

Smarter than a Second-Grader

by [Brian Gunnell](#)

We learn to count in first- and second-grade, but somehow this basic skill deserts many bridge players in the heat of battle.

Board 24
West Deals
None Vul

♠ 6	♠ A 8 3 2	♠ 7 5 4	
♥ K 7 3	♥ Q 8 5	♥ A J 9 4	
♦ K 8 4 2	♦ Q J 7 6 5 3	♦ 10 9	
♣ A Q 5 4 3	♣ --	♣ 8 7 6 2	

N
W E
S

♠ K Q J 10 9			
♥ 10 6 2			
♦ A			
♣ K J 10 9			

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♣	1 ♦	1 ♥	1 ♠
2 ♥	2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	All pass	

West leads the ♥3 and East (correctly) inserts the ♥J. Two more hearts are cashed, followed by a trump shift. "Rats!" mutters declarer, who had been planning to cross-ruff the entire hand, scoring all nine trumps separately. Those ruffs, plus the ♦A, would be enough to fulfill the contract. But, after the trump return, the cross-ruff leaves declarer a trick short, so it's time for Plan B.

Our declarer's (faulty) Plan B was to set up dummy's diamonds. He won the trump return in hand, cashed the ♦A, then club ruff, diamond ruff, club ruff, diamond ruff. This line of play required good breaks (such as spades 2-2 and diamonds 3-3, or failing that the doubleton ♦K). But declarer's luck was out and, as the cards lie, it was impossible to enjoy those long diamonds.

Our second-graders need no luck, instead they'll do some counting:

- N-S have 23 HCP, so the other guys have 17.
- In the heart suit East showed up with 5 of those 17 missing HCP.
- West opened the bidding and surely has the remaining 12 HCP.

Once declarer realizes that West has the missing high cards (obviously including the ♣A and ♣Q), it's routine to win the trump return in hand, and take ruffing finesses against West's high clubs. Declarer leads the ♣K which is covered by the ♣A and ruffed. Back to hand with a trump. Then the ♣J is led, and run around if West declines to cover. When the dust has cleared, declarer will have scored five trumps in his hand, plus two club ruffs in dummy, plus two club tricks, and the ♦A. Ten easy tricks for the second-graders!