

## Counting the Right Way

Counting is a key skill in bridge, but many forget that counting tricks (in Notrump) and Suits (in losers) isn't a given. If you skip or err in this key step, you'll snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Make sure that you are A) counting, and B) counting correctly.

### Notrump

| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <b>Notrump 1</b><br/> </div> | <b>North</b><br>♠ AJ6<br>♥ 54<br>♦ AQJ65<br>♣ 1095 | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | West      | North     | East | South | Pass | 3NT | Pass | 1NT | Pass |  |  | Pass |
|---|--|--|-----------|-----------|------|-------|------|-----|------|-----|------|--|--|------|
| West  | North  | East   | South     |           |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
| Pass  | 3NT  | Pass   | 1NT       |           |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
| Pass  |  |  | Pass      |           |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
| <b>West</b><br>♠ 98<br>♥ KQJ108<br>♦ 72<br>♣ K876   | <b>South</b><br>♠ KQ432<br>♥ A32<br>♦ K43<br>♣ A2  | <b>East</b><br>♠ 1075<br>♥ 976<br>♦ 1098<br>♣ QJ43   |           |           |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
|   |  | <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>3NT South</td> <td>NS 0 EW 0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>  | 3NT South | NS 0 EW 0 |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
| 3NT South   | NS 0 EW 0  |  |           |           |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |

If you look at the heart suit in isolation, you'll be tempted to hold up twice. Don't let yourself be fooled! You have 12 tricks in all likelihood.

| <table border="1"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">Notrump 2</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">D</td></tr> </table> | Notrump 2   | D   | <b>North</b><br>♠ A432<br>♥ AK2<br>♦ 76<br>♣ 9832 | <table border="1"> <tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td>2♣</td><td>Pass</td><td>1NT</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td>3NT</td><td>Pass</td><td>2♥</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td></td><td>Pass</td><td>Pass</td></tr> </table> | West | North | East | South | Pass | 2♣ | Pass | 1NT | Pass | 3NT | Pass | 2♥ | Pass |  | Pass | Pass |
|---|---|---|---|---|------|-------|------|-------|------|----|------|-----|------|-----|------|----|------|--|------|------|
| Notrump 2   |   |   |   |   |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |  |      |      |
| D   |   |   |   |   |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |  |      |      |
| West  | North   | East  | South   |   |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |  |      |      |
| Pass  | 2♣  | Pass  | 1NT   |   |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |  |      |      |
| Pass  | 3NT   | Pass  | 2♥  |   |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |  |      |      |
| Pass  |   | Pass  | Pass  |   |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |  |      |      |
| <b>West</b><br>♠ Q106<br>♥ 93<br>♦ J985<br>♣ KJ75   | <b>South</b><br>♠ K87<br>♥ Q765<br>♦ AK32<br>♣ A4 | <b>East</b><br>♠ J95<br>♥ J1084<br>♦ Q104<br>♣ Q106 |   |   |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |  |      |      |
|   |   | <b>3NT South   NS 0 EW 0</b>                        |   |   |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |  |      |      |

4-3 fits produce an extra trick (on length) only when the suit splits 3-3, about 1/3 of the time. Don't bank on that. As a side note, make sure that you are properly interpreting the lead. Sometimes you don't have to be afraid of a particular suit.

| <table border="1"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">Notrump 3</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">D</td></tr> </table> | Notrump 3   | D   | <b>North</b><br>♠ A94<br>♥ 98<br>♦ Q82<br>♣ AJ1092 | <table border="1"> <tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td>3NT</td><td>Pass</td><td>1NT</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td></td><td></td><td>Pass</td></tr> </table> | West | North | East | South | Pass | 3NT | Pass | 1NT | Pass |  |  | Pass |
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| D   |   |   |  |   |      |       |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
| West  | North   | East  | South  |   |      |       |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
| Pass  | 3NT   | Pass  | 1NT  |   |      |       |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
| Pass  |   |   | Pass   |   |      |       |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
| <b>West</b><br>♠ Q10532<br>♥ 1074<br>♦ J9<br>♣ Q43  | <b>South</b><br>♠ K6<br>♥ AKQ<br>♦ A7643<br>♣ 765 | <b>East</b><br>♠ J87<br>♥ J6532<br>♦ K105<br>♣ K8 |  |   |      |       |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |
|   |   | <b>3NT South   NS 0 EW 0</b>                      |  |   |      |       |      |       |      |     |      |     |      |  |  |      |

When hunting for extra tricks, make sure you know which suits are more likely to find your bonus tricks. We need at least two more tricks. Clubs is much more likely to generate those extra tricks than diamonds.

**Suits 1**  
D

| West                                | North  | East  | South                |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|----------------------|
| ♠ 43<br>♥ A10532<br>♦ J843<br>♣ 104 | <b>North</b><br>♠ Q98<br>♥ 87<br>♦ A765<br>♣ AK73  | <b>East</b><br>♠ A65<br>♥ J96<br>♦ Q102<br>♣ QJ65 | 1♠<br>2NT<br>4♠      |
|                                     | <b>South</b><br>♠ KJ1072<br>♥ KQ4<br>♦ K9<br>♣ 982 |   |                      |
|                                     |  |   | 4♠ South   NS 0 EW 0 |

Make sure you count losers from the long hand. While you can peek at the other hand for high cards, shortness in the hand with fewer trumps isn't useful unless you include it in your plan. Here, you have two potential heart losers. You need to count them both to realize the danger of playing on trumps.

**Suits 2**  
D

| West                                | North  | East  | South                |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|----------------------|
| ♠ 764<br>♥ J976<br>♦ 107<br>♣ KQJ10 | <b>North</b><br>♠ QJ8<br>♥ KQ4<br>♦ 654<br>♣ 9874  | <b>East</b><br>♠ 32<br>♥ A1085<br>♦ QJ98<br>♣ 632 | 1♠<br>4♠             |
|                                     | <b>South</b><br>♠ AK1095<br>♥ 32<br>♦ AK32<br>♣ A5 |   |                      |
|                                     |  |   | 4♠ South   NS 0 EW 0 |

Here we see our friend the 4-3 fit. The diamond suit is very dangerous for declarer since it can be two losers. If you draw trumps first, you may find an extra loser in the end.

| <b>Suits 3</b><br><b>D</b>                        | <b>North</b><br>♠ KJ1094<br>♥ 72<br>♦ AQ3<br>♣ 876 | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | West | North | East | South | Pass | 2♥ | Pass | 1NT | Pass | 3NT | Pass | 4♠ | Pass | Pass | Pass |  |
|---|--|---|------|-------|------|-------|------|----|------|-----|------|-----|------|----|------|------|------|--|
|   | West   | North   | East | South |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |      |      |  |
| Pass  | 2♥   | Pass  | 1NT  |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |      |      |  |
| Pass  | 3NT  | Pass  | 4♠   |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |      |      |  |
| Pass  | Pass   | Pass  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |      |      |  |
| <b>West</b><br>♠ A52<br>♥ J1098<br>♦ 8742<br>♣ K4 | <b>South</b><br>♠ Q87<br>♥ AQ53<br>♦ 65<br>♣ AQJ2  | <b>East</b><br>♠ 63<br>♥ K64<br>♦ KJ109<br>♣ 10953  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |      |      |  |
|   |  | <b>4♠ South</b>   <b>NS 0 EW 0</b>  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |     |      |     |      |    |      |      |      |  |

The hand with long trumps is the hand you count losers from. It doesn't have to be declarer's hand. Here, after partner transfers, South is declarer but we count losers from North. That should help us see the diamond danger.