

♠♥♦♣ THINKING IT OUT ♠♥♦♣

You dealt and this is your hand:

S	South
♠	QJ32
♥	A
♦	A65
♣	Q8765

You open 1♣ and partner responds 1♥, of course. East overcalls 1♠. What will you do now?

You really have nothing more to say. You can't support partner's hearts, you only have 5 so-so clubs so you can't rebid them. You don't know if partner has values or is just squeaking out a response. There is nothing wrong with a pass and leave it up to partner. He knows your hand but you have no idea about his.

After West raises to 2♠, partner doubles. This is definitely for takeout, showing he has enough points to compete to the 3-level. This is passed around to you. What do you do now?

Bidding one of your minor suits might be right, but if you're going to play at the 3-level, you'd prefer to be in notrump. You have spades stopped and if you can trust partner's hearts, 3NT might make. This becomes the final contract and West leads a low spade. You see this dummy:

N	North
♠	10
♥	KJ1054
♦	K1092
♣	KJ10

West leads ♠5.

S	South
♠	QJ32
♥	A
♦	A65
♣	Q8765

Like every notrump hand, the declarer must count his top tricks and then plan how he is going to make up the difference to make his contract. You have 2

hearts, 2 diamonds and once the ♠A is driven out, 4 clubs. Therefore you need only 1 spade trick.

The problem is, if you use up your spade stopper before you can drive out the ♠A. You could lose 4 spades before you get back into the lead. Unfortunately, the ♠A is probably with the overcaller who has all the spades.

You put up dummy's ♠10 on the initial lead, and West takes the ♠A, leading back the ♠4. What do you play?

If you split your honors and insert the ♠J, you are headed for defeat. It is certain that West holds the ♠K, otherwise East would have won with the ♠K, not the ♠A; and would have returned the ♠A. When West wins the ♠K, he will send his 3rd spade back to clear the suit. Now, when East wins the ♠A, he will be able to take his remaining spades to set the contract.

During the bidding, East has shown 5 spades. You and dummy hold 5 spades. Therefore, West started with 3 spades, and if you play the ♠3 on this second spade trick, West will win cheaply and lead his last spade – the ♠K. Now he will have to switch, allowing you to win and force out the ♠A before you have to use your only spade stopper. This is called gaining a tempo. It puts you a trick ahead of the opponents and allows you to take your 9 tricks.

Look at the entire deal:

11 D	N North	♠ 10	♥ KJ1054	♦ K1092	♣ KJ10	W N E S	1♣
						P 1♥ 1♠ P	
						2♣ X P 2NT	
						P 3NT P P	
W West						E East	
♠ K85						♠ A9764	
♥ Q9876						♥ 32	
♦ J83						♦ Q74	
♣ 42						♣ A93	
	S South	♠ QJ32	♥ A	♦ A65	♣ Q8765		
						3NT S	NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/y2alszdd>, 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.