

**DON'T GET DIVORCED FROM DUMMY!**  
**by**  
**BARBARA SEAGRAM**

In No Trumps, your opponents, who have no sense of humour, usually lead their strongest suit. This, invariably, is your weakest suit.

	765	
	K	
	754	
K43	AK8642	J1082
Q10864		7532
KJ83		Q2
7	AQ9	QJ10
	AJ9	
	A1096	
	953	

S	N
1NT	3NT

In the absence of a sequence (always our favourite lead) , West led the H6, fourth of his longest and strongest. As declarer, you count your sure winners. Only count the for sure, fast ones that are carved in stone, not the possible ones, not the slow ones.

You count 6 winners: 1 S, 2 H, 1 D and 2 C winners. The C suit is the obvious suit that you decide will be your “project suit.” The problem is that you have very few entries to the dummy where your long club suit is located. You have one less entry after your LHO led a H.

Let’s do some math: With 6 clubs in dummy and 3 clubs in your hand; missing 4 clubs, they rate to divide 3-1 most of the time. (Missing an even number of cards, they divide badly, missing an odd number of cards they divide favourably, most often.) It looks as though you will have to be prepared to lose a C. If you play Ace, then King of C and then give away a C, your C suit will now be high in dummy but they will be stranded and you will have no access to these. Since you are prepared to give away a C, give it away first. Lead the C2 at trick # 2 and duck it, allowing East to win it with the C 10. East should lead back a H, since returning partner’s suit is what we were trained to do at mother’s knee. Declarer can win the H Ace and now take five C tricks, D Ace, two H tricks and a S trick for a total of 9 tricks.

On this hand, we had to give away a C trick and we could afford to do so since we started with a double stopper in the suit the opponents led. It doesn’t come

easily to any of us to give anything away, we prefer to take, take, take! But in order to receive, one must often give.  
Now let's have a look at another hand.

		72	
		93	
		432	
		K76543	
K9			QJ1043
Q10875			K642
J1098			75
J10			Q8
		A865	
		AJ	
		AKQ6	
		A92	
S	N		
2C	2D		
2NT	3NT		

West, once again, led their fourth best H7. This time you as south only have one H stopper. There is no point holding up your stopper in H as the enemy have 9 cards together in this suit. Since your H stopper is gone and you only count 7 sure winners, you must try to score six tricks in the C suit without the opponents winning a C trick. If they get in, you'll be toast!

Win the H Ace and lead the C Ace at trick # 2. Now lead a C to dummy's king. But hold it! If you lead the C2 towards dummy, there will be good news and bad news. The good news is that the C's break 2-2. This is wonderful. BUT you will still have the good C9 in your hand. So back you go to the C9, only to be forever divorced from dummy's good C suit. Where did it all go wrong??

The pesky C9 got in the way. At trick three, having played the CAce, it was imperative to play the C9 towards the C King in dummy. When the suit breaks magically 2-2, you can now play your high C's from dummy and your little C2 from your hand disappears nicely under the little spots in dummy. One S trick, 1 H trick, 3 D tricks and 6 C tricks. It pays to live right!

Count your winners, make a plan and take your time **at trick one** to decide on your strategy. If you only make your plan later in the hand, it will all be too late. Every card matters: take your time.