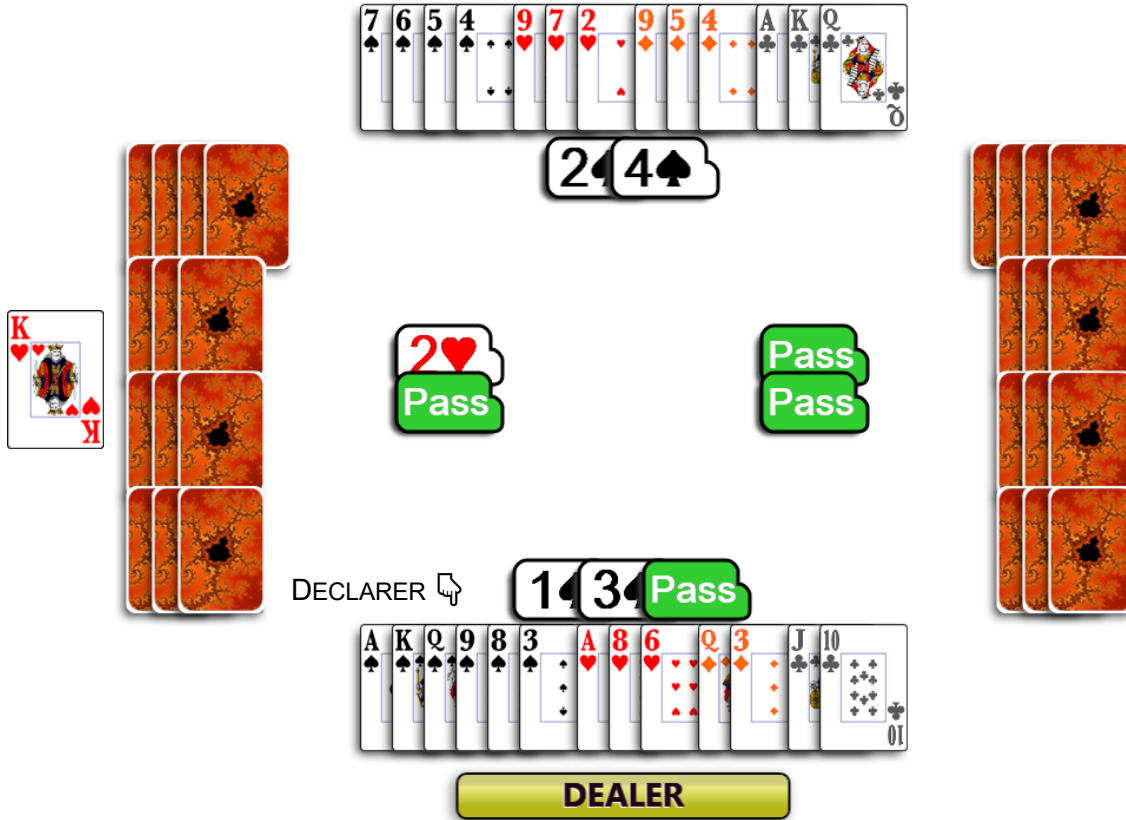


REVISION EXERCISE 8

Dealer is south and ends up in 4♠ with the bidding as shown:





Notes on bidding

South's opening is clear. North's response (after the overcall) is correct showing a hand with 6-9 total points and 4+ spades. The hand is flat so has no ruffing value to add to its HCPs.

South has a stronger hand than initially shown and invites partner to bid game if partner's strength is at the upper end of the 6–9 TP range. It is 9 TPs (no ruffing points) so game in 4♠ is bid.

Initial play

West leads . against  by south. A card from dummy and east follows suit.

Your analysis

1. Interpret the lead
2. Describe your play

DO NOT GO TO THE NEXT PAGE UNTIL YOU HAVE ANSWERED.

Analysis

Interpret the lead

West has overcalled and led the king. West will have at least five hearts (overcalled) and will have the ♥Q as well.

As east has followed suit, it shows that east started with one or two hearts. You have six hearts between your hands, so E/W must have seven, either 5-2 or 6-1. This shows us how to play.

Describe the play

First, estimate the tricks in each suit.

- 6 spade winners, provided the opponents don't sneak in a ruff
- 1 heart winner but two losers
- 2 diamond losers
- 3 club winners

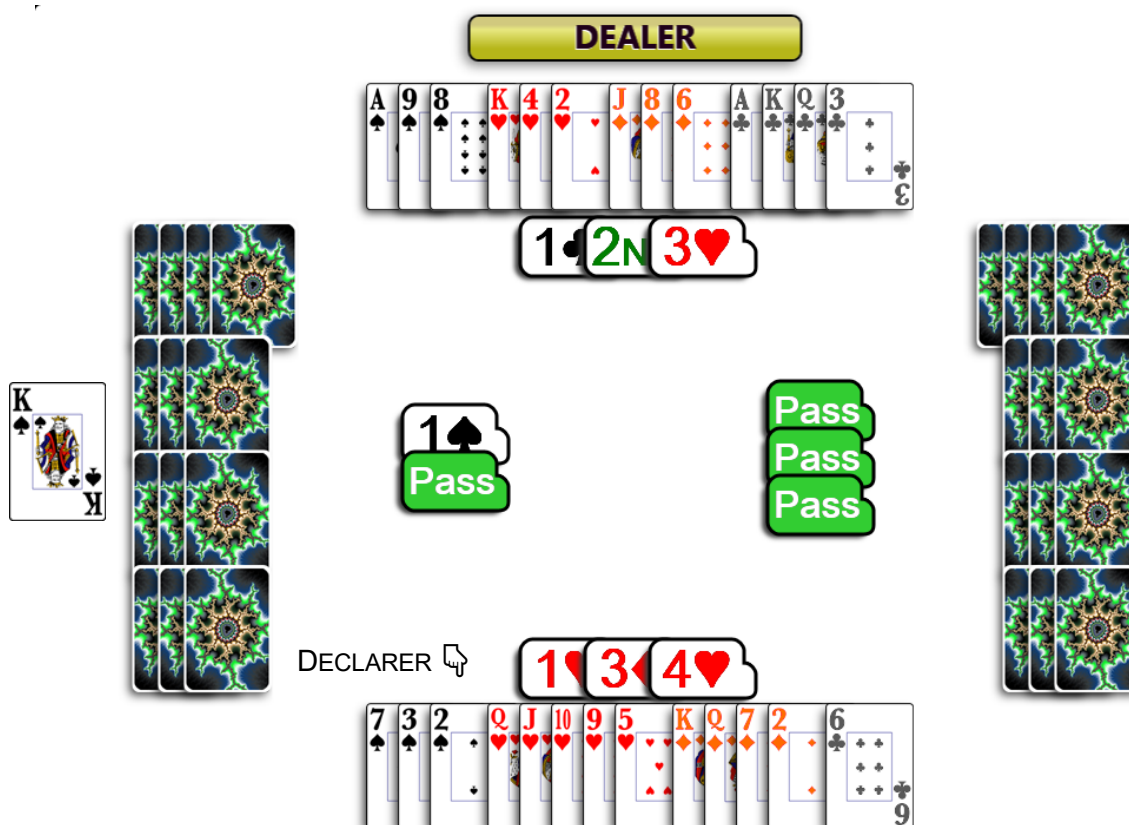
Initially, we see four losers. The play then boils down to:

1. Preventing a ruff
2. Disposing of a heart or diamond loser on a club winner

We prevent a ruff by drawing trumps as soon as we can. Win the heart lead with the ace and immediately draw trumps. Were we to let the king hold, west may lead another heart that east could ruff if the hearts broke 6-1. This play is distinguished from no-trumps play when we may decide to hold up the ace until the second round. Although a no-trumps contract is often feared by newcomers to bridge, in reality properly planning suit play is much harder as there is far more factors to consider.

Once trumps are drawn in two or three rounds as required, play the winning clubs from dummy discarding one of the heart or diamond losers (it make no difference which). [See the losing line of play here](#) and the [winning line of play here](#).

Dealer is north and south ends up in 4♥:



Notes on bidding

North has a strong, flat hand that has to be opened 1♣, the longest suit – the only 4-card suit.



South as responder bids the longest suit first – 1♥.

West puts in a spade overcall but north is not deterred as there is the ♠A as a guaranteed stopper. North can and does bid 2NT, showing 17–18 HCPs balanced (and, importantly, a spade stop).

South knows that game is on even in no-trumps (from the total HCPs) but it is not that attractive with a club singleton. South shows a second suit by bidding 3♦, also showing hearts are at least 5 cards in length.

North now rebids 3♥ giving delayed support for hearts that shows three cards, after which south can bid game in hearts.

Initial play

West leads  against  by south.

Your analysis

1. Interpret the lead
2. Describe your play

DO NOT GO TO THE NEXT PAGE UNTIL YOU HAVE ANSWERED.

Analysis

Interpret the lead

West has overcalled and led the king. West will have at least five spades (overcalled) and will have the ♠Q as well. Additionally, west will be particularly strong to have overcalled after two previous opponents' bids, indicating that east must have very little strength.

As in the previous hand, declarer must win with dummy's ace, after which east follows suit (much to declarer's relief).

Describe the play

Once again, estimate the tricks in each suit.

- 1 spade winner and 2 losers
- 4 heart winners and 1 loser
- 2 diamond winners and 2 losers (maybe 1 loser if, against the odds, diamonds break 3–3 but it is best not to plan on this basis unless you have no other choice)
- 3 club winners

The play requires us to dispose of two losers, but how? We have the lead with the ♠A, so let's examine what might happen next.

The bridge autopilot takes control, so you start to draw trumps. You already know you will lose to the ♥A, so that is taken probably by west. West promptly plays back two spade winners and leads any other card. At this point you have lost three tricks to west and you still have a diamond loser left, so you have failed. [See losing line of play here.](#)

We need to dispose of our losers before the lead is given back to the opponents. We turn immediately to the clubs. With our three clubs winners, we follow suit in hand once but discard our remaining two spade losers on them. This line of play is not without risk as west might well be able to ruff the third club. Were this to happen, then the 3–3 diamond break can be an additional possibility. All being well, our three clubs hold up so it is time to start drawing trumps. Now we are safe. We have two aces out against us plus a probable, but not certain diamond loser. We have made our game. [See winning line of play here.](#)

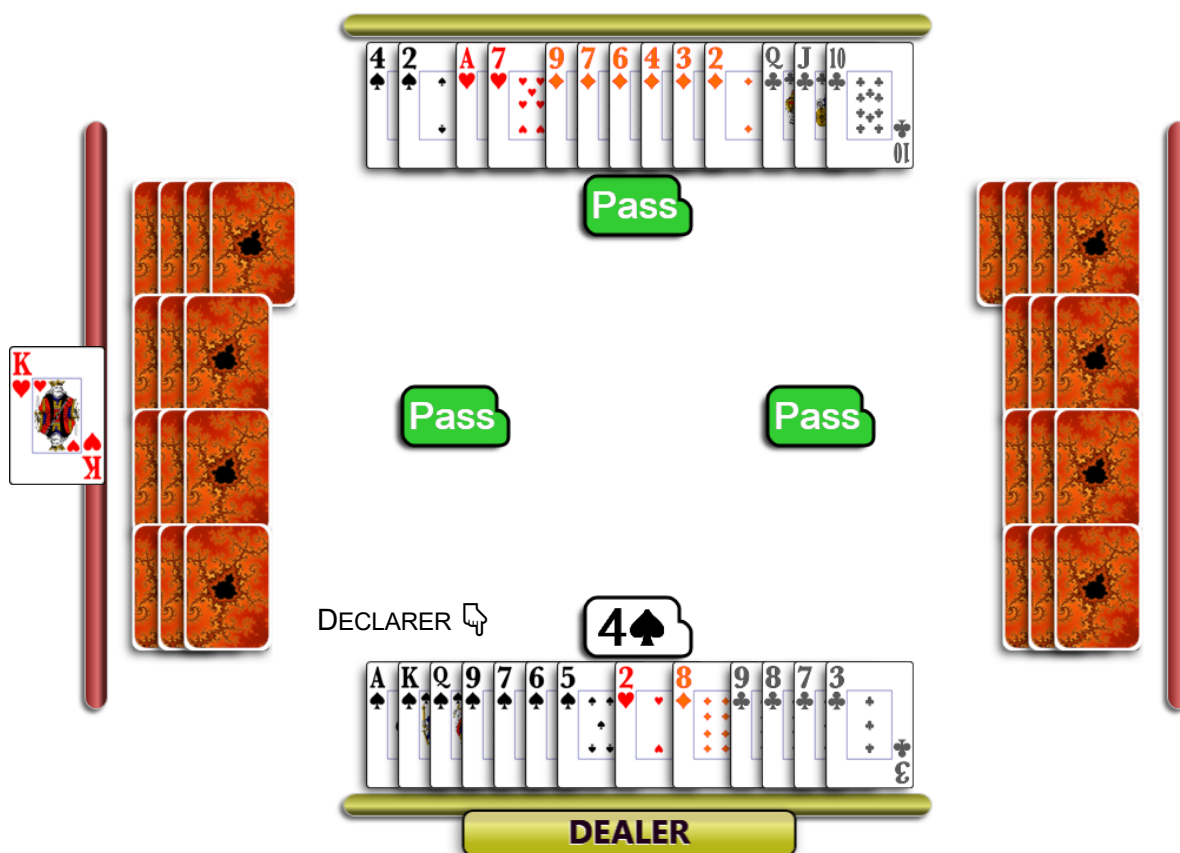
It is correct more often than not to draw trumps immediately.

In this example, it leads to failure.

THINK FIRST.

Dealer is south and ends up in 4♠.

N/S are not vulnerable, E/W are vulnerable.



Notes on bidding



4♠ is a pre-emptive bid designed to interfere with the opponents' bidding with little risk to yourself. It is made with a relatively weak hand (6–9 HCPs) but with the potential for many tricks but not enough for game. Your contract is not expected to make so you must judge the bid accurately based on the hand's playing strength.

In south's hand, you can see you are likely to make 7 spades tricks and somewhat less likely to make 1 club trick – 8 tricks in all. Consider the possible outcomes:

- You play in 4♠ and go 2-off giving away 100 points or 3-off giving away 150 points.
- The opponents double for penalties and go 2-off giving away 300 points or 3-off giving away 500.
- You may make your contract with help from partner scoring 420 points.
- If the opponents were left to bid unhindered, they could make game and score 620.

Clearly, there are other possible outcomes but the above shows that there is a high probability that you end up with a better result by pre-empting. More on pre-empts can be found in the Commentary following this exercise.

Initial play

West leads  .against  by south.

Your analysis

1. Will you always make 4♠?
2. Will you sometimes make 4♠ and if so identify the necessary conditions for success?
3. Will you always fail the contract?

DO NOT GO TO THE NEXT PAGE UNTIL YOU HAVE ANSWERED.

Analysis

We simply take each suit in turn and see what transpires.

Spades

If spades break 2–2 or 3–1, our top spades will remove all the spades from the opponents, so we make 7 spade tricks.

If the spades break 4–0, we will only make 6 tricks.

Hearts

You have no losers as dummy's ace wins.

Diamonds

You have 1 loser that you can do nothing about.

Clubs

You have to lose the ace and king but after that you have 2 winners left. You note that, between both hands, you have the ♣Q,J,10,9 – only 2 tricks can be lost.

RESULT

You will make your contract unless spades break 4–0, and that will only happen less than 10% of the time. Your 4♠ bid has proved very successful in this particular case.

COMMENTARY ON PRE-EMPTIVE BIDDING

It is fair to say that pre-emptive bidding is frequently misunderstood as a cursory analysis of many clubs' results shows. It is a highly targeted bid, not something that can just fire off and hope for the best. Remember it is a bid designed to fail; if it succeeds, as in the last example, so much the better but that is just a bonus. Pre-empts are designed to **REDUCE OUR LOSS** – damage limitation.

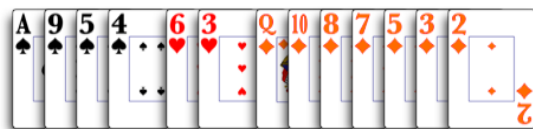
Just to give some idea of the scale of the problem, a correct pre-empt will be made on about 1 in 150 hands. A biddable slam occurs in about 1 in 25 hands. But how many more times do you see an opening pre-empt compared with bidding a slam contract? The evidence shows far more. To put it another way, contracts designed to fail are bid more frequent than contracts designed to give you a much higher score! Bit weird really.

Here are some common misconceptions:

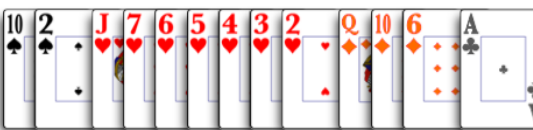
- A pre-empt always starts with a 3-level bid.
False. The minimum is the 3-level but may be 4- or 5- level but not past game. So 3♥, 4♠ and 5♣ openings are all pre-empts.
- A higher level pre-empt shows extra length in the suit, e.g. 4♠ shows 8 spades.
False. A higher level shows extra playing strength. This is often extra length but could be a long second suit.
- Vulnerability is irrelevant.
False. You plan on going 3-off not vulnerable and 2-off vulnerable as you must guard against an opponent's penalty double.
- The suit opened can be any old 7+ card suit.
False. The suit must be strong with at least two honours including the queen or higher. You have to have trump control. Examples:



Ideal clubs for possible pre-empt.
Note no outside strength necessary.



Bare minimum diamonds



Totally unsuitable hearts

- And lastly, responder does not recognise your bid is designed to fail, bids on and leaves you in a worse position than when you started – and almost invites an opposition penalty double. Example: after partner has opened 3♥, does responder contemplate 4♥?



NO! You only have one more trick. Opener is already going 2- or 3-off. Having a good heart fit cannot compensate.