As a general guideline:

Opening Preemptive Bids in Third Position

Since partner has already passed, you can afford to take more liberties with preemptive openings in third chair, especially when non vulnerable against vulnerable opponents:

- You might hold only a six-card suit for a three-level preempt
- You might not have a 'good' suit
- Your hand might fall outside the guideline of the *Rule of 500*

Q. Would you make a preemptive opening bid of 3♣ with the North hand if you were in fourth chair?

A. No.

- There's no reason to make an obstructive bid in fourth position since you can simply pass the hand out.



Focus on the East and West hands. How would the auction go if North *passed* in third position? Take a moment to discuss the auction with the others at your table.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss how the auction will continue after three passes.

Q. What would be East's opening call if South, West, and North all passed?

A. 1NT.

- East has a balanced hand and 16 high-card points plus 1 for the five-card suit.

Q. What would West respond to the 1NT opening?

A. 3NT.

- East has a balanced hand with 10 high-card points plus 1 for the five-card suit. That's enough to raise directly to game.
- There's no reason to mention the five-card diamond suit.

Q. What would East do over the 3NT response?

A. Pass.

- Without interference, East-West should have a straightforward auction to 3NT.



Focus again on the East-West hands. Suppose that North opens 3♣ in third chair instead of passing. Take a moment to discuss with the others at the table what call East would make and how would the auction would continue.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss how the auction would continue if North opens 3♣.

Q. What choices would East have if North opened 3♣?

A. Pass, Double, 3♦, 3NT.

- East might pass, but that is very timid with a hand worth 17 points.
- East could make a takeout double. East does have enough strength for a takeout double at the three level and support for the unbid suits.
- East could overcall. East has a good five-card diamond suit and enough strength to come in at the three level.
- East could overcall 3NT. Most partnerships play that a non-jump overcall of 2NT or 3NT shows about the same as an opening 1NT bid. Of course, it's a lot riskier at the three level, especially when partner has already passed.

Q. What contract is East-West likely to reach if East makes a takeout double?

A. 5♦.

- With 10 high-card points and a five-card suit, West should jump to 4♦ in response to the takeout double and East is likely to continue to 5♦.

Q. What contract is East-West likely to reach if East overcalls 3♦?

A. 5♦.

- With five-card support and 10 high-card points, West is likely to raise to the game level.

Q. What contract is East-West likely to reach if East overcalls 3NT?

A. 3NT.

- An overcall of 3NT in this situation has a fairly wide range of about 16-21 points.
- West might be a little nervous about passing 3NT but, even if East has as many as 20 or 21 points, slam is unlikely.

Observation

- You can see how difficult the bidding becomes for East-West if North opens 3♣ instead of passing. The East-West auction is not very comfortable. They may stop too low, get too high, or get to the wrong contract.
- On this hand, East's best choice is probably to overcall 3NT. A takeout double isn't perfect since East has only three-card support for both major suits and the partnership might land in a 4-3 fit. An overcall isn't perfect with only a five-card suit at the three level. 3NT isn't perfect either, with only one stopper in the opponent's suit, but it would be the choice of most experienced players.

Review of the Play and Defense



Focus on the East-West hands. Discuss with the others at your table the likely result if East-West get to a contract of 5♦.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the play in a 5♦ contract.

Q. How many losers do East-West have in a 5♦ contract?

A. Four.

- There are two probable spade losers, a heart loser, and a club loser.
- Even if North-South are unable to get both their spade tricks, 5♦ should be defeated at least one trick.



Focus on the South hand. Suppose East gets to a contract of 3NT and North has not bid during the auction. Discuss with the others at your table which card South is likely to lead.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss South's opening lead against 3NT.

Q. Which card is South likely to lead against 3NT with no clue from the auction?

A. ♠J or ♥2.

- South might lead the ♠J, top of the *interior sequence* in spades.
- If South doesn't want to lead from the spade holding, South might lead the ♥2, fourth highest in that suit.



Put the ♠J in front of the South hand as the opening lead. Discuss with the others at the table how will East fare in a contract of 3NT after this lead.

Give the students a few moments to discuss the play in 3NT after the lead of the ♠J.

Q. How many tricks will declarer take after the lead of the ♠J?

A. Nine or ten.

- Declarer will get at least one spade trick, two heart tricks, five diamond tricks, and the ♣A.
- Declarer might even make an overtrick by winning the first trick with the ♠Q and later leading toward the ♠K.



Replace the ♠J in front of the South hand with the ♥2 as the opening lead. Discuss with the others at the table how will East fare in a contract of 3NT after this lead.

Give the students a few moments to discuss the play in 3NT after the lead of the ♥2.

Q. How many tricks will declarer take after the lead of the ♥2?

A. Nine.

- Declarer has two heart tricks, five diamond tricks, and the ♣A.
- Declarer can promote a winner in the spade suit for the ninth trick.



Focus on the South hand. Discuss with the others at your table which card South is likely to lead against a 3NT contract if North opened the bidding 3♣.

Give the students a few moments to discuss the opening lead against 3NT.

Q. Which card will South lead against 3NT if North opened 3♣?

A. ♣7, ♣6, or ♣4.

- South will lead a club, partner's suit, rather than a spade or heart.
- The choice of which club to lead depends on the partnership methods.
- Some partnerships lead the *top of nothing* in partner's suit, in which case the opening lead would be the ♣7.
- Some partnerships lead the *middle* of three low cards in partner's suit, planning to follow with a higher card (*up*) so that partner will know they don't have a doubleton, and then the lower card (*down*). This is referred to as *MUD*—Middle, Up, Down. In that case, South would lead the ♣6.
- Some partnerships lead low from three or more cards in partner's suit. In that case, South would lead the ♣4.



Place the ♣4 in front of the South hand as the opening lead. Discuss with the others at the table how will East fare in a contract of 3NT after this lead.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the play in 3NT after the lead of a club.

Q. How many tricks will East make in a 3NT contract if South leads a club?

A. Eight (or six or nine).

- After the lead of a club, the defenders can always defeat the contract if they are careful.
- Declarer has only eight sure tricks—two hearts, five diamonds, and a club.
- To develop a ninth trick, declarer needs to lead a spade. When declarer leads a spade, South will have the opportunity to play the ♠A and lead another club to defeat the contract.
- Declarer will likely hold up with the ♠A on the first round, hoping that North started with a seven-card club suit and that South started with only two clubs.

- Declarer might then try leading a low spade toward dummy immediately, hoping that South will duck or that South has no more clubs to lead.
- If South does hop up with the ♠A, the defenders can now defeat the contract by three tricks—the ♠A and five club tricks.
- Alternatively, declarer might try taking all the diamond and heart winners before leading a spade.
- As long as South keeps a club to go along with the ♠A and three hearts, declarer is still defeated one trick.
- If both defenders discard too many hearts when declarer runs the diamonds—or South discards the remaining club—declarer can make the contract.

It is probably best to stick with the main variation in which declarer wins the second club and leads a spade. This makes the point without getting into the complexities of the North-South discards on the run of the diamonds.



Focus on the North-South hands. Discuss with the others at your table what is likely to happen if North is left to play in a contract of 3♣.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the play in 3♣.

Q. How many losers does North have in a contract of 3♣?

A. Six.

- There are two spade losers, two heart losers, and a diamond loser. Assuming the missing clubs are reasonably divided, there is only one club loser.

Q. Can North eliminate any of the losers?

A. Yes.

- North can avoid losing two spade tricks by taking a repeated finesse.

You may need to walk through the play in the spade suit to avoid two losers if the students are unfamiliar with this combination.

Observation

- By opening **3♣**, not only does North make the auction difficult for the opponents, but North also gets South off to the winning lead if the opponents do settle in 3NT.
- Even if North is left to play in **3♣**, perhaps doubled, North can escape for down one . . . a small loss when compared to the potential gain of defeating the opponents in a 3NT contract.

Introducing the Weak Two-Bid

Leave the North hand face up on the table. Take the cards from the East, South, and West hands and sort them into suits. Each person at the table take charge of one suit. Focus on the North hand remaining on the table.



Spades:
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ 7 6 4
♥ J 8 3
♦ 4
♣ K Q J 9 8 3

W	N	E	S
P			
P	3♣		

Q. How many playing tricks is this hand worth?

- A. Five.
- With a reasonable division of the missing clubs you expect to lose only one trick in that suit.

Q. Why is this hand not ideal for an opening bid of **3♣** in first or second position?

- A. Six-card suit.
- The club suit is only six cards in length. Ideally, a preemptive opening at the three level promises a seven-card suit.
 - Even non vulnerable, there aren't enough playing tricks to satisfy the *Rule of 500*. If **3♣** were doubled, it could possibly be defeated for a penalty of 800 points (100 + 200 + 200 + 300).

Q. If you were non vulnerable and wanted to make an obstructive bid with this hand, what would be the appropriate level according to the *Rule of 500*?

A. Two level.

- Ideally, you would want to open this hand **2♣** since that wouldn't risk more than a penalty of 500 points if you are doubled (100 + 200 + 200).

Q. Why can't you open **2♣ with this hand?**

A. Strong and forcing.

- An opening bid of **2♣** in standard methods shows a strong hand and is a forcing bid. That is why you would have to stretch and open **3♣** with this hand.



Spades:

Hearts: Add the ♠K, ♠Q, and ♠10.

Diamonds:

Clubs: Take away the ♣K, ♣Q, and ♣J.

NORTH

♠ 7 6 4

♥ K Q J 10 8 3

♦ 4

♣ 9 8 3

W N E S
2♥

Q. If the two level were available for obstructive opening bids, what would be the ideal opening bid with this hand when non vulnerable?

A. **2♥**.

- With five playing tricks, a good suit, and no outside strength, an opening bid of **2♥** would be the appropriate level since it would satisfy the *Rule of 500* even if you were doubled and defeated three tricks (100 + 200 + 200).
- An opening bid of **2♥** on this type of hand would be descriptive, showing a good six-card suit with a weak hand.
- It would also be obstructive, since it would take away the entire one level and most of the two level from the opponents.
- Most modern partnerships have adopted the style of *weak two-bids*:

Weak Two-Bids

An opening bid of **2♦**, **2♥**, or **2♣** shows:

- A good six-card suit
- A weak hand, typically 5-11 high-card points

All strong hands (22 or more points) are opened with an artificial **2♣** bid.



Spades: Add the ♠A, ♠K, and ♠J.
Hearts: Take away the ♥K, ♥Q, and ♥J.
Diamonds:
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ A K J 7 6 4
♥ 10 8 3
♦ 4
♣ 9 8 3

W N E S
2♠

Q. Playing weak two-bids, what would you call with this hand as dealer?

A. 2♠.

- A good six-card suit and less than the values for an opening bid at the one level makes this hand ideal for an opening bid of 2♠.
- Weak two-bids can be opened in any chair, although they are rarely used in fourth chair since you have the option of passing the hand out.

Q. Would it make any difference if your side is vulnerable rather than non vulnerable?

A. Yes/No.

- Opening 2♠ with this hand would be riskier when vulnerable since there's no guarantee that you won't be doubled and be penalized 800 or more points.
- However, most players would accept the risk and open 2♠ even when vulnerable.
- If the spades are reasonably divided around the table, there's a good chance that you might take six tricks even if partner doesn't hold the ♠Q. It might fall, or you might be able to take a finesse if East holds the ♠Q.
- You don't have to open 2♠ just because you have a weak hand and a six-card suit. It's an option you have when playing weak two-bids. You must exercise your judgment about whether or not it is worth the risk.



Spades: Take away the ♠A; add a low spade.
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ K J 7 6 4 2
♥ 10 8 3
♦ 4
♣ 9 8 3

W N E S
Pass

Q. Does this hand qualify as a weak two-spade opening bid?

A. No.

- The six-card suit would not generally be considered 'good'. Most partnerships prefer two of the top three honors or three of the top five honors.
- There are only four high-card points.



Spades: Take away a low spade; add the ♠A.
Hearts: Take away a low heart; add the ♥A.
Diamonds:
Clubs:

NORTH

♠ A K J 7 6 4
♥ A 10 8
♦ 4
♣ 9 8 3

W N E S
1♠

Q. What would be the opening call with this hand?

A. 1♠.

- With 12 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit, this hand qualifies as a one-level opening bid.



Spades: Add the ♠Q.
Hearts: Add the ♥K.
Diamonds:
Clubs: Take away three low clubs; add the ♣A.

NORTH

♠ A K Q J 7 6 4
♥ A K 10 8
♦ 4
♣ A

W N E S
Pass

Q. What would be the opening call with this hand?

A. 2♣.

- When playing weak two-bids, all strong hands are opened with an artificial 2♣ bid.
- If you were to open 2♠ partner might pass, thinking you have a weak hand.
- Responder generally makes the *artificial waiting response* of 2♦, giving opener an opportunity to describe the hand.
- Opener would then rebid 2♠, showing a strong two-bid in spades.

Conclusion

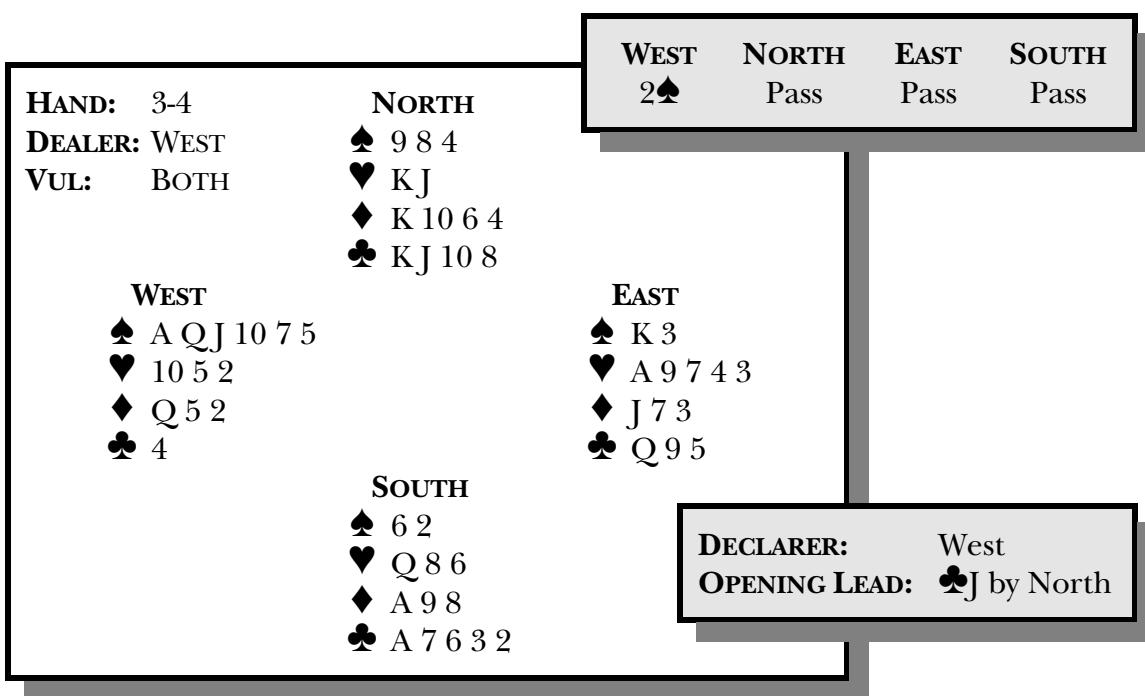
- The weak two-bid is an effective form of obstructive bid that is used by many partnerships.
- You don't give up much by using the weak two-bid along with the strong artificial 2♣ bid and the 2♦ waiting response. You can still show a strong two-bid in a major suit starting at the two level . . . and you have freed the 2♦, 2♥, and 2♠ openings for use as obstructive bids.

Hand 3-4 - Opening a Weak Two-Bid

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 3-4. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?



Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What call does West make in first chair?

A. 2♠.

- West has a good six-card suit but not enough to open the bidding at the one level.
- Even though East-West are vulnerable, most players would open 2♠. Even if East doesn't hold the ♠K, West might be able to avoid the loss of a spade trick by taking a successful finesse against South. Also, the ♦Q might produce a trick.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. Does North have enough to enter the auction over the 2♠ bid?

A. No.

- North doesn't have enough for a sound opening bid at the one level. Coming in at the two level would be much too dangerous.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What does East respond to the 2♠ opening?

A. Pass.

- West is showing a weak hand of about 5-11 points, so East should settle for partscore . . . and wish West luck when putting down the dummy.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. Does South have enough to enter the auction?

A. No.

- South is in the *balancing* position and can assume North has some strength because East-West have stopped in partscore. However, South doesn't have enough to risk pushing North-South to the three level, especially with only three-card support for hearts.

Review of the Play and Defense

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What would North lead against a contract of 2♠?

A. ♣J, ♦4.

- North has no clear-cut opening lead against 2♠.
- North might start with the ♣J, top of the *interior sequence*.
- North might lead the ♦4, fourth highest in that suit.
- North might also try the ♥K, top of the doubleton, or might lead a trump.

Place the ♣J in front of North as the opening lead and turn the remaining North-South cards face down. Assume that West is declarer in a 2♠ contract. Discuss with the others at your table how declarer should plan to make the contract.

Q. How many losers does declarer have in a contract of 2♠?

A. Six.

- West has two heart losers, three diamond losers, and a club loser.

Q. What options does declarer have for eliminating a loser?

A. Promoting a diamond winner; discarding a diamond loser.

- Declarer could hope to establish a winner in the diamond suit either by leading toward dummy's ♦J or leading toward the ♦Q, hoping one defender has both the ♦A and ♦K. If the ♦A and ♦K are in different hands, however, this won't work.
- The alternative is to try to establish an extra winner in the heart suit on which to discard a diamond loser. This will succeed if the missing hearts are divided 3-2 . . . provided declarer keeps an entry to the dummy.
- Let's see how the play might go.

Turn all the cards face up. Put the ♣J in front of the North hand as the opening lead.

Q. If declarer plays a low club from dummy, should South play the ♣A?

A. No.

- If North holds the ♣K—as on the actual hand—there is no need to play the ♣A since the ♣J will win the trick.
- If West holds the ♣K, then playing the ♣A will give declarer two tricks in the suit, one with the ♣K and one with the ♣Q.
- Even if West holds the singleton ♣K, playing the ♣A is unlikely to gain a trick for the defense since the ♣Q will be an established trick on which declarer can discard a loser.
- South's best choice is to play a low club.

Turn the first trick face down. (♣J-♣5-♣2-♣4).

- Assume North continues with the ♣10, declarer plays low from dummy again and ruffs this trick.

Turn the second trick face down. (♣10-♣9-♣3-♠5).

- Declarer now draws one round of trump by playing a spade to dummy's ♠K.

Turn the third trick face down. (♠7-♠4-♠K-♠2).

- Declarer draws a second round of trump by playing a spade to the ♠A.

Turn the fourth trick face down. (♠3-♠6-♠A-♠8).

- Declarer draws a third round of trump with the ♠Q to extract the defenders' last spade. Declarer can discard dummy's ♣Q and South can discard a club.

Turn the fifth trick face down. (♠Q-♠9-♣Q-♣6).

- Now declarer leads a low heart and plays low from dummy. Declarer needs to keep the ♠A as an entry for later.

Turn the sixth trick face down. (♥2-♥J-♥3-♥6).

- If North now leads a diamond, the defenders can take their two diamond winners but West's ♦Q will be established as a winner. To avoid this, suppose North leads another club. Declarer discards a low diamond from dummy, South follows suit, and declarer ruffs.

Turn the seventh trick face down. (♣8-♦3-♣7-♠10).

- Declarer plays another heart and again plays low from the dummy. Declarer had to lose two heart tricks anyway, so declarer is simply *taking the losses early* to preserve an entry to dummy.

Turn the eighth trick face down. (♥5-♥K-♥4-♥8).

Q. What can the defenders do at this point?

A. Take their ♦A and ♦K.

- The defenders are left with little choice. They have to take their ♦A and ♦K or risk losing them. That will establish the ♦Q as declarer's eighth trick.
- If the defenders were to lead another club, declarer could ruff, play a heart to dummy's ♠A, and discard two diamond losers on the established heart winners . . . making an overtrick.

You can skip this next point if short on time.

Turn all the diamonds face up and turn all the other cards face down. The layout in the diamond suit is what is sometimes referred to as a *frozen suit*. Take a few moments to discuss with the others at your table why this suit is considered *frozen*.

Give the students a couple of minutes to examine the diamond suit.

Q. Suppose North leads this suit. How many tricks will each side get in the suit?

A. North-South get 3. East-West get 1.

- If North leads diamonds, North-South can establish three tricks in the suit but they have to give one trick to East-West.
- It will be similar if South first leads the suit. North-South can establish three tricks in the suit but only by giving a trick to East-West.

You might need to walk through the play of the diamond suit if North leads a low diamond, making sure that a low diamond is played from dummy, not the ♦J.

Q. Suppose West first leads the suit. How many tricks will each side get?

A. North-South get 4. East-West get 0.

- If West leads a low diamond, North plays second hand low, and South wins dummy's ♦J with the ♦A.
- South can then lead a diamond trapping West's ♦Q.
- It will be similar if the first diamond is led from dummy. South plays low, and North captures West's ♦Q with the ♦K, leaving the ♦J trapped in the dummy.
- In summary, if North-South are first to lead the suit, East-West always get a trick; if East-West are first to lead the suit, North-South get all the tricks. Neither side wants to lead the suit since it will give the other side an extra suit. That is why the suit is *frozen*—neither side wants to break the ice.

Conclusion

- Preemptive opening bids serve a twofold purpose. They are descriptive, often allowing the partnership to reach its best contract once responder has knowledge about opener's hand. They are also obstructive, taking room away from the opponents and making it difficult for them to find their best contract.
- If the partnership uses *weak two-bids*, obstructive opening bids can be made at the two level or higher. With a good six-card suit, you can open a weak two-bid in any suit except clubs. With a good seven-card suit, you can open at the three level. With an eight-card suit, you can start at the four level.
- When considering a preemptive opening bid, keep an eye on the vulnerability and your position at the table.

Lesson 4 - Strong Opening Bids

Hand 4-1 - Opening Two Notrump

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 4-1. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy-style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2NT Pass	Pass	6NT

HAND: 4-1 **NORTH**
DEALER: NORTH ♠ K J 9 4
VUL: NONE ♥ K Q 9
 ♦ A K 7
 ♣ A 7 3

WEST
♠ 8 7 5 2
♥ 5 4 2
♦ 3
♣ K Q 10 9 8

EAST
♠ 6 3
♥ 8 7 6 3
♦ Q 9 6 5
♣ 5 4 2

SOUTH
♠ A Q 10
♥ A J 10
♦ J 10 8 4 2
♣ J 6

DECLARER: North
OPENING LEAD: ♦ 5 by East

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What would North open the bidding?

A. 2NT or 1♣.

- The partnership has to agree on the range for an opening 2NT bid as well as an opening 1NT. North has a balanced hand with 20 high-card points.
- Partnerships that use a range of 16-18 points for 1NT usually use a range of 22-24 points for opening 2NT. In that case, this hand would be opened 1♣ since it is too strong for 1NT and not strong enough for 2NT.
- Partnerships that use a range of 15-17 points for 1NT usually use a range of 20-21 points for opening 2NT.
- Let's assume you are using a range of 20-21 points for an opening 2NT, in which case this hand would be a perfect 2NT opening bid.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What would East call?

A. Pass.



Focus on the South hand. Take a moment to discuss with the others at your table what South should respond to the 2NT opening bid.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss South's response.

Q. What is the value of the South hand?

A. 14 points.

- South has 13 high-card points and can add 1 point for the five-card suit.

Q. What does South know about the combined strength of the partnership hands?

A. 34-35 points.

- North's 20-21 points combined with South's 14 points gives the partnership a combined total of 34 or 35 points.

Q. What level does the partnership belong?

A. Small slam.

- The partnership has more than the 33 combined points usually required for a small slam and fewer than the 37 points required for a grand slam.

Q. Is South's hand balanced?

A. Yes.

- 5-3-3-2 is a balanced hand pattern.

Q. With 34-35 combined points and two balanced hands, what contract is likely to be best?

A. 6NT.

- Keep it simple. When responder knows how high and where the partnership belongs, responder can take the partnership directly to the best spot.

Q. Does South need to know how many aces the partnership holds before bidding slam?

A. No.

- With 34-35 combined points, the partnership can't be missing two aces—8 high-card points—so there's no point in asking for aces.
- If South were to ask for aces and found the partnership was missing one ace, South would bid 6NT anyway.
- If South were to ask for aces and found the partnership had all the aces, South would still bid 6NT since the partnership doesn't have enough combined strength for a grand slam. Even if North-South hold all the aces and kings, there will be some gaps elsewhere.
- It's more likely that the partnership is missing the ace and king in a suit, in which case the defenders might be able to take the first two tricks. There's no easy way to determine if that is the situation and asking about aces and kings is more likely to give away useful information rather than get useful information.

Q. If South did want to inquire about aces, could South bid 4NT?

A. No.

- A response of 4NT is a *quantitative*—invitational—raise, asking opener to pass with a minimum and bid slam with a maximum.
- It is similar to raising 1NT to 2NT to invite opener to game.
- If South were to bid 4NT on this hand, North would pass since North has ‘only’ 20 points. The partnership would then miss the slam contract.

Q. If South wants to ask for aces, what call does South make over 2NT?

A. 4♣.

- A response of 4♣ is the Gerber convention asking partner to show the number of aces held.
- Partner would make the cheapest available bid, 4♦, to show no aces—or all four aces; the next cheapest bid, 4♥, to show one ace; 4♠ to show two aces; 4NT to show three aces. Responder could then ask for kings by bidding 5♣. Any other bid would be a signoff.

Q. Is there any harm in using the Gerber convention to ask for aces?

A. Maybe.

- On the surface, there doesn’t appear to be any harm in asking for aces—even though it isn’t necessary. South plans to bid 6NT after North shows one ace or two aces.
- Going through the Gerber convention, however, gives information to the opponents and may also give them an opportunity to enter the auction.

Q. What might West do if South were to bid 4♣?

A. Double.

- A double of a high-level artificial bid is *lead-directing*, not takeout. It suggests strength in the suit doubled or, perhaps, length—looking for a profitable sacrifice.
- On this hand, West might double the 4♣ bid, knowing that North-South aren’t intending to play with clubs as the trump suit. With nothing in the other three suits, West would like to suggest a club lead to partner.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose North is declarer in a contract of 6NT. Who makes the opening lead?

- A. East.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. If the auction were simply 1NT by North and 6NT by South, what would be the opening lead?

- A. ♦5 or ♥3.

- With no information from the auction, West is likely to lead fourth from longest and strongest, the ♦5.
- Another choice might be a heart lead from the four-card suit.

Q. If South bid 4♣ during the auction and West doubled, what suit would East lead?

- A. Clubs.

- When partner has made a *lead-directing* double during the auction you should lead the suit suggested by partner unless you clearly have a better alternative.



Focus on the North hand. Discuss with the others at your table how many tricks North will take in a contract of 6NT if East leads anything except a club.

Give the students a moment to determine how many tricks North can take.

Q. How many sure tricks does North have?

- A. Ten.

- Declarer has four spade tricks, three hearts, two diamonds, and a club.

Q. What suit can North use to develop the two extra winners required?

- A. Diamonds.

- Whether or not East leads a diamond, declarer can develop two extra tricks in that suit by giving up a trick to East's ♦Q.
- Declarer can play the ♦A, ♦K, and a third round of diamonds toward the dummy. Or, declarer can lead the ♦J from dummy, taking a finesse.

Q. How many tricks would North take in 6NT if East were to lead a club?

A. Ten.

- North can't take more than the ten sure tricks before having to give up a trick to East's ♦Q—at which point, East-West will take their established club winners.

6♦ will also be defeated if the defenders lead a club. South's club loser can't be discarded on North's extra spade winner until trumps have been drawn. East will get an opportunity to win a diamond and lead a second club.

Observation

- Bidding is not an exact science. All the partnership can accomplish through the auction is to reach a *reasonable* contract. There's no guarantee that even the best of contracts will make or that the worst of contracts will fail. That will depend on the lie of the cards. Finesses may win or lose; suits may break well or badly.
- On this hand, North-South are likely to succeed in a contract of 6NT if they take a straightforward approach to the best contract possible . . . not necessarily the best possible contract. Unless East is clairvoyant, or gets some help from the auction, East is unlikely to lead a club.

A Closer Look at Opening Balanced Hands

Leave the North hand face up on the table. Take the cards from the East, South, and West hands and sort them into suits. Have each person at the table take charge of one suit. Focus on the North hand remaining on the table.



Spades:
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ K J 9 4
♥ K Q 9
♦ A K 7
♣ A 7 3

NORTH SOUTH
2NT

- Q. If the partnership uses a range of 20-21 points for an opening bid of 2NT, what call would you make with this hand?
- A. 2NT.



Spades: Take away the ♠K and ♠J.
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs: Add the ♣K and ♣10.

NORTH
♠ 9 4
♥ K Q 9
♦ A K 7
♣ A K 10 7 3

NORTH SOUTH
2NT

- Q. What would you open with this hand?

- A. 2NT, 1♣.
- You can add a length point for a five-card suit, even with balanced hands. This hand is worth 20 points—19 high-card points plus 1 length point.
 - You can open 2NT holding a five-card suit.
 - Most players no longer worry about having a *stopper*—Q-x-x or better—in all suits when opening 2NT. A low doubleton is not a deterrent.
 - If you were to open 1♣, you would have an awkward choice of rebid to describe the hand if partner responded 1♦ or 1♥, for example.



Spades: Add the ♠Q.
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs: Take away the ♣K.

NORTH
♠ Q 9 4
♥ K Q 9
♦ A K 7
♣ A 10 7 3

NORTH SOUTH
1♣

Q. What would you open with this hand?

A. 1♣, 1NT.

- If the partnership range is 16-18, then this hand could be opened 1NT.
- The more popular style, however, is to use a range of 15-17 for 1NT, making this hand too strong.
- With a balanced hand too strong for 1NT but not strong enough for 2NT open one-of-a-suit, planning to jump in notrump at your next opportunity.

Q. If you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠, what would you rebid?

A. 2NT.

Q. What range of points does the jump rebid to 2NT show?

A. 18-19.

- Too much for 1NT—18 or more points—and too little for 2NT—19 or less.
- The jump to 2NT is not forcing. Responder can pass with 6 points or fewer.

Q. If you open 1♣ and partner responds 1NT, what would you rebid?

A. 2NT/3NT.

- Assuming the partnership is playing standard methods in which a response of 1NT shows about 6-10 points, the raise to 2NT is invitational, showing 18-19 points.
- If you had a balanced hand with fewer than 15 points, you would pass the 1NT response; if you had a balanced hand and 15-17 points, you would have opened 1NT; if you had a balanced hand and 20-21 points, you would have opened 2NT.
- If the partnership agreement is that a 1NT response to 1♣ shows 8-10—responder would raise to 2♣ with only 6-7—then you would jump right to 3NT with this hand instead of inviting.

Q. If you open 1♣ and partner raises to 2♣, what would you rebid?

A. 2NT.

- Partner's raise shows about 6-10 points, so an invitational rebid of 2NT is enough. Partner can pass with 6-7 points and accept the invitation with 8 or more.



Spades:
Hearts: Take away the ♡K.
Diamonds: Add a low diamond.
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ Q 9 4
♥ Q 9
♦ A K 7 2
♣ A 10 7 3

NORTH SOUTH
1NT

Q. What would you open with this hand?

A. 1NT.

- 15 high-card points and a balanced hand make this ideal for a 1NT opening if the partnership range is 15-17.



Spades:
Hearts: Add the ♡J.
Diamonds: Take away the ♦K.
Clubs:

NORTH
♠ Q 9 4
♥ Q J 9
♦ A 7 2
♣ A 10 7 3

NORTH SOUTH
1♣

Q. What would you open with this hand?

A. 1♣.

- With a balanced hand too weak for 1NT, open the bidding one-of-a-suit.

Q. What would you rebid with this hand if partner responded 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠?

A. 1NT.

- Rebidding notrump at the cheapest available level describes a balanced hand too weak to open 1NT.

Q. What if partner were to respond 1NT?

A. Pass.

- Partner has at most 10 points, so the partnership belongs in partscore.

Q. What if partner were to raise 1♣ to 2♣?

A. Pass.

- Again, partner has at most 10 points, so the partnership belongs in partscore.
- If you were to bid 2NT at this point, you would be showing 18-19 points.



Spades:

Hearts: Take away the ♡Q; add a low heart.

Diamonds:

Clubs:

NORTH

♠ Q 9 4

♥ J 9 2

♦ A 7 2

♣ A 10 7 3

NORTH SOUTH

Pass



Spades: Add the ♠A.

Hearts: Take away a low heart; add the ♥A.

Diamonds: Add the ♦K.

Clubs: Take away two low clubs.

NORTH

♠ A Q 9 4

♥ A J 9

♦ A K 7 2

♣ A 10

NORTH SOUTH

2♣

Q. What would be your call with this hand?

A. 2♣.

- Balanced hands of 22 or more points are opened with an *artificial strong 2♣ bid*.
- The 2♣ bid is forcing and doesn't say anything about clubs. Responder isn't supposed to pass.
- Responder usually makes an *artificial waiting response of 2♦*—waiting for opener to describe the hand.

Q. What would opener rebid with this hand if responder bid 2♦ over the artificial 2♣?

A. 2NT.

- A rebid of 2NT describes a balanced hand of 22-24 points, too strong for 2NT.

Q. Would the 2NT response be forcing?

A. No.

- With the 2NT rebid, opener has limited the hand to 22-24 points. With a balanced hand and only 1 or 2 points, responder can pass.



Spades:

Hearts: Take away a low heart; add the ♠K.

Diamonds:

Clubs:

NORTH
♠ A Q 9 4
♥ A K J
♦ A K 7 2
♣ A 10

NORTH SOUTH
2♣

Q. You're the dealer. What would you open with this hand?

A. 2♣, 3NT.

- This is a balanced hand with 25 high-card points.
- Using the artificial 2♣ opening, *all* balanced hands of 22 or more points are opened 2♣.
- If the partnership didn't use the artificial 2♣ opening, this hand could be opened 3NT, showing 25-27 points. Using the artificial 2♣ opening, an opening bid of 3NT is freed up for other purposes.

There's no need to discuss with the students the meaning of an opening 3NT bid when the partnership uses 2♣ for all strong hands. Some partnerships might use it as an ACOL 3NT (a long running suit with stoppers in the other suits), or a Gambling 3NT (a solid seven-card or longer minor suit with no outside stoppers), or a four-level minor suit preemptive opening (a broken eight-card or longer minor suit).

Q. What would you rebid if partner made a waiting response of 2♦ over the 2♣ opening?

A. 3NT.

- A rebid of 3NT shows a balanced hand of 25-27 points.

Q. Would the 3NT rebid be forcing?

A. No.

- Opener has limited the hand to 25-27 points, so responder can pass if 3NT appears to be the best spot.



Spades:

Take away a low spade; add the ♠K.

Hearts:

NORTH
♠ A K Q 9
♥ A K J
♦ A K 7 2
♣ A Q

Diamonds:

Clubs:

Take away a low club; add the ♣Q

NORTH SOUTH
2♣

Q. What would you open with this hand?

A. 2♣.

- With a balanced hand of 30 high-card points, start the bidding with 2♣.

Q. What would you rebid if partner responded 2♦?

A. 4NT.

- A rebid of 4NT isn't the Blackwood convention. It shows a balanced hand with about 28-30 points, too strong to rebid 3NT. Don't expect this auction too frequently!
- It's not forcing, so responder could pass.

Conclusion

- Incorporating the *artificial 2♣ opening bid* into the partnership methods gives you a way to show the complete range of balanced hands:

Opening Balanced Hands

0 - 11/12	Pass.
12/13 - 14	Open one-of-a-suit planning to rebid notrump at the cheapest available level.
15 - 17	Open 1NT.
18 - 19	Open one of a suit planning to rebid notrump jumping a level.
20 - 21	Open 2NT.
22 - 24	Open 2♣ planning to rebid 2NT.
25 - 27	Open 2♣ planning to rebid 3NT.
28 - 30	Open 2♣ planning to rebid 4NT.

Hand 4-2 - Opening a Strong Balanced Hand

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 4-2. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and talk about the hand. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

HAND:	4-2	NORTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
DEALER:	EAST	♠ 10 8 4 2 ♥ Q 10 7 4 3 ♦ K 6 ♣ Q 8	2♣ 2NT 3♦ Pass	Pass Pass Pass Pass	2♦ 3♣ 3NT	Pass Pass Pass
VUL:	N-S	WEST	♠ A K J ♥ A 9 5 ♦ A Q ♣ A J 6 4 3	♠ Q 7 6 3 ♥ 8 6 2 ♦ 10 7 5 ♣ K 5 2		
		SOUTH	♠ 9 5 ♥ K J ♦ J 9 8 4 3 2 ♣ 10 9 7			
				DECLARER: OPENING LEAD:	West ♥ 4 by North	

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What does East call as dealer?

A. Pass.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What is South's opening call?

A. Pass.

- The diamond suit isn't good enough for a weak two-bid, especially since North-South are vulnerable.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What call does West make?

A. 2♣.

- With a balanced hand and 23 high-card points, West starts the auction with an *artificial 2♣ opening*.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What does North do?

A. Pass.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. What does East respond to the 2♣ bid?

A. 2♦.

- Unless East has a good five-card suit or longer and about 8 or more points, East makes the artificial *waiting response* of 2♦. This leaves the maximum amount of room for West to describe the hand.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. After South passes, what call does East make?

A. 2NT.

- A 2NT rebid describes a balanced hand of 22-24 points.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. Is West's 2NT rebid forcing?

A. No.

- West has an upper limit of 24 high-card points, so East could pass with a hand that offered no prospect for game.

Q. After North passes, what does East respond?

A. 3♣, 3NT.

- With 5 high-card points, East should make sure the partnership gets to game.
- East could simply raise to 3NT, but there could be an eight-card fit in spades. East can use the Stayman convention to ask if opener has a four-card major.
- The partnership can use the same methods after 2♣-2♦-2NT as it uses over an opening 2NT bid. This usually includes the use of 3♣ as the Stayman convention.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. If East bids 3♣, what call does West make after South passes?

A. 3♦.

- The 3♦ response shows no four-card major suit.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. After North passes, what call does East make next?

A. 3NT.

- Having discovered that there is no major suit fit East can settle for game in 3NT.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What does West do?

A. Pass.

- West has described the hand and answered East's Stayman inquiry. West has nothing further to add.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose West is declarer in a contract of 3NT. Who makes the opening lead?

A. North.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What would North lead?

A. ♠4.

- North should start with fourth highest from longest and strongest. It's likely that East holds a four-card major for the Stayman bid, but there isn't any reason it should be hearts.



Place the ♡4 in front of North as the opening lead and turn all the remaining North-South cards face down. Focus on the West hand as declarer in a contract of 3NT and discuss with the others at your table how declarer should plan the play.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the play.

Q. How many sure tricks does declarer have?

A. Eight.

- There are four sure tricks in spades. After West plays the ♠A-K-J, the ♣K can be used as an entry to get to the ♠Q.
- There is one sure trick in hearts, one in diamonds, and two in clubs.

Q. Declarer needs to develop one more trick to make the contract. Which suits offer the potential to develop an extra trick?

A. Diamonds and clubs.

- In diamonds, declarer could plan to take the finesse, hoping South holds the ♦K.
- In clubs, declarer could also take a finesse, hoping South holds the ♣Q.
- The club suit offers additional possibilities. Even if a trick is lost in the club suit, declarer can establish one or more extra tricks through length if the suit doesn't break too badly.

Q. Is there any danger on this hand?

A. Yes, hearts.

- North has led a heart and the defenders may be able to establish enough winners in the suit to defeat the contract.

Q. Is there anything West can do to minimize the danger from the heart suit?

A. Yes, hold up the ♡A.

- Declarer doesn't need to win the ♡A on the first round of the suit. Declarer can wait until the third round.
- If the missing hearts divide 4-3—with both defenders following to three rounds—then there is no danger in losing a trick since the defenders will have only one more heart trick to take.

Q. If the missing hearts are divided 5-2 with North having the five-card suit, who is the dangerous opponent?

A. North.

- Declarer doesn't want to lose a trick to North, since the defenders will then have a total of five tricks—four heart tricks and the trick lost in another suit.
- There is no danger in losing a trick to South since South will have no hearts left.

Q. What is the problem with both the diamond and the club finesse?

A. Both are into the dangerous hand.

- If either finesse loses, it will be to North, the dangerous opponent.

Q. West has a choice between the diamond finesse and the club finesse. It looks like a 50-50 guess. Can declarer do anything to improve the odds?

A. Yes. Play the ♣A and ♣K first.

- Instead of relying on the 50% diamond finesse or the 50% club finesse, declarer can improve the odds by playing the ♣A and then the ♣K before trying the diamond finesse.
- This gives declarer the additional chance that the ♣Q will fall singleton or doubleton. If it doesn't, declarer can try the diamond finesse.
- The odds are slightly against the ♣Q falling doubleton—eight ever, nine never—but playing the ♣A and then the ♣K gives declarer two chances instead of one.
- There are additional possibilities by playing the ♣A and ♣K first, which will be discussed in a moment.
- Let's walk through the play.

Turn all the cards face up and put the 4♥ in front of North as the opening lead.

Q. If North leads the ♥4 and a low heart is played from dummy, which card should South play?

A. ♥K.

- South should play *third hand high*, trying the best to win the trick for the partnership.
- If North holds the ♥A, South doesn't want to play the ♥J and give declarer a cheap trick with the ♥Q when the defenders may be able to take all the tricks in the suit.

Q. When South plays the ♡K, which card does West play?

A. ♡5.

- West wants to *hold up* the ♡A.

Turn the first trick face down. (♡4-♡2-♡K-♡5)

Q. When South leads back the ♡J, does West take the ♡A?

A. No.

- West holds up a second time in the heart suit, trying to run one of the defenders out of the suit.

Q. When West plays the ♡9, which heart does North play?

A. ♡Q.

- North must be careful to *overtake* South's ♡J. Otherwise, the defenders won't be able to establish their heart winners.
- North has already seen all the hearts except for the ♡A, so it cannot do any harm to overtake the ♡J. The only remaining hearts will be declarer's ♡A and dummy's ♡8.

Turn the second trick face down. (♡J-♡9-♡Q-♡6)

- North is now in a position to lead a third round of hearts to establish the suit. On this trick, South can discard a low diamond.

There's no need to go into suit preference signals here unless one of the students raises the subject. Technically, North might lead the ♡7, the middle of the three remaining cards, to show preference for the middle-ranking of the three remaining suits—spades, diamonds, and clubs. This might be of more help to a good declarer than to partner, so it's probably best for North to return any heart at this point, leaving declarer to guess whether North has the ♦K. Simply have the students lead the ♡3 to trick three.

Turn the third trick face down. (♡3-♡8-♦2-♡A)

Q. After winning the ♠A, what should declarer do next?

A. Unblock the spades.

- Declarer should take the spade winners in the West hand so that a trick can be taken with the ♠Q when declarer is in dummy with the ♠K.
- Declarer plays the ♠A, ♠K, and ♠J as North and East follow suit. South can discard another diamond on the third round of spades.

Turn the fourth trick face down. (♠A-♠2-♠3-♠5)

Turn the fifth trick face down. (♠K-♠4-♠6-♠9)

Turn the sixth trick face down. (♠J-♠8-♠7-♦3)

NORTH			
WEST	EAST	SOUTH	
♠ —	♠ Q	♠ —	
♥ —	♥ —	♦ J 9 8 4	
♦ A Q	♦ 10 7 5	♣ 10 9 7	
♣ A J 6 4 3	♣ K 5 2		

- Here declarer is at the crucial position in the hand. The diamond finesse offers a 50% chance of making the contract, but taking the two top clubs first gives declarer the additional chance that the ♠Q will fall before risking the finesse.

- Declarer first plays the ♣A as everyone follows suit.

Turn the seventh trick face down. (♣A-♣8-♣2-♣7)

- Then declarer plays a club to dummy's ♣K. North's ♣Q appears on this trick, so declarer doesn't need to risk the diamond finesse.
- Declarer has the rest of the tricks. Declarer can take dummy's ♠Q discarding the ♦Q and take all the club winners.
- Let's see what would happen if the ♣Q had not fallen.

Turn all the clubs face up again. Take North's ♦K and give it to South. Take South's ♣10 and give it to North.

	NORTH			
	♠ 10			
	♥ 10 7			
	♦ 6			
	♣ Q 10 8			
WEST		EAST		
♠ —		♠ Q		
♥ —		♥ —		
♦ A Q		♦ 10 7 5		
♣ A J 6 4 3		♣ K 5 2		
	SOUTH			
	♠ —			
	♥ —			
	♦ K J 9 8 4			
	♣ 9 7			

Q. What would declarer do if this were the layout?

- A. Take the diamond finesse.

- When declarer plays the ♣A and a Club to dummy's ♣K and the ♣Q doesn't fall, declarer can take the ♠Q, discarding a club, and then try the diamond finesse.

Take North's ♣Q and ♣10 and give them to South. Take South's ♦K and ♦J and give them to North.

NORTH			
♠ 10			
♥ 10 7			
♦ KJ 6			
♣ 8			
WEST		EAST	
♠ —		♠ Q	
♥ —		♥ —	
♦ A Q		♦ 10 7 5	
♣ AJ 6 4 3		♣ K 5 2	
SOUTH			
♠ —			
♥ —			
♦ 9 8 4			
♣ Q 10 9 7			

Q. Here is another possibility. What happens if this is the layout and West plays the ♣A and a club to dummy's ♣K?

- A. North shows out on the second round of clubs.

Q. What can declarer do now?

- A. Establish extra winners in the club suit.

- Declarer can take the ♠Q, discarding the ♦Q, and then lead a club from dummy toward the ♣J.
- This is perfectly safe since South doesn't have a heart to lead after winning the ♣Q.

There's likely no need to go into other possibilities. If the ♣Q doesn't appear under the ♣A-K, declarer could still choose to lead another club instead of taking the diamond finesse. That works if South has the ♣Q rather than North—a good possibility once North has already shown up with four spades, five hearts, and two clubs.

Conclusion

- Before risking the contract on a finesse, always look to see if there are other possibilities. The play of the cards requires even more judgment and imagination than the bidding.

Hand 4-3 - Opening a Strong Unbalanced Hand

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 4-3. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

HAND: 4-3
DEALER: SOUTH
VUL: E-W

NORTH
♠ K Q 7
♥ 10 7 6 4 3
♦ 8 7 4 2
♣ 9

WEST
♠ 8 6 3
♥ 9 2
♦ Q J 10 6
♣ A 5 4 3

SOUTH
♠ J 10 9 4 2
♥ K 8 5
♦ K 9 5 3
♣ 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

EAST
♠ A 5
♥ A Q J
♦ A
♣ K Q J 10 7 6 2

DECLARER: East
OPENING LEAD: ♠J by South

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the South hand.

Q. South is the dealer. Does South have an opening bid?

A. No.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. Does West have enough to open?

A. No.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. Does North have an opening bid?

A. No.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. East certainly has enough to open. What is East's opening call?

A. 2♣.

- East has 21 high-card points plus 3 length points for the seven-card suit.
- Strong unbalanced hands of about 22 or more points are opened with an artificial strong 2♣ bid.
- This says nothing about clubs. It is a coincidence that East actually holds clubs.

Q. Is East's call forcing?

A. Yes.

- Partner must say something because East has not yet had an opportunity to describe the hand.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. After South passes, what does West respond?

A. 2♦.

- In response to the strong artificial 2♣ opening, most partnerships use the *artificial waiting response of 2♦*. This leaves room for opener to describe the hand.
- With about 8 or more points and a good five-card or longer suit responder can show the suit right away—since responder knows the partnership is headed for at least game and likely a slam.

There's no need to go into a lot of detail on responding to 2♣ at this point. The focus of the course is Opening the Bidding. A more detailed discussion of responding to 2♣ openings and the subsequent auction will have to wait for another course.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. After the artificial 2♦ response, what is East's next call?

A. 3♣.

- East must show the club suit. The original 2♣ bid was totally artificial so it's time to let partner know that East has a strong unbalanced hand with a five-card or longer club suit.
- This is one of the disadvantages of the artificial 2♣ opening. When opener holds a strong unbalanced hand with a minor suit the partnership will be at the three level before opener starts to describe the hand. Most partnerships consider this a small price to pay for freeing up opening bids of 2♦, 2♥, and 2♠ for other purposes, such as weak two-bids.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. After hearing the 3♣ rebid by opener, what call does West make?

A. 4♣.

- Since East has now described a 'strong two-bid in clubs', West should show the fine support for East's suit.
- Agreeing on the suit at once allows the partnership to look at slam possibilities.
- Once responder raises opener's suit, the partnership is committed to at least the

game level. There's no need for responder to jump and use up even more of the little bidding room that remains.

- If West held a very weak hand with no fit and no long suit to show, West would bid notrump at the cheapest available level—3NT in this case.



Focus on the East hand. Now that East has found a fit, discuss with the others at your table what action East might take next.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss how the auction might go from here.

Q. What are some of the possible actions East might take after finding a fit?

A. 5♣, 6♣, 4♦, or 4NT.

- Once a fit has been found after a strong two-bid opening, the next consideration is whether the partnership belongs in game or slam.
- At this point, the partnership's slam bidding methods take over. Most partnerships use the Blackwood convention, although there are other possibilities such as *cue-bidding* and *Key-card Blackwood*.
- East might take a conservative view and merely sign off in game, 5♣. That's a little conservative, since West's original 2♦ response didn't deny holding any aces or kings.
- A reasonable approach is a direct jump to 6♣. This might make if West has as little as ♠K-x-x-x, or it might require a finesse or two. It definitely keeps things simple.
- Another approach would be to start a *cuebidding* sequence by bidding 4♦. Unless the partnership has very sophisticated methods, this is probably not the best approach. East has all the aces except the ♣A and this is the one card West won't be able to show easily—since clubs is the agreed trump suit.
- The most practical approach is probably to use the Blackwood convention. If West has an ace, slam should be at worst on a finesse. If West doesn't have an ace, East can then decide whether to settle for game or jump to slam anyway.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. If East does bid 4NT, the Blackwood convention, what does West respond?

A. 5♦.

- A response of 5♣ would show no aces—or all four. A response of 5♦ shows one ace.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. After hearing the 5♦ response to Blackwood, what call does East make?

A. 6♣, 5NT.

- Knowing partner holds the ♣A, a small slam seems like a reasonable bet. At worst, the slam may depend on a successful heart finesse.
- Since the partnership holds all the aces, East might consider a grand slam. If partner holds two kings, there should be 13 top tricks.
- East might bid 5NT to find out how many kings partner holds.

Bidding 5NT does court some danger. If West were to respond 6♦, showing one king, the partnership would be beyond the safety of 6♣. Most players would be willing to take that chance and be prepared to settle in 6NT opposite one king. At worst, that contract will require a heart finesse.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. If East bids 5NT, the Blackwood convention asking about kings, what would West respond?

A. 6♣.

- A response of 6♣ shows no kings.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. After the 6♣ response for West, what call does East make?

A. Pass.

- 6♣ should be high enough—even too high—if West holds no kings.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose East is declarer in a 6♣ contract, who would be on lead?

A. South.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What would be South's opening lead?

A. ♠J.

- With nothing better to go on, South would likely lead the ♠J, top of a sequence.
- It would be dangerous to lead from either of the kings, especially if East-West are known to hold all the aces and to be considering a grand slam.



Put the ♠J in front of South as the opening lead and turn the remaining cards in the North and South hands face down. Focus on the East hand and pretend that you are declarer in 6♣. Discuss with the others at the table how you would plan to play the hand.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the play.

Q. How many losers do you have in a contract of 6♣?

A. Two.

- There are a spade loser and a potential heart loser.

Q. What possibilities are there for eliminating one of the losers?

A. Heart finesse or establishing the diamonds.

- A straightforward possibility is the heart finesse. Declarer could use the ♣A as an entry to take the finesse. If North holds the ♥K, the finesse will work and declarer can ruff the remaining heart loser in dummy.
- A more subtle—and guaranteed—approach is to make use of dummy's diamonds.
- In effect, declarer can promote two extra winners in the diamond suit after taking the ♦A and giving up a trick to the ♦K. That would give declarer twelve tricks without having to rely on a finesse—one spade, one heart, three diamonds, and seven clubs.
- The catch is to avoid losing a spade trick while establishing the diamonds.
- Let's see how this can be done.

Turn all the cards face up.

- South leads the ♠J, a low spade is played from dummy, North plays the ♠7, and declarer wins the first trick with the ♠A.

Turn the first trick face down. (♠J-♠3-♠7-♠A)

- Declarer now draws a round of trump by playing the ♣K from the East hand. Declarer wants to keep dummy's ♣A as an entry later.

Turn the second trick face down. (♣K-♣8-♣3-♣9)

- Now that the defenders' trumps are drawn, East can focus on the diamond suit. East starts by playing the ♦A as low cards are played from the other three hands.

Turn the third trick face down. (♦A-♦3-♦6-♦2)

- Declarer is going to need to get to dummy *twice* to make use of the diamonds—once to drive out the ♦K and once to get back to take the established winner.
- Declarer must be careful to play the ♣2 over to dummy's ♣4—or a high club to dummy's ♣A, keeping the ♣2 as a second entry.
- Suppose declarer plays the ♣2, South discards a low spade, the ♣4 is played from dummy, and North discards a low heart.

Turn the fourth trick face down. (♣2-♣2-♣4-♥3)

- Declarer now leads the ♦Q from dummy and North plays a low diamond.
- This is the critical play. East now discards the ♠5, letting South win the trick with the ♠K.
- This play is referred to as a *loser on a loser*. East discards the spade loser on the same trick that is lost to South's ♠K.

Turn the fifth trick face down. ($\spadesuit Q-\spadesuit 4-\spadesuit 5-\spadesuit K$)

Q. What can South do at this point to defeat the contract?

A. Nothing.

- Whatever South returns, declarer will be able to win and discard both the $\heartsuit Q$ and $\heartsuit J$ on the winning diamonds in dummy, using the $\clubsuit A$ as an entry.
- Declarer makes the contract without having to risk the heart finesse.

Turn all the cards face up. Give North's $\spadesuit 2$ to South. Give South's $\spadesuit K$ to North.

Q. Would it make any difference if North held the $\spadesuit K$ instead of South?

A. No.

- The play would start the same way. South would lead the $\spadesuit J$ and declarer would win the $\spadesuit A$.

Turn the first trick face down. ($\spadesuit J-\spadesuit 3-\spadesuit 7-\spadesuit A$)

- Declarer now draws a round of trump with the $\clubsuit K$.

Turn the second trick face down. ($\clubsuit K-\clubsuit 8-\clubsuit 3-\clubsuit 9$)

- Declarer plays the $\spadesuit A$.

Turn the third trick face down. ($\spadesuit A-\spadesuit 3-\spadesuit 6-\spadesuit 2$)

- Declarer crosses to dummy with the $\clubsuit 2$.

Turn the fourth trick face down. ($\clubsuit 2-\spadesuit 2-\clubsuit 4-\heartsuit 3$)

- Declarer now leads the $\spadesuit Q$.

- If North plays low, declarer discards the ♠5. Since South can't win this trick, declarer no longer has a spade loser. Declarer can try the heart finesse for an overtrick.
- If North covers the ♦Q with the ♦K, declarer has two choices. Declarer can discard the ♠5 and then use dummy's remaining diamond winners on which to discard the ♥Q and ♥J. Or, declarer can ruff the ♦K, cross to dummy with the ♣A, discard the ♠5 on one of the winning diamonds, and try the heart finesse for an overtrick.

Observation

- The trouble with finesses is that they may lose if the missing cards are unfavorably located. Always look for an alternative to taking a finesse, preferably a sure way to make the contract that doesn't rely on a favorable lie of the opponents' cards.
- When a trick must be lost to the opponents, consider the most advantageous time to lose that trick. Sometimes it is possible to compress two losers into one with appropriate timing.
- Entries are valuable commodities. Be sure to consider the number of entries you require and look carefully to see where they will come from.

More on Strong Two-Bids

Leave the East hand face up on the table. Take the cards from the North, South, and West hands and sort them into suits. Have each person at the table take charge of one suit. Focus on the East hand remaining on the table.



Spades:
Hearts:
Diamonds:
Clubs:

EAST
♠ A 5
♥ A Q J
♦ A
♣ K Q J 10 7 6 2

WEST **EAST**
 2♣

Q. What are some of the criteria that make an unbalanced hand worth a strong two-bid rather than a one-level opening bid?

A. 22 or more points, good suit, playing strength.

- The basic criterion for an opening bid of 2♣ is a hand worth about 22 or more points, leaving an opening bid at the one level as limited to at most 21 points. This ties in nicely with opening 2♣ on balanced hands of 22 or more points.
- With unbalanced hands, however, some degree of judgment is required. The more unbalanced the hand is, the fewer high-card points are required.
- A reasonable criterion is that the hand should be within one *playing trick* of game. On this hand, for example, East can expect to take at least 10 tricks with clubs as trumps . . . one spade, two hearts, one diamond, and six clubs.
- Opening 2♣ with an unbalanced hand containing a minor suit is especially awkward since you won't get to show the suit until the three level. You either need a lot of playing tricks or a hand that will make 3NT a reasonable alternative if partner is very weak.



Spades:
Hearts: Add two low hearts.
Diamonds:
Clubs: Take away two low clubs.

EAST
♠ A 5
♥ A Q J 3 2
♦ A
♣ K Q J 10 7

WEST **EAST**
 2♣

Q. What would you open with this hand?

A. 2♣.

- You have 21 high-card points plus 1 point for each of the five-card suits, making this hand worth 23 points.
- You have about nine playing tricks . . . one spade, three hearts, one diamond, and four clubs. The heart suit is a little difficult to estimate, but you can get two tricks from the ♥A-Q-J combination and should be able to develop at least one more trick through the length in the suit.
- If you were to open only 1♥, you could easily miss a game contract. Partner would pass with 5 or fewer points and you might take ten tricks with very little help from partner.

Q. If you open 2♣ with this hand and partner responds 2♦, what is your rebid?

A. 2♥.

- With a choice of suits to show, opener uses the same guidelines as opening the bidding at the one level. Bid the longer suit first; with two five-card or six-card suits, bid the higher-ranking first.



Spades:
Hearts: Add two low hearts.
Diamonds: Take away the ♦A
Clubs: Take away a low club.

EAST
♠ A 5
♥ A Q J 5 4 3 2
♦ —
♣ K Q J 10

WEST **EAST**
 2♣

Q. What would you open with this hand?

A. 2♣.

- There are only 17 high-card points plus 3 length points for the seven-card suit, but this hand is worth a strong two-bid since there are 10 playing tricks.

This can be illustrated more easily by creating a hand for East as follows.

Leave the East hand face up and create a hand for West opposite it.



Spades:

Hearts: Add two low hearts.

Diamonds: Take away the ♦A

Clubs: Take away a low club.

EAST

♠ A 5
♥ A Q J 5 4 3 2
♦ —
♣ K Q J 10

WEST

EAST
2♣

Spades: Add three low spades.

Hearts: Add three low hearts.

Diamonds: Add four low diamonds.

Clubs: Add three low clubs.

WEST

♠ 4 3 2
♥ 9 8 7
♦ 5 4 3 2
♣ 4 3 2

Q. How many losers would East have opposite this West hand?

A. Three.

- East would lose only one spade, one heart, and one club trick.
- East's hand is worth a strong two-bid even though its point-count valuation is only 20.

Leave the West as it is and modify the East hand.



Spades: Take away the ♠A.

Hearts: Add the ♥K.

Diamonds: Add a low diamond.

Clubs: Take away the ♣K.

EAST

♠ 5
♥ A K Q J 5 4 3 2
♦ 6
♣ Q J 10

WEST

EAST
1♥/4♥

Spades:

Hearts:

Diamonds:

Clubs:

WEST

♠ 4 3 2
♥ 9 8 7
♦ 5 4 3 2
♣ 4 3 2

Q. What would be East's opening bid with this hand?

A. 1♥ or 4♥.

- Playing tricks aren't the only criterion for an opening two-bid. The hand needs some defensive value as well in case the opponents come into the auction.
- The East hand is worth nine playing tricks . . . eight heart tricks and one club trick.
- However, the East hand has very little defensive potential. On these combined hands, East-West could not defeat a contract of 6♦ or 6♠ by North-South, and perhaps not even a grand slam.
- To open a strong 2♣ bid, you should have at least 2-3 sure tricks on defense.
- This hand should be opened either 1♥ or, given the lack of defensive potential, with a preemptive bid of 4♥, trying to buy the contract.



		EAST
Spades:	Add the ♠A, ♠Q, and a low spade.	♠ A Q 6 5
Hearts:	Take away the ♥K, ♥J, and a low heart.	♥ A Q 5 4 3 ♦ K
Diamonds:	Take away a low diamond; add the ♦K.	♣ K Q J
Clubs:	Take away a low club; add the ♣K.	
		WEST
Spades:		♠ 4 3 2
Hearts:		♥ 9 8 7
Diamonds:		♦ 5 4 3 2
Clubs:		♣ 4 3 2

WEST EAST
1♥

Q. What would you open the bidding with this East hand?

A. 1♥.

- Although there are 21 high-card points plus 1 for the five-card suit, this hand isn't really worth a 2♣ opening bid.

Q. How many tricks would you expect to take opposite the West hand if you were playing with hearts as the trump suit?

A. Six or seven.

- With no high cards in the West hand as entries you would expect to lose at least two spade tricks—maybe three—two heart tricks, a diamond trick, and a club trick.
- If partner doesn't have enough to respond over 1♥, it's unlikely that you will miss a

game contract.



Spades:

Hearts: Take away a low heart.

Diamonds: Take away the ♦K; add a low diamond.

Clubs: Add the ♣A.

EAST
♠ A Q 6 5
♥ A Q 5 4
♦ 6
♣ A K Q J

WEST **EAST**
1♣

Spades:

Hearts:

Diamonds:

Clubs:

WEST
♠ 4 3 2
♥ 9 8 7
♦ 5 4 3 2
♣ 4 3 2

Q. What would you open the bidding with this East hand?

A. 1♣.

- There are 22 high-card points but strong 4-4-4-1 hands are very awkward.
- If you were to open 2♣, you would have no convenient rebid over a 2♦ response. 2♥, 2♠, or 3♣ would promise a five-card or longer suit. 2NT would promise a balanced hand.
- Opposite the West hand, you might not take more than six tricks in any contract.
- If partner can't respond over a 1♣ opening, it's unlikely that you are missing a game.

Conclusion

- Use your judgment when deciding whether or not to open a strong artificial 2♣ bid.
- The more playing tricks you have, the fewer high-card points you need. However, you need some defensive values in addition to playing tricks.
- With no good five-card suit, be very cautious in opening a strong 2♣ to show an unbalanced hand. Sometimes it's best to open at the one level, taking a chance that partner might pass but leaving lots of room to explore for the best contract if partner does respond.

Hand 4-4 - Opening with a Strong Two-Suited Hand

Play of the Hand



Play Hand 4-4. When you have finished playing the hand, turn the cards face up, dummy-style, and discuss the hand with the others at your table. What do you think is the best contract? How should the auction go?

HAND: 4-4
DEALER: WEST
VUL: BOTH

NORTH
♠ J 9 3
♥ J 5 2
♦ 8 6 4 2
♣ 7 6 3

WEST
♠ 7 5 4 2
♥ 7
♦ Q 10 7 3
♣ Q J 10 5

SOUTH
♠ A K Q 8
♥ A K 9 6 3
♦ A 9 5
♣ A

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

EAST
♠ 10 6
♥ Q 10 8 4
♦ K J
♣ K 9 8 4 2

DECLARER: South
OPENING LEAD: ♣Q by West

Give the students 7-8 minutes to bid and play the hand and then have everyone turn the hand face up on the table, whether or not they are finished.

Turn all fifty-two cards face up, dummy-style.

Review of the Bidding

Focus on the West hand.

Q. West is the dealer. Does West have an opening bid?

A. No.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. Does North have enough to open?

A. No.

Focus on the East hand.

Q. Does East have an opening bid?

A. No.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What is South's opening call?

A. 2♣.

- South has an unbalanced hand with 24 high-card points plus 1 for the five-card heart suit.
- South has eight or nine playing tricks . . . three or four in spades, three or four in hearts, one in diamonds, and one in clubs.
- South also has plenty of defensive values should the opponents venture into the auction.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What will North respond?

A. 2♦.

- North makes the *artificial waiting response* of 2♦... waiting to hear what type of hand opener holds.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What is South's rebid?

A. 2♥.

- With an unbalanced hand, South starts describing the hand by bidding the longer suit.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. Having already responded 2♦ does North have to bid again over 2♥?

A. Yes.

- South's original 2♣ bid was totally artificial. This is the first time South has described a strong two-bid in hearts.
- South has shown an unbalanced hand and there is no upper limit to the strength at this point—unlike a notrump rebid which would limit the strength to a specific range. South might have enough to take ten tricks with no help from North.
- It is as though South had opened an old-fashioned strong 2♥ bid. North must keep the bidding going to allow South to finish describing the hand.

Q. What does North bid?

A. 2NT.

- With only two jacks, North wants to make a discouraging bid, showing no interest in reaching a slam contract. The standard agreement is that the cheapest available notrump bid is the weakest rebid North can make.
- North does have support for South's suit but can show this in the next round of the bidding, having already denied any strength.
- The 2NT bid is similar to the old-fashioned negative response to a strong two-bid.

A student might suggest jumping to 4♥ to show a weak hand with support. That's a reasonable bid, although it is usually reserved for four-card support with no outside aces, kings, singletons or voids.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What does opener bid now?

A. 3♠.

- South can show the second suit. North could easily hold four or even five spades with a very weak hand.
- By bidding the hearts before the spades, South has shown longer hearts than spades. With equal length, South would have bid the higher-ranking suit first.

Focus on the North hand.

Q. What does North do now?

A. 4♥.

- With equal support for opener's suits, responder should put the partnership back into the longer combined suit, hearts.

Focus on the South hand.

Q. What does South do next?

A. Pass.

- South has described the hand and received no encouragement from North. South should settle for game and give up any thoughts of a slam contract.

Review of the Play and Defense

Q. Suppose South is declarer in 4♥, who would be on lead?

A. West.

Focus on the West hand.

Q. What would West lead?

A. ♣Q.

- The top of the *solid sequence* in clubs is most attractive.



Place the ♣Q in front of West and turn the remaining East-West cards face down. Focus on the South hand as declarer in a 4♥ contract. Discuss with the others at the table how South should plan to play the hand.

Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss the play.

Q. Outside of the trump suit, how losers does South have in a contract of 4♥?

A. Two.

- Apart from the trump suit, declarer has only the two losers in the diamond suit.

Q. Declarer can afford one loser in the heart suit but not two. Is there any danger?

A. Yes, if the missing trumps aren't divided 3-2.

- If the ♥Q is singleton or the five missing hearts are divided 3-2, declarer will have an easy time avoiding the loss of more than one trump trick.
- If the hearts are divided 4-1 declarer could lose two tricks because both the ♥Q and ♥10 are missing.
- If the hearts are divided 5-0, there's probably nothing declarer can do to avoid losing at least two heart tricks.

Q. Is there any way to guard against a 4-1 division of the missing hearts?

A. Yes.

- Declarer should plan to play one high heart and then lead toward the ♥J in dummy.
- Let's see how this works.

Turn all the cards face up.

- West leads the ♣Q, a low club is played from dummy, East makes an encouraging signal with the ♣9, and declarer wins the ♣A.

Turn the first trick face down. (♣Q-♣3-♣9-♣A)

- Declarer now plays the ♥A in case either defender holds the singleton ♥Q, or ♥10.

Turn the second trick face down. (♥A-♥7-♥2-♥4)

Q. If declarer were to now play the ♥K, what would happen?

A. Declarer would have two heart losers.

- East would have the ♥Q and ♥10 left sitting over dummy's ♥J for two tricks.
- Instead, declarer should lead the ♥3 toward dummy's ♥J. West discards a low spade. The ♥J is played from dummy and East wins the ♥Q.

Turn the third trick face down. (♥3-♠2-♥J-♥Q)

- Suppose East leads the ♣K, hoping to get a trick in that suit. Declarer ruffs with the ♥6 as both West and North follow suit.

Turn the fourth trick face down. (♣K-♥6-♣5-♣6)

- Declarer now knows that East still has the ♥10 and ♥8 left.
- Declarer crosses to dummy by leading the ♠8 to dummy's ♠J as both defenders follow suit.

Turn the fifth trick face down. (♠8-♠4-♠J-♠6)

- Declarer now leads dummy's ♡5 and, when East follows suit with the ♡8, finesses the ♡9. West discards a low diamond.

Turn the sixth trick face down. (♡5-♡8-♡9-♦3)

- Declarer can now draw East's last trump with the ♡K and safely take the remaining winners in spades and diamonds.
- Declarer loses only one heart trick and two diamond tricks.

Turn all the hearts face up and turn the remaining cards face down on the table.

NORTH ♡ J 5 2	EAST ♡ Q 10 8 4
WEST ♡ 7	SOUTH ♡ A K 9 6 3

- If declarer played the ♡A and ♡K, declarer would have lost two heart tricks to East's ♡Q and ♡10.
- By playing the ♡A and then leading a low heart toward dummy's ♡J, declarer was able to avoid two losers in the suit.

Take East's ♡Q, ♡10, and ♡8 and give them to West.

	NORTH ♥ J 5 2	
WEST ♥ Q 10 8 7		EAST ♥ 4
	SOUTH ♥ A K 9 6 3	

Q. What would happen if this were the layout and South played the ♡A and ♡K?

A. South would lose two heart tricks to West's ♡Q and ♡10.

Q. What would happen if South played the ♡A and led a low heart toward dummy's ♡J?

A. South would lose only one heart trick to West's ♡Q.

- If West plays low on the second round of hearts, dummy's ♡J will win. Declarer can then take the ♡K and will lose only one trick to West's ♡Q.
- If West wins the ♡Q on the second round, declarer plays a low heart from dummy. After regaining the lead, declarer can play a low heart to dummy's ♡J and return to the South hand to draw West's last trump with the ♡A, again losing only one trick.

Take West's ♡7 and give it to East.

	NORTH ♥ J 5 2	
WEST ♥ Q 10 8		EAST ♥ 7 4
	SOUTH ♥ A K 9 6 3	

Q. What would happen if the East-West hearts were divided 3-2 all along?

A. Declarer would lose only one trick.

- When declarer takes the ♡A and leads a low heart toward dummy, West wins the ♡Q, but that is the only trick the defenders get in the heart suit.
- The defenders were always entitled to one trick if the defender holding three hearts also holds the ♡Q.

Take West's ♡8 and give it to East.

NORTH ♡ J 5 2	EAST ♡ 8 7 4
WEST ♡ Q 10	SOUTH ♡ A K 9 6 3

Q. What would happen if this were the layout and South played the ♡A and a low heart toward dummy's ♡J?

A. Declarer would lose one heart trick.

- West would win the second round of hearts with the ♡Q but declarer would have the rest of the heart tricks.

Q. Could declarer have done better if this were the layout?

A. Yes.

- Declarer could have played the ♡A and ♡K and avoided losing any tricks in the suit.

Conclusion

- Playing the ♡A and a low heart toward dummy's ♡J is called a *safety play*. It makes sure that declarer doesn't lose more than one trick in the suit.
- A *safety play* might cost a trick—as in the last layout. However, declarer is willing to give up the chance for an extra trick to improve the chance of making the contract. Here, declarer could afford to lose one trump trick, but not two.

\$19.95 in USA (\$27.95 in Canada)

www.BetterBridge.com