Improving Your Counting Skills

"Counting to a bridge player is similar to an actor learning his lines – it doesn't guarantee success, but he can't succeed without it." George Kaufman

To get into the right frame of mind, try this exercise. Neither side is vulnerable.

South	*You*	*North*	*East*
1♦	Pass	1NT	2♣
All Pass			

♠ 2 ♥ 10 9 8 5 ♦ 8 6 5 4 3 2 ♣ K Q

After a brief auction, you become the dummy in 2♣. Try to figure out the distribution of the other 3 players. *If you'd like a hint, go to the bottom of the page.

Solution

North's 1NT response to 1♦ denies a 4-card major. South's 1♦ opening and subsequent pass make it very clear that he also doesn't have a 5-card major. So, N-S do not have an 8-card fit in a major.

N-S have no more than 7 cards in either major, so your side (E-W) has at least 6 cards in each major. You have 1 spade and 4 hearts, so East must have 5+ spades and 2+ hearts. But, he overcalled 2♣; not 2♠. The only logical conclusion is that he has 5 spades, 2 hearts, no diamonds, 6 clubs (5-2-0-6). You have 1-4-6-2, so your sides' 26 cards consist of: 8 clubs, and 6 cards in each of the 3 other suits.

N-S have 7 spades and 7 hearts. Since North lacks a 4-card major, he has 3 in each; South has 4 in each. If South has 0 clubs and 5 diamonds, he'd bid 2♦. If North has 4 diamonds, he'd bid 2♦. So, you now know it all: South has 4-4-4-1, and North has 3-3-3-4.

*Hint: Begin by using clues from the N-S bidding to figure out the distribution for your partner (East).