

A close-up photograph of a red and white striped coffee cup filled with dark coffee, sitting on a matching saucer. In the foreground, a stack of playing cards is fanned out, showing the King of Diamonds and other cards. The background is softly blurred.

# A Second Book of Bridge Problems

Patrick O'Connor



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# Introduction

This book is aimed at bridge players who have read *A First Book of Bridge Problems* and are now further along the road in their bridge careers. If you are a new reader, welcome! The book has some new themes as well as variations of earlier ones.

The book comprises fifty problems, presented in approximate order of difficulty. The idea is to present bridge hands as you, the reader, would encounter them playing at the table. Each deal has a single theme. Unlike a textbook, where topics are introduced systematically, this book will give you no clue as to what type of play is required.

Planning the play at the first trick is emphasized in the book. Good players always pause after dummy comes down to plan the hand. Weak players tend to rush in without thinking. To this end there is a brief initial chapter entitled 'Planning the Play as Declarer'. Defenders also need to plan, so there is also a chapter entitled 'Planning the Defense'.

South is always the declarer in these problems. Most of the time you are declarer but sometimes you are a defender sitting East or West. The bidding system is very standard. The bidding is not usually relevant to the play of the hand but it is given as a reinforcement of standard bidding. However, if you play another system it doesn't affect the problems, which are all about the play. An asterisk in a bidding diagram denotes a conventional bid that needs no further explanation (e.g. Stayman).

Each problem is presented with two of the four hands shown. There are one or more question points within the problem where the reader can attempt a solution or read further. The full deal is shown overleaf with the solution. The key point of each problem is spelled out at the end.

On p. 119 you will find a glossary of common bridge terms in case you are not familiar with any of the jargon in the book.

Finally, there are themes and key points for each of the problems listed on pp. 123-127. These enable you to look up a theme and find the problem(s) in which it occurs, or to see the key points of each problem.

I hope you enjoy the book.



# Planning the Play as Declarer

## Planning the play in notrump

These are the steps in planning the play in a notrump contract:

- Count your *winner*s
- 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
- Plan your entries

An example of counting your winners:

♠	K Q 9 8 2
♥	J 10 9
♦	7 6 4
♣	A 3
	<input type="text"/>
♠	A 4 3
♥	A 7 4 3
♦	K Q J 10
♣	K 10

South is in 3NT. West leads the ♣Q.

Look at both hands, suit by suit. In spades, you have the ace, king and queen that could win you three separate tricks. You might make two more tricks with the nine and the eight but this is not certain so you can't yet count them as winners. They will have to be developed. In hearts you have one immediate winner — the ace. In diamonds you have no winners! Tricky here — you won't have any certain winners until you have lost a trick to the ace but after that trick the remaining high cards will be winners. In clubs you have two winners. So you have six winners and must develop three more to make 3NT.

How can you develop three more tricks? Looking at spades, the opponents have five between them. About two-thirds of the time one person

will have three spades and the other two. Roughly a quarter of the time they split 4-1 and a 5-0 split is pretty uncommon. It doesn't hurt to remember these numbers. If they split 3-2 this will give you five spade tricks but only eight winners in total.

The best bet is the diamond suit. Once you knock out the  $\heartsuit A$  you will have three winners, which is just what you need. So you plan to lead a diamond as soon as you get in and keep leading them until the ace appears. This will give you nine tricks. Then if the spades break 3-2 you will get two extra tricks as a bonus.

## Planning the play in a suit contract

These are the steps in planning the play in a suit contract:

- Count your *losers*
- Decide whether you need to develop tricks
- Consider trumping losers in the short trump hand
- Draw trumps right away unless there is a good reason not to
- Don't be afraid to give up the lead
- Plan your entries

An example of counting your losers:

$\spadesuit$	J 10 2
$\heartsuit$	K 10 9 5
$\diamondsuit$	A 8 4 2
$\clubsuit$	7 3
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>
$\spadesuit$	A K Q 4 3
$\heartsuit$	A 7 4
$\diamondsuit$	7 6
$\clubsuit$	A J 10

South is in  $4\spadesuit$ . West leads the  $\heartsuit K$ .

Find the hand with the most trumps — in this case it is South. It is known as the **long trump hand**. Consider only losers in the long trump hand. In spades the ace, king and queen will take tricks and the jack and ten in the short hand will take care of the four and three in the long hand, so no losers in spades. In hearts the ace will take a trick and the seven and four are

losers, but the king will take care of one of them so you only have one loser. In diamonds the seven and six are losers, but the ace will take care of one of them so you only have one loser. In clubs you have the ace plus two losers, neither of which can be covered by a high card in the short hand. So you have four losers — one in hearts, one in diamonds and two in clubs and you need to eliminate one of them to make your contract.

There are thirteen tricks in a deal. Take your four losers from thirteen and you get nine. That is, you expect to take nine tricks in 4♠. But you need ten, so you have to eliminate one of your losers.

Can you trump a loser in the short hand? Yes — since you have three clubs in the long hand, South, and only two in the short hand, North, you could trump one club in the short hand. The next thing to consider is whether you can safely draw trumps right away. If there is no reason to delay, you should always draw trumps first. In this case if you draw trumps there will be none left in dummy to trump a club. So you plan to lead the ♣A and then another club. When you regain the lead you will be able to draw a round or two of trumps, leaving one in dummy, and then trump your losing club. This will give you ten tricks and your contract.

There are other possibilities here but trumping a loser in dummy is the best bet to eliminate a loser.



# Planning the Defense

## During the bidding

The time to start planning the defense is during the bidding. The opponents' bidding tells you what they have in their hands. It might take them one or many bids to tell you. There are numerous possibilities but here are some of the things they might say:

- I have a minimum opening hand with six spades
- I have a big hand with a good heart suit
- I do not have enough points to respond to a non-forcing bid
- I have a balanced hand with 15-17 HCP
- We have a fit and I am minimum
- I am highly distributional and my strength is...

and so on.

So by the end of the bidding you have a fair idea of the strength and distribution of declarer's and dummy's hands. Looking at your hand, you can work out what's left for partner.

## Dummy comes down

Declarer plans the play. You plan the defense.

First off, were you right about dummy's hand? Add your HCP to dummy's and subtract the total from 40 because there are 40 HCP in the deck. This is the number of HCP shared between declarer and partner. Take the number you think declarer has from this and you have partner's HCP.

You will have some idea of declarer's hand from the bidding. If declarer opens and rebids a major, you can expect there to be six cards in the suit. If declarer bids two suits, you have an even better idea of the distribution. And don't forget partner's bidding, if any. As the play develops you will be able to build up a clearer picture of declarer's hand.

Start by trying to work out what declarer might do.

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## Declarer Play Practice - With No Pressure!

Patrick O'Connor's *A First Book of Bridge Problems* was named Book of the Year for 2012 by the American Bridge Teachers' Association. This sequel also comprises 50 problems in declarer play and defense for the beginner or near-beginner, presented in approximate order of difficulty. The problems are slightly more advanced than those in the first book.

Experienced players recognize certain standard situations without having to work them out. Newcomers, however, can spend a lot of mental effort on these scenarios. The aim of this book is to help develop recognition of these situations. The bridge hands are presented as the reader would encounter them playing at the table. Unlike in a textbook, where topics are introduced systematically, there is no clue as to what type of play is required.



**PAT O'CONNOR** (Sydney, Australia) is a retired IT consultant who now teaches bridge classes for beginners.



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