

## Defending NT Contracts

<p>           ♠ A87            ♥ Q103            ♦ A976            ♣ A32            ♠ 10532      ♠ J94            ♥ A92          ♥ KJ654            ♦ 1032          ♦ J5            ♣ 1085          ♣ QJ4            ♠ KQ6            ♥ 87            ♦ KQ84            ♣ K976         </p>	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>All Pass</p> <p>East leads a <b>fourth highest to an honour ♥5</b>. West plays ♥A (<b>third hand high</b>) and returns his partner's suit, ♥9 (<b>top of two remaining</b>). The defenders take the first five heart tricks.</p>	West	North	East	South		1NT	Pass	3NT				
West	North	East	South										
	1NT	Pass	3NT										
<p>           ♠ 10532            ♥ Q92            ♦ 1032            ♣ 1085            ♠ KQ6          ♠ J87            ♥ 87            ♥ A103            ♦ KQ84        ♦ A976            ♣ K976        ♣ A32            ♠ A94            ♥ KJ654            ♦ J5            ♣ QJ4         </p>	<p>Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>South leads a <b>fourth highest to an honour ♥5</b>. North plays ♥Q (<b>third hand high</b>). Declarer should allow this to hold the trick and aim to win the third round in case North has the ♠A and South has five hearts, in which case North will not have any more hearts left to lead to South. North returns his partner's suit, ♥9 (<b>top of two remaining</b>). Again declarer should withhold his ♥A, so South's ♥J wins. Now South drives out ♥A. Declarer needs spade tricks for his contract, but unfortunately South has the ♠A and cashes two more heart tricks to defeat the contract.</p>	West	North	East	South	3NT	All Pass	1NT	Pass				
West	North	East	South										
3NT	All Pass	1NT	Pass										
<p>           ♠ 976            ♥ 872            ♦ AK94            ♣ AK9            ♠ AQ4          ♠ 532            ♥ Q10654      ♥ J9            ♦ J5            ♦ 10832            ♣ QJ4          ♣ 10865            ♠ KJ108            ♥ AK3            ♦ Q76            ♣ 732         </p>	<p>Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>West leads a <b>fourth highest ♥5</b>. East plays ♥J (<b>third hand high</b>). Declarer may or may not allow ♥J to hold the trick, but as long as the defenders persist in leading hearts whenever they have the lead declarer will lose two spade tricks and three hearts. If declarer takes ♥J with ♥A at trick 1, when West gains the lead he should continue with ♥Q because ♥Q 10 now form a sequence.</p>	West	North	East	South	Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT				
West	North	East	South										
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT										
<p>           ♠ 854            ♥ AK654            ♦ 75            ♣ QJ4            ♠ KQJ3          ♠ 976            ♥ QJ10          ♥ 872            ♦ AJ6            ♦ KQ94            ♣ 732            ♣ AK9            ♠ A102            ♥ 93            ♦ 10832            ♣ 10865         </p>	<p>Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>North should lead a <b>fourth highest ♥5</b>. It cheaply loses the trick even though South plays ♥9 (<b>third hand high</b>). However South quickly gains the lead with ♠A and <b>returns his remaining heart</b>. North takes four heart tricks to defeat the contract.</p> <p>If North wrongly starts with ♥A K he can drive out declarer's heart stopper but he will never regain the lead to cash his winning hearts.</p>	West	North	East	South	1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass		
West	North	East	South										
1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass										
3NT	All Pass												

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<p>           ♠ KQJ3            ♥ KJ10            ♦ A96            ♣ 732            ♠ A102      ♠ 854            ♥ 93          ♥ AQ654            ♦ 10832      ♦ 75            ♣ 10865      ♣ QJ4            ♠ 976            ♥ 872            ♦ KQJ4            ♣ AK9         </p>	<p>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>All Pass</p> <p>East should lead a <b>fourth highest ♥5</b>. It cheaply loses the trick even though West plays ♥9 (<b>third hand high</b>). However West quickly gains the lead with ♠A and <b>returns his remaining heart</b>. East takes four heart tricks to defeat the contract.</p>	West	North	East	South		1NT	Pass	3NT
West	North	East	South						
	1NT	Pass	3NT						
<p>           ♠ A102            ♥ 632            ♦ 10832            ♣ QJ6            ♠ QJ6      ♠ K973            ♥ 87      ♥ KQ9            ♦ KQJ4    ♦ A96            ♣ AK95    ♣ 732            ♠ 854            ♥ AJ1054            ♦ 75            ♣ 1084         </p>	<p>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>3NT      All Pass</p> <p>South leads ♥J, <b>top of an interior sequence</b>. Declarer might win ♥K but North quickly gains the lead with ♠A and <b>returns a heart</b>. South takes four heart tricks to defeat the contract. If South wrongly led a fourth highest ♥5 declarer would win cheaply with ♥9 and have two heart stoppers.</p>	West	North	East	South			1NT	Pass
West	North	East	South						
		1NT	Pass						
<p>           ♠ QJ6            ♥ A87            ♦ KQJ4            ♣ 965            ♠ A54      ♠ 10832            ♥ KQ542    ♥ J3            ♦ 75      ♦ 10832            ♣ 1084      ♣ QJ7            ♠ K97            ♥ 1096            ♦ A96            ♣ AK32         </p>	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Pass      3NT      All Pass</p> <p>With only two heart honours West should lead a <b>fourth highest ♥4</b> against no-trumps (against a suit contract the correct lead would be the ♥K, top of a <u>two</u>-card honour sequence). Declarer should withhold his ♥A. East plays ♥J (<b>third hand high</b>) and <b>returns his partner's suit</b>. West persists with hearts to force out ♥A and when he gains the lead with ♠A he cashes enough hearts to beat the contract.</p> <p>Suppose West wrongly leads ♥K. It wins the trick. West can only continue ♥4, and East's ♥J wins. Now East has no heart to return.</p>	West	North	East	South				1NT
West	North	East	South						
			1NT						
<p>           ♠ J54            ♥ KQ542            ♦ 75            ♣ QJ4            ♠ K97      ♠ AQ6            ♥ 1096      ♥ J87            ♦ A96      ♦ KQJ4            ♣ AK32      ♣ 965            ♠ 10832            ♥ A3            ♦ 10832            ♣ 1087         </p>	<p>Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>With only two heart honours North should lead a <b>fourth highest ♥4</b> against no-trumps. South plays ♥A and <b>returns his partner's suit</b>. The defenders take the first five tricks to defeat 3NT.</p> <p>Suppose North wrongly leads ♥K. It wins the trick. North can only continue ♥4, and South's ♥A wins trick 2. Now South has no heart to return.</p>	West	North	East	South	1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass
West	North	East	South						
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass						

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<p>           ♠ K972            ♥ A96            ♦ A96            ♣ K93            ♠ 1083      ♠ A54            ♥ 753      ♥ KQ1042            ♦ 10832    ♦ 75            ♣ 1087      ♣ QJ4            ♠ QJ6            ♥ J8            ♦ KQJ4            ♣ A652         </p>	<p>Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>All Pass</p> <p>With three heart honours including the touching ♥K Q (a <b>'broken' sequence</b>) East should lead ♥K. Declarer withholds ♥A and East continues ♥Q, squashing dummy's ♥J. This might also win, but East continues hearts to drive out ♥A and soon comes in with ♠A to defeat the contract. If East had wrongly led ♥4 (fourth highest) declarer could win cheaply at trick 1 and have a second heart stopper.</p>	West	North	East	South		1NT	Pass	3NT
West	North	East	South						
	1NT	Pass	3NT						
<p>           ♠ 853            ♥ 75            ♦ 10832            ♣ 10872            ♠ QJ6      ♠ 10972            ♥ 863      ♥ AQ9            ♦ AQJ9    ♦ K64            ♣ A65      ♣ K93            ♠ AK4            ♥ KJ1042            ♦ 75            ♣ QJ4         </p>	<p>Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>With three heart honours including the touching ♥ J 10 South should lead ♥J, <b>top of an interior sequence</b>. Declarer wins ♥Q. South regains the lead with ♠K, and now ♥K 10 form a sequence. South continues with ♥K to drive out ♥A. South eventually wins ♠A and cashes enough heart tricks to defeat 3NT. If South had wrongly led ♥4 (fourth highest) declarer could win ♥9 at trick 1. ♥A and ♥Q would still give him two more heart stoppers.</p>	West	North	East	South	3NT	All Pass	1NT	Pass
West	North	East	South						
3NT	All Pass	1NT	Pass						
<p>           ♠ AKQ            ♥ Q42            ♦ 874            ♣ KJ107            ♠ 75      ♠ 10962            ♥ 105    ♥ 9873            ♦ AQ93    ♦ J102            ♣ 98532    ♣ A4            ♠ J843            ♥ AKJ6            ♦ K65            ♣ Q6         </p>	<p>Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>West leads ♣8, <b>high for hate</b> from a suit without an honour. East can tell this isn't fourth highest: the only clubs higher than ♣8 that he cannot see are ♣9 and ♣Q. Therefore there is no future in clubs. However with ♣95432 it would be better to lead the ♣9 because leading ♣5 would be misinterpreted as fourth highest promising an honour ) East takes ♣A and switches to ♦J, dummy's weakness. Declarer cannot prevent the defenders from taking four diamond tricks to defeat the contract.</p>	West	North	East	South	Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT
West	North	East	South						
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT						
<p>           ♠ K9543            ♥ J832            ♦ A76            ♣ 8            ♠ A1086    ♠ 7            ♥ KQ6      ♥ A75            ♦ 985      ♦ KQJ103            ♣ A53      ♣ K942            ♠ QJ2            ♥ 1094            ♦ 42            ♣ QJ1076         </p>	<p>Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>North leads a <b>fourth highest</b> ♠4. South plays ♠J (<b>third hand high, but lower of touching honours.</b>) Suppose declarer wins ♠A, a reasonable action because his spade intermediate cards are good and he has hopes of a second trick. North gains the lead with ♦A and knows South has ♠Q, otherwise why would declarer have wasted ♠A on ♠J? North leads a low spade to South's ♠Q and a spade return defeats the contract. If South had wrongly played ♠Q at trick 1 then North would have assumed that South did not have ♠J so he would not have found this defence.</p>	West	North	East	South	1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass
West	North	East	South						
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass						

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<p>           ♠ A92            ♥ 76            ♦ QJ654            ♣ AKQ            ♠ Q108743    ♠ 6            ♥ 82            ♥ KQJ109            ♦ 32            ♦ A109            ♣ 643           ♣ 10952            ♠ KJ5            ♥ A543            ♦ K87            ♣ J87         </p>	<p>Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1♦</td> <td>1♥</td> <td>2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>West leads ♥8, <b>top of a doubleton in the suit his partner bid</b>. East plays the ♥9, the <b>cheapest card necessary</b> to force out the ♥A. If North ducks then East continues to lead hearts to force out the ace. When East regains the lead with ♦A he can cash enough hearts to beat the contract.</p>	West	North	East	South		1♦	1♥	2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass					
West	North	East	South														
	1♦	1♥	2NT														
Pass	3NT	All Pass															
<p>           ♠ 10743            ♥ 8            ♦ 932            ♣ KQJ109            ♠ Q95            ♠ AKJ            ♥ AQ54          ♥ 76            ♦ K87            ♦ QJ10654            ♣ 873            ♣ A6            ♠ 862            ♥ KJ10932            ♦ A            ♣ 542         </p>	<p>Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♦</td> <td>1♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>North could lead his partner's suit, but a singleton lead is not very attractive against no-trumps, as it is unlikely that partner's suit can be established. However what really decides the issue is North's excellent clubs. North leads ♣K, <b>top of a 3+ honour sequence</b>, and continues clubs. Declarer must take dummy's ♣A at trick 2, but then South gains the lead with ♦A and returns a club to beat the contract.</p>	West	North	East	South			1♦	1♥	2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass				
West	North	East	South														
		1♦	1♥														
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass														
<p>           ♠ K52            ♥ K95            ♦ K874            ♣ 642            ♠ A94            ♠ 863            ♥ 6                ♥ Q8432            ♦ 106532        ♦ 9            ♣ AQ53          ♣ J1098            ♠ QJ107            ♥ AJ107            ♦ AQJ            ♣ K7         </p>	<p>Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>East might feel his normal lead is ♥3 (fourth highest) but it is usually a bad idea to lead a broken suit that has been bid by declarer or dummy. Instead East should lead ♣J, <b>top of a 3+ honour sequence</b>. The defenders take four club tricks and ♠A to defeat the contract.</p>	West	North	East	South				1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass	
West	North	East	South														
			1♥														
Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT														
Pass	3NT	All Pass															
<p>           ♠ 984            ♥ 8            ♦ 106532            ♣ Q653            ♠ QJ107          ♠ K52            ♥ A764           ♥ 532            ♦ AQJ            ♦ K874            ♣ A7              ♣ K42            ♠ A63            ♥ KQJ109            ♦ 9            ♣ J1098         </p>	<p>Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>It is not normally a good idea for defenders to lead a suit that has been bid by declarer or dummy, however South's hearts are solid and he can see the contract being beaten with four heart tricks and ♠A. South leads ♥K, <b>top of a 3+ honour sequence</b>. Later he takes ♠A and cashes enough heart tricks to defeat the contract.</p>	West	North	East	South	1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass				
West	North	East	South														
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass														
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass														