You are South, declarer in 1NT.

♠ K Q 4 3
♥ J 8 2
♦ 4 3 2
♣ 6 5 4

```
        N
    W       E
        S
```
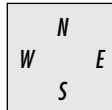
♠ 6 5 2
♥ Q 7 5
♦ A 10 5
♣ A K Q J

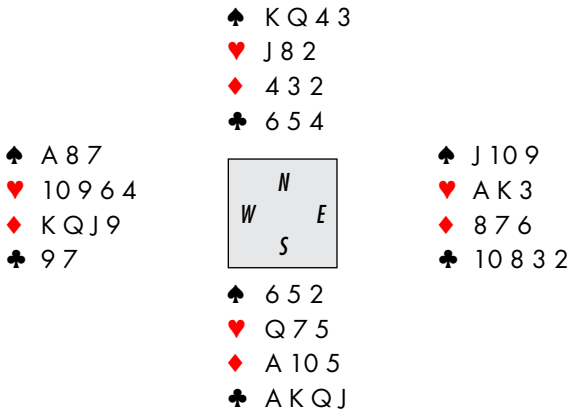| West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	1NT
all pass			

You have a balanced hand with 16 points, so you open 1NT and everyone passes.

West leads the ♦K. How do you plan to play the hand?

Analysis

You can count five winners — one diamond and four clubs. The best chance for two more tricks is the spade suit.

What spade layout do you hope for?

```
                    ♠ K Q 4 3
                    ♥ J 8 2
                    ♦ 4 3 2
                    ♣ 6 5 4
    ♠ A 8 7           ┌─────────┐          ♠ J 10 9
    ♥ 10 9 6 4        │    N    │          ♥ A K 3
    ♦ K Q J 9         │ W     E │          ♦ 8 7 6
    ♣ 9 7             │    S    │          ♣ 10 8 3 2
                      └─────────┘
                    ♠ 6 5 2
                    ♥ Q 7 5
                    ♦ A 10 5
                    ♣ A K Q J
```

You need to find the ♠A with West. In that case, if you lead twice towards the king and queen of spades in dummy they will each take a trick.

Normally you would duck the first round of diamonds, but a heart switch would not be welcome. So you take the opening lead in hand with the ♦A. Lead a small spade towards dummy. If West goes up with the ace you have two spade tricks. If West ducks, play the king from dummy. If it holds, don't play the queen but return to your hand in clubs and lead another spade towards the queen. The opponents can take the ♠A, three diamonds and two hearts but that is all, so you end up with seven tricks.

Don't just lay down your high honors to be taken by even higher ones — lead towards them. You need to hope that West has the ♠A. If East has it, *c'est la vie* - you probably cannot make seven tricks.
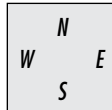
Key Point

Don't lay down your high honors, lead towards them.

You are South, declarer in 4♠.

♠ 10 9 6 5 4
♥ 8 2
♦ A K 4 2
♣ 8 6

```
      N
  W       E
      S
```

♠ K Q J 8 7 2
♥ J 7 6
♦ Q 7
♣ A 10

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	4♠	all pass	

You have 13 HCP and six spades, so you open 1♠. West overcalls 2♥. North has five-card support for your spades and decides that game is the place to be, and bids a simple 4♠.
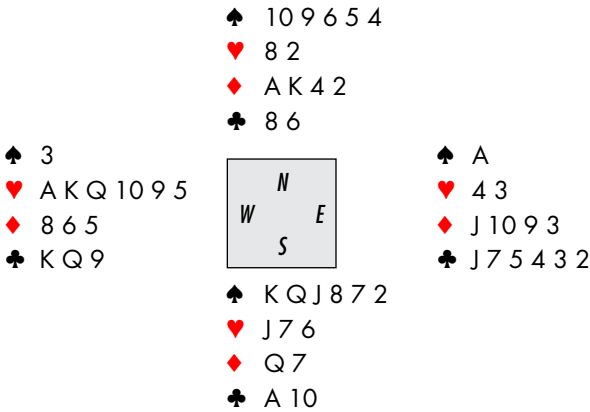
West starts with the ♥A and ♥K, East following suit twice. West then switches to the ♣K.

How do you plan to play the hand?

Analysis

You have four losers — one in spades, two hearts already lost and one in clubs. The third heart loser in your hand can be ruffed in dummy later, so that is not a problem. But there is a loser in each of spades and clubs, so you need to eliminate one of them.

Any thoughts?

♠ 10 9 6 5 4
♥ 8 2
♦ A K 4 2
♣ 8 6

♠ 3
♥ A K Q 10 9 5
♦ 8 6 5
♣ K Q 9

```
        N
    W       E
        S
```

♠ A
♥ 4 3
♦ J 10 9 3
♣ J 7 5 4 3 2

♠ K Q J 8 7 2
♥ J 7 6
♦ Q 7
♣ A 10

You win the club switch with the ace. Your club loser is now exposed to the wolves.

You should not play trumps immediately. If you do, the opponents will take their ♠A and then cash their ♣Q. The key is to play diamonds first. Play the ♦Q, then lead the seven to the ace in dummy and play the ♦K, discarding your club from hand.

Then you can afford to play trumps. The opponents will win the ♠A but you can ruff your remaining heart in dummy, making ten tricks.
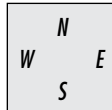
Key Point

Delay drawing trumps if necessary, in order to discard losers on dummy's winners.

You are South, declarer in 6NT.

```
                    ♠  8 2
                    ♥  A Q
                    ♦  A J 10 9 8
                    ♣  A K 7 4

                       ┌─────────┐
                       │    N    │
                       │  W    E │
                       │    S    │
                       └─────────┘

                    ♠  A K Q 3
                    ♥  K 7
                    ♦  7 4 3
                    ♣  Q J 9 8
```

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	6NT	all pass	

You have a balanced hand with 15 points, so you open 1NT. Partner has 18
points and, knowing that there are between 33 and 35 points in your two
hands, bids a small slam.

The lead is the ♥J. How do you plan to play the hand?

Analysis

You have ten winners — three in spades, two in hearts, one in diamonds
and four in clubs. The only possible source of extra tricks is the diamond
suit.

How will you play the diamond suit?

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

You can only afford to lose one diamond trick. You could cash the ♦A and hope that either the ♦K or ♦Q is singleton, meaning you would only lose one trick to the other diamond honor. But this is a poor bet. The other approach is to play for West to have at least one of the missing diamond honors. Win the opening lead in hand with the ♥K and play a small diamond towards dummy. If West plays low, play the ♦J from dummy. Here this will lose to the ♦K and East will probably return a heart to your ace.

Return to your hand with a spade or a club and lead another small diamond towards dummy. If West plays low, play the ♦10 from dummy. It wins and East follows suit, so the queen is the only outstanding diamond and it will fall under the ace. Now you make four diamond tricks and your contract. The only way you would have failed is if the ♦K and ♦Q were both with East, which is only a 25% chance.

If East was unable to follow suit on the second diamond, this would tell you that West must have started with four diamonds to the queen. You would remain patient and return to your hand with a spade or club and finesse against the ♦Q again.

Key Point

When missing two honors in a suit, consider finessing twice. This technique is called a 'double finesse'.

You are South, declarer in 3♣.

♠ 9 4 2
♥ K 3
♦ 9 5 4
♣ A K 8 7 3

```
        N
   W        E
        S
```
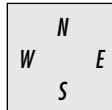
♠ A K 7 3
♥ A 9 5 4
♦ Q 7
♣ 6 5 4

West	North	East	South
			1♣
pass	3♣	all pass	

You have 13 HCP and no five-card major, so you open 1♣, your longer minor. Partner has 10 points, no four-card major and five clubs, so gives you a limit raise to 3♣. This shows 10-12 points and usually at least five trumps. You have a minimum opening hand so you pass.
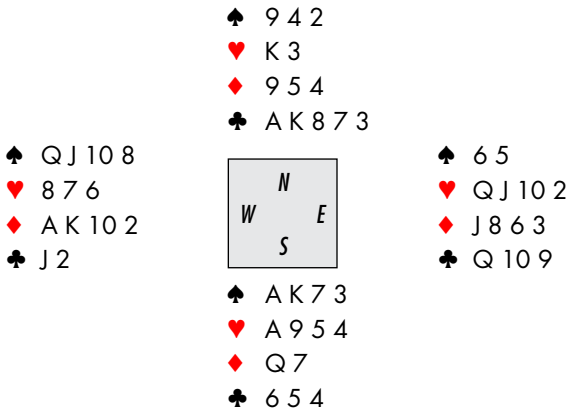
West leads the ♠Q.

How do you plan to play the hand?

Analysis

This hand looks different to most of the problems so far. What is the difference?

Normally the declarer has longer trumps than dummy. In this case you, South, have three trumps and dummy, North, has five. How does this affect your planning?

```
                    ♠ 9 4 2
                    ♥ K 3
                    ♦ 9 5 4
                    ♣ A K 8 7 3
  ♠ Q J 10 8                        ♠ 6 5
  ♥ 8 7 6          ┌─────────┐     ♥ Q J 10 2
  ♦ A K 10 2       │    N    │     ♦ J 8 6 3
  ♣ J 2            │ W     E │     ♣ Q 10 9
                   │    S    │
                   └─────────┘
                    ♠ A K 7 3
                    ♥ A 9 5 4
                    ♦ Q 7
                    ♣ 6 5 4
```

When counting losers, you look in the 'long hand', the hand with more trumps or, if they are the same length, the stronger trumps. So here you must count losers from the perspective of North: one loser in spades, three in diamonds and one in trumps if they split 3-2.

Can you eliminate one loser?

You can try to trump a diamond loser in the hand short in trumps, South. So win the lead with the ♠A in hand and, before drawing trumps, lead a diamond from your hand. Whoever wins this may lead a club to thwart your plan. Win the club with the ace and lead another diamond. If the defenders lead another club, win it with the king. Then lead dummy's last diamond and trump it in your hand.
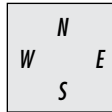
You will eventually lose a trick to the ♣Q as well as a spade, but you will make your contract.

Key Point

Make sure you count losers in the 'long hand' — the one with more trumps.

You are East. South is declarer in 1NT. Partner leads the ♠2.

```
              ♠  Q 6 3
              ♥  K J 4
              ♦  9 8 5
              ♣  A K J 2
                              ♠  A J 7
            ┌─────────┐       ♥  Q 8 6 5
            │    N    │       ♦  Q J 6
            │  W   E  │       ♣  Q 6 5
            │    S    │
            └─────────┘
```

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1NT
all pass			

North opens 1♣. South responds 1NT (6-9 HCP, no four-card suit outside clubs), ending the bidding.

Your partner leads the ♠2. Declarer calls for the ♠3 from dummy. How many spades does partner have? How many spades does declarer have?

How do you play?

Analysis

Partner is probably leading the fourth-best spade in which case they have four spades, and so South has three.

If there were three small spades in dummy, you would certainly play your ace. What do you do in this situation?

♠ Q 6 3
♥ K J 4
♦ 9 8 5
♣ A K J 2

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

♠ 10 8 4
♥ A 10 7
♦ A 4 3
♣ 9 8 7 3

You should play the ♠J. The defense can now take four spade tricks. The ♠J wins, you cash your ♠A and return the ♠7 to partner's ♠K. The ♠9 now takes the fourth trick. Your partner switches to diamonds and the contract is defeated. If instead you take the ♠A at Trick 1, partner can take a trick with the ♠K but declarer takes the third trick with the ♠Q in dummy. Then declarer can play on clubs and make the contract.

    You may well ask what would happen if declarer had the ♠K. Let's swap the ♠K and the ♠10:

♠ Q 6 3
♠ 10 9 5 2   ♠ A J 7
♠ K 8 4

If you play the ♠J, declarer takes it with the ♠K but later West can possibly get in and lead the ♠10, trapping the ♠Q, in which case declarer makes only one trick in the suit. If you play the ♠A, declarer is certain to take two tricks with the ♠K and ♠Q.

    So whether declarer has the ♠K or not, you come out even or ahead if you play the ♠J at the first trick.

Key Point

Retain an honor card over dummy's honor. Play your next highest card provided it is a nine or better.