

Hand Study 203 with Matthew Granovetter  
Class 1

SAMPLE  
First 6 pages of 16 pages

Welcome, everyone!

This course is designed with the idea of learning how to think in crucial situations and be better prepared when they come up at the table. Sometimes we know that a situation is crucial and sometimes we don't.

When we know we are at a crucial point in the hand, it is much easier to put down our cards and begin to think things through. But in the auction, we may not always be able to do this, because if we think too long and then pass, partner may be at a "bridge ethics" disadvantage. In the auction, we definitely need to build a repertoire of bids to use easily in various competitive situations.

When we don't know that the crucial bid or card is necessary, we are more apt to make a mistake. So besides studying how to think in these situations, we'll also try to identify when these critical situations arise.

In this course, we'll use a very basic Standard American system:

5-card majors

forcing notrump response

simple Blackwood

jump raises are forcing (also after 1 of a minor)

splinters over 1H, 1S to 4C or 4D

3NT response to 1H, 1S = splinter in other major

2NT response over anything = natural and forcing

Weak jump shifts by an unpassed hand

1NT opening = 15+-18-

Jacoby and Texas transfers over 1NT openings or 2NT openings

Over our 1NT, we respond:

2S = minors, 3 minor = weak, 3 Major = natural

System ON after notrump overcalls, with a transfer to their suit as a game force and singleton in their suit

Penalty doubles of their overcall at the two level, negative at the three level

After they double or bid anything, a bid of 3C or higher by us = a transfer, with a transfer into their suit as a Stayman bid.

All second round jumps below game by responder are forcing

Fourth suit is forcing one round by responder, but opener may pass a two level rebid by responder

Weak two bids, with 2NT as the only force; opener rebids a feature in the minor or natural in a major

Negative doubles after we open one of a suit

Our preempts are on the light side, but lighter at favorable vulnerability and the opposite (solid) when vul vs. not

Landy (2C for majors) vs. their notrump

Fourth best leads

Ace from ace-king vs. suits

That's enough for now. System is not important for this course; it's only a framework. Our class is about learning how to judge a hand.

I'd like to start with improving judgment in the bidding, and developing cardplay ideas. I'm going to present all the hands as problems, taking you up to what might be the crucial moment. So try to answer each problem before continuing to read. Sometimes I'll present lots of problems in one hand, as the hand progresses. And I'll ask questions about other players' decisions. Try to answer the question before reading further in the text.

Sometimes I'll put three stars \* \* \* to tell you that it's time to stop reading and answer the last question.

This course, I hope, should also give you a glimpse into the way the top players discuss hands. Sometimes a single deal will be discussed for a very long time, because there's so much depth to it. (My wife and I once went to Thanksgiving dinner at our friends' – Paul and Sandy Trent – house when they brought up a recent bidding problem. Two hours later we had not seen the turkey, since the four of us were still discussing the hand!) I hope you enjoy this; I know you'll learn a lot.

Problem 1.

You hold:

```
J 5 3 2
Q 10 7 2
J 2
A 8 5
```

Your LHO opens 1NT, strong, and your partner doubles. RHO says pass. What is your call?

\* \* \*

This is a crucial juncture, because by passing or bidding you will definitely affect the result.

One of the crucial moments in the auction occurs when your bidding options include what might be the final pass. Since the pass might be final, you should stop and think.

The double of 1NT is the equivalent of the notrump bidder's point count (at least) and shows a decent opening lead. Add the points around the table. Declarer and partner have a combined 30 count at least. You have 8. That leaves dummy with at most 3.

Another way to look at this is that partner has at least 15 and you have 8, at least 23 total. Therefore, your side has more than declarer's side and it's OK to defend 1NT. Pretty simple reasoning and you should pass.

What about vulnerability? At the table on this hand, your side was not vulnerable and they were vulnerable. But I didn't include this in the problem because it's irrelevant. In most cases, the penalty you receive is better than the score you can get by bidding, though this will not always be so. But you can never identify the rare cases where bidding will lead to a better score, so don't worry about them.

Also, East has no guarantee of an eight-card fit and no way to investigate this - two more reasons to pass the double. The full deal:

```

                10 9 4
                8 6 3
                Q 9 5 3
                10 6 3

A 8 6           J 5 3 2
A J 5           Q 10 7 2
10 8 7         J 2
K Q J 2        A 8 5

                K Q 7
                K 9 4
                A K 6 4
                9 7 4

```

South	West	North	East
1NT	double	pass	?

If you pass as East, partner would lead the king of clubs. The defense is interesting.

You signal with the 8 of clubs and West must choose a club at trick two. His choice is the queen, jack or 2. Which should he play and why?

\* \* \*

This is a crucial point in the defense, though not easily identifiable. The reason it's crucial is that West prefers a heart return from partner and conveying this information is vital. After all, most defenders would simply cash four club tricks and then try to decide what to shift to.

West cannot afford to play the 2, because South might be holding up with the A754, leaving partner with the initial 9-8 doubleton.

West should return the queen or jack, where the queen says he prefers a spade return and the jack says he prefers a heart return. Diamonds are out. Why? Because dummy's diamond suit makes that suit an illogical play.

**Important Point:**

When giving a suit-preference signal, and there are three options, you must eliminate (mentally) one of the suits. Eliminate the strongest suit.

10 9 4  
8 6 3  
Q 9 5 3  
10 6 3

A 8 6	J 5 3 2
A J 5	Q 10 7 2
10 8 7	J 2
K Q J 2	A 8 5

K Q 7  
K 9 4  
A K 6 4  
9 7 4

West should return the jack of clubs at trick two. East wins the ace and shifts to a heart. Since East has no more entries, he should play a high heart (the queen or ten), so he can hold the trick in case South has Kxx. Should East return the queen or ten?

Which card is more clear to partner?

\* \* \*

Tough call.

The queen shows the jack but the ten shows the nine. Nevertheless, partner may have one or both of these cards (the jack or 9). Which card is West more likely to hold in hearts, the jack or the nine?

West has given suit-preference for hearts and, therefore, is more likely to hold the jack. Thus, East should return the queen, since partner is looking at the jack and won't be confused.

```

                10 9 4
                8 6 3
                Q 9 5 3
                10 6 3

A 8 6          J 5 3 2
A J 5          Q 10 7 2
10 8 7        J 2
K Q J 2       A 8 5

                K Q 7
                K 9 4
                A K 6 4
                9 7 4

```

As you can see, declarer is better off ducking the queen of hearts. If he covers with the king, he will lose four heart tricks. Based on the double of 1NT, he should duck the heart, and he'll end up losing 8 tricks, for minus 500.

In real life, East bid 2H and made 8 tricks for plus 110. The scoring was matchpoints and this score was worth 47% of the matchpoints. Normally, a few points below average is nothing terrible, but in this case a huge score was missed. By passing the double, he would have scored 96%. When opportunity knocks at the bridge table, it's important to take it.

Problem 2: Both vulnerable  
You are South

```

6
K 10 8 2
J 9
K J 9 6 3 2

```

South	West	North	East
pass	1 D	1 S	pass
?			

What is your call?

\* \* \*