

If you were sitting North on the evening of February 1<sup>st</sup>, chances are you remember having to deal with strong minor one-suiters after partner opens 1NT (15–17).

Does your partnership NT structure have a method for bidding the following hands?

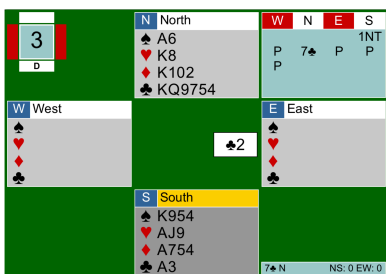
1NT – ?

Board 3	A6 K8 KT2 KQ9754	Board 23	Q86 K8 AKJ7632 4
---------	---------------------------	----------	---------------------------

Strong minor one-suiters are easily shown if you happen to be playing 4-way transfers. Subsequently, you can cuebid to try for slam, and perhaps eventually check for keycards with 4m (Minorwood), 4m+1 (Kickback), or 4NT (RKCB).

1NT – 2S clubs (partner bids 3C to accept a game try, 2NT otherwise)  
 2NT diamonds (partner bids 3D to accept a game try, 3C otherwise)

The most important thing, however, is that both partners agree to and remember whatever methods you choose to employ. Failing that, one might have to squeeze a little extra something out of the play.

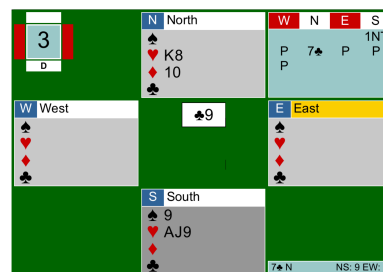


As a hypothetical example, suppose that on Board 3 you encounter a few bidding mishaps and end up declaring 7C.

East leads a trump, and they split 3-2 (whew!). You next lead a low diamond to the DA, and East plays the DQ. Do you finesse the DT for the 13<sup>th</sup> trick?

No! It is true that the Principle of Restricted Choice tells us that East is twice as likely to hold a singleton Q compared to QJ doubleton. That is not the whole story, however. East could be messing with us by hopping with the Q from QJxx. Most importantly, we are a favorite to make this contract if East does have a singleton Q *without finessing the DT*.

Start by cashing the DK to confirm that East is holding a singleton. Since West started with five diamonds, East is likely the defender with long spades. Ruff a spade to isolate the spade stopper and run the remaining trumps. The last trump inflicts the double squeeze—neither defender will be able to guard hearts.



(On the actual hand East started with QJ doubleton, so the DT sets up easily as the 13<sup>th</sup> trick. All's well that ends well.)

12		North		West		East		South	
		♠ A765		♠ P		♠ P		♠ 1♠	
		♥ 964		♥ P		♥ P		♥ P	
		♦ K982		♦ P		♦ P		♦ 3NT	
		♣ K		♣ P		♣ P		♣ P	
West		♣ J		East					
♠ J842		♣ 4		♣ 2					
♥ J1032									
♦ 5									
♣ Q96									
		South							
		♠							
		♥							
		♦							
		♣							
		3NT S		NS: 0 EW: 0					

On Board 28, West faces a typical matchpoint dilemma.

A 4<sup>th</sup>-best club is led against South's 3NT contract. Dummy's CJ wins, and declarer cashes the DK (unblocking the DT) and runs the D9 successfully. What do you plan to discard assuming that declarer is going to run diamonds?

We really would like to know whether declarer has a third spade, a fourth heart, and/or a fourth club. Declarer is forcing us to guess with what little information we have. That is the key, though—what information *do* we have?

Partner had one chance to signal—in clubs—and played the C2. A common treatment is to signal *count* when one cannot beat the Queen (or a lower card) played by dummy, since in such cases attitude is usually clear (you don't have a higher honor). Thus, partner has four clubs (playing UDCA), and we can afford to pitch all the clubs on the run of the diamonds.

12		North		West		East		South	
		♠ A765		♠ P		♠ P		♠ 1♠	
		♥ 964		♥ P		♥ P		♥ P	
		♦ K982		♦ P		♦ P		♦ 3NT	
		♣ K		♣ P		♣ P		♣ P	
West		♣ J		East					
♠		♣ 4		♣ 2					
♥									
♦									
♣									
		South							
		♠ KQ9							
		♥ KQ8							
		♦ AJ103							
		♣ A53							
		3NT S		NS: 0 EW: 0					

Now let's try the hand from declarer's point of view. Dummy's CJ wins, and West pitches the H2, H3, and HT as we run the diamonds. What next?

We can easily afford to lead the HK out of hand. We expect West to drop the HJ, or, if West shows out, we can later finesse for East's HJ for 12 tricks.

What if, instead of discarding hearts, West pitches the C6, C9, and CQ? It would seem like we have the necessary entries to lead hearts twice from dummy, so we make 12 tricks whenever the HA is onside or the spades split. However, a closer inspection reveals that we cannot easily combine the chances of the HA onside *and* the spade split—we have to unblock the SK and SQ before crossing to the SA, and the defender with the HA will be able to cash the long spade if they have it.

(Retaining the DK in dummy would provide a *third* entry, which helps keep the chances of the spade split in reserve. Of course, it loses to a singleton DQ offside.)

(In fact, going after hearts is rather risky despite the probability of the HA onside (50%) being higher than the spade split (36%). A savvy West could *duck* with AJxx in hearts, and subsequently cash 3 heart tricks if declarer repeats the heart finesse.)

This is the full hand. West guessed well not to pitch spades, but the heart discards turned out to be equally fatal despite declarer having only 3 cards in the suit.

12		North		West		East		South	
		♠ A765		♠ P		♠ P		♠ 1♠	
		♥ 964		♥ P		♥ P		♥ P	
		♦ K982		♦ P		♦ P		♦ 3NT	
		♣ KJ		♣ P		♣ P		♣ P	
West				East					
♠ J842				♠ 103					
♥ J1032				♥ A75					
♦ 5				♦ Q764					
♣ Q964				♣ 10872					
		South							
		♠ KQ9							
		♥ KQ8							
		♦ AJ103							
		♣ A53							
		3NT S		NS: 0 EW: 0					