

♠♥♦♣ **TO DUCK OF NOT TO DUCK** ♠♥♦♣

You are the dealer with this 16 point balanced hand.

S	South
♠	A94
♥	742
♦	AK4
♣	KQ84

You open 1NT and partner raises you to 3NT. The opponents are silent. West leads the ♠3 and you see this dummy. What is your plan?

N	North
♠	J5
♥	J96
♦	QJ732
♣	A65

West leads ♠3

S	South
♠	A94
♥	742
♦	AK4
♣	KQ84

North was very aggressive in raising directly to 3NT. He counted his 5-card diamond suit as 1 extra point and gave full value to his ♠J.

But you are in game. So, what are you going to play from dummy? You should put up the ♠J. West could have led from ♠KQ8 and you will have an extra trick.

You play the ♠J and East covers with the ♠Q ☹.

Now, what do you play from your hand?

You and partner have 5 spades between you. The Rule of 7 would indicate you should duck twice ($7-5=2$). If you do, you are headed for disaster. The

rule tells you how many times to hold up *if you are going to hold up at all*. It doesn't tell you whether or not to hold up.

You can only know whether to hold up after you have made your plan. You must first count your top tricks. You have 3 clubs, 5 diamonds and the ♠A. More important, your hearts are wide open. If you don't win the ♠A and take your 9 tricks immediately, the opponents will switch to hearts and since they have seven of them, they will take 4 hearts and the spade you would let them have.

Your bridge logic will tell you whether you should hold up. You can use the Rule of 7 to help you figure out how many times to duck – once you have made the basic decision that you must hold up.

Look at the entire deal:

11 D		N North ♠ J5 ♥ J96 ♦ QJ732 ♣ A65	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	W	N	E	S				1NT	P	3NT	P	P	P			
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W West ♠ K10732 ♥ 853 ♦ 10 ♣ J932			E East ♠ Q86 ♥ AKQ10 ♦ 9865 ♣ 107																
		S South ♠ A94 ♥ 742 ♦ AK4 ♣ KQ84	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0																

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

<https://tinyurl.com/y27m346d>, 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.