

Play of the hand in No Trump contracts

Planning the play in no trumps

- Count your winners
- Decide whether you need to develop tricks
- Don't be afraid to give up the lead
- In general, establish your extra tricks before cashing sure tricks
- Establish your longest suit

Counting winners

a) Contract 3NT

♠ KJ95 ♠ Q74
♥ Q6 ♥ KJ3
♦ AJ2 ♦ KQ109
♣ KQ52 ♣ J109

b) Contract 3NT

♠ KQ97 ♠ A10
♥ KJ6 ♥ Q105
♦ KJ432 ♦ AQ106
♣ 5 ♣ A876

c) Contract 3NT

♠ A864 ♠ QJ10
♥ A85 ♥ K643
♦ 987 ♦ AK32
♣ A108 ♣ K94

You have only 4 top diamonds

3 top spades, 5 top diamonds, 1 top club

1 top spade, 2 top hearts, 2 top diamonds, 2 top clubs

= 4 sure tricks

= 9 sure tricks

= 7 sure tricks

Possible tricks

2 spade 2 heart 3 clubs

2 hearts

2 spades if K♠ finesseable

Establishing a side suit

Contract 3NT, lead Q♥

♠ A97 ♠ K64
♥ AK94 ♥ 86
♦ 864 ♦ KQJ10
♣ A3 ♣ K874

You have 2 spade tricks, 2 heart tricks, 2 club tricks. That totals 6. You will need to get three extra tricks from diamonds. Win the A♥ and play on diamonds until someone takes the A♦. Win the return and cash all winners = 9 tricks

If you cash your winners and then play diamonds you will come down to

♠ 7 ♠ 6
♥ 94 ♥ -
♦ 864 ♦ KQJ10
♣ - ♣ 74

Now, when you switch to diamonds and the opponents win the A♦ they can cash their spades, hearts, and clubs and the contract will be defeated

Lesson 9

Play an honour from the short hand first

Contract 3NT, lead K♥

♠ 86	♠ AK95
♥ 942	♥ A65
♦ AKJ96	♦ Q4
♣ 854	♣ A962

Win the A♥. If you play the A♦, and a small diamond back to the Q♦, you will not be able to enjoy the diamond winners. Play the Q♦ first, then cross to dummy via small to the J♦. = 9 tricks

Taking a finesse

Contract 3NT, lead Q♠

♠ A93	♠ K762
♥ A952	♥ K86
♦ 86	♦ AJ10
♣ K85	♣ AQJ

You have 8 sure tricks. None of the 4-card suits are likely to give you a 4th trick in the suit. Your only hope is that one of the diamond honours is favourably placed. So play the 6♦ to the 10♦, then 8♦ to the J♦ = 9 tricks

Lose a trick early

Contract 3NT, lead Q♥

♠ 83	♠ AK96
♥ 943	♥ AK4
♦ AK9832	♦ 74
♣ 98	♣ KQ42

You have 6 top tricks. The additional tricks have to come from the diamonds. You have 8 diamonds. The missing diamonds will usually break 3 – 2. If you play A♦ K♦ you will not make the smaller diamonds. Play small from both hands first = 9 tricks

Establish your longest suit

Contract 3NT, lead 2♠

♠ A3	♠ KJ6
♥ K63	♥ A87
♦ A983	♦ K74
♣ K872	♣ A964

Win the A♠. Clubs are your longest fit so cash A♣ K♣ and play a third club. Hopefully the suit will break and you will end up with 2 spades, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and 3 club tricks = contract made

Hold Up Play

Sometimes when you have a weak suit you have to hope that you can exhaust the dangerous opponent of cards in that suit

Contract 3NT, lead K♠

♠ A83	♠ 96
♥ K63	♥ AQ7
♦ KQJ109	♦ 743
♣ K8	♣ A964

Don't play the A♠ until the third round (Hold Up Play). Now play on diamonds, hoping that the opponent with the A♦ is not the person with the 5-card spade suit. (If the opponent with the A♦ has a spade then the suit breaks 4 – 4 and your contract is safe.)