

♠♥♦♣ GETTING A COUNT ♠♥♦♣

East dealt and opened 3♠. At unfavorable vulnerability (red vs white), this promised a good 7-card spade suit. This is your hand:

S	South
♠	85
♥	J854
♦	7
♣	AQ10975

The bidding continued:

West	North	East	South
4♠	Dbl	3♠ Pass	Pass ?

You have a choice of bids. Pass isn't one of them. You could bid 5♥, since partner is probably showing 4 hearts herself. However, 5♣ is also in contention. Clubs are where your points are. And since you have 6 clubs and a quality suit, you are guaranteed at least a 9-card fit.

Say you decide to advance with 5♣. Partner raises you to 6♣. West leads the ♠A and you see this dummy:

N	North
♠	6
♥	AK1097
♦	AQJ8
♣	K32

West leads the ♠A

S	South
♠	85
♥	J854
♦	7
♣	AQ10975

Recognizing the problem is pretty simple. You need to bring in the hearts without losing a trick. The solution is a little more complicated.

The intermediate player will simply apply the saying – ‘Eight ever, nine never’. He will take the ♥AK and expect the hearts to break 2-2. If they don’t, he will consider himself unlucky.


The advanced player will think about the bidding. Since East opened with a 7-card spade suit, it is more likely that West will have more hearts than East. He will finesse ♥10. Again, if he loses to East’s ♥Q, he will consider himself unlucky.

The expert player won’t depend on adages or luck. He will play the hand carefully, getting a count on East’s hand. That is, he will find out the exact distribution in the East hand and take the required heart play with certainty.

West wins the ♠A and switches to a low diamond. You will win the ♦A and immediately ruff a diamond. Both East and West follow to both the diamonds. You will now pull two rounds of trump, leading up to the ♣K and back to the ♣A. East discards a spade on the second club. Now you know that East started with 7 spades and 1 club. He also had at least 2 diamonds.

To continue getting the count, lead your last spade and ruff it in the dummy, using dummy’s last trump. Now another diamond ruff. Again, East follows suit. You ruff that diamond and lead a heart to the ♥A, and lead your last diamond. This time, East discards. That completes the count. East started with 7 spades, 3 diamonds and 1 club. This leaves him with exactly 2 hearts. You can now pull the last trump and lead a heart to the ♥K with confidence.

This is the full deal:

	N North ♠ 6 ♥ AK1097 ♦ AQJ8 ♣ K32	W N E S 3♠ P 4♣ X P 5♣ P 6♣ P P P
	W West ♠ AJ2 ♥ 62 ♦ K10643 ♣ J86	E East ♠ KQ109743 ♥ Q3 ♦ 952 ♣ 4
	S South ♠ 85 ♥ J854 ♦ 7 ♣ AQ10975	6♣ S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/y4lccudk>, OR copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the “Next” button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on “Play” you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.