

Using Length in Suit and NT Part 1

Board 1

North Deals

None Vul

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

Auction Commentary: Since South knows partner's 1 NT holds at least 2 pieces in every suit, the ♥ fit is known. South can count length + HCP and get to 10. So game in ♥s it is!

Opening Lead: ♦ J East's lead isn't clear-cut - the ♠ 10 is the top of an interior sequence, and the ♣ 8 is 3rd best from an honor. ♦ J is slightly better, as the top of a sequence (or "near sequence," with J-10-...8!)

Planning the Play: In this suit contract, Declarer starts by counting LOSERS. There is probably just 1 ♥ loser if they don't split 5-0. And if ♣s behave, there should be just 1 loser there, too. 1 ♦ loser rounds it out. The contract should make barring something weird. Of course, when you're looking at something weird in the dummy, you need to cross your fingers for the other 2 hands!

Declarer will make both high ♦s on this lead, and there are no ♠s to lose. Before diving in on the ♣ suit, we should draw trumps. Pay attention to the side suits to ensure they've split. A 3/2 break in ♥s was first, and then the 3/2 break in ♣s. Isn't life grand? :)

Takeaway: With a hand such as this, South knows that slam isn't in the cards... ;) South knows the final contract will be 4 ♥, so rather than using 2 ♦ to transfer to 2 ♥, South could jump to 4 ♦ to transfer directly to 4 ♥! This is called a "Texas Transfer," and is the Jacoby Transfer's big brother. There are times when a responder would prefer to use "Texas" over "Jacoby." You and partner should read about it, make decisions, and put this one in your toolbox right away. It's an easy one, and can help you in many hands.

Using Length in Suit and NT Part 1

Board 3

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ K 10 4		♠ J 5									
♥ Q J 10 9 8		♥ 6 3									
♦ 6 3		♦ 8 5 2									
♣ J 10 8		♣ A K 7 6 5 3									
♠ Q 9 6 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #006400; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 8 7 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K 5		♥ 7 4 2									
♦ A K 7 4		♦ Q J 10 9									
♣ 9 2		♣ Q 4									

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		Pass
3 NT by West			

Auction Commentary: Balanced 15-17 counts open 1 NT. East, don't be tempted to talk about the ♣s. Those clubs will be great tricks in NT, right? The only reason for Responder to place the contract in a minor (below slam) is because the hand has no value except if their minor is trump. East could steer toward a ♣ contract if East's holding in ♣s were 6 small pieces - like ♣T87542, with that outside ♠J. THEN you should make sure the contract were in ♣s! But here, you know partner holds at least 2 ♣s and can get to your hand. Put partner in game and watch her earn it :)

Opening Lead: ♥ Q (top of sequence)

Planning the Play: Count winners in NT - 2 ♣s, 2 ♦s, 2 ♥s... need 3 more. Let's not TOUCH the ♠ suit -- (and we're lucky they didn't lead one)! The ♣s are the ticket home. Declarer needs to take special care with the ♣s, though. Those ♣s are the only entry to Dummy. We expect the opponents to hold 5 pieces, 3/2. So winning the opening lead in hand, we lead a small ♣ and DUCK immediately. Let them win the first one. They'll return another ♥. But if the ♣s did break 3/2, it's all over but the celebrating. You will win the ♣AK and watch the 4th and 5th ♣s drop. Cash the rest of the ♣ suit, (winning 5 of them in total), and you've already won 2 ♥s. That's 7 tricks, so go grab those top 2 ♦s and you've made your 9 tricks.

See how easy that was? Through promotion and length, you made your contract!

Takeaway: And if you cashed the ♣AK and THEN let them win the third one, you'll be wanting to call an Uber to get back there later :)

Using Length in Suit and NT Part 1

Board 8

West Deals

None Vul

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

Auction Commentary: Stayman tried to find the ♥ fit, but we'll have to settle on 3 NT. Don't make the mistake of inviting with this South hand - you have 9 HCP and a 5-card minor. That's an extra point every day of the week!

Opening Lead: ♠ Q

Planning the Play: Counting winners: 2 ♠s, 2 ♥s, 1 ♦ (thank heaven they didn't lead one!), and 2 ♣s. 2 more tricks will come from the ♣ suit, if they break 3/2 you're home free. BUT WAIT, they led a ♠, and the Dummy had to win that. Now the only way to the Dummy is in the ♣ suit. Fear not -- if you force them to win that ♣ right away, then Declarer's 3rd small ♣ will be a link to the rest of the suit.

Takeaway: Statistically, when the missing cards in a suit are an odd number, (3 or 5, say), then the missing cards have divided as EVENLY as possible. So missing 3 pieces, expect 2 in one hand and 1 in the other. Missing 5, there should be 3 in one hand and 2 in the other. But if the missing pieces are an even number, (2 or 4 or even 6), they divided ODDLY - (unevenly). You expect to find them 2/0, or 3/1, or 4-2. Is it always this way? Of course not - but the only thing we have to use when we're planning is the "most likely" division of the cards. And if that doesn't work, and there's no possible "Plan B" with these hands, then NOBODY can make the contract, and you'll be in good company! :)

Using Length in Suit and NT Part 1

Board 10
East Deals
Both Vul

♠ A 10 9 2		♠ K 3									
♥ 4 3		♥ A Q 5									
♦ Q J 10 9 3		♦ K 8 6 4									
♣ K 6		♣ A 9 5 2									
♠ Q J 7 5 4	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="background-color: #008000;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 7 6		♥ J 10 9 8 2									
♦ A 7		♦ 5 2									
♣ 10 7 3		♣ Q J 8 4									

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 NT	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
3 NT by East			

Auction Commentary: When partner opens 1 NT, responder is always in charge. Opener limited their hand, and limited hands are never in charge. With 10 HCP, Responder will give the opener a choice of 2 game bids. The 2♥ call says, "Partner, I have 5 ♠s over here." And then the jump to 3 NT says, "Partner, I also have enough to be in game. Do you have 3 ♠s with me? If so, please correct the game to our ♠ fit, and bid 4♠. But if you don't have 3 ♠s with me, please just pass 3 NT. We have plenty to make 9 tricks."

Opening Lead: ♥ J

Planning the Play: Count winners in NT: 3 ♥s, 2 ♦s, 1 ♣... we need 3 more. The ♠ suit is promising, and we need to right away start promoting those tricks! We'll purposely lose to the ♠ A, and with a decent break we hope to score 3 ♠s. Counting 7 pieces of ♠s, the opponents have 6 between them. 6 outstanding pieces rate to divide 4-2 in the opponents' hands. So, the ♠ K forces the ♠ A, then the ♠ QJ are good. We will have played 3 ♠s, and one of them will still have a high ♠. But forcing that out will yield our much-needed 3rd ♠ trick. *Wait - this means we have to purposely give up the lead to the enemy?* Yes, and we need to do it FIRST!

(1) We win the ♥ lead in our hand, then lose a ♠. (2) North wins the ♠ A, returns another ♥. *We win that in hand also, because that ♥ K might be needed for transportation to the good ♠s once we set them up!* (3) Then we play the ♠ QJ, and watch South pitch on the ♠ J. (4) We now know North has the ♠ 10, so we purposely let that win next. And the 5th ♠ in Dummy is now set up. (5) We will win 3 ♥s, 2 ♦s, 1 ♣ as predicted, PLUS 3 ♠ tricks! Nicely played.

Takeaway: In NT, take your losers early while you still control all the suits.