



Lesson 16: Pre-emptive Bidding at 3, 4 or 5 level

Hand 1

Played by East

None vul	♠ J 3 ♥ Q T 4 2 ♦ J T 6 ♣ A 8 3 2	Dealer N
♠ 9 ♥ K J 9 7 6 5 ♦ A Q 8 ♣ K 7 6	N W E S	♠ A Q T 8 7 6 4 ♥ 3 ♦ 5 2 ♣ J 9 5
	♠ K 5 2 ♥ A 8 ♦ K 9 7 4 3 ♣ Q T 4	

North East South West
 Pass 3♠ (1) Pass (2) Pass (3)

All pass

Bidding

- 1 – Pre-emptive opener – 7 card suit 6-10 HCP
- 2 – Reluctantly, but what can he bid?
- 3 – Must NOT bid 3NT – no length in partner’s suit to run spades!

Contract 3♠ by East. South has Opening lead.

South must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit? Could lead low diamond (4th highest from his longest suit)

Declarer must make his plan

In a suit contract declarer must count his losers first – 1 or possibly 2♠ 1♥ possibly 1♦ 2 or possibly 3♣ = 6 losers possibly going 2 down but this still may be a good score if EW have kept NS out of a contract!

Strategy – hopes to make 6 spades, and finesse hearts and diamonds to make another 3 tricks to secure his contract.

The card play

So long as Declarer takes the Diamond finesse he has no Diamond losers. Declarer proceeds to draw trumps by leading ♠9 from Dummy and unless covered by North, lets it run. South must win ♠K at some stage. A passive second Diamond is best. Once trumps are drawn Declarer leads ♥3 towards the ♥K. South rises with ♥A and leads a third Diamond. Declarer ruffs but can’t reach Dummy’s ♥K except by opening Clubs which sooner or later he is forced to do. He should lose three Club tricks. If the Defence open Clubs, Declarer wins one Club trick and makes the contract.

Opponents should win 1♠ 1♥ 3♣ to put contract down 1. Contract down 1 = +50 NS If the defence led Clubs, contract makes. +140. **Best Score: 3♠ by EW = +140**

Hand 2

Played by South

Vul NS	♠ Q 4 3 ♥ A ♦ A 7 4 2 ♣ K T 6 3 2	Dealer East
♠ K J T 7 ♥ 8 4 3 ♦ Q J T ♣ A 8 7	N W E S	♠ A 9 6 5 2 ♥ 2 ♦ K 9 6 5 ♣ Q J 5
	♠ 8 ♥ K Q J T 9 7 6 5 ♦ 8 3 ♣ 9 4	

East **South** **West** **North**
 Pass 4♥ (1) Pass (2) Pass (3)
 All Pass (4*)

Bidding

- 1 – Pre-emptive opener – 8 card suit 6-10 HCP
- 2 – Reluctantly, but what can he bid?
- 3 – Happily – holding boss trump and knowing a fit in hearts!
- 4 – *Some East's may X for Takeout! 4♠ by EW

Contract 4♥ by South.

West must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit?

Not so easy, elects for the ♦Q This is good it knocks out Declarer's entry to Dummy.

Declarer must make his plan

Sees 8 tricks in hearts plus ♦A and if the ♣A is 'on side' he can make a 10th trick.

The card play

Declarer wins the diamond lead. Next play the ♥A to unblock the trump suit and lead a second diamond won by West. With no better play West may lead a trump won by declarer. Declarer draws trumps and plays the Club finesse to make his contract.

Score 4♥ by NS = 620 (4 x 30) = 120 + 500 **vulnerable** game bonus

Note had the club Ace been offside Defenders should win 1 spade, 1 diamond and 2 clubs.

Contract then goes 1 down. +100 to EW.

Note- even one off is a good score since EW can make 4♠ giving a score to them of +420. A massive swing! This again underpins why preempts are such an important 'tool'.

Hand 3.

Played by West

Vul EW	♠ A K 7 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ J 9 6 ♣ K 9 7 6	Dealer S
♠ 6 ♥ A K Q 9 8 4 3 2 ♦ 7 ♣ Q 5 3	N W E S	♠ T 9 4 3 ♥ J 7 ♦ A 8 5 4 3 ♣ A 8
	♠ Q J 8 5 ♥ T ♦ K Q T 2 ♣ J T 4 2	

South	West	North	East
Pass	1♥ (1)	Pass	2♦ (2)
P (3)	4♥ (3)	All pass	

Bidding

- 1 – With 11HCP you meet the rule of 20 so open normally.
- 2 – Meets the rule of 14 so bids longest suit at the 2 level.
- 3 – Always going to play in hearts so bids to game.

Contract 4♥ by West.

North must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit?

A♠ (top of sequence)

Declarer must make his plan

In a suit contract declarer must count his losers first –

1♠ and 2♣ – Looks fine 😊

You have 10 cards in hearts (so opponents only 3)

Even with a 3:0 split you can draw all trumps for 8 tricks plus ♦A and ♣A = 10 tricks.

(Some may choose to play clubs before drawing trumps to lose only 1 club and 1 spade making 11 tricks)

The Card Play

Declarer wins the spade continuation then draw trumps in two rounds. Next, plays to his diamond winner and has to lose two clubs against best defence.

Score 4♥ by EW = 620 (4 x 30) + 500 **vulnerable** game bonus

Note: Don't be tempted to open with a preempt bid holding a very long suit if your hand meets the rule of 20 and your HCP are over 11+

Hand 4

Played by North

Vul All	♠ K 9 6 ♥ T 9 ♦ A Q J 8 7 4 3 ♣ 7	Dealer W
♠ J 7 ♥ J 8 4 ♦ T 2 ♣ A Q T 8 4 3	N W E S	♠ A T 8 5 2 ♥ A 6 5 2 ♦ K 9 ♣ 9 6
	♠ Q 4 3 ♥ K Q 7 3 ♦ 6 5 ♣ K J 5 2	

West	North	East	South
Pass	3♦ (1)	Pass (2)	Pass (3)
Pass (4)			

Bidding

- 1 – Pre-emptive opener
- 2 – Reluctantly, but what can he bid?
- 3 – Should not be tempted to bid 3NT – not strong enough. With only 2 small diamonds may not be able to reach partner's long suit if the opponents hold up a winning diamond.
- 4 – Notes vulnerability and rightly decides Clubs too short and hand too weak to overcall 4♣!

Contract 3♦ by North. East has Opening lead
East must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit?

Can't under lead an Ace in Hearts or Spades. Can't lead away from the trump King so it has to be Clubs. ♣9 top of doubleton is his best lead.

Declarer must make his plan

In a suit contract declarer must count his losers first - 1 or possibly 2♠ 1♥ 1♦ if ♦K in East, 1♣ – possibly 5 losers, 1 too many!

Strategy is to draw trumps ending in North and lead a heart playing ♥K if the ♥A doesn't appear from East. Return to North by ruffing a club and repeat the heart finesse by leading toward the ♥Q (unless East plays his ♥A). Hope that East switches to spades, playing his ♠A. Spades is your 'frozen' suit. Declarer opening play in the spade suit will establish one spade winner. Letting defenders open the spade suit should give declarer 2 winners! Declarer makes 6♦ 2♥ & 1 (possibly 2)♠ = 9 (10) tricks

The card play

On the club lead, West should cover whatever honour is played from Dummy (or play ♣10 if Dummy plays low). Do not play ♣A unless ♣K played! Switch to another suit (♣9 top of nothing partner is not wanting the suit returned) A trump return looks safe) When declarer gets in, implements his strategy above

Score 3♦ by NS = +110 (3 x 20 = 60) + 50 part score bonus

Hand 5

Played by North

Vul : N/S	♠ A Q 9 7 6 3 2 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ 9 6 ♣ 9	Dealer N
♠ J 8 4 ♥ T 9 8 7 6 ♦ J T ♣ 6 5 4	N W E S	♠ K 5 ♥ A K ♦ Q 7 2 ♣ J T 8 7 3 2
	♠ T ♥ Q J 4 ♦ A K 8 5 4 3 ♣ A K Q	

North East South West
3♠ (1) P 4♠ (2) P

ALL PASS

Bidding

- 1 – Pre-emptive opener
- 2 – Knowing of 8 card fit in spades and with a strong 19 HCP hand with controls in the other suits bids to game in spades*.

*NB Don't bid 3NT without 3 cards in the pre-empt suit - you cannot get back to spades to run them all if the opponents hold a winning card in the suit.

Contract 4♠ by North.

East must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit?

Easy, ♥A will allow you to have a look at dummy and also get an attitude signal from partner.

Declarer must make his plan

In a suit contract declarer must count his losers first - 1 or possibly 2♠ 2♥ but no diamonds or clubs - possibly 4 losers, 1 too many!

Strategy: The lead means losing 2 hearts before declarer gets in. Win whatever is led at the third trick.

Draw trumps playing ♠10 from South and unless West covers (hoping for the ♠K and/or ♠J to be in West's hand), allow it to run thereby reducing your spade losers.

The card play

♠10 played by declarer won with ♠K by East.

Win whatever East returns. Take your established ♥Q winner. Play your minor suit winners and ruff one to get to North to finish drawing trumps then claim your 10 tricks.

Score 4♠ by NS = +620 (4 x 30 = 120) + 500 **vulnerable** game bonus

Hand 6

Played by South

Vul EW	♠ Q J 5 4 ♥ A Q J 8 ♦ Q 7 3 2 ♣ 8	Dealer E
♠ T 7 ♥ K T 7 5 ♦ A 9 6 ♣ A T 9 3	N W E S	♠ 3 ♥ 9 4 2 ♦ 8 4 ♣ K Q J 7 6 4 2
	♠ A K 9 8 6 2 ♥ 6 3 ♦ K J T 5 ♣ 5	

East	South	West	North
3♣ (1)	3♠ (2)	5♣ (3)	5♠ (4)
Pass (5)	All Pass		

Bidding

- 1 – Pre-emptive opener
- 2 – Overcalls with a good 6 card suit
- 3 – Great support, knows it may go down but hopes the sacrifice will keep NS out of a game contract their way!
- 4 – Decision time – X 5♣? Bid 5♠? Or just Pass? Decides to bid 5♠! Pass is very wimpy!

5 – Once bidding a pre-empt you've described your hand so no more to say.

Contract 5♠ by South.

West must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit? Chooses ♣A* in the hope of winning 1 club trick before defenders get the chance to discard the few clubs they hold. *Partner must surely have the ♣KQ for his bid.

Declarer must make his plan

In a suit contract declarer must count his losers first – 0♠

possibly 1♥ unless the finesse works, (if it works, come back to hand and repeat the heart finesse once more), 1♦ 1♣ = 3

Strategy – Draw trumps, establish diamonds by forcing out ♦A and finesse hearts

The card play After the defence takes the first trick, a switch to trumps is safest. Declarer must draw the remaining trumps and implement his strategy as above. He has 6♠ 3♦ and 3♥ winners by taking the finesse twice!

Score: NS make 5♠ = +450 (5 x 30 = 150) + 300 **non vulnerable** game bonus

Note: In this hand 5♣X gives NS a better score i.e. down three vulnerable = +800 **The risk of raising a preempt when vulnerable!**

Hand 7.

Played by West

Vul All	♠ 2 ♥ - ♦ AKJT7532 ♣ T975	Dealer S
♠ KQT987543 ♥ 986 ♦ - ♣ 6	N W E S	♠ AJ6 ♥ AKQ52 ♦ 6 ♣ A432
	♠ - ♥ JT743 ♦ Q984 ♣ KQJ8	

South	West	North	East
P	4♠ (1)	5♦ (2)	5♠ (3)
Pass (4)	Pass	Pass	?

Bidding

1. Pre-emptive opening bid showing an 8 (here he has 9!) card suit.
2. Adventurous perhaps but with a great suit and no defence against spades bids!
- 3 – Looks good. Knowing partner has an 8+ card trump suit.
- 4 – Some South's may bid onto 6♦! If so might East bid 6♠?

Likely Contract 5♠ by West

North must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit? Easy ♦A

Declarer must make his plan

In a suit contract declarer must count his losers first – 0 ♠ 0 ♥ 1 ♦

The Card Play

Declarer ruffs ♦A, draws the single outstanding trump and now sees that by playing his heart winners and his club winner he can make all 13 tricks!

Score: EW make 5♠ plus 2 overtricks = +710 (7 x 30 = 210) + 500 vulnerable game bonus

NOTE: If 5♠ is played by East, then an unlikely heart lead by South would mean that North would ruff the heart and N/S would make one trick! In real life this would not happen as South would lead his partner's suit. There is no obvious reason for South to lead a heart.

These very distributional hands occur more often than you would think, and lots of tricks can be made by hands with fewer points than expected.

Hand 8

Played by East

None Vul	♠ A 7 6 2 ♥ K 9 8 5 3 ♦ J 9 4 ♣ T	Dealer W
♠ K 5 ♥ 6 ♦ 8 5 2 ♣ K Q J 9 5 4 3	N W E S	♠ Q J T ♥ A J T ♦ K Q T 6 ♣ A 7 2
	♠ 9 8 4 3 ♥ Q 7 4 2 ♦ A 7 3 ♣ 8 6	

West North East South
 3♣ (1) Pass 3NT (2) All Pass

Bidding

- 1 – Pre-emptive opener
- 2 – Classic 3NT hand after a pre-empt. Holding 17 HCP and 3 cards in clubs expects to run the clubs for 7 tricks! Plus another 2 tricks at least in from the other suits.

Note: 5♣ also makes but 3NT scores better

Contract 3NT by East.

South must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit?

In a NT contract 4th highest from longest suit headed by an Honour is a standard lead. South therefore chooses ♥2.

Declarer must make his plan

In a NT contract declarer should count his winners first- Wow! Clubs are solid and with ♥A = 8 tricks off the top. Easy to set up 2 more tricks in spades by forcing out ♠A or in diamonds by forcing out ♦A

First question for declarer is should he win the heart lead in the first round? Yes, East MUST cover North's ♥K with the ♥A to establish his ♥J or ♥T as a second heart winner. (East should work out the lead of the ♥2 promises the missing honour - ♥Q!) It is easiest for declarer (East) to set up the ninth trick before running all the Clubs in dummy (West) to avoid squeezing his own hand!

The card play

Win the heart lead. Play ♠10 to ♠K (whether or not the ♠A is played to unblock). North **may** rise with ♠A, return ♥9 and then the ♥10 to force out the ♥Q thus establishing declarer's ♥J. Declarer wins a heart return and will now cash ♠QJ, play ♣A to unblock and cross to Dummy's Clubs.

Score EW make 3NT +1 = +430 (40 + 3 x 30 = 130) + 300 **non-vulnerable** game bonus

Hand 9

Played by North

Constructive preempt in first seat

EW Vul	♠ A K Q T 8 7 4 2 ♥ 6 ♦ 9 4 ♣ 6 5	Dealer N
♠ J 9 ♥ J 4 2 ♦ Q J T 7 ♣ K 9 8 4	N W E S	♠ 6 ♥ A K Q 7 5 3 ♦ 8 3 ♣ A 7 3 2
	♠ 5 3 ♥ T 9 8 ♦ A K 6 5 2 ♣ Q J T	

North	East	South	West
4 ♠ (1)	Pass (2)	All Pass	

Bidding

1. North has a high quality 8 card suit and no defensive values.
2. Some East's may bid 5♥ but difficult when vulnerable

Contract 4♠ by North.

East must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit? Easy - ♥A

Declarer must make his plan

In a suit contract declarer must count his losers first – 0♠ 1♥
0♦ 2♣ – looks OK

Strategy – The opponents may win 3 tricks off the top – 1♥ and 2♣. When declarer gets in he draws trumps and take 2 diamond winners for 10 tricks.

The card play

Ruff the likely heart continuation, draw trumps in two rounds. Take you 2 diamond winners and give up 2 clubs to make your contract.

Score NS make 4♠ = +420 (4 x 30 = 120) + 300 **non vulnerable** game bonus

Hand 10

Played by South

Don't open a pre-empt if your hand is too strong

All vul	♠ 7 4 2 ♥ K J ♦ A ♣ A K J T 9 8 7	Dealer E
♠ Q 9 8 6 ♥ A 5 3 ♦ T 8 7 5 ♣ 4 2	N W E S	♠ A K ♥ T 9 7 2 ♦ 9 6 4 3 2 ♣ Q 3
	♠ J T 5 3 ♥ Q 8 6 4 ♦ K Q J ♣ 6 5	

East	South	West	North
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♣ (1)
Pass	1♥ (2)	Pass	3♣ (3)
Pass	3NT (4)	All Pass	

Bidding

1. You have a 7 card suit but are far too strong to open with a pre-emptive 3 bid so just bid 1 your suit at the 1 level.
2. Respond with the cheaper 4 card suit.
3. Showing 16+ HCP and a 6+ card suit
4. You have enough for game and have stoppers in unbid suits.

Contract 3NT by South.

West must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit? In NT 4th highest is a good lead so chooses ♠6

Declarer must make his plan

In a NT contract declarer should count his sure winners first

–0♠ 0♥ 3♦ 6 or 7♣ = 8 or 9 tricks

Work suit – Clubs then Hearts

Plan – Tackle the Club suit straight away.

Then, take care in this hand not to 'block' your red suits i.e. play honours from the short hand first (in North) making sure you can return to South.

The Card Play On the Spade lead, East wins the ♠A and ♠K and then changes suit so you can assume that he does not have another Spade! If a heart switch, West wins the ♥A and continues spades. You must win the 4th spade holding ♠JT Implement your plan. With 9 cards play clubs from the top hoping the ♣Q will fall – it does! Phew! Contract made!

Score – NS make 3NT = +600 (40 + 2 x 30 = 100) + 600
vulnerable game bonus

Hand 11

Played by East

Don't bid a pre-emptive bid in 1st or 2nd seat without a solid suit.

Your partner has yet to bid

None Vul	♠ Q J 7 4 3 ♥ K 9 7 ♦ Q 5 3 ♣ 5 2	Dealer S
♠ 9 6 2 ♥ A Q T 5 4 2 ♦ A K 9 8 ♣ -	N W E S	♠ A K 8 5 ♥ J ♦ J T 6 2 ♣ K Q J 6
	♠ T ♥ 8 6 3 ♦ 7 4 ♣ A T 9 8 7 4 3	

South	West	North	East
Pass (1)	1♥ (2)	Pass	1♠ (3)
Pass	2♦ (4)	Pass	3NT (5)
All Pass			

Bidding

1 - Don't even think of bidding 3♣ in the first seat with only 4 HCP - a poor suit (only 1 of the top 4 honours). Your partner has still to bid so don't make things difficult for him. If you make a pre-emptive bid in first or second seat you need a good solid suit and you need to be stronger than this. Don't open a 3 level

pre-emptive bid just because you have a 7 card suit.

2 – Opens his longest suit

3 – Bids his 4 card major

4 – Bids his minor

5 - You know that the partnership needs to be in a game but where? You know you have a suit fit in diamonds but having stops in spades & clubs 3NT looks a better contract than 5♦
6 - Decision time – East has hearts and diamonds. Partner has spades and must also have clubs - Pass!

Contract 3NT by East.

South must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit? In NT 4th highest is a good lead so chooses ♣8

Declarer must make his plan

In a NT contract declarer should count his sure winners first -
2♠ 1♥ 2♦ 0♣ = 5 where can the other 4 come from? Work suits hearts – run the ♥J only covering if the ♥K is played by South.

The Card Play – Win the club lead, and play the hearts as above Sadly the ♥K does not appear so you must give up one heart to North who may switch to spades which you win. While you still have stops in spades and clubs set up your diamonds trying to finesse the ♦Q– it fails drat! North may return to clubs in which case you lose 3 tricks 1♥ 1♦ and 1♣

Score: EW make 3NT plus 1 overtrick = +430 (40 + 3 x 30 = 130) + 300 **non-vulnerable** game bonus

In diamonds 12 tricks are possible but is almost impossible to bid. 3NT is the second best contract

Hand 12

Played by South

A high level pre-empt when vulnerable is risky but with such a shapely hand South hopes to lose no more than 3 tricks for 1 down! Even X still a better score than allowing EW to make 4♠

NS vul	♠ 4 2 ♥ JT 9 ♦ K 8 6 5 2 ♣ J 7 6	Dealer W
♠ AKT863 ♥ 7 2 ♦ A 9 4 3 ♣ 4	N W E S	♠ QJ75 ♥ A8653 ♦ QJT ♣ 3
	♠ 9 ♥ KQ4 ♦ 7 ♣ AKQT9852	

West	North	East	South
1♠(1)	Pass	4♠(2)	5♣(3)
Pass(4)	Pass	X(4)	

Bidding

1. Meets rule of 20 to open at 1 level
2. Support for partner's suit and LTC score of 7.
3. A great pre-empt suit even vulnerable when the opponents have bid confidently to a major suit game, albeit non-vulnerable.
4. Some East/West may bid 5♠ but better to X a vulnerable NS!

Likely Contract 5♣X by South

West must think about his opening lead – which suit? And which card in that suit? Easy - ♠A

Declarer must make his plan

In a suit contract declarer must count his losers first – 1♠ 1♥ 1♦ (depending where the ♦A is) and 0♣. One too many. Can you reduce these? No, as Defenders can take 3 top tricks straight away!

Work suits – Hearts – force out ♥A for 2 extra tricks. Finally, play low towards the ♦K hoping the ♦A is in West's hand for one more trick.

The Card Play As soon as declarer gets in draw trumps in one round and set up your hearts then take the diamond finesse leading low towards the ♦K in West.

Score NS go down - 1 in 5♣X = -200 (-100 if not X). A good sacrifice as EW can make 4♠ = +420.

If EW bid to 5♠ they go 1 down **non-vulnerable** = -50 is a worse score for EW

Note NS should NOT be pushed into 6♣! Going 2 down would NOT be a good sacrifice as they will surely be X = -500 against +50 for 5♠ by EW going 1 down)