

The ABC of Bridge

The primary focus of Always Be Counting is to visualize all four hands as if you were seeing the hand in the bridge column of the newspaper. Achieving this reconstruction requires some basic arithmetic together with processing information from bids made, bids not made, and opening leads. Successful implementation of all of the ABC pillars (Counting, Communicating, and Curiosity) rests with the fundamental recognition that bridge is a PARTNERSHIP game!

Key to a good partnership is the active **ANTICIPATION** of potential problems that are likely to challenge your partner. This is best illustrated via the following quiz. However, before taking the quiz, you may find it useful to re-read earlier ABC articles regarding Losing Trick Count and defensive carding.

Anticipation Quiz

1) South
S J1075
H J108
D A42
C A97

W	N	E	S
P	1NT*	P	?

* 15-17 HCP

Your bid? Answer: _____

2a) South
S 986542
H Q10
D J52
C J7

W	N	E	S
1D	P	1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Opening Lead? Answer: _____

2b) Same hand as above with a different auction.

W	N	E	S
1D	1H	1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Opening lead? Answer: _____

3) North	EW Vulnerable	NS Non-vulnerable			
S 1087			W	N	E S
H KQ9542			1D	2H	2S 4H
D Q1087			4S	?	
C -					

3)	Your bid?	Answer:_____
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4) South	W	N	E	S
S KQ973	P	1H	P	?
H 10865				
D 82				
C 74				

Your bid? Answer: _____

Your bid? Answer:_____

- 1) 3NT. Anticipating a Losing Trick Count of 5-7 for the strong NT opener, it is very likely that winning 9 tricks in NT will be far easier than winning 10 tricks in a 4-4 spade fit. Why? It is LTC at work! South's hand has a LTC of 10 and $10 + 5$ (best case) = 15. $24 - 15 = 9$ likely winners in a spade contract.
- 2a) 5S. Partner is marked for some points but did not bid. Maybe he has AK3 of spades and spades break 2-2. You are entitled to some positive luck sometimes.
- 2b) QH. Partner showed a heart suit so oblige by leading the queen. This overrides 4th best.
- 3) 5C. Once you decide to sacrifice over their vulnerable 4S game, it is imperative that you Anticipate your partner's opening lead problem should the vulnerable opponents elect to bid 5S. Clearly the 5C bid can be nothing but a lead director! The full hand is as follows:

	North	
	S 10 85	
	H KQ9542	
	D Q1087	
	C -	
West		East
S KQ64		S AJ973
H 6		H 87
D AKJ9		D 43
C Q1097		C AK63
	South	
	S 2	
	H AJ103	
	D 652	
	C J8542	

If E-W bid 5S, South should lead a high club to show his heart entry (AH). North ruffs the club and returns his 2H to ask for another club. 5S down one is a great result for N-S.

- 4) 3H. Conventional wisdom is to respond 1S not 3H. However, the limit raise of 3H gives the most useful information to the opener while providing the LEAST information to the opponents. Let's examine this fully. The limit raise shows exactly an 8 loser hand consistent with Losing Trick Count theory. What are the likely contracts? Most often the contract will be 4H. Let's examine some possible auctions and then you select the auction that you believe will put the opponents at a disadvantage.

- a) 1H P 3H P b) 1H P 1S P c) 1H P 1S P d) 1H P 1S P
 4H P P P 2C P 3H P 1NT P 3H P 2H P 3H P
 4H P P P 4H P P P 4H P P P

It is my view that the preferred auction is the first one as it tells partner to pass 3H with a 7-loser hand and accept the invitation with a 6 loser hand or better. The other auctions give information to the opponents that may help them to optimize their defense.

Whether you agree or disagree with some of my answers, remember that bridge is indeed a partnership game and the more that you can anticipate and help your partner during the bidding as well as the defense, the stronger your partnership will become. So continue to apply the ABCs of Bridge.