

MAKING A GRAND SLAM

Your partner opens 1NT and this is your hand:

S	South
♠	A753
♥	KJ10
♦	Q3
♣	AKQ7

You could almost open 2NT yourself, so your slam hat should immediately go on. You could use Stayman to check on a spade fit, but with a minimum of 34 points between you and partner; and a very balanced hand, you might just as well check on aces and kings because it will be a decision between a small slam and a grand slam.

I would use the Gerber convention to gather the necessary information to make the slam decision. 4♣ is the ace asking bid. The basic system for reporting on aces is in steps. The first step, 4♦ shows 0 aces, ♥4 shows 1 ace, and so forth. There is another system, called Roman Key Card Gerber, where 4♦ shows either 0 or 3 aces, 4♥ shows 1 or 4 aces, and 4♠ shows 2 aces. Using that system North responds 4♠ and you know you have all the aces.

Now get a reading on kings. 5♣ asks for a report on kings. Using the same Roman Key Card Gerber structure, North rebids 4♥ showing 1 or 4 kings. What would you do now?

You have all the aces and are off 1 king. You could safely bid 6NT and afford to lose 1 trick. But everyone else playing this board will be in at least 6NT and your score will only be average or below average. Playing matchpoint scoring I would take the chance that you will be able to successfully finesse against the outstanding king, and bid 7NT.

After East leads the ♠8 you put your hand down. These are the two hands:

N	North
♠	KQ9
♥	A94
♦	A10
♣	J10984

East leads ♠8

S	South
♠	A753
♥	KJ10
♦	Q3
♣	AKQ7

Take over the North hand and plan how you are going to make this grand slam.

Notice that North opened 1NT with 14 HCP. He added a point for the 5th club. Many fail to do this and miss out on a big advantage: a long suit in notrump often takes an extra trick.

You have 3 spades, 2 hearts, 1 diamond and 5 clubs. You need 2 more tricks. You play a low spade from dummy and your ♠9 wins the first trick. Now you only need 1 more trick and you have a two way finesse against the ♥Q. How are you going to find the lady?

The trick is to play off all your top tricks. After playing 10 top tricks, the defenders will be discarding like crazy. One of them will be discarding hearts. Since the defender with the ♥Q also needs 2 small hearts to protect it, it will be easy to locate that defender: the one that isn't discarding hearts.

Sure enough, deep into the play of the hand, East discards 2 hearts. When it's time to play the heart suit, lead the ♥K from the dummy. Follow this with the ♥J10. West will have to play his ♥Q on the third heart and you win your ♥A for the thirteenth trick and your grand slam.

This is the entire deal:

D 5	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ KQ9 ♥ A94 ♦ A10 ♣ J10984	1NT	P	P	4♣
W West		P	5♣	P	5NT
♠ J10642 ♥ Q76 ♦ KJ65 ♣ 5		P	6♥	P	7NT
		P	P	P	
	E East				
	♠ 8 ♥ 8532 ♦ 98742 ♣ 632				
	S South				
	♠ A753 ♥ KJ10 ♦ Q3 ♣ AKQ7				
		7NT N	NS: 0	EW: 0	

You might be wondering why East led a singleton ♠8. It was more logical than you think. You didn't use Stayman over 1NT so you didn't have 4 spades. North probably had no more than 4 spades. That means that West started with 5 or more spades and thus, the spade suit stood a good chance of being developed into a defensive trick. What is stranger is why West didn't split his honors on the first spade trick and insert the ♠10. You could have survived that play by going to the dummy and leading another low spade to your hand. The ♠9 will always take a trick.

There is another approach you could take with any lead from East. This is called a Simple Squeeze. You have 11 top tricks. If the defender that is guarding the ♥Q also holds the ♦K, you can squeeze him. You play your 11 winners, making sure you don't discard a spade from the dummy on your last club. When you are down to the last 4 tricks, ready to lead the dummy's last spade, your hands look like this;

D 5	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ KQ9 ♥ A94 ♦ A10 ♣ J10984	1NT	P	P	4♣
W West		P	5♣	P	5NT
♠ J10642 ♥ Q76 ♦ KJ65 ♣ 5	♠9	P	6♥	P	7NT
	♠J	P	P	P	
	♥5				
	♠A				
	E East				
	♠ 8 ♥ 8532 ♦ 98742 ♣ 632				
	S South				
	♠ A753 ♥ KJ10 ♦ Q3 ♣ AKQ7				
		Select cards to play for all 4 players			
		7NT N	NS: 9	EW: 0	

If West discards the ♦J you take 2 diamonds and a heart; if he discards the ♥7, your last three tricks are the ♥KJ and the ace of diamonds.

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/y8vbajyf> , 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.