24 Declarer Play Level 1 Lesson 2 ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ (Courtesy T Zines)

Theme: Length
Lead: Nothing very attractive. Either ♥3 or ♦2 looks reasonable!
Play: You & dummy both have the same ugly 3-3-3-4 shape with 8 top tricks between you

Board 1
North Deals
None Vul

	♠ K 7 2 ♥ Q 10 5 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ 7 5 3 2	
♠ Q 8 3 ♥ J 9 6 3 ♦ 10 8 6 2 ♣ K 10	N W E S	♠ J 6 5 4 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ 9 7 3 ♣ A Q J
	♠ A 10 9 ♥ A K 7 ♦ A J 4 ♣ 9 8 6 4	

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

Lead: ♥ 3

Your ***only hope*** for a ninth is in your one long holding – clubs, weak as they are. You will need the defenders' 5 clubs to break 3-2, a cheering 68% chance. If they do, you will at last make 1 trick after losing 3.

But it is essential to *start immediately on clubs, keeping your top cards in your short suits firmly in place*, and to continue clubs on the next two occasions after you are forced to lose the lead.

https://bridge-training.com/player/index.php?dds=q7D9Lehz

Theme: Hold up, length
Bidding: With 9 hcp & a poorish 5-card suit, 3NT is mildly aggressive. West might choose to invite game instead & East will likely accept
Lead: ♠4 to the ♠A and ♠8 returned (high from a remaining doubleton)

Board 2
East Deals
N-S Vul

	♠ A 8 5 ♥ Q 10 6 3 ♦ J 10 5 ♣ J 10 6	
♠ 9 6 ♥ K 8 4 ♦ K 6 3 ♣ K 9 7 5 2	N W E S	♠ K J 3 ♥ A 7 2 ♦ A 9 8 ♣ A 8 4 3
	♠ Q 10 7 4 2 ♥ J 9 5 ♦ Q 7 4 2 ♣ Q	

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
		1 NT	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

Lead: ♠ 4

Play: On the spade lead you can count 7 guaranteed tricks. Again, your only hope lies in your long holding in clubs. A 3-1 break is 9% more likely than 2-2.

3-1 will be fine, because you can establish the 2 extra tricks you need after losing one.

The only possible problem occurs if spades are 5-3 (and North's ♠8 certainly suggests only 2 or 3 spades originally) and if the 5-carder can get in when the defence plays a third round of spades. Your best hope to prevent this is to *hold up your ♠K* on the second round and take the third.
It's not only aces that can be held up.

South will win and whatever he returns, you will play 2 top clubs and a third. North will win but has no way to reach South's hand and you can take your 9 tricks. If South started with 3 clubs, at least you'd have gone down fighting.
https://bridge-training.com/player/index.php?dds=yZW9viNX

Theme: Combine chances

Bidding: N/S show a balanced 22/33-24/25 HCP with a 2♣ opening and 2NT rebid. And they use the 2♦ response as a waiting bid with no clear positive. With a weak doubleton club, South uses Stayman to check for a heart fit before settling on 6NT with a combined 34-36 hcp.

Lead: ♠J an ideal safe lead against 6NT

Winners: 3♠ 2♥ 4♦ 2♣ =11

Board 3
South Deals
E-W Vul

	♠ A K 5 ♥ A 5 4 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ A K J 4	
♠ 6 3 2 ♥ J 10 9 ♦ 10 7 5 ♣ 8 7 6 5	N W E S	♠ J 10 9 8 ♥ Q 3 2 ♦ 8 6 4 ♣ Q 10 9
	♠ Q 7 4 ♥ K 8 7 6 ♦ A J 9 2 ♣ 3 2	

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
			Pass
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	6 NT
All pass			

Lead: ♠ J

Play: Where might the twelfth trick come from?

The ♣ finesse is one possibility – a 50% chance. The only other possibility is a long-suit trick in ♥s if they break 3-3, a 36% chance. Does that mean you should choose the finesse?

Interestingly, you can **combine your chances** & have two bites of the cherry *as long as you try the ♥s first*. Even in slam, you can afford to lose one trick. Duck a ♥ at trick two, win whatever they return & play the 2 top ♥s. If the suit breaks 3-3, as here, you have 12 tricks. Had they been a more likely 4-2, you'd have tried the ♣ finesse as your last hope.

Note that you can't afford to try the ♣ finesse first because if it loses, you can no longer afford to duck a ♥. Timing is everything. Do your losing early – yes, even in slam - if there's a possible profit in it.

https://bridge-training.com/player/index.php?dds=dK54wFuE

Theme: Hold up even with 2 stoppers

Lead: ♠9, top of a doubleton in partner's overcalled suit

Play: On the ♠ lead, whether South plays K or T (you know he holds both), you can count 7 top tricks. The 2 more you need can be promoted in ♥s after losing to the K & A because of your strong intermediates. (♦s can supply only one at best even if they break 3-3.)

Board 4
West Deals
Both Vul

	♠ 9 5 ♥ K 4 3 ♦ 10 6 4 ♣ 9 8 7 5 3	
♠ A Q 2 ♥ 10 8 6 ♦ K 9 8 7 ♣ K J 6	N W E S	♠ 7 6 4 ♥ Q J 9 7 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ A Q 10
	♠ K J 10 8 3 ♥ A 5 2 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ 4 2	

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥	1 ♠
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass

Lead: ♠ 9

If South holds both ♥ honours along with his 5/6 spades to the KJT, you are doomed. You must ***hope*** North holds at least one.

Holding up even with two stoppers is essential here *when you know you have to lose the lead twice.*

Duck the first spade and win the second as cheaply as you can and play a heart. North should win this, but now has no spade to play. Win the return and play a second heart. South can win, but his spades are not yet established. Whatever he plays, you can take your 9 tricks.

If you win the first spade and play a heart, you will go down if North wins the first heart (as he should in order to protect his partner's hoped-for entry), because you have failed to sever the communication in spades between the defenders.

https://bridge-training.com/player/index.php?dds=kX3qsR6r

Theme: Danger Hand
Lead: ♥6
Winners: 2♠ 0♥ 4♦ 1♣ = 7 but with lead 8. I more needed
Play: When third hand plays ♥T, you assume West has led from AQ. You win the ♥J (not the time for a hold-up – they would then at once take 5 tricks!). It can easily come from finessing in ♠s or in ♣s, even if the finesse loses. Which one will you choose?

Board 5
North Deals
N-S Vul

	♠ K J 10 4 ♥ 8 5 2 ♦ K Q 10 ♣ A J 8	
♠ Q 9 2 ♥ A Q 7 6 3 ♦ 7 5 2 ♣ 6 5	N W E S	♠ 7 6 5 3 ♥ 10 4 ♦ 9 6 4 ♣ K 4 3 2
	♠ A 8 ♥ K J 9 ♦ A J 8 3 ♣ Q 10 9 7	

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
	1 ♣	Pass	3 NT
All pass			
Lead: ♥ 6			

Theme: Finesses. entries
Bidding: East shows a balanced 18-19 with a ♥ stopper but without 4 ♠s by jumping in NT
Lead: ♥Q
Winners: 1♠ 2♥ 3♦ 1♣ = 7
Play: If ♦s break 3-3 they will provide an extra trick, *but one will not be enough.* If ♠s are 3-3 you can establish another trick *but only after losing the lead twice*. And this you can't afford as you have only one ♥ stopper left after trick one.

Board 6
East Deals
E-W Vul

	♠ 10 9 8 7 ♥ 6 2 ♦ 7 5 ♣ K 9 8 5 2	
♠ J 6 5 2 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ 7 6 4	N W E S	♠ A 4 3 ♥ K 9 4 ♦ A 8 6 2 ♣ A Q J
	♠ K Q ♥ Q J 10 8 5 ♦ J 10 9 4 ♣ 10 3	

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
		1 ♦	1 ♥
Dbl	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 NT	All pass		
Lead: ♥ Q			

The vital question to ask is, ***'Who is the danger hand?'*** Which opponent can hurt you if he gains the lead? Even if West holds long hearts, he cannot play the suit without giving you a second heart trick for your ninth trick.

But if East wins the lead, he can lead a heart through your remaining K9 and you will go down. ***East is the danger hand.***

And so you will choose to ***finesse ♠s into the safe hand,*** West.

Cross at trick two to ♦K and run the ♠J. If it loses and West does well not to continue hearts (knowing you have K9 left) but tries to get East in with a club, you will refuse the finesse and carefully untangle and cash your 9 tricks.

https://bridge-training.com/player/index.php?dds=8aC3N7dE

Clubs offer the only other possibility. A successful finesse will give you 1 extra trick and repeating the finesse will give you 2. If the diamonds break you can even afford a losing club finesse as long as you take it *early* while your last heart stopper is intact.

2 club finesses require 2 entries in dummy to allow you to lead twice towards ♣AQJ. There are only 3 entries - ♥A, ♦K and ♦Q. Don't neglect to use any 2 in good time.

Win ♥A in dummy and finesse a club. Return to dummy and finesse again. You are now assured of 9 tricks, and 10 if the diamonds break (not this time).

https://bridge-training.com/player/index.php?dds=tevzHy3P