

Defense

Your opponents won the bid. It's your job to find and attack their losers before they have a chance to ditch them.

Don't Help Clean the Streets

Don't lead trump. If you hold a powerful trump card, use it to win a trick and gain the lead when your opponents lead trump.

Return Your Partner's Suit

If your partner has led a suit earlier in the hand, lead that same suit back to them. They may have promoted a winner or voided the suit and are able to trump it. Don't lead this suit if the declarer has already shown a void and trumped the suit.

Discard the Suit You Want Led

If you cannot follow suit and cannot trump to win the trick, discard a card from the suit that you would want led. For example if you have the Ace of Diamonds and cannot follow suit, discard a low Diamond. Watch for what suits your partner discards and lead those suits if you can.

Second Hand Low

If the opponent to your right led to the trick, you will be the 2nd player to play to the trick. You usually do not want to play an unprotected high card to the trick because the opponent to your left may beat it, or worse: your partner may be forced to play over it.

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Play Winning Bid Whist

Inspiration for this zine came from
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Bidding

Winning the bid is extremely powerful. The bid winner gets to exchange cards with the kitty and lead to the first trick.

Length is Strength

When bidding, the shape of your hand is the most important factor. Having a long suit of 5 or more cards is essential. If you have strong cards in your long suit it is even better. Short suits are also good because they allow you to create voids after exchanging with the kitty.

Stoppers

When considering bidding in No Trump, you want to have a stopper in every suit. A stopper is a card that is guaranteed to win a trick. An Ace is a stopper, so is a King with one other card in the suit, or a Queen with 2 other cards in the suit.

Sacrifice

The game is won by the first team to reach 7 points, or lost by the first team to reach -7 points. If your opponents are bidding a contract that will allow them to win the game, it is often better to overbid them for a contract you likely cannot win. It is better to lose points in order to prolong the game and get another chance at winning on the next hand.

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Support

Your partner won the bid, it's your job to help them win the contract.

Third Hand High

When your partner leads to a trick, you will be the 3rd player to play to the trick. It is almost always correct to play your highest card of the led suit if it has a chance of winning the trick. Don't hold back high cards to try to win later, it's your job to let your partner know where the high cards are.

Cash Your Winners

If you play 3rd hand high, you may win an early trump trick and be able to lead the next trick. If you have any Aces in a side suit, lead them immediately. If your partner is void in that suit, you are giving them a perfect opportunity to ditch a loser.

Exit Safely

After you've cashed your winners, you want to give the lead back to your partner. They won the bid and exchanged with the kitty, they are in a much better position to lead the way. The safest way to exit safely is to lead a trump. Your partner likely has the strength to win the trick, and even if they don't have the high card needed, you are still helping to clean the streets and promote your partner's other trump cards.

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Establish your long suit

If you exchanged cards with the kitty properly, you hopefully have a long trump suit and 1 long side suit. After the streets are clean and you've ditched some losers, you want to establish your long side suit. If the other players are out of the suit and have no trumps, then even low ranked cards can win tricks if led. Establishing your long side suit is very similar to cleaning the streets. Lead the suit until your opponents run out. If you have a gap in the suit and are missing important high cards, give your partner a chance to win the trick.

No Trump Contracts

In No Trump Contracts, promoting your winners is more important than ditching your losers. If you have KQxx in a suit, your King or Queen will become winners once the Ace is gone. If you play the King and your opponent covers with the Ace, you have promoted your Queen.

Length is still strength in No Trump. Establish your long suit.

It is important to take your risks before you cash in on your sure tricks. Don't lead your Aces right away, you will need them to retake the lead while you promote your cards and establish your suits.

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Bidding Checklist:

1. Do you have at least 1 long suit? (5+ cards)
2. How many strong cards in your long suits?
The shorter the suit, the more strength needed
3. Analyze the shape of the hand. Flat is bad.
Doubletons and Singletons can become voids after exchanging with the kitty
4. Do you have strength in any suits other than your long suit?
5. If you have a flat hand, think defense instead of offense.

Exchanging with the Kitty

Trump Contracts

Keep all trumps

Void a suit, or void 2 if you can

Keep Aces

Don't keep unprotected Kings, you're better off adding extra length to a long side suit

No Trump Contracts

Add length to your strong suits

Keep stoppers

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Declarer Play

You won the bid, now it's time to win the hand.

Clean the Streets

You won the bid and exchanged with the kitty, you and your partner should have more trumps than your opponents. Don't let them win tricks by trumping side suits. You almost always want to get those trumps out of their hands by leading trumps immediately.

Get Partner Involved

Unless you have an extraordinary hand, you likely won't be able to win every single trump trick on your own. Give your partner an opportunity to win a trump trick.

For example, if you have the Big Joker and the King of trump, lead the King. Your partner might have the Little Joker or the Ace and be able to help you out. Even if your partner doesn't have the right cards to win the trick, you'll get them out of your opponent's hand early while still keeping your high trumps for later

Counting Trump

The only way you will know for sure that the streets are clean is if you count the trump cards. There are 13 cards in each suit, plus 2 jokers, totalling 15 cards in the trump suit. It is easier to count down than up. From that 15, subtract however many trumps are in your hand. Everytime another player plays a trump, subtract another from your total. When you reach zero, the streets are clean.

If you lose count or get confused, try to remember how the tricks were played. If you led trump and everyone followed suit, that is 4 trumps down. If you led it again and one player did not follow suit, that's 7 total trumps down.

Ditch Your Losers

Depending on the level of the bid, you will know how many tricks you can lose before you lose the contract. Look at your hand and figure out which cards are at risk of losing a trick. Any card in a suit without the Ace is a potential loser. If you have a short suit with only 1 or 2 losers, you may be able to discard them on tricks your partner will win. For example, if you have the QJ of Spades and are void in Diamonds, you can discard your J if your partner leads the Ace of Diamonds

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