

TAKE ALL YOUR  
CHANCES  
AT BRIDGE



Eddie Kantar

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
THE PROBLEMS	8
APPENDIX 1: THE THEMES	161
APPENDIX 2: USEFUL NUMBERS	165

# INTRODUCTION

On many bridge hands you can see more than one reasonable line of play to make your contract. If you select the best percentage line your chance of making the hand increases, but if you don't... There's a better way to go, though. The idea is to look for the line of play which, if it doesn't work, still allows you to try the other line; there may even be a third line! This is called 'staying alive', a phrase which could just as well be the title of this book. In other words, avoid putting all of your eggs in one basket!

Unfortunately, but realistically, there will be hands where you have to choose immediately among several lines of play. The opponents have forced your hand and there is no time to try one line and then switch to another if the first doesn't work. Now it does help to know a bit about percentages or the odds. Some of these percentages, *common* ones, will be sprinkled throughout the book. You are probably familiar with most of them already, but if you are not, these numbers can help. A list of the most helpful percentage numbers can be found at the end of the book ([Appendix 2, p.165](#)).

How should you attack the hands where you do have options available? If you are declaring a notrump contract, count your sure tricks. If you don't have enough to make the contract (and you won't!) look for some way to develop that missing trick or tricks. If you see at least two lines of play to secure those extra tricks, look for a way to stay alive! Give yourself a chance to take both lines. At trump contracts counting losers *and* sure tricks is the way to go. If the total doesn't come to thirteen, count your cards.

Many common themes have been introduced with a few purposeful 'theme repeats'. The repeats give you a chance to see if you picked up some pointers from a somewhat similar previous example. Some of these hands are from articles and books I have written, others I have constructed especially for this book.

The East-West hands listed at the end of the commentary are arbitrary. They are set up for teachers so that the student (and/or you) will at least be rewarded for selecting the best percentage line. In real life, unfortunately, the best percentage line is not always the winning line.

The bidding will be given and explained with only a rare exception (you, or more likely partner, having made a bid that defies explanation). Use the bidding where you can as a guide in the play.

Assume IMP scoring. *Play to make your contract and do not worry about overtricks or undertricks.* If the play would differ at matchpoints, it will be mentioned in the discussion.

After the bidding and the opening lead (assume fourth best leads) you will eventually see ‘Plan the play’ and that is your cue to stop reading and start planning before reading on. Four play problems are followed by their solutions on the following pages. Restrain yourself — try to solve each problem yourself rather than just turning the page!

The difficulty level is intermediate to intermediate plus. The more difficult hands are labeled ‘advanced’ so take double credit for those. Have fun! Onward!

Eddie Kantar

# THE PROBLEMS



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**PROBLEM 1**

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[TO SOLUTION](#)

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

After you open 4♥, partner checks to make sure you have an ace and sets you down in 6♥. Opening lead: ♣K. Plan the play.

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**PROBLEM 2 (ADVANCED)**

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[TO SOLUTION](#)

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

You open 1♥, partner responds 2♣ (intending to rebid 3♣, invitational), but your jump to 3NT ends the bidding. If a 2♣ response is played as a game force, then 1NT (forcing) is the proper response. You would raise 1NT to 2NT and partner would bid 3NT. All roads lead to Rome.

The opening lead is the ♠4 and dummy's ♠J wins, East playing the ♠3, showing count. Plan the play.



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**PROBLEM 3**[TO SOLUTION](#)

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

You decide to treat your hand as worth 15 points (look at those clubs) and open 1NT. Partner raises you to 3NT and you wind up playing the hand from the wrong side. Let's hope partner doesn't count your points. West leads the ♥J. You try the ♥Q, but no luck: East wins and returns the ♥8 to dummy's ♥A. When you lead a club to the ♣Q, it holds. Plan the play from here.

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**PROBLEM 4 (ADVANCED)**[TO SOLUTION](#)

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

The auction 2NT-3NT gets you the opening lead of the ♥4, East playing the ♥2 (standard count). And now? Plan the play.

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

After you open 4♥, partner checks to make sure you have an ace and sets you down in 6♥. Opening lead: ♣K. Plan the play.

You have two possible losers, a spade and a diamond, and you have two chances to get rid of at least one of them.

You can take the diamond finesse. If it wins, you make an overtrick, if it loses you are down one as the ♠A is the setting trick. Alternatively, you can lead up to the ♠K first. If West has the ♠A, you won't need the diamond finesse as a diamond goes off on the ♠K assuming West goes up with the ♠A. If West plays low, the ♠K wins and you can take the diamond finesse for an overtrick. If East tops the ♠K with the ♠A, you still have the diamond finesse available.

### Tip

*When two lines of play are available, take the one that gives you a chance (keeps you alive) to use the other if the first fails. Expect this theme ('staying alive') to appear time and again in this set of hands, just as at the table. Lead up to the ♠K to stay alive.*

Percentage-wise if you lead up to the ♠K first and that doesn't work and then take the diamond finesse you have a 75% chance of making the hand. (One of two finesses.)

If you put all of your eggs in the diamond finesse basket you only have a 50% chance of making the hand.

The West hand: ♠ A 9 6 5 ♥ 2 ♦ 7 6 4 3 ♣ K Q J 9

The East hand: ♠ Q J 10 7 ♥ 8 ♦ K 5 ♣ 8 7 6 5 3 2

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

You open 1♥, partner responds 2♣ (intending to rebid 3♣, invitational), but your jump to 3NT ends the bidding. If a 2♣ response is played as a game force, then 1NT (forcing) is the proper response. You would raise 1NT to 2NT and partner would bid 3NT. All roads lead to Rome.

The opening lead is the ♠4 and dummy's ♠J wins, East playing the ♠3, count. Plan the play.

You have eight top tricks and need but one more. In spite of those impressive clubs, if you rely entirely on a 3-2 break, you will be giving yourself a 68% chance to make the hand. Not bad, but you can do better. Much better. Duck a diamond at Trick 2, win the likely spade return and play the ♦A and ♦K. If diamonds break 3-3 (36%), dummy's fourth diamond is your ninth trick. If they don't, you still have 3-2 clubs to fall back on (68%). You stay alive by playing diamonds before clubs, giving yourself an 80% chance of making the hand. Why consign the diamonds to oblivion? It doesn't cost anything to test them. Take full credit if you played the ♦A, ♦K and another diamond instead of ducking a diamond.

Notice that you can't test the clubs first and fall back on the diamonds being 3-3 if the clubs don't break 3-2. The club suit is the entry to the fourth diamond; diamonds have to be attacked before clubs.

The West hand: ♠ K 10 8 4 2 ♥ Q 9 4 3 ♦ J 9 8 ♣ 9

The East hand: ♠ 9 5 3 ♥ K J 6 ♦ Q 10 6 ♣ J 10 8 3

## WHEN YOU'VE FOUND A GOOD LINE OF PLAY LOOK FOR A BETTER ONE.

Selecting the best line of play as declarer on a bridge hand is not easy. Most intermediate players know something about basic odds and percentages, and can usually come up with a plan that offers a reasonable chance of success. However, the expert player will skilfully combine options, so as to take advantage of more than one possibility. Rather than putting all the eggs in one basket, an expert will 'stay alive' by squeezing out every extra chance. In this book of intermediate problems, Eddie Kantar shows the reader how to do this — there is always an optimum line that will allow you take *all* your chances, and bring home your contract. And, as you learn, Kantar's inimitable humor makes the advice easy to swallow.



**EDDIE KANTAR** (California) is a world champion, a member of the Bridge Hall of Fame, and one of the world's most popular bridge writers and teachers. His books for advancing players include *Modern Bridge Defense* and *Topics in Declarer Play*.



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