

Plan Before You Play

1.	♠-AQ	
	♥-J643	
	♦-AK98	
	♣-752	
	♠-74	
	♥-AKQ105	
	♦-QJ10	
	♣-Q93	
Contract: 4♥		OL: ♠3
From Eddie Kantar: "Thinking Bridge"		

This hand illustrates several key lessons of declarer play: (1) Plan before you play to the first trick; (2) count your winners; and (3) count your potential losers. You have 10 winners (5 hearts, 4 diamonds, and 1 spade). You have 4 potential losers (1 spade and 3 clubs). In an IMP game (where making your contract is far more important than an overtrick), you should not give the opponents a chance to cash 4 winners. Play the ♠A, pull trumps, run diamonds, pitching a spade. You may still have a chance to make 5 (if ♣AK are onside and you are able to lead toward your ♣Q twice). In a pair game or Board-a-Match, you may decide to go for the overtrick by finessing in spades, but planning before you play makes

it an intentional decision.

2.	♠-2	
	♥-K5432	
	♦-A10432	
	♣-102	
	♠-KQJ10873	
	♥-A6	
	♦-	
	♣-QJ93	
Contract: 4S		OL: ♥7
N E S W		
1♥ 4♠ All pass		
From Bobby Wolff: "Aces on Bridge"		

When you plan before you play, you should consider any information revealed by the bidding or opening lead. The heart lead is a clear singleton. Thus, in addition to the three obvious losers, you are at risk of having your second heart winner ruffed out. How can you avoid that? Win the first heart in dummy, and cash the ♦A, pitching the ♥A. Now lead a spade. Ruff a heart return high and attempt to pull trumps. You will make 4♠ unless West started with A9xx of spades (you will lose two trumps due to a trump promotion). If you failed to plan at trick 1 and carelessly played a low heart from dummy, you can't recover.

3.	♠-A1032	
	♥-432	
	♦-AK32	
	♣-K2	
	♠-K4	
	♥-J65	
	♦-654	
	♣-QJ1095	
Contract: 1NT by South		
OL: ♠Q		From Eddie
Kantar-"Thinking Bridge"		

Most of the time, there's reason to celebrate when an opponent leads the queen (usually from the QJ) when we have this NS holding in the suit. By winning the king and later finessing the 10, we get 3 tricks rather than 2 without the lead. However, planning the play means looking at the entire hand, not just one suit. If you win the first trick with the king, you will be limited to 1 club trick if the defenders hold up with the ace one round. If, on the other hand, you win the first spade in dummy and knock out the ♣A, your spade entry to the South hand ensures 4 club tricks.

4. ♠-J8
♥-AJ4
♦-Q75
♣-AQ985

♠-AKQ
♥-K83
♦-A10
♣-KJ763

Contract: 6N OL:2♠

You have 11 top tricks with two possibilities for the twelfth trick: the ♦K may be onside or the ♥Q may be onside. Which do you try? The answer is that you may try both, as long as you choose the right order. You must first lead toward the ♦Q. If that loses, you still have control of all suits and can later try the heart finesse. If you try the heart finesse first and it loses, then you can no longer afford to let them take a diamond trick.