

## HAVE YOU ANY HELP?

This is the bidding so far:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♣	1♥	Pass	2♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	??

Your hand is:

- ♠ K96
- ♥ Q104
- ♦ 1098765
- ♣ 4

You have only 5 HCP but you have some shape. You can count another 3 points for the singleton club and an extra point or two for the 6-card diamond suit. You do have two honors in partner's suit. This rates a gentle raise to the two level. Partner's 2NT was a general game try. He knows the suit will be hearts but wants to know if you have anything extra that you didn't convey in your first bid. He probably has a "6-losing trick" hand and is looking for 3 "cover cards" before he bids game. Losing tricks are the top three cards in each suit that don't include the ace, king or queen. Cover cards are the aces and kings that make up for the losers in your partner's hand. Looking at your hand, you do see three cover cards. You have the king of spades and the queen of partner's suit. You also have the ability to ruff 1 or 2 clubs. You bid 3♣ to say you would accept your partner's game try. You have something in clubs that you didn't show in your first bid. If you didn't have this extra, you would just return to 3♥.

Partner jumps to game, and East leads the ♣3. Take your partner's hand and plan the play.

<p style="text-align: center;">North</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♠ Q108</li> <li>♥ AK9863</li> <li>♦ J</li> <li>♣ A52</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">East</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♣3</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">South</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♠ K96</li> <li>♥ Q104</li> <li>♦ 1098765</li> <li>♣ 4</li> </ul>	

The first thing we learn as bridge players is to pull trump early. Actually, the first thing we do, once we get the lead is often to start pulling trump. Here, there are only four hearts outstanding and if the cards break as we expect, they will be 3-1 and it will take all dummy's trump to accomplish this. If you do this, however, you will be set by two tricks.

Yes, it's usually right to pull trump – but not always. Sometimes, there are tasks to do first. Here, the task is to trump the two clubs in the dummy. After all, the singleton club was one of the best things about your hand during the bidding. You should win the ♣A and ruff a club. Then lose a diamond and regain the lead in your hand and ruff the second club. Then you can pull trump once with ♥Q and get back to your hand with a diamond ruff and take out the last of the trumps.

Now you start on spades. Lead the ♠10 and East will probably play the ♠J. Cover with the ♠K and West will win with the ♠A. Now, the other two spades will be good. You will end with 2 spades, 6 hearts, 2 club ruffs and the ♣A – eleven tricks in all.

This is the entire hand:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">14 <small>D</small></div>		<b>N North</b> ♠ Q108 ♥ AK9863 ♦ J ♣ A52	W N E S 1♣ 1♥ P P P 2NT P 3♣ P 4♥ P P D
		<b>W West</b> ♠ A754 ♥ J ♦ A4 ♣ QJ10976	<b>E East</b> ♠ J32 ♥ 752 ♦ KQ32 ♣ K83
		<b>S South</b> ♠ K96 ♥ Q104 ♦ 1098765 ♣ 4	4♥ N NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/nhn38x7>. Or, copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.