

THE HOLD-UP

ABOUT THE DEALS

You may be either Opener or Responder, but you will always be in the South position.

The first page of each Deal shows your hand, dummy's hand, the bidding, the opening lead and early play. You are asked to study the Deal and mentally devise a Plan to make the contract. When you have your Plan in your mind click **NEXT**.

The subsequent page will then appear telling you what you should have done and perhaps giving you a chance to continue with the Plan by again clicking **NEXT**.

On the final page of each Deal all four hands will be shown.

HOLD-UP LESSON

The hold-up play is one of the first techniques bridge players learn, right up there with finessing. And the first example they are shown will be something like this one.

You are playing a notrump contract.

Your Left Hand Opponent leads the ♥5 and RHO puts on the ♥Q.

Here is the ♥ suit in dummy's and your hands.

Dummy ♥ 8 4

You ♥ A 10 2

Suppose you take your ♥A at the first (or second) trick. Then, whenever you lose a trick to either opponent they will win some ♥ tricks, four of them if LHO has led a 5-card suit.

But suppose you refuse to win your ♥A until the third round; you hold-up. Then, whenever you lose a trick to your RHO he may be void in ♥s because he started out with just three of them. Since he cannot lead a ♥ back to his partner your contract may be successful.

Of course, even after the hold-up, if you lose a later trick to your LHO he will then cash his ♥ tricks. So hold-up plays aren't always perfect solutions.

The Basic Hold-up:

Look at that ♥ suit in a full example.

The contract is 3NT and West's opening lead is the ♥5. East plays ♥Q.

♠ A 7 3
♥ 8 4
♦ K J 10 9 8
♣ 5 4 2



Since this is a notrump contract count your winners.

♠ = 2 : ♥ = 1 : ♦ = 0 : ♣ = 2 : Total = 5.

You need 4 more winners, and Dummy's ♦ suit will provide them.

The danger is that West may hold five ♥s, so when you drive out the ♦A,

♠ K 8 2
 ♥ A 10 2
 ♦ Q 6 3
 ♣ A K 10 6

the defense may be able to win 4 ♥ tricks to go along with their 1 ♦. So you hold-up your ♥A until the third round. Then you play ♦K and continue with the ♦ suit until the defense takes the ♦A. If it is East who wins, and he started with only 3 ♥s, he will have none to return to his partner's hand. And if East does happen to have a fourth ♥ it means the ♥ suit was originally 4-4 and you will only lose 3 tricks in the suit..

Holding Up with a King

The contract is 3NT and West's opening lead is the ♥Q. East plays the ♥A and returns the ♥9.

♠ A 7 3
 ♥ 8 4
 ♦ K J 10 9 8
 ♣ Q J 2



♠ K 8 2
 ♥ K 6 2
 ♦ Q 6 5 3
 ♣ A K 5

Since this is a notrump contract count your winners.

♠ = 2 : ♥ = 1 : ♦ = 0 : ♣ = 3 : Total = 6.

You need 3 more winners, and Dummy's ♦ suit will provide them. Once East takes the ♥A on the first round the situation becomes identical to the first example.

You hold-up your ♥K until the third round. Then you drive out the ♦A and hope it is East who has it.

Not Holding Up with a King

The contract is 3NT and West's opening lead is the ♥5. East plays the ♥J.

♠ A 7 3
 ♥ 8 4
 ♦ A J 10 9 8
 ♣ Q J 2



♠ K 8 2
 ♥ K 6 2
 ♦ Q 6 5 3
 ♣ A K 5

Since this is a notrump contract count your winners.

♠ = 2 : ♥ = 1 ? : ♦ = 1 : ♣ = 3 : Total = 7.

The opening lead guarantees you a ♥ trick.

And you'd better take it right now or East will return a ♥ and West will take all the ♥ winners he happened to be dealt.

This was not a time to hold up, and after you win the first trick you pin all your hopes on the ♦ finesse. If West holds the ♦K you will make the contract. If East holds the ♦K they are going to bury you with ♥s.

Holding Up with A J x: or not:

When your LHO leads a suit in which you hold A J x and RHO plays a high honor, you have an interesting situation. This holding might be just one stopper, but might be two, depending on which defender will be getting the lead.

The contract is 3NT and West's opening lead is the ♠6. East plays the ♠Q.

♠ 7 3
 ♥ A 8 4 3

Since this is a notrump contract count your winners.

♦ Q J 10 9
♣ K Q 2



♠ A J 2
♥ K 6 2
♦ A 6 5 3
♣ A 7 5

♠ = 1? : ♥ = 2 : ♦ = 1 : ♣ = 3 : Total = 7.

Suppose you hold-up your ♠A until the third round.
You need tricks from ♦s and you must finesse through East. If the finesse fails West will take his ♠ winners.

Suppose you take your ♠A at trick one.
You need tricks from ♦s and you must finesse through East. If the finesse fails West will not be able to lead ♠s without setting up your ♠J.

The contract is 3NT and West's opening lead is the ♠6.
East plays the ♠Q.

♠ 7 3
♥ A 8 4 3
♦ A 6 5 3
♣ K Q 2



♠ A J 2
♥ K 6 2
♦ Q J 10 9
♣ A 7 5

Since this is a notrump contract count your winners.

♠ = 1? : ♥ = 2 : ♦ = 1 : ♣ = 3 : Total = 7.

Suppose you take your ♠A at trick one.
You need tricks from ♦s and you must finesse through West. If the finesse fails East will lead a ♠ through your ♠J 2 and West will win a lot of ♠s.

Suppose you hold-up your ♠A until the third round.
You need tricks from ♦s and you must finesse through West. If the finesse fails East will be unable to return a ♠ to his partner (unless they split 4-4).

Holding Up with Two Stoppers:

If you have to establish a suit which is missing two top honors then you may have to hold-up on their suit when you have it double-stopped.

The contract is 3NT and West's opening lead is the ♦J.
East plays the ♦K.

♠ A 7 3
♥ A 8 3
♦ 6 5 2
♣ J 10 9 6



♠ K Q 2
♥ K 6 2
♦ A Q 3
♣ Q 7 5 4

Since this is a notrump contract count your winners.

♠ = 3 : ♥ = 2 : ♦ = 2 : ♣ = 0 : Total = 7.

You need to get 2 tricks from ♣s. The danger is that West may have a 5-card ♦ suit that can be established before you can set up any ♠ tricks.

Suppose you take your ♦A at trick one and play on ♣s. If the two high ♣s are split, East will win the first ♣ and play another ♦, allowing West to establish the suit. When you again play ♣s, WEST will take his winner and also take some ♦s.

Suppose you allow East to win the ♦K. He will return the suit and drive out one of your stoppers, but he will use his last remaining ♦ to do so. Now, whenever East takes his ♣ winner he will have no ♦s to help West

establish the suit. Since West has only one entry in ♣s he can win it and establish the ♦s, but won't be able to get back in to cash them.

Holding Up at a Suit Contract:

The hold-up is utilized most often when you are playing notrump; the purpose usually being to disrupt communications between the defenders by exhausting one defender of his partner's suit. This use of a hold-up doesn't really apply to suit contracts.

There are other reasons for a hold-up, though, which do apply in suit contracts.

The contract is 4♥ and West's opening lead is the ♠3.
East plays the ♠Q.

Since this is a suit contract count your losers.

♠ 8 7
♥ Q 10 8 3
♦ K 7 5
♣ A J 9 4

♠ = 1 : ♥ = 0 : ♦ = 2 : ♣ = 1 : Total = 4.

You can't avoid losing 1 ♠, and the ♦A is also a sure loser. If the ♣ finesse works you would be home free, but even if it fails you can guarantee the contract with a hold-up play.



♠ A 6 2
♥ A K J 6 2
♦ 8 6
♣ Q 10 3

The danger is that if East holds the ♦A, West may obtain the lead and play a ♦ through dummy's ♦K, giving you two ♦ losers. You can prevent that from happening if you can prevent West from getting the lead. Since the only suit West can get the lead with is ♠s, all you have to do is let East win the ♠Q and take your ♠A on the second round.

Since East cannot attack ♦s from his side he will have to give you the lead. You pull trumps, then finesse the ♣. Even if the finesse loses East cannot play ♦s without setting up dummy's ♦K, so you will eventually get to discard one of your ♦ losers on dummy's fourth ♣.

15 Practice Deals will be worth more than another 1500 words.

Deal 1