

Winners and Entries in No Trump

**Board 1**

North Deals

None Vul

♠ A 9 4		♠ Q 5
♥ 9 8 3		♥ A 10 7
♦ A K Q 5		♦ 10 9 8 7
♣ K Q J		♣ 10 8 5 3
♠ K J 8 6 2	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;">             N W     E S           </div>	
♥ K J 5 2		
♦ 4 2		
♣ 9 2		
♠ 10 7 3		
♥ Q 6 4		
♦ J 6 3		
♣ A 7 6 4		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	1 NT
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

**Auction Commentary:** North has 19 pts and is too strong to start with 1 NT. North opens in a suit, and shows her strength next time with a 2NT rebid. South has enough to respond, but must stay at the one-level. South's 1 NT response describes a minimum 6-10 point hand. With this 7-point hand, South bids game. (NOTE -- some Norths would just do the math and jump directly to 3 NT after responder's 1 NT limiting bid. 19 points opposite what must be at least 6 points equals 25, and that's game in 3 NT, after all!)

**Opening Lead:** ♠ 6 - In No Trump we try to establish our longest suit. Lead 4th best when you don't have a sequence in that suit.

**Planning the Play:** Counting winners, we find 1 ♠, 4 ♦s and 4 ♣s. That makes 9 tricks. Win the ♠ A right away. Your ♥s are even worse than your ♠s; you don't want the opponents to switch suits! The ♣ suit is BLOCKED. You don't want to spend 2 high ♣s on the same trick, so you need an ENTRY to South's ♣ A. Take North's 3 high ♣s first, and then use the ♦ J as that entry. Be mindful with entries to take them in the correct order! If you played your ♦ AKQ first, the ♦ J entry would disappear. If you played your ♣ A first, it would eat one of your other ♣ winners. PLAN PLAN PLAN :)

**Takeaway:** When you can count all the tricks you need to make your contract, TAKE 'EM AND RUN, as the saying goes!

### Counting Winners and Entries in No Trump

**Board 7**

South Deals

Both Vul

	♠ Q J 4 3										
	♥ 5										
	♦ A 5 3										
	♣ J 9 7 4 3										
♠ 10 8 5	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 7 6 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 10 8 7 6		♥ 9 3									
♦ 8 7		♦ Q J 10 9									
♣ K 8 5		♣ A Q 10									
	♠ A K										
	♥ A K Q 4 2										
	♦ K 6 4 2										
	♣ 6 2										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
			1 ♥								
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	3 ♦								
Pass	3 NT	All pass									

**Auction Commentary:** South has an unbalanced maximum one-level opening bid. The rebid will be a game-forcing jump shift to 3♦. North has a minimum response and must stay at the one-level. A bid of 2♣ (to show 5 pieces of them) would show more strength than the hand has. Once South jump shifts, North must be able to stop the only unbid suit - the ♣s -to bid NT. When 3 suits have been bid, don't suggest playing in NT unless you have the 4th suit stopped! (NOTE: While we'd love the strong hand to be declarer here, there is no convenient bid North can make to get South to bid the NT game. Over 3♦, 3♥ would show 2 pieces; and 3♠ would show extra length in North's previously bid suit. There is no way to show the ♣ stopper without going past 3 NT... so North decides to just bid it.)

**Opening Lead:** ♦ Q, top of a sequence. We often try to lead an unbid suit, but East has a nice sequence in ♦s. Sequences are often very safe leads that give nothing away.

**Planning the Play:** In NT we count our winners. (If there are not enough, we need to look around to find how to get what's missing!) Winners are 4 ♠s, 3 ♥s and 2 ♦s -- that's 9 tricks, if you have entries to all of them! The ♠ suit is blocked, as there is no link in the ♠ suit between the two hands. North's entry to cash the other two top ♠s is that ♦ A. Win this first trick, so you can "take 'em and run!" But where you win it is critical: you need to preserve that ♦ A entry until after you're unblocked the ♠s, by cashing the ♠ AK in dummy FIRST. Then you lead a small ♦ up to the ♦ A, and win the other two top ♠s. The 3 top ♥s will bring the contract home.

**Takeaway:** In NT we count our winners and make a PLAN before we play a single card to trick #1. If you first won the ♦ A, and THEN decided to make your plan, you would not make this contract!

### Counting Winners and Entries in No Trump

**Board 10**  
East Deals  
Both Vul

	♠ Q 10 2										
	♥ 10 8										
	♦ 8 6 4 3										
	♣ A Q 7 2										
♠ J 9 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 8 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A Q 6 3		♥ K J 4									
♦ 10 5 2		♦ A K Q J									
♣ 10 9 4		♣ J 8 3									
	♠ K 7 6 5										
	♥ 9 7 5 2										
	♦ 9 7										
	♣ K 6 5										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
		1 ♦	Pass								
1 ♥	Pass	2 NT	Pass								
3 NT	All pass										

**Auction Commentary:** East has a balanced 9 HCP and must open a suit at the one-level, planning to jump in NT next. West is minimum, but can afford to bid 1♥. A minimum hand can make a one-level bid. West's 7 points are enough to accept opener's 2 NT game invitation, because West knows that partner must have 18 or 19 HCP to make that bid.

**Opening Lead:** ♠ 5 is 4th best. North should be awake on the first trick. If dummy plays low, take the ♠ 10 rather than the ♠ Q. When the ♠ J is in the dummy, you play third hand ONLY AS HIGH AS NECESSARY -- which here is the ♠ 10. Keep the ♠ Q over the ♠ J for later!

**Planning the Play:** Counting winners, we see 1 ♠, 4 ♥s and 4 ♦s. Take them and run! Be careful with the lopsided ♥ suit, unevenly divided between your hand and the Dummy. Take the ♥ K and ♥ J, then use the ♥ 4 to travel over to the dummy.

**Takeaway:** When taking winners, it's a good idea to play blocked and lopsided suits early. Playing the "high card from the short side of the suit" is almost always best.

Counting Winners and Entries

**Board 12**  
West Deals  
N-S Vul

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

  

♠ Q 10 7 6 5	♠ Q 10 7 6 5
♥ 8 6 2	♥ 8 6 2
♦ 8 4	♦ 8 4
♣ A 10 9	♣ A 10 9



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

**Auction Commentary:** West has 20 HCP, unbalanced. Opening some number of NT is not possible with an unbalanced hand, so this will have to be opened at the one-level. West opens 1 ♦ and plans to show the strength with a **jump shift** to 3 ♣ next. (The **J/S** will be forcing to game.) East's minimum still has enough to make a bid at the one-level, so 1 ♠ tries to find the fit. (Bid your 4-card majors up the line at the one level.) When 3 ♣ forces East to make another bid, careful consideration is needed. The only unbid suit is ♥s, and East can't "stop" them. East should not bid 3 NT. (1) We like to keep the big hand concealed, so it should be declarer if possible, and (2) if West's stopper is the ♥K, then the lead in ♥s should come from West's LHO. (This ensures the ♥K will be a winner.) So, when East is forced to find a bid over the 3 ♣, going back to opener's first suit by bidding 3 ♦ will allow West to bid the 3 NT (with a ♥ stopper, of course!).

**Opening Lead:** ♥ Q, top of that sequence

**Planning the Play:** Counting winners, we find 2 ♠s, 2 ♥s and 5 ♦s. But we need to be careful about entries! East only has 1, (the ♦K), because West doesn't have a low ♠ to lead to the ♠K. Since ♠s are the problem suit, play it first! Unblock the ♠A first, lead a small ♦ to the ♦K, and cash the ♠K. Keeping your transportation clean and easy, take the "high card from the short side:" cash the ♦10 next, and then lead the small ♦ to your hand. You'll win the rest of the ♦s and the other high ♥. 9 tricks come home without even touching the ♣ suit. Whew!

**Takeaway:** "High card from the short side" is a phrase you will hear often! It's the planning of which card to take in which order that will make or break you. Always look for unblocking needs when you're making your plan, and you will be successful more often!