

KEEPING TRACK OF THE SPOT CARDS

S	South
♠	A1097
♥	AK952
♦	74
♣	85

You are the dealer and hold an 11 HCP hand with 5 hearts and 4 spades. Being non-vulnerable, you should open this hand 1♥. This is a special type of hand that is particularly hard to bid using standard bidding. If partner responds 1♠ you will have no trouble supporting him with 2♠ and you will find the proper level. The problem arises when he responds 1NT or 2 of a minor. You are too weak to bid your 4-card spade suit. This bid is called a reverse because it requires partner to go to the 3-level if he prefers hearts to spades. If he is very weak you could be much too high. There is a special convention to handle this shape hand, but using standard methods, your best "lie" is to rebid hearts. This normally promises 6 hearts, but you will have to live with a possible 5-2 fit.

In this deal, partner's initial response is 2♣. Over your rebid of 2♥ he jumps to 4♥.

West leads the ♥7. What is your plan?

N	North
♠	K43
♥	Q84
♦	J2
♣	AK976

West leads ♥7

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If trumps behave, you should take 5 hearts tricks, 2 spades and 2 clubs. You only need 1 more trick for your contract. Your spade suit looks like the source of the extra trick. You are missing the ♠JQ but you do have the ♠109. You should be able to finesse against one of the honors.

You should play low in the dummy on the heart lead and win East's ♥10 with you ♥A. You are not planning on ruffing losers, so you should attack the outstanding trump. Lead a low heart to the dummy's ♥Q. It is always better to lead up to an honor, rather than leading the honor. When you do, West shows out. You can handle this 4-1 split. Run dummy's ♥8 and finesse against East's ♥J. Say East plays low; insert the ♥5. Now take the ♠AK and come to your hand with a low spade. East plays the ♠J. This is a significant card. The probability that the ♠Q and ♠J are split is higher than that they are both in East's hand. Pull the last trump and lead the ♠9, ducking in dummy if West plays low. This should hold and is your 10th trick.

If West had been discarding spades while you were playing hearts, your ♠10 should take the 11th trick. It's important to look at the cards the opponents are playing to tricks they can't win. This often provides clues to how to play the rest of the hand for additional tricks.

This is the entire deal:

	N North ♠ K43 ♥ Q84 ♦ J2 ♣ AK976	W N E S P 2♣ P 1♥ P 4♥ P 2♥ P P
	W West ♠ Q8652 ♥ 7 ♦ A53 ♣ Q1032	E East ♠ J ♥ J1063 ♦ KQ10986 ♣ J4
	S South ♠ A1097 ♥ AK952 ♦ 74 ♣ 85	4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/yctaxa3f>, 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.