

Responding without a fit

Board 1

North Deals

No-one Vul

♠ 10 7 4 2

♥ 10 8 2

♦ 10 4 3

♣ K Q J

♠ 6 5

♥ J 7 6 5

♦ K Q J 9

♣ 7 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 8 3

♥ 9 4

♦ A 6 5

♣ 10 9 8 5 2

♠ K Q J 9

♥ A K Q 3

♦ 8 7 2

♣ A 6

6
7 8
19

West

North

East

South

Pass

Pass

1 ♥

Pass

1 ♠

Pass

4 ♠

All pass

4 ♠ by North

Lead: ♣ 10

With a balanced hand and 19 points, South opens 1 ♥ with a planned rebid of No Trumps. With 4+ spades and 6+ points, North must bid 1 ♠ to show their spade suit, even if they have 3-card heart support. South has a fit and sufficient points for game and bids 4 ♠.

Even though a diamond lead would beat the contract on this occasion, East should not lead the ♦ A or a low diamond. It is best to avoid making an opening lead in a suit contract in a suit that you have an unsupported Ace (i.e. you do not have the King). East should lead ♣ 10.

Declarer should discard a losing diamond on the third round of clubs before drawing trumps.

The play theme on these hands: Discard losers before drawing trumps.

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Board 2

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ A 6 4

♥ K Q 10

♦ 10 8 3

♣ 10 9 8 7

♠ 7

♥ J 8 7 3 2

♦ A K 6 2

♣ 6 5 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q J 10 9 5

♥ A 5 4

♦ J

♣ J 4 3

♠ 8 3 2

♥ 9 6

♦ Q 9 7 5 4

♣ A K Q

9
8 12
11

West

North

East

South

1 ♠

Pass

1 NT

Pass

2 ♠

All pass

2 ♠ by East

Lead: ♣ A

East opens 1 ♠. West cannot bid a new suit at the two level, as this would show 10+ points. West bids 1 NT, 6-9 points. The 1 NT "dustbin" response does not show a balanced hand. With a six-card suit, East should rebid it. This will end the auction.

South should cash three rounds of clubs, then switch to a heart. Declarer must play the ♦ A and ♦ K, discarding a heart loser, before drawing trumps. Eight tricks can be made.

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Board 3

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 8 6 4

♥ A 7 4

♦ Q J 10

♣ J 10 6 3

♠ K 3 2

♥ J 9 8 3 2

♦ A 8 2

♣ Q 8

N
W E
S

♠ A Q J 10

♥ Q 10 6

♦ 6 5 4

♣ A K 9

♠ 9 7 5

♥ K 5

♦ K 9 7 3

♣ 7 5 4 2

8
10 16
6

West

North

East

South

Pass

Pass

1 ♠

Pass

2 ♥

Pass

4 ♥

All pass

4 ♥ by West

Lead: ♦ Q

East has a balanced hand but too many points to open 1 NT. East opens 1 ♠ with a planned rebid of No Trumps. West can respond with a new suit at the two level which shows 10+ points. In response to 1 ♠, 2 ♥ promises a five-card suit (2 ♣ and 2 ♦ responses would only promise a four-card suit). With enough points for game and an eight-card fit, East can bid game in hearts.

North leads the ♦ Q. On winning with the ♦ A, declarer must immediately play three rounds of clubs discarding a diamond loser. Failure to do this will result in losing two diamonds and two trumps, causing the contract to fail.

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Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ K Q J 7

♥ A K Q 3

♦ A 3 2

♣ 8 7

♠ 10 6

♥ 6 5

♦ K Q J 7 5

♣ 9 6 5 4

N
W E
S

♠ 3 2

♥ J 10 8 7 4

♦ 10 8

♣ A K 3 2

♠ A 9 8 5 4

♥ 9 2

♦ 9 6 4

♣ Q J 10

19
6 8
7

West

North

East

South

Pass

1 ♥

Pass

1 ♠

Pass

4 ♠

All pass

4 ♠ by South

Lead: ♦ K

With 4-4 in the majors, North should open 1 ♥. South responds 1 ♠, showing at least six points and at least four spades. With 19 points and excellent spade support, North can confidently bid 4 ♠.

On winning the ♦ A, declarer should draw trumps before discarding a diamond loser on the hearts. Unlike previous hands, you can safely draw trumps here without losing the lead, so there is no immediate need to use the hearts for discarding losers.

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Board 5

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ K

♥ Q J 8 3

♦ 9 7 2

♣ A Q J 10 5

♠ 10 5 4 2

♥ 6 5 4

♦ K Q J 4

♣ 8 4

N
W E
S

♠ 9 8 7 3

♥ A 2

♦ 10 8 5

♣ K 9 6 2

♠ A Q J 6

♥ K 10 9 7

♦ A 6 3

♣ 7 3

13
6 7
14

West

North

East

South

1 ♣

Pass

1 ♥

Pass

2 ♥

Pass

4 ♥

All pass

4 ♥ by South

Lead: ♦ K

With an unbalanced hand, North bids 1 ♣ with a planned No Trump rebid. South bids 1 ♥ in response, the lower of two four-card suits. North raises to 2 ♥. South knows there are enough points for game and bids 4 ♥.

West leads the ♦ K. Declarer must immediately play the ♠ A crashing the ♠ K, followed by two more rounds of spades to discard the diamond losers. Now declarer can draw trumps and play on clubs. However, to make 11 tricks, declarer must not draw trumps but should look to take ruffs.

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Responding without a fit

Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A K

♥ 8 7

♦ 6 5 4 3

♣ K 10 8 5 2

♠ J 5 3

♥ A Q 4 2

♦ Q J 10 9

♣ Q J

N
W E
S

♠ Q 10 9 8 4 2

♥ K 5 3

♦ A K

♣ 9 3

♠ 7 6

♥ J 10 9 6

♦ 8 7 2

♣ A 7 6 4

10
13 12
5

West

North

East

South

1 ♠

Pass

2 ♦

Pass

2 ♠

Pass

4 ♠

All pass

4 ♠ by East

Lead: ♥ J

In response to East 1 ♠ opening bid, West should bid 2 ♦. It is normally correct to respond with the lower of two four-card suits, but 2 ♥ over 1 ♠ would show at least five cards in the suit. East repeats the spade suit to show extra length (at least five spades) and about 12-15 points. West knows there is an eight-card fit in spades and can bid the game.

South should lead the ♥ J. Although attacking clubs defeats the contract, South has no way of knowing that. Leading an unsupported Ace (without the King) is usually a mistake, and underleading an Ace in a suit contract is even worse. Declarer must discard a club before drawing trumps. Win the heart in hand, cash the ♦ A and ♦ K, then cross to dummy using a heart and discard a club on the third round of diamonds.

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