

It helps to play tricks in the right order. However, there are some deals which require the declarer (or the defenders) to play with a particular tempo - or timing. For example, in NT hands, both sides are trying to gain the tempo - by successfully establishing their long suit first.

Hand 1	♠ 752		
Dealer N	♥ K3		
	♦ KQ9854		
	♣ A3		
♠ K1084		♠ QJ9	
♥ J98	□	♥ Q1064	
♦ A		♦ 1062	
♣ 109875		♣ K42	
	♠ A63		
	♥ A752		
	♦ J73		
	♣ QJ6		

South in 3NT

West leads 10♣. Declarer could play low from dummy, hoping West has K♣ but, if East has K♣, he will win, and switch to a spade before South has knocked out A♦, which should be his prime concern.

To grab the tempo, declarer rises with A♣ in in dummy and immediately plays diamonds. Playing low from dummy leads to defeat.

To give up a possible extra trick to ensure your contract is a frequent occurrence in NTs. In suit contracts, often you have to start

playing side suits, make ruffs, of set-up discards before drawing trumps, either because you need the trumps in dummy for ruffing or as entries, or because you are missing the trump ace and you do not have time to lose that trick before making the key play.

Hand 2	♠ 10943		
Dealer E	♦ KQ6		
	♦ AK3		
	♣ 852		
♠ A		♠ K72	
♥ 743	□	♥ 10982	
♦ 106532		♦ 974	
♣ KQJ10		♣ 964	
	♠ QJ865		
	♥ AJ5		
	♦ Q8		
	♣ A73		

South in 4S

West leads K♣. Declarer faces two club losers and two trump losers. If he wins and leads a trump, those are the four tricks he will lose. However, if before drawing trumps, South plays Q♦, then A♦ and K♦, throwing a low club away from his hand, now when he leads a trump and West wins, West can only cash one club trick before South can ruff. As a result, South succeeds in making his game contract.

South plays in 4S

West leads Q♦. South counts two spade losers, two heart losers, and a club. To succeed, he must trump two low hearts in dummy. This must be achieved before drawing any trumps at all. South should win trick 1 with K♦ in dummy, play A♥ and cash K♥. Now he trumps a low heart in dummy, returns to hand with A♦ and trumps his other low heart - it can only be over-trumped by a winning trump anyway. In this way, declarer makes his 10 tricks. If South tries to draw even one of trumps before doing this, he will fail.

Hand 4	♠ 954		
Dealer S	♦ 9652		
	♦ A		
	♣ AKQJ5		
♠ AKQ10		♠ 632	
♥ Q1043	□	♥ K87	
♦ 87		♦ 95432	
♣ 987		♣ 103	
	♠ J87		
	♥ AJ		
	♦ KQJ106		
	♣ 642		

Hand 3

Dealer	♠ J75		
	♥ 106		
	♦ K653		
	♣ J875		
♠ K4		♠ A2	
♥ Q987	□	♥ J52	
♦ QJ109		♦ 874	
♣ K106		♣ AQ942	
	♠ Q109863		
	♥ AK43		
	♦ A2		
	♣ 3		

South in 3NT

West leads ♠AKQ10 and then switches to 3♥ - to K♥ and South's A♥. Declarer now has numerous tricks in the minor suits, but the diamonds are completely blocked. What can South do about the blockage?

The answer is: foresee it!

When West leads out her fourth and final spade, South has a chance to unblock the diamond suit - by discarding A♦! This now allows South to cash ♦KQJ10 and then her five winning clubs, to bring home her contract.