

Eric Rodwell with Mark Horton

THE RODWELL FILES

SECRETS OF A BRIDGE CHAMPION

DOS and DON'TS



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FOREWORD

Eric Rodwell and his partner Jeff Meckstroth are the best-known pair in the world — ‘Meckwell’ is a neologism that is in every bridge player’s lexicon. Having reported their efforts for more years than I care to remember, I can safely say that they are also the most formidable partnership in the world. Brian Clough, a legend in English soccer, was once quoted as saying, ‘I wouldn’t say I was the best manager in the business, but I’m in the top one.’ So, here’s a question that I’ll answer for Jeff and Eric (they are far too modest to make such a claim):

‘Are they the best pair in the world?’

‘Perhaps not, but they’re in the top one.’

The theme of Peter Shaffer’s play *Amadeus* is Salieri’s envy of Mozart, a classic example of the inequality of inborn talent. The play contrasts Mozart’s genius with the more modest abilities of Salieri, which appear mediocre by comparison. As a journalist, I have been fortunate enough to be able to enjoy the company of many world-class bridge players and to discuss with them countless situations in bidding, play and defense. I am close enough to these stars to realize just how far away I am from achieving their level of play.

If you can’t play with (or against) the stars, the next-best thing is to study their methods and try to understand how they think about the game. However, it is very rare for a top-class player to tell you exactly how he or she does it. You will appreciate, then, the exceptional nature of this book, as someone who is surely one of the Bridge Immortals lets us in on his unique approach to play and defense. It has been my privilege to work with him as a researcher, sourcing and selecting example deals to illustrate the principles he describes.

To some extent bridge is a puzzle without an answer — I’ve been at it for forty years and I still have no idea how to play. This book represents one of the best opportunities you will ever have to get inside the mind of a champion — don’t fail to take it.

Mark Horton
March 2011

INTRODUCTION

Back in the 1980s I developed a series of notes on an approach to hand analysis and cardplay that I found useful. The methodology included giving my own names to many different types of plays, strategies, and analytical techniques — I had learned in college that giving unusual, even funny names to things makes them easier to remember.

I gave a digital copy of the notes (the original ‘Rodwell File’!) to Fred Gitelman, a promising Junior at the time, and it circulated amongst a small number of players in Toronto. One person who saw the notes was Ray Lee, who suggested to me many years ago that I turn them into a book. I resisted the idea, partly because I knew that my notes were a long way from becoming what I intended, which was a good book on advanced cardplay. Then at the Washington NABC in 2009, Ray approached me again, this time with the idea of adding Mark Horton to the project as a co-author. This idea excited me, as I didn’t really have time to research good examples to illustrate all the concepts.

Mark has done a marvelous job of finding all sorts of suitable deals, mostly from high-level play. In fact, when I got his material it occurred to me that the book could be made useful to a much wider range of players. So I wrote some new introductory chapters that establish the foundation for what is talked about later. For some time I had not been keeping records of hands I played, but during 2010 and 2011, with the book in mind, I collected interesting deals that illustrated the concepts and that in some cases introduced additional concepts. The combination of all these efforts is a larger book than we had first planned, but I believe a better one.

Most of the deals presented here are ‘real’ — they occurred and were played as described. I wish I had recorded more of my own deals but there are many good hands here involving other players. I have constructed some deals when none that we knew of from actual play illustrated the point properly. A few of them are randomly generated by my computer.

In some cases, I talk about a line of play or defense that was not actually selected at the table but that would have made things interesting, but I don’t then present it as a first-person account of a hand I actually played. In a few deals I made minor modifications to spot cards to make the deal more interesting.

Finally, the names. In some cases, the name is descriptive. In other cases it is just something that came into my mind, often somewhat silly as I think they stick in the mind better. I hope those few that are named after other players won’t offend anyone.

HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The first two chapters in Part 1 set the groundwork for the more advanced concepts: how to develop tricks, entries, trump management, counting, calculating the odds, and the basics of squeezes and endplays. They move quickly, and are intended more as a refresher than a fundamental text. I recommend you study these chapters carefully unless you are at a level where it is all easy, and even then you should still skim them to make sure you can connect the later concepts properly. This part of the book ends with two important chapters on the analytical process: they describe the steps involved in selecting a line of play or defense, and include a checklist of ‘defogging’ questions to fall back on if you get stuck.

The rest of the book is largely concerned with identifying, naming and illustrating a wide variety of bridge plays and situations. Where I have invented names, they made sense to me at the time, and in most cases had something to do with the play itself. If you want to call them something else, be my guest: at least the wheels are turning for you and that should be beneficial.

There are numerous examples that just illustrate a principle, but others are presented as problems in declarer play or defense. The depth of the explanations does vary somewhat also, to accommodate varying levels of player. As I said earlier, the emphasis, wherever possible, is on real-life deals instead of the constructed layouts that fill most ‘solve these problems’ books. This has made our task both tougher and more interesting, as real deals sometimes don’t have a clear-cut answer. Quite a few of the examples involve me as a player, and in some cases I went wrong at the table. I tend to find the decisions I get wrong to be more interesting, and potentially more instructive, than those I get right.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

This book is for anyone who wants to understand, even partially, higher-level cardplay, or for anyone who just enjoys reading about it and appreciates its beauty. There are numerous books on bidding and conventions but I feel that cardplay technique is a more valuable subject to study, and that improvement in this area will help your scores quite a bit.

- *Experts*: I’m sure you will find this presentation different from anything you have encountered before, and the examples interesting and useful. I hope you find the names of things helpful as well.
- *Strong Regional players*: This book gives you the chance to improve the level of your play significantly.
- *Flight B players*: Depending on your innate ability and desire to delve into things, you can make enormous progress in cardplay.
- *Flight C and Club players*: Don’t be put off! You can learn more than you imagined was possible, and I predict you will have fun doing it.

If advanced cardplay concepts are difficult for you, just try to grasp what you can. Go over it again after a time and you will be able to learn more and more. If you are having trouble following the play from the text, I suggest using your own deck of cards to lay out the hand and follow the play trick for trick. I recommend reading the material in the order it is presented, but there is no reason you can't skip around if it suits you. Whatever your level, and however far you get into the book, you will get better results and more pleasure when you play. It is not necessary to understand everything in here to benefit from it. And in due time, you just might get there anyway!

As large as this book is, it isn't big enough to include everything you might wish to study about some topics (especially the more basic ones), and some suggestions for further reading are given in an Appendix. This book is intended to be many things: a textbook, a reference book, a book suitable for teachers to use, and a problem book — but most of all, I hope you'll find it to be entertainment. Enjoy!

Eric Rodwell
March 2011

PART 1

THE BUILDING BLOCKS

SOME BASIC IDEAS

This is a book about cardplay in bridge, which is a vast subject. Many of the concepts are, if not ‘advanced’, certainly beyond the basic level. I firmly believe that many of the ‘secrets’ of expert bridge can be understood by most players if they are willing to invest some time. And while far too many players get hung up in the fascination of bidding conventions, the game is usually won or lost in the cardplay, not the auction.

Let me start by saying that I believe strongly in having names and labels to attach to concepts. I find that having such labels makes the ideas easier to remember, and it certainly makes it easier to refer to them when writing, with some assurance that the reader and I both have the same thing in mind. I have invented terms for many of the specific cardplay techniques that appear in later chapters.

In the first two chapters I am going review some of the more basic techniques to allow a larger audience to follow the later narrative. There will be a lot of later references to squeezes, endplays, trump promotions and the like, so I want to make sure everyone knows what I am talking about. Even if you think you are familiar with all this, I urge you to read through it quickly rather than skipping over it — if only so you have a grasp of the terminology. However, even in an area as basic as finessing, you may find I have something to say that is new to you.

CASHING SOLID TRICKS

The general principle is to cash your tricks in such a way as to allow the fluid ‘running’ of the suit. This is usually easier if you play the high card(s) from the short side first.

♠ A Q J 3
[]
♠ K 2

Start with the king, then cash the ace, queen and jack.

If you have no small card to connect with the other hand (often called a *link card*), then you have a choice: either cash the winners in the short hand then use a side entry to the other winners, or overtake the last winner in the short hand.

(a) ♠ A J 3 2



♠ K Q

(b) ♥ A J 10 2



♥ K Q

In (a), to get the four tricks you have on top, cash the ♠KQ then cross to dummy in another suit to cash the ♠AJ. In (b), cash the ♥K then overtake the ♥Q with the ♥A to cash the ♥J10.

If your solid suit has a lot of cards in it (what is called a ‘good fit’), then running the solid suit forces the defenders to make a lot of discards. This can be useful in helping you figure out the distribution of the remaining suits, or as part of a legitimate line of play such as a squeeze. However, there is a downside — you lose your ability to communicate back and forth if you run the long suit, so you have to consider the matter on a case-by-case basis.

♦ A Q J 10 4 3



♦ K 9 8 5

Here you can run six diamond tricks, but you lose communication if you do so. Also, it is possible that discarding twice from your hand will be awkward.

If your solid suit is a short-suit fit, your high cards are not only entries but also *stoppers* in the suit that prevent the opponents from running this suit. It is less attractive to cash out this type of suit early in the play, unless you are trying for an endplay (where you force them to make a favorable lead).

(a) ♠ K 3



♠ A 2

(b) ♥ K Q 4



♥ A J 3

In (a), you have two winners, a.k.a. stoppers. When they lead a spade they knock out one of your stoppers. You can choose to win the first trick in either hand, and as with any choice you need to consider whether there is reason to pick one over the other. Do you want to be in a certain hand *now*? If not, then consider which hand might need the entry *later*, and play accordingly.

Example (b) has three winners, and a surplus high card, the ♥J. This means you can win two tricks in dummy, or two in hand. Another choice.

PROMOTING HIGH CARDS

Promoting high cards means driving out opponents' high card(s) so that your lower honors can become winners. In most respects this is like cashing solid suits except you have to lose the lead one or more times.

(a) ♠ K Q J

 ♠ 4 3 2

(b) ♥ K J 10 3

 ♥ Q 2

(c) ♦ K J 10 9 3

 ♦ Q

The spade suit in (a) above plays itself: when you knock out the ace you have promoted two winners. The position in (b) is best played by leading the ♥Q then the small one (high card from the short side first). In (c), the diamond suit can be played first as an overtake, ♦Q to the ♦K, then led from the top until they take the ♦A. Note that the lowest card, the ♦3, will be a winner if the suit divides 4-3. If you have enough entries to dummy (at least two, as they will duck the ace on the first round of the suit), you can play the ♦Q, then cross using an entry and lead the ♦K to guarantee four tricks.

You may have to knock out more than one stopper in your suit:

(a) ♠ Q J 10

 ♠ 5 4 2

(b) ♥ J 8 4 3

 ♥ 10 9 2

(c) ♦ J 10 9 8 3

 ♦ Q 2

In (a), spades must be led twice to knock out the two high cards and set up your one winner. The heart suit in (b) must be led three times. In (c), the diamond suit must knock out two winners, and in case they refuse to win an early trick, you should lead the ♦Q first. You will need at least one side entry to dummy and will need two entries if they duck the first diamond lead.

If you have honors split between the two hands you can choose which trick(s) you win in which hand (depending perhaps on when they choose to take their winners in the suit).

(a) ♠ K J 3

 ♠ Q 6 5

(b) ♥ Q 2

 ♥ K 3

In position (a), if you want to retain a late entry to hand, play the honors from dummy first. The defenders might thwart this plan by ducking the ♠A twice; in this case you have your two tricks and must now look elsewhere. In (b), say LHO leads low to his partner's ace. You can choose between playing low from hand and winning the next lead there, or unblocking the ♥K to win the next lead in dummy.

The high card(s) you knock out don't have to be the highest cards in the suit. Many such cases involve suits where a finesse (see p. 20) is a possibility.

(a) ♠ A K J 10



♠ 4 3

(b) ♥ Q J 2



♥ A 10 9 5 4

(c) ♦ A K Q 10 9 3



♦ 8 4

The spades in (a) can be developed for three tricks. You can cash the ♠AK, hoping the ♠Q will drop, then lead the ♠J to knock out the queen. You will need a side entry to dummy to cash the ♠10. If you have no entry, you can lead the ♠J the first time (if you are in the dummy).

The heart suit in (b) is best played by taking a finesse against the ♥K, but if you need only four tricks you can lead low from hand to the ♥Q, then follow by playing the ♥J. If you had ♥A10985 in hand, you could afford to lead the ♥A, unblocking the ♥Q, and continue with a low heart to the jack.

In (c), the diamond suit produces six tricks if the jack falls in three rounds. If a defender has four or five to the jack, you continue with the ♦10 to force out the ♦J, then your ♦9 and ♦3 are tricks. Of course you need a side entry to cash them; if you don't have one you can run the ♦8, or if stuck in dummy, lead the ♦10. These plays would make sense if you needed only five winners from the suit.

ESTABLISHING SMALL CARDS

Small cards become good if neither opponent has any cards left in the suit. You will develop the maximum number of tricks in such a suit when the opponents' cards are split as evenly as possible.

(a) ♠ A 8 7



♠ 9 6 5 4 3 2

(b) ♥ A K 7 6



♥ 5 4 3 2

(c) ♦ 9 7 6 5 4



♦ 8 3 2

In (a), you are only missing four spades, the ♠KQJ10. If they are split 2-2, playing ace and another establishes your four remaining small spades. If they are 3-1, you need to surrender another trick before your last three spades are good. If they are 4-0, then you need to come to hand and surrender a third spade trick to establish the two small spades.

In (b), you are missing ♥QJ1098. If they are divided 3-2, you can give one up and establish one small card. If they are 4-1 or 5-0, you can establish nothing. In order to avoid establishing two tricks for the opponents, you may consider losing an early trick in the suit (*ducking*), so that when you cash the ace next, you will know whether or not cashing the king will do you any good.

You have no top cards in (c), as you are missing ♦AKQJ10. You must surrender at least three tricks in the suit, depending on whether the split is 3-2, 4-1, or 5-0.

FINESSES

A *finesse* is an attempt to trap one or more high cards that one or both opponents hold. There are many variations. The simplest position is when you lead toward a medium-strength card.

(a) ♠ A Q 3

 ♠ 6 5 4

(b) ♥ Q 3 2

 ♥ A 8 7

In (a), you can lead low toward the ♠AQ, planning to cover the ♠K with the ♠A, and otherwise to play the ♠Q. This is a 50-50 chance, depending on the location of the ♠K. Note that you must lead *toward* your high cards to take advantage of the favorable location of the king. This is a sound principle to keep in mind for many situations. Leading toward your high cards is called **lobbing** (the same term as in tennis).

In (b), you can lead toward the ♥Q, with a 50-50 chance that the queen will be worth a trick. A difference from (a) is that with the ace in the opposite hand, West can take his king and score a fast trick even if you do end up with two tricks. Note that the beginner ‘finesse’ of leading the ♥Q can’t work because East can cover with the ♥K if he has it and you will have nothing left but small cards. This type of ‘hopeless finesse’ has been dubbed a *Chinese finesse*. I will be referring to this in later chapters.

The finesses above are not attractive since you gain at best one trick and help the opponents establish their tricks if the finesse doesn’t work, i.e. it is offside. You should prefer to finesse in suits where you are for sure promoting one or more high cards, or working toward establishing small cards:

(a) ♠ A Q J

 ♠ 4 3 2

(b) ♥ A Q 4 3

 ♥ 7 6 5

In (a), even if the finesse loses, you will establish a second trick. If the finesse works, you need to come back to hand to repeat the finesse to get your third trick. Of course, just because the finesse wins doesn’t mean a second finesse will work. A wily defender might duck his ♠K the first time to make you waste an entry to repeat the finesse.

In (b), you have the chance of a finesse and a 3-3 split. Whether the finesse wins or loses, you can try ducking the next lead, hoping that the ♥A will bring down the remaining cards.

The type of finesse I have been discussing where you lead toward your honor(s), I will name a **lobbing finesse**. However, if you have enough strength in a suit you can profitably lead an honor, which has the advantage of holding the lead for a repeated finesse.

(a) ♠ A Q 3
 []
 ♠ J 10 4

(b) ♥ Q 3 2
 []
 ♥ A J 10 9

(c) ♦ A J 10 3
 []
 ♦ Q 9 4

In (a), you have a surplus honor, the ♠10, so you can lead the ♠J. If West has the king and doesn't cover, you have retained the lead to repeat the finesse. Note that you have three cards in each hand. When you lead the ♠J, if West covers it goes jack, king, ace, and you spend two honors on the same trick. However, since you have one more honor (AQJ10) than cards in the suit you will still be able to take all the tricks when the ♠K is onside.

In (b), you lead the ♥Q from dummy. Note again you have five honors (you can count the ♥9 as an honor here since it touches the other cards you have, the ♥QJ10). If East covers you have four tricks. If East doesn't cover, you retain the lead for a second finesse. If you have no more dummy entries you will take four tricks if East has the ♥K along with no more than two small hearts.

Position (c) is a favorite in bridge books. Now you have the nine in the opposite hand, and can ensure four tricks without re-entering your hand if you lead that nine first. When it holds, you next lead the queen then finally low to the jack. If you lead the queen first, then your nine isn't high enough to hold the lead and you will have to waste an entry getting back to take a third finesse.

Finesses are often taken by defenders as well. However, since they can see only the dummy and not partner's holding, they are playing for a layout of the suit that is hypothetical.

(a) ♠ 4 3 2
 ♠ A Q 5 [] ♠ J 10 6
 ♠ K 9 8 7

(b) ♥ 4 3 2
 ♥ A Q 10 9 [] ♥ J 8 5
 ♥ K 7 6

In (a), East leads the ♠J to take a *defensive finesse*, as I call it. Whether South covers or not, the defenders take three spade tricks. Note, however, that this establishes the thirteenth spade for declarer, which might or might not matter.

In (b), if East is in (on lead) for the last time, he leads the ♥J if he needs three or more fast tricks in hearts. This time partner has just what is needed, the ♥AQ10.

This type of finesse, whether by declarer or defense, I will call a *pusher finesse* because you need to lead a card that either holds the trick or is covered, which is commonly called a *pusher*.

In most finessing situations you also have the option of 'playing for the drop', which means playing for the missing card to be offside but with few enough small cards accompanying it that the card will drop.

(a) ♠ A Q 9 2

♠ J 10 3

(b) ♥ A K J 10 8

♥ 9 7 6 5

In (a), you are missing six to the king, so the finesse is a much better chance than playing for the drop, which requires the ♠K to be singleton. I will be discussing basic odds calculations in Chapter 3, but I will tell you that the odds are basically 31:1 against playing for the drop, as opposed to 50-50 for the finesse.

In the suit shown in (b), you are missing only four cards and you have the ♥AK, so playing for the drop is a good chance. Most players would recognize that going for the drop is recommended by the rule ‘eight ever, nine never’. In any event, with no other information available, the odds for the drop are slightly better than for the finesse.

You can often combine playing for the drop with finessing:

(a) ♠ A J 10 4 3

♠ K 5 2

(b) ♥ A K J 3

♥ 7 6 5

In (a), cash the ♠K in case East has the singleton ♠Q, then finesse the ♠10. If East shows out you have to cross to hand again for another finesse. If that second entry isn’t available, you might prefer to lead directly to the ♠10, then back to the ♠K so you can finesse again. This gives up on RHO’s singleton ♠Q but gains when RHO has a small singleton, which is four times as likely.

In (b), you can cash the ♥A first in case there is stiff ♥Q, then finesse the ♥J (which means getting back to hand). If only three tricks are needed, you can cash the ♥AK in case RHO has doubleton ♥Q, then lob toward dummy’s ♥J. Of course, you would need appropriate entries in both hands for this play.

This type of play, cashing one or more winners in case something important drops, I have named **cash catering**. You are catering to a certain short-honor holding by cashing one or more winners before (presumably) finessing.

When missing the queen, and sometimes the jack, you often have a two-way finesse if you have higher cards in each hand.

(a) ♠ A J 10 3

♠ K 9 8 2

(b) ♥ A J 10 3

♥ K 5 4 2

(c) ♦ Q 10 9 3

♦ K 8 7 4

(d) ♣ A J

♣ K 10 5 4 3 2

In (a), you have a true two-way finesse. If you want to play West for the ♠Q you cash the ♠K (cash catering), unblocking the ♠10 from dummy, then run the ♠9. Note that you have ♠AKJ1098, six honors, so you can afford the unblock of the ♠10 (and a possible cover of the ♠9).

In (b), you are missing the ♥9 and ♥8, so while you can take a finesse either way, you can pick up four to the queen only in West's hand: you have only four valuable cards (♥AKJ10) so you can't afford anything getting covered. Cash the ♥K then finesse the ♥10; if West has queen-fourth, come to hand for another finesse. Of course, if you don't have the entries, you can start with a low card from hand to the ♥10, hoping to pick up ♥Q9xx outside. If you are stuck in dummy, you can't pick up any 4-1 splits (except stiff queen), so you give yourself just as good a chance by leading the ♥A and running the ♥J.

In (c), you are missing five to the ace-jack. You can finesse for the jack either way, or you can play for the drop. In either case, you would usually want to play a high honor first, which is like cash catering (picks up the stiff jack and the ace-jack doubleton). Since you have six important cards you can afford an unblock, say leading the ♦10 to your king, planning to run the ♦8 next.

In (d), you could finesse either opponent for the ♣Q, and leading low to dummy's jack appeals if having two dummy entries is crucial. In most cases, it is better to play to the ♣A (cash catering) and then run the ♣J, which also is playing the high card from the short side first.

Many positions involve finessing against more than one card.

(a) ♠ K J 2

 ♠ 7 6 5

(b) ♥ A Q 10

 ♥ 8 5 4 3

(c) ♦ 9 4 3

 ♦ A J 10 8

In (a), lead low from hand to the ♠J. If the ♠AQ are outside, you can repeat the finesse. If the ♠J forces the ace, you have developed one trick. If the ♠J loses to the ♠Q, come back to hand and lob toward the ♠K.

In (b), lead low to the ♥10. If that wins, you can cross again to finesse the ♥Q. If the ♥10 loses to the king, cash the ♥AQ, hoping for a 3-3 split (or ♥J9 doubleton) to make your ♥8 good. If the ♥10 loses to the ♥J, cross to hand to finesse the queen. In all cases you can hope your ♥8 will eventually get set up.

In (c), you have a finesse against touching cards, the ♦KQ. Easiest is to lead low the first time to the ♦J, probably losing. Then lead the ♦9 for a pusher finesse against the other honor.

Sometimes there will be a delayed finesse available.

(a) ♠ A K 9 2

 ♠ 8 7 6 5

(b) ♥ A K 3

 ♥ J 9 4 2

(c) ♦ K 3 2

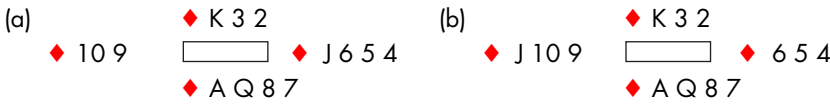
 ♦ A Q 8 7

In (a), lead up to the ♠A. If West plays an honor, you can win this trick and then lead low to your ♠8, setting up a finesse if he started with ♠QJ10x and split his honors (another example of the advantage of leading *toward* your high cards.) If West plays low, play the ♠A. If East plays an honor on this trick, again you should

lead low toward your ♠8, hoping West has the other two honors to set up a delayed finesse. In all cases, if the suit is 3-2 you have no need to finesse — you just drop the missing card and cash your ♠9.

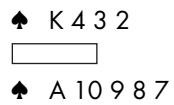
In (b), leading the ♥J is attempting a Chinese Finesse. Instead, cash the ♥AK; if nothing falls, lob toward your ♥J, hoping for one more trick. If the ♥10 falls, your ♥J9 are ‘equals’ against the ♥Q. If West has singleton or doubleton ♥Q, you can take a delayed finesse against East’s ♥10xxx(x). If East has a singleton or doubleton ♥Q, your ♥J becomes a trick. You should consider not cashing it right away; West must then keep his ♥10xxx(x) protected and you might be able to force him to lead away from it later in the hand (an *endplay*).

In (c), cash the ♦A and then lead low to the ♦K. You are missing ♦J109xxx originally. If a defender shows out you give up on the suit. If both follow but two of the big cards (♦J109) are still out, you try for a 3-3 split. The interesting case is when West plays two high cards (say the ♦10 and ♦9), making the layout one of these:



In the first case, you take a delayed finesse by playing a diamond to your eight. In the second case, you should avoid a delayed finesse. What should you do? It is all about the *percentage play*, i.e. the one that works most often. If West has ♦J109, he can play any two cards he wants, but with ♦J10, ♦J9 or ♦109 doubleton he must play the cards he was dealt. If you always finesse, you will win three times for every once you lose.

Terence Reese called this the *Principle of Restricted Choice*, i.e. when you are missing two or more touching cards and you have to guess whether to take a delayed finesse, assume the opponent’s play was restricted, not that they chose which card to play from equals.



Say you lead the ♠10. West plays the ♠Q, and you win with the king. Now when you lead the ♠2, East follows with the other remaining small card. Should you finesse or play for the drop?

The Principle of Restricted Choice says to assume West’s play was forced, i.e. play him for stiff ♠Q and finesse. This wins whenever West has a stiff honor (2 cases) and loses to ♠QJ doubleton (1 case) — giving you odds of about 2:1 in your favor. I’m fudging the math a little since the three cases aren’t equally likely, but as it happens, it’s not far off here.

There are many possible finessing positions. I suggest reading the excellent section on suit combinations in the *Official Encyclopedia of Bridge*.

RUFFING FINESSES

A ruffing finesse uses the power of the trump suit to complete the finesse.

```

♠ 2
♥ 7 6 5
[ ]
♠ A Q J 10
♥ A K Q 3 2

```

If hearts are trumps, you might try to ruff three spades in dummy, but that would require a 4-4 spade break and lots of entries to hand. Instead, you could lead the ♠A and run the ♠Q, taking a *ruffing finesse* against West. If West plays the ♠K, you ruff; if he does not, you discard from a side suit. Even if the finesse loses, you have established two more winners. If you think East has the ♠K, you can lead a spade from dummy to your queen and then ruff two more in dummy.

Restricted choice can come into play in a ruffing finesse position:

```

♠ 3 2
♥ J 3 2
[ ]
♠ A K 10 9 4
♥ A K Q 10 9 8

```

Hearts are trumps. You cash the ♠AK, and East drops the ♠J on the second round. What now?

Your best play now is to cash the ♥AK. If both follow, or if West has the last trump, you lead the ♠10, planning to take a ruffing finesse. Why not try to ruff out the ♠QJx from East? Because the Principle of Restricted Choice says don't play someone to have chosen from equals, play for their choice to have been restricted. If East has three trumps, then you have to play for spades to be 3-3 since he can ruff in if you successfully run the ♠10.

RUFFING LOSERS IN THE HAND WITH SHORTER TRUMPS

Dummy is normally the hand with shorter trumps, and in this case trumping losers in the dummy will gain you extra tricks.

(a)	♠ 8	(b)	♦ A 4 3
	♥ 4 3 2		♣ 4 3 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>
	♠ A 4 3		♦ 8
	♥ A K Q J 10		♣ A K Q J 10

Position (a) is simple. If hearts are trumps, you can trump both spade losers in dummy and get $5 + 2 = 7$ trump tricks. Conversely, in Position (b) with clubs trumps, it does you no good to trump the losing diamonds in hand. You still get only five trump tricks, and in fact might lose one if clubs divide 4-1.

Defenders are aware of this possibility and will usually find the trump switch if they see dummy with (typically) three trumps and a side-suit ruffing value (doubleton or less). You don't want to help them. In (a) above, if you don't have side entries to hand, don't lead any trumps. Cash the ♠A, ruff a spade, then cross in trumps to ruff the second spade. If you cash a high trump first, then after ruffing a spade there is only one trump left in dummy, and if you surrender the lead they will take it out with a trump switch.

TRUMP CONTROL

Establishing side-suit winners won't necessarily do you any good if there are enemy trumps out. If the defenders can ruff in and either cash too many tricks or prevent you from cashing yours, you have lost **trump control**. A number of the examples and principles that come later in the book deal with trump control but here I'll discuss a few basic ideas.

1. *Unless there is a reason not to (and there often is), draw all the outstanding trumps.*

♠	5 4 3 2
♥	2
♦	A K 8 7
♣	A 6 5 4
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>
♠	A K Q J 10 9 7
♥	A 5 4 3
♦	2
♣	8

You are in 7♠. You have eleven top tricks and can ruff two hearts in dummy to get to thirteen. However, you should not risk any ruffs or overruffs and should draw the two outstanding trumps before ruffing your hearts in dummy (or, preferably, claiming).

2. *With any suit combination, and your trump suit is a suit combination, study the position to see how many are out, and exactly what cards are missing (if they might be important).* I call this an **asset survey**.

On the previous deal, you were missing just two small trumps. I suggest noting how many total trumps you have, so if you have seven they have six, if you have eight they have five, etc. Then as you draw each round you can subtract from the original missing number.

The idea of an asset survey is not restricted to trump contracts, of course. Here's a deal from the 2011 Spring NABC:

♠ 10 9 6
♥ K 7 5 4
♦ K 5 2
♣ J 10 4

♠ A K 3
♥ A J 10 3
♦ Q 9 6
♣ A 6 2

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♣ ¹
pass	1♦*	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. Precision

West leads the ♥2, attitude, showing interest in the heart suit. How do you play from here?

This hand was played by Jeff Meckstroth and typically, he saw the answer immediately: stick in the ♥7. This paid off as West had led from ♥Q982. Even so this gets you up to only seven tricks. Now what?

Since there was nothing great to do in other suits, he cashed the hearts to make East discard three times. East pitched an encouraging club and two discouraging spades. Jeff now tried the ♠10 — East covered with the jack and he won with the ace. Now, reading West for 4-4 in the majors, he led a low club from hand to the jack. When East won with the king and returned a low diamond, Jeff inserted another middle card: the nine. That was the end of the hand as the full deal was:

* Throughout, an artificial bid is indicated with an asterisk when the meaning is obvious.

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

East might have tried a sneaky ♦10 instead of a low one; if Jeff fell for that and covered with the queen he would probably go down — West could win and return a diamond, giving declarer a very difficult guess.

3. *If you can't draw all the trumps directly, you can either leave one or more 'master' (high) trump(s) out, or lead trumps to force them out.*

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

Suppose you are in 6♠ and the lead is the ♥Q, which you win with the ace. Cash two top trumps, claiming all the tricks if they split 3-2. If they are 4-1, you can simply continue with queen and another spade, surrendering the top trump. This gives you the trump control to run the club suit. In essence you are now playing in notrump.

If the lead is the ♦K, the situation is much worse if trumps are 4-1. You can't play as above since you will lose diamond tricks. Play the ♥AK and ruff a heart, return to hand with the ♣10, draw one more round of trumps, and lead high clubs, throwing diamonds. You will make your slam if the defender who has four trumps also has at least three clubs.

CROSSRUFF AND DUMMY REVERSAL

A **crossruff** means ruffing back and forth in both hands. This way you might score all your trumps separately. Crossruffing is most attractive when your trumps are high enough to stop overruffs and you have enough distribution to keep ruffing in each hand. You will lose trump control eventually, so you need to cash any side winners you hope to get early. Lew Stansby made 6♠ on a crossruff against Jeff Meckstroth and me on this deal:

```

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

```

North opened 1♣, and South responded 1♦. From there he got to 6♠ and I led a heart. Reasoning that neither defender was likely to have six hearts and not have bid at the one-level, he took the ♥A and ruffed a heart, led a club to the ace and ruffed another heart. Then he played a club to the king and a diamond to the ace. At this point he had scored four side-suit tricks and two heart ruffs, and he had six remaining high trumps. So he claimed six on a crossruff even though he could have tried to cash the ♣Q (which would have worked) or the ♦K (which would not). These plays risked suffering a ruff followed by a trump return which would kill one of the crossruff trump tricks.

Hands where you hope to run a long suit are not good candidates for a crossruff:

```

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

```

You are in 4♠ and they lead the ♥Q. You could crossruff hearts and diamonds for a while, but you wouldn't be able to get more than two club tricks without suffering a ruff. Better to try to maintain trump control. Cash the ♠AK and then run clubs. Even if trumps are 4-1 you will be able to take ten tricks.

A *dummy reversal* is a maneuver where you ruff in the long trump hand. If you are in a 5-3 fit, you need to ruff at least three times in the long trump hand to show any benefit from this play. If ruffing even once in dummy isn't practical, a dummy reversal might be the best approach:

♠ Q 10 9
♥ A 3 2
♦ A 5 4 3
♣ 8 6 5

♠ A K J 8 7
♥ K Q 5 4
♦ 2
♣ A K 3

Playing in 6♠, you have eleven top tricks. Hearts could be 3-3, or you could try to draw two rounds of trumps, hoping that you can then cash three heart tricks and ruff the fourth heart in dummy. If the lead is a diamond, you can try to ruff three diamonds in hand: ♦A, diamond ruff, ♠9, diamond ruff with the ♠K, ♥A, diamond ruff with the ♠A, then overtake the ♠J with the ♠Q and draw the last trump. This requires only a 3-2 trump break.

Here is a slightly modified deal from the 2011 Spring NABC in Orlando. The dummy reversal is easy to miss:

♠ A Q 2
♥ 4 3
♦ K 9 7 5
♣ K Q 4 3

♠ K 9
♥ A Q 10 7 6
♦ Q 4 2
♣ 8 7 6

♠ J 4 3
♥ K 8 5
♦ A J 10 8 6
♣ J 9

♠ 10 8 7 6 5
♥ J 9 2
♦ 3
♣ A 10 5 2

Dealer West

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
1 ♥	dbl	2 ♣ ¹	2 ♣
pass	pass	3 ♦	3 ♣
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

1. 9-11, artificial heart raise.

West leads the ♦2 to dummy's five and East's six, and East returns a trump to West's nine and dummy's queen. What next?

You are a step behind to ruff a heart in dummy, but with lots of small trumps in hand, a dummy reversal works perfectly: ruff a diamond, spade to the king and ace, ruff a diamond, club to the king, ruff the last diamond. Then lead good clubs — they can ruff in whenever they want, but you get 2+0+0+4, and three diamond ruffs in hand for nine tricks.

BASIC DEFENSIVE IDEAS

Later in the book, I'm going to discuss many exceptions to the 'standard' rules of defending. Before we get to the exceptions, though, it is worth going through a brief review of those standard rules and why they normally apply:

1. Second hand low

This gives partner, 'fourth hand', a chance to win the trick cheaply, or force 'third hand' to put up a big card.

(a)	♠ K 9 3	(b)	♥ J 5 4
♠ J 8 7 6	□	♥ A 9 3 2	□
♠ Q 5 4	♠ A 10 2	♥ K 8 7	♥ Q 10 6

In (a), when the ♠3 is led from dummy, play second hand low, the ♠2. This keeps your ♠A10 over dummy. 'Flying' with the ace is called 'beating air' because instead of capturing an honor with your ace, you get 'air' (small cards).

Similarly, in (b), when dummy leads low, play the ♥6. If you stick in the ♥10, it goes king, ace. Declarer can then finesse against partner's nine by running the eight.

2. Cover an honor with an honor

The 'second hand low' rule is not intended to apply to situations where an honor is led. In many situations, covering prevents a Chinese Finesse from succeeding. Generally, when a single honor is led, cover. If an honor is led from touching cards, wait to cover the last card in the sequence. Of course, all these rules presume that there is some potential benefit from covering.

(a)	♠ J 3 2	(b)	♥ J 10 3
♠ 10 9 4	□	♥ K 9 2	□
♠ A K 8 7	♠ Q 6 5	♥ A 5 4	♥ Q 8 7 6

In (a), when the ♠J is led, since there is only one honor in dummy, cover with the ♠Q. This promotes partner's ♠10. Declarer's lead of the ♠J is not a hopeless play: for example, since he has the ♠87, he can develop a third trick if East has ♠Q965.

In (b), when the ♥J is led, do not play the ♥Q. If you do, then declarer wins the ace and lobs toward the ♥10 for a second trick. When you duck the ♥J, partner wins the ♥K. If the ♥10 is led next, you do cover that because it is the last honor: declarer is held to one trick in the suit.

Here is a deal I played in the 2011 Gatlinburg Regional, having got to a seemingly hopeless 5♣:

♠ A J 10 8 7
 ♥ J 6 5 4
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ 5 3

 ♠ —
 ♥ K Q
 ♦ Q 9 8 5 4
 ♣ A Q 8 6 4 2

West led a heart to the ace and a heart came back to my king. Rather than give up, I tried leading the ♦Q, a Chinese finesse. Amazingly, West did not cover from K10x. Clubs were split 3-2 with the king onside, so I was able to finesse the trumps and ruff out the diamonds. Making +600!

I always say that covering an honor has a ‘make a wish foundation’, named after the charity of the same name. Either you are promoting something in your hand, or you are hoping to promote something in partner’s hand. However, if partner can’t have any length in the suit, you can’t promote anything.

♠ 4 ♠ J 3 2 ♠ Q 7 6 5

 ♠ A K 10 9 8

Spades are trumps and you are East. The bidding has marked declarer with at least five spades, leaving West with a singleton or void, so covering the ♠J can’t help. Indeed, it might be disastrous if partner has the stiff king. When you don’t cover the ♠J, declarer might decide to play for the drop.

Here’s a hand, dealt randomly by my computer, that illustrates that making the decision to play second hand low, or to cover an honor, is often not simple:

♠ Q 3 2
 ♥ A 10 2
 ♦ Q 10 4
 ♣ K Q 4 3

 ♠ 9 7 6
 ♥ K 8 3
 ♦ A J 5 2
 ♣ A J 5

Dealer South			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			2♥
pass	2NT*	pass	3♠
pass	4♥	all pass	
1. Feature in spades.			

You lead the ♠6, dummy plays low, and partner’s ten is taken by the jack. How do you defend if declarer:

- a) leads the ♦9?
 - b) leads the ♥Q?
 - c) leads the ♣9?
- a) Declarer is marked with ♠AJ and reasonable hearts so he is surely missing the ♦K. Best to rise ‘second hand high’ to return a spade. Of course partner will need the ♠8, but just in case declarer might misguess, lead the ♠7. Rising is necessary because spades is a *half-frozen suit* (see p. 35) that only you can lead safely.
- b) It is instinctive to play low on the ♥Q, but on this deal it is right to cover. You want to take out a dummy entry and stick declarer in dummy so that he will be forced to lead another suit to you.
- c) This is tougher. If declarer has a stiff club you have a chance to beat him by rising ace and playing partner for a doubleton ♦K (switch to a low diamond). If declarer has two or three clubs, ducking is your best chance. Declarer’s hand is

♠ A J 4 ♥ Q J 9 7 6 5 ♦ 9 3 ♣ 9 2

Only leading a club, and if you duck, leading back another low club from dummy, will make the hand for declarer. He can then ruff out your ace and draw trumps, ending in dummy.

3. Third hand high

This rule is designed to prevent fourth hand from winning a cheap trick.

	♠ 7 5 4	
♠ Q 10 6 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	♠ K 9 3
	♠ A J 8	

When partner leads a low spade, you must play third hand high, the ♠K. Eventually you hope you can trap declarer’s jack. If you play a lower card, this is called *finessing against partner*.

There are several common exceptions to this rule:

Partner leads an equivalent honor

<p>(a)</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>♠ Q J 8 7</td> <td>♠ 5 4 3</td> <td></td> <td>♠ K 6 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>♠ A 10 9</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	♠ Q J 8 7	♠ 5 4 3		♠ K 6 2		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>				♠ A 10 9			<p>(b)</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td></td> <td>♥ 5 4 2</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>♥ Q J 10 9 3</td> <td><div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div></td> <td>♥ K 7</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>♥ A 8 6</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		♥ 5 4 2		♥ Q J 10 9 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	♥ K 7		♥ A 8 6	
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	♠ A 10 9																					
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♥ Q J 10 9 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	♥ K 7																				
	♥ A 8 6																					

When partner leads the ♠Q in position (a), a card that is equal in rank to your king, play low (encouraging the lead). However, in (b), especially defending notrump, you should risk covering partner’s ♥Q with the ♥K as an unblocking play.

Partner's honor is trapping an honor in dummy

♠ J 10 9	♠ K 4 3 []	♠ A 8 7 6
	♠ Q 5 2	

When partner leads the ♠J and dummy plays low, you should also play low, saving your ace to trap the king.

You are finessing against dummy

If partner leads a small card and you have the king-jack over dummy's queen, you will of course stick in the jack if dummy plays low.

(a)	♠ Q 5 4	(b)	♥ Q 5 4
♠ J 9 3 2	[]	♠ K 10 6	♥ A J 3 2
	♠ A 8 7		♥ K 10 6
			♥ 9 8 7

In (a), when West leads the ♠2 and dummy plays the ♠4, stick in the ♠10 as a finesse against dummy. In position (b), the ♥10 wins the trick (against notrump, of course — partner will not have underled the ♥A against a suit contract). Even if declarer has the ♥AJ, it still saves a trick to stick in the ♥10. If declarer has the ♥J without the ♥A (again, possible only at notrump), it does no harm to stick in the ♥10.

4. Return partner's lead

This is primarily a rule for defending against notrump, where in most cases partner has led a long suit. Against suit contracts, partner's lead might be a singleton, in which case returning the lead for a ruff is normally a good idea. In other cases where it is apparent that there are no more tricks to take in the suit led, then you can consider a switch:

	♠ 4 3	
	♦ 8 7 6	
♠ Q led	[]	♠ A 8 7 6
		♦ J 10 9

If you are defending a heart contract and partner leads the ♠Q, you win the ♠A. Declarer is marked with the ♠K and dummy can trump further spade leads, so you switch to the ♦J, leading around into weakness and taking a defensive finesse. Partner is likely to have one or more diamond honors.

5. Choose between an active and a passive defense

It's not always necessary to get active on defense — indeed, getting active may be the only way for you to let declarer get home.

The concept of an *empty hand* versus a *full hand* is a useful one when you are trying to decide on an overall plan of defense. An *empty hand* is one in which declarer has no prospects for developing the tricks he needs; he can get there only with defensive help. A *full hand* is one in which declarer will get his tricks in due time if given the chance. This has relevance in determining defensive strategy (active or passive) but here let's just think about it in relation to whether or not to cash a stranded winner.

	♠ 5	
♠ A Q 9 6 4 2	<input type="text"/>	♠ 8 3
	♠ K J 10 7	

You lead the ♠6 to the eight and jack. Partner (when next in) returns the three to the ten and your queen. If the hand is *empty*, you must abandon the suit (or maybe duck the trick to retain a major tenace in the suit). If the hand is *full*, you might need to cash your trick and find the right switch.

You are probably familiar with the concept of a *frozen suit* — one that no one can afford to lead without helping the other side.

(a)	♠ K 10 9	(b)	♥ 10 4 3
♠ J 8 7 6	<input type="text"/>	♠ Q 3 2	♥ K 9 8 7
	♠ A 5 4		♥ A J 6
			♥ Q 5 2

In (a), if declarer leads spades he gets only two tricks. If either defender leads the suit, his partner's honor is captured and his own honor can be finessed.

In (b), if the defense leads hearts declarer gets two tricks. If declarer leads toward the ♥10, West plays second hand low and East captures the ♥10 with the ♥Q. If declarer leads low from dummy, East plays second hand low and West captures the ♥J with the ♥K. If dummy leads the ♥10, East covers an honor (single honor) with an honor and declarer still gets only one trick.

A suit that one player, but not his partner, can lead safely I have named a *half-frozen suit*. Invariably there is a tenace position that can be led *through* safely by one player, but not *into* by partner.

(a)	♠ A 6 5	(b)	♥ K J 3
♠ K 9 8 7	<input type="text"/>	♠ J 10 3	♥ 10 4 2
	♠ Q 4 2		♥ A 7 6
			♥ Q 9 8 5

In (a), East, but not West, can lead the suit safely. When East leads the ♠J West will know that declarer has the ♠Q. In (b) West, but not East, can lead the suit safely. Note that in both cases the appropriate player is taking a defensive finesse. In the

second example, also, if West leads the two and declarer plays low from dummy, East must play West for the ten, not the ace.

A suit that can be picked up if you know the location of the cards I call a *guessing suit*.

(a)

♠ K J 10 3

♠ 9 8 7

♠ A 6 5

♠ Q 4 2

(b)

♥ K 4 3

♥ 8 7 6

♥ Q 10 9 5

♥ A J 2

East is unlikely to lead either of these suits. In (a) West should be warned by the presence of the ♠KJ10 in dummy that ‘breaking’ spades (i.e. leading a suit for the first time) might solve a guess for declarer. In (b), it is more appealing to try a defensive finesse, but on this layout it solves a guessing suit for declarer.

The problem for the defense is that it isn’t clear in many cases what type of suit they might be breaking because they can’t see declarer’s holding in the suit. So the question becomes, ‘Do I need to risk breaking suits, or can I defend passively?’ Breaking suits is called an ‘active’ defense. A lot of times it won’t be clear whether active or passive defense is called for, but sometimes it is obvious:

♠ 3 2
 ♥ A Q 8
 ♦ 9 7 6
 ♣ A Q J 10 8

♠ A 8 7 6 5
 ♥ 7 2
 ♦ Q 8 3
 ♣ 9 5 4

Dealer South
 Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	2♣	pass	1♥
pass	4♥	all pass	2NT

Partner leads the ♠Q to your ace, and declarer plays the ♠4. What now?

Declarer has the ♠K, so no more tricks are available there. If a club finesse is needed it is inside. It is unlikely you can take a trump trick, so declarer will likely take 1 spade + 5 hearts + 5 clubs = 11 tricks. So even though diamonds is possibly a frozen suit (say declarer has ♦K10x), it doesn’t matter because declarer can pitch his diamond losers on the clubs.

Thus, you must try for three diamond tricks by leading the ♦Q. This is a pusher finesse, hoping partner has ♦AJ10(x). I should note that in many bridge problem books, that would be the end of it. Real-life deals are often more complicated. For example, it is just possible that declarer has this hand:

♠ K 4 ♥ J 9 5 4 3 ♦ A J 2 ♣ K 7 3

Now you still need to attack diamonds but you need to start by leading *low*. Partner wins the ♦10 and plays a diamond back to your queen. Declarer plays a heart to

the queen and follows by cashing the ♥A, but partner can ruff the third round of clubs and cash his ♦K.

Similarly, some deals clearly call for passive defense:

♠ Q 2	Dealer South																							
♥ 9 7 6 3	Neither Vul.																							
♦ 10 4 3																								
♣ J 7 6 5																								
	♠ A 8 6																							
	♥ J 8 2																							
	♦ Q 8 7 6																							
	♣ A 4 2																							
	<table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>2♣*</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>2♦*</td><td>pass</td><td>2♠</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>2NT</td><td>pass</td><td>3♠</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>4♠</td><td>all pass</td><td></td></tr></table>				West	North	East	South				2♣*	pass	2♦*	pass	2♠	pass	2NT	pass	3♠	pass	4♠	all pass	
West	North	East	South																					
			2♣*																					
pass	2♦*	pass	2♠																					
pass	2NT	pass	3♠																					
pass	4♠	all pass																						

Partner leads the ♥K. Declarer wins with the ♥A, and leads a low spade to the queen and your ♠A. Now what?

There is some appeal in a switch to a minor suit, but there is no reason to worry about losing your tricks. Left to his own devices, declarer must lead from his hand. Best to continue hearts to clarify that suit, with trumps as a reserve ‘exit’ (safe play). Declarer’s hand might be

♠ K J 10 9 7 5 4 ♥ A ♦ A K J ♣ K 3

Note that a lead of either minor risks letting him take his tenth trick right away. If you defend carefully you will always beat 4♣ with passive defense.

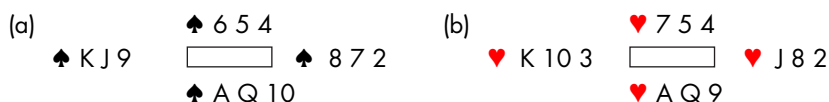
So ends Chapter 1, a brief run through many of the basic principles of cardplay. I shall address exceptions to these principles in later chapters, but for now let’s move on to look at some more advanced maneuvers. Again, you will probably be familiar with at least some of the ideas, but stay with me — I am laying an important foundation for the good stuff that is coming later.

THE BASICS OF ADVANCED CARDPLAY

We're going to encounter many squeezes and endplays later in the book, so let's take a look at some of the basics in this chapter.

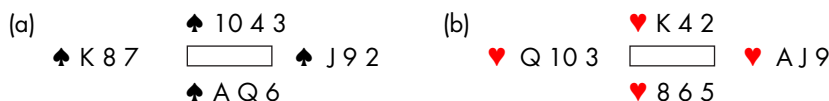
ELIMINATIONS AND THROW-INS

An *endplay*, also known as a throw-in or strip, simply means putting an opponent in and forcing a favorable lead. For this to work, the opponent must be forced to lead a frozen suit (or a half-frozen suit, when appropriate), or, in a trump contract, give you a ruff and sluff.



In (a), only three cards are left to play. Best is to lead from dummy to your ♠10, forcing West to lead the half-frozen suit back into your tenace. In (b), leading low to the ♥9 is just as effective. Even if the ♥K is onside, there's no need to put in the ♥Q; the endplay will work just as well.

In position (b), East might try putting up the ♥J but it won't help; you cover with the queen and West must lead from his ♥10 into your A-9 tenace. Change the suit a little, however, and second hand *can* save partner from an endplay.



In (a), when dummy leads a low spade, East must insert the ♠9, otherwise declarer plays the ♠6 to endplay West. Instead, if it goes nine, queen, king, then leading the ♠8 back traps dummy's ♠10. In (b), when declarer leads the ♥5, West must insert

the ♥10 (the ♥Q will do also) to prevent a duck into partner. Note that these are exceptions to ‘second hand low’, plays you wouldn’t normally make unless it was clear an endplay was looming.

Some of these endplays ‘play themselves’, but in most cases you have to set up the position. This means taking out the defenders’ safe exits in other suits.

♠ K Q 9 3
♥ A K 3
♦ 8 6 5 2
♣ K 3

♠ A J 10 8 7
♥ Q 9 2
♦ A Q 9
♣ A J

West leads the ♥J against 6♠ and you win the ace. You lead the ♠K from dummy and both follow. Now what?

You have eleven top tricks and must get a twelfth from diamonds. Simply draw trumps and cash the rest of the heart and club winners, ending in dummy. Then lead a diamond to the nine (if East plays the ♦10 or ♦J, cover with the ♦Q). West can win cheaply but must either lead a diamond back into your tenace or give you a ruff and sluff.

Since success is guaranteed if you time the play correctly, I call this a *lock strip*: strip the hand and you are a ‘lock’ (100%). In many cases, though, the defense will have a chance to stop an endplay.

♠ 9 7
♥ A J 10 3
♦ 8 6 5
♣ A 7 6 5

♠ A 8 5 3
♥ 4 2
♦ 7 4 3
♣ Q 10 3 2

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT ¹
pass	2♣*	pass	2♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

1. All 1NT openings in this book are 15-17 unless noted.

Partner leads the ♠Q to your ace. What now?

Most players would get this right instinctively. Partner can't have a singleton spade so they would switch to a diamond, the ♦7, taking a defensive finesse. The whole deal is:

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

If you don't return a diamond, declarer can try for an endplay when trumps are 2-2. He starts with two top clubs and a club ruff. Now he draws two rounds of trumps ending in dummy, ruffs the last club, ruffs the spade, and then leads a diamond to the jack, endplaying partner. Your play at Trick 2 allows partner to win the diamond at a point where he can exit safely (as it happens, in any other suit).

Declarer can sometimes use ducking or *avoidance* plays to prevent a critical attack from a defender:

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

You are in 4♥ and West leads the ♣K. How do you play?

Best is to duck the club lead, since you don't want East to win a club trick and push a diamond through. West continues with another club, so you win the ♣A and ruff a club with the ♥K. Using your entries wisely, you cross to the ♥Q, ruff the last club with your ♥A and cross back to dummy with another trump.

Now you must eliminate the spades, and it is best to lead toward your high cards, the ♠A10. If East has only one spade honor he can't force his way in, and he

might play low with ♠KJ or ♠QJ, allowing you to stick in the ten. You can win the spade return and ruff a spade in dummy, leaving these cards:

♠	—
♥	10
♦	8 6 5
♣	—
	<div></div>
♠	—
♥	9
♦	A Q 9
♣	—

If trumps are 2-2, you have a lock strip by playing a diamond to your nine. The hand is still makeable on the same line of play if West has a singleton trump. A strip that works with an exit card still out is called a *partial elimination*. It would not work if West had the third trump, since that gives him an exit card. The best you could do would be to lead a diamond to the nine (a combination finesse against the ♦J10). If you lose to the ♦J or ♦10 and West returns a trump, you will be glad that you arranged to have the high trump in dummy — you can win this trick and still try a finesse of the ♦Q.

This is the original layout:

	♠ 6 3	
	♥ Q J 10 8	
	♦ 8 6 5	
	♣ A 6 5 4	
♠ Q J 5 4	<div></div>	♠ K 9 8 7
♥ 6		♥ 4 3 2
♦ K J 7 4		♦ 10 3 2
♣ K Q 9 7		♣ J 10 3
	♠ A 10 2	
	♥ A K 9 7 5	
	♦ A Q 9	
	♣ 8 2	

Note the importance not only of keeping East off lead in both black suits, but of leaving the third trump outstanding.

Strips can also work in notrump, but since there is no possibility of a ruff and sluff you have to extract all the possible exit cards. This is sometimes done by ducking tricks that have to be lost in any event.

♠ K 6 5
 ♥ A 4 3 2
 ♦ 10 9 7
 ♣ A Q 3

 ♠ A J 10
 ♥ 10 7 6
 ♦ A K Q J
 ♣ 9 8 7

Dealer South			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♥K, which you duck, and continues the ♥Q which you win as East pitches a diamond. What now?

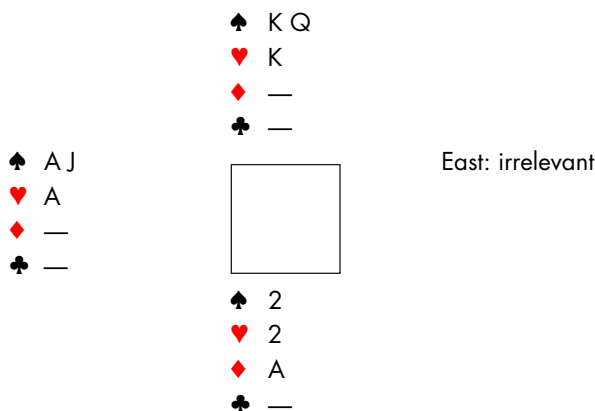
You have eight winners, and have a lock strip available in the club suit. Simply play off your diamonds, pitching a heart from dummy, and then run the ♣9. East will have only black cards left and must either lead into the club tenace or lead spades, a guessing suit.

SQUEEZE PLAY

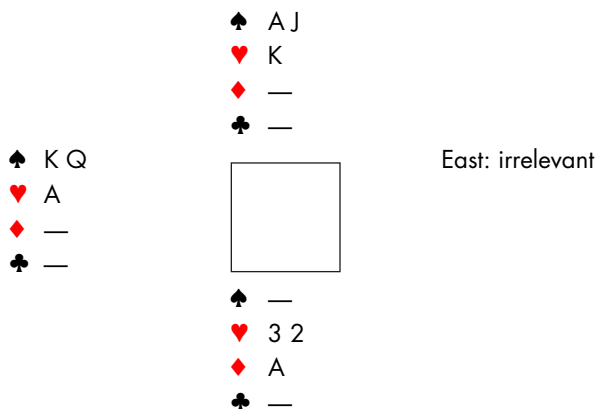
A *squeeze* involves forcing a fatal discard from one or both opponents. There are many variations but I will discuss here only the most common ones. A squeeze against only one opponent is called a *simple squeeze*:

	♠ A J	
	♥ K	
	♦ —	
	♣ —	
♠ K Q	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> </div>	East: irrelevant
♥ A		
♦ —		
♣ —		
	♠ 2	
	♥ 2	
	♦ A	
	♣ —	

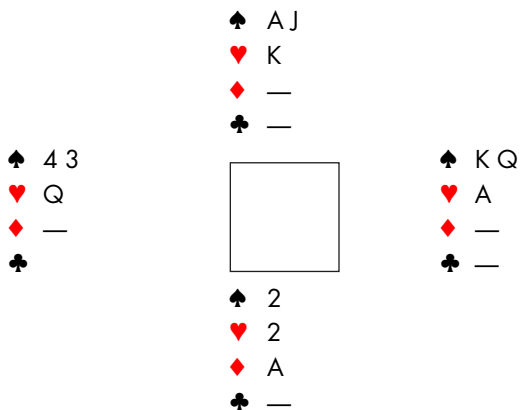
You have two tricks on top out of the last three, but when you lead the ♦A West is helpless. If he pitches the ♥A, you discard the ♠J and dummy is good. If West pitches a spade honor, you discard the ♥K and dummy's spades are good. Let's look at some variations of this position where the squeeze *doesn't* work, and this will help us see what the necessary elements are.



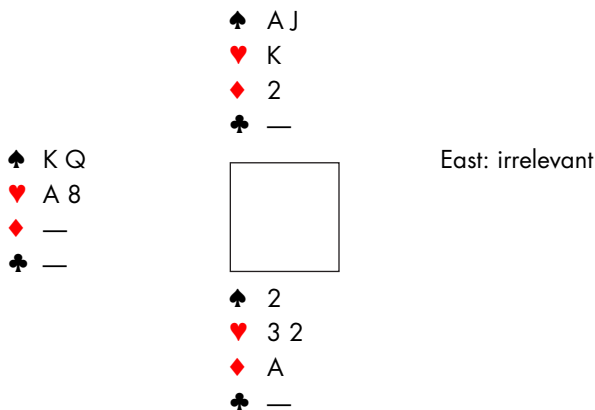
This time when you lead the ♦A, West can painlessly pitch the ♠J. What went wrong? You cannot normally squeeze a player who has the top cards in both **threat suits**. Dummy's spade and heart holdings are **threats** or **menaces**, i.e. they aren't tricks at the moment but they threaten to become winners. I call this position a **two masters** position — one where the threatened opponent has 'masters' (winners) in both threat suits. Two masters squeezes normally fail.



This time when you lead the ♦A, West can pitch a spade honor. You have squeezed him but can't take advantage of it because you don't have an entry to dummy. I coined the phrase '*Entries — the lifeblood of bridge*' to try to emphasize how crucial entries are — not just in squeezes, but in all other aspects of cardplay too.



This time it is East you are trying to squeeze. The problem is that dummy has to discard first and whichever threat (♠J or ♥K) dummy pitches, East can discard the same suit. You could say that the holdings that East has, which I call *squeeze stoppers*, are offside, much like a finesse can be offside.



This time there is a four-card ending. You have two winners and four cards left. When you lead the ♦A, West pitches the ♥8. The squeeze doesn't work because you have too many losers — two — so West has a spare ('idle') card. Simple squeezes only work when you have all the tricks but one, i.e. you have only one 'loser'.

	♠ A J	
	♥ K	
	♦ —	
	♣ —	
♠ K Q		♠ 7
♥ 8		♥ A J
♦ —		♦ —
♣ —		♣ —
	♠ 2	
	♥ 2	
	♦ A	
	♣ —	

You lead the ♦A but West only has to protect spades, so he pitches the ♥8. The only hand getting squeezed is dummy. So if the squeeze is to work, one opponent must guard both threat suits by himself.

Clyde Love, in his classic *Bridge Squeezes Complete*¹, used the acronym **BLUE** to describe the necessary conditions:

B = Both threats must be held by a single defender.

L = Loser count must be *rectified*, i.e. you must be down to only one loser.

U = Upper hand. At least one threat must lie *over* the defender to be squeezed.

E = Entry. In at least one of the threat suits, you must have a winner plus a threat card in one hand and a small card in the opposite hand.

If you review the ‘squeeze doesn’t work’ examples above, you will see that in each case one of the **BLUE** conditions isn’t met, which is why they fail.

Here’s another common squeeze position:

♠ A J
♥ 2
♦ —
♣ —
♠ 2
♥ K
♦ A
♣ —

1. Revised and updated second edition (2010) published by Master Point Press.

This time the threats, the ♠J and ♥K, are split between your two hands. This position is much more flexible, because when you lead the ♦A you can discard the small heart from dummy. If either opponent has sole control of the majors, he is squeezed. This type of position is called an *automatic squeeze*, since either defender can be squeezed. The original position is called a *positional squeeze* since only the defender in front of the menaces can be squeezed.

Let's look at a full deal involving a squeeze:

```

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

```

You arrive in 7NT and West leads the ♠K. How do you play?

You have twelve top tricks. If hearts are 3-3 you will always make the hand, but bridge is all about giving yourself extra chances beyond the most obvious. The only other hope is a squeeze in the majors. It would have to be against West because both menaces, the ♠J and the ♥6, are in the dummy. You are well on your way because presumably West has the ♠KQ, giving him exclusive control of spades. You are going to *assume* that he also has exclusive heart control, since otherwise it doesn't matter how you play.

Let's check out **BLUE**. **B** is taken care of by assumption (West has sole control of both majors). **L** is taken care of also, as you have twelve of the thirteen tricks on top, so just one loser. **U** is taken care of, as both of your threats lie over West's squeeze stoppers. **E** you have to be careful about, and this is where most who aren't familiar with squeeze play would go wrong. West has already knocked out the entry in spades so the heart entry must be preserved.

Best is to win the ♠A and cash four rounds of a minor (say diamonds), pitching the low spade from dummy. Now you cash the other minor. If West doesn't pitch the ♠Q, you pitch the ♠J from dummy and try to run the hearts. Note that you must have at least one top heart left in dummy after running the minors or you won't have an entry to dummy. So you must be patient and try to run hearts only at the end of the hand.

If you have two losers, you want to try to duck a trick if you can to rectify the loser count to one. Suppose you are in 6NT with these hands:

♠ A 10 6
 ♥ A K 4 3
 ♦ A K 3
 ♣ K Q 4

 ♠ 4 3 2
 ♥ Q 8 2
 ♦ Q J 10
 ♣ A J 10 8

This time you have only eleven top tricks, so when West leads the ♠K you should duck, to rectify the loser count. Then the hand plays similarly to the previous one, keeping the heart suit controlled while running the minors. You will squeeze West if he has the ♠KQJ and four or more hearts. You can also squeeze West if he has five spades to the king-queen and at least four hearts. There is one other possibility (besides 3-3 hearts), too. Can you spot it?

You have a third spade in your hand, which could also serve as a menace (called an *alternative threat*). If East has four or more hearts and five spades to the jack, the hand will play as an automatic squeeze: discard the ♠10 at the end and East is squeezed. This time you will have to keep careful count of the spades so you can know whether your ♠4 is a trick. Try it with East having this hand:

♠ J 9 8 7 5 ♥ J 10 9 8 ♦ 9 7 ♣ 9 7

Try playing the hand without ducking the opening spade lead. Try playing the hand by ducking but cashing the hearts early. In both cases you should see that East can beat the hand with proper discarding.

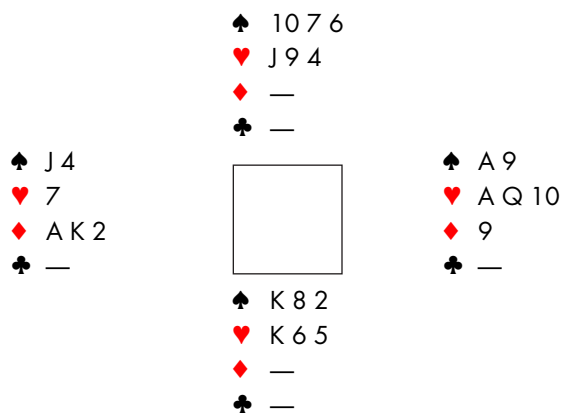
It is possible also to squeeze declarer or dummy. This deal is a slightly modified version of a hand I defended in a 2011 Regional:

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

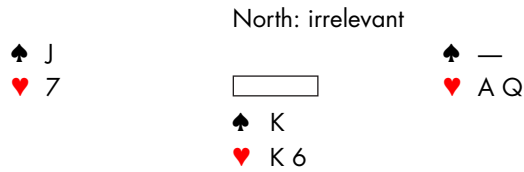
Dealer South			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
all pass			1NT

Declarer opened 1NT and played there. I got off to the unfortunate lead of a low diamond to the jack and queen. Declarer then cashed five rounds of clubs, burning dummy's jack-nine early so he was stuck in his hand. I knew he had six fast tricks so I needed to assume partner had both major-suit aces, giving us six tricks as well. I discarded two discouraging hearts and the ♠Q, to alert partner to what my spades were. Partner pitched a card from each suit.

Now when declarer exited with a diamond, I assumed this would be the position:



I was planning to lead a spade to partner's ace, to unblock the suit, and he would then return his diamond. I would cash two more diamonds, partner throwing his last spade and the ♥10. This would be the position with South to discard on the last diamond:



South would have to pitch something, and we would take the last two tricks. This is similar to the automatic squeeze position I just described. Unblocking the ♠A is called a *Vienna Coup*.

In practice, declarer had the ♥A, so we couldn't beat him, but life is like that sometimes.

There are other, more complex simple squeezes, but they are well described in Clyde Love's book, and I'll leave you to explore them there.

Another common squeeze position is the *double squeeze*, where both opponents are squeezed:

	♠ A 2	
	♥ K	
	♦ 2	
	♣ —	
♠ K J		♠ Q 10
♥ A Q		♥ 3
♦ —		♦ A
♣ —		♣ —
	♠ 3	
	♥ —	
	♦ K	
	♣ A K	

Here there are four cards left and South has three winners, so **L** is fine. He cashes the ♣A, pitching the diamond from dummy. Neither defender has a problem on this trick (♥Q, ♥3). However, the ♣K forces West to throw a spade (the ♥A is immediate defeat). Dummy can now part with the ♥K and East is squeezed. The ♣K becomes the *squeeze card*. Love termed the club suit the *free suit*; on this hand the other three suits are threat suits. Spades are a threat against both opponents.

It isn't necessary to have full comprehension of squeeze play to execute one of the basic types. Just follow a few rules:

1. Try to rectify the Loser Count to 1.
2. Keep communication in possible threat suits.
3. Be sure to cash the last winner in the free suit before fatally cashing winners in threat suits.
4. Make a mental note of which cards you need to look for so you know if a threat has become a winner.

This type of situation is common. Say you are playing 4♠ on this deal in a matchpoint game, where overtricks matter:

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

West leads the ♥Q. How do you plan the play?

You have no suits you can develop — it's always good to check that first because a squeeze is not the best play on most hands. You have ten top tricks so you should duck the ♥Q. West continues a heart to the ace, and after drawing trumps you give up the other heart, to get L down to one. East wins and returns the ♣K, giving you hope.

Now, just play off your last two trumps, pitching clubs from dummy. If East has the ♣KQ and four or more diamonds, he is squeezed. All you have to look for is a discard of the other high club; if you don't see it, try to run diamonds. Either it works or it doesn't.

Note that you followed my four simple rules: you ducked two hearts to rectify L, you ran all your spades, you kept the diamond threat suit entries in place, and you noted that you had to watch for the ♣Q. Do those things and the hand plays itself. Notice that the defense could have prevailed if West had switched to a club at Trick 2. Then the defenders could 'kill' the club menace. If you run your tricks there is no squeeze because you still have two losers. This is not easy defense, however.

Another common squeeze type is the *strip squeeze*, so called because it involves both a squeeze and a strip. These are easier to find when the bidding has been revealing:

♠ 5 4 2
♥ K Q J
♦ A K Q J 10 3
♣ J

♠ A 10 3
♥ 10 4 2
♦ 9 8 4
♣ A Q 8 3

Dealer West				
Both Vul.				
West	North	East	South	
1♠	dbl	pass	1NT	
2♠	2NT	pass	3NT	
all pass				

West leads the ♠K, which you duck, and continues with the ♠Q, on which East pitches a discouraging heart. How do you play?

West surely has the ♥A and five spade winners, and likely has the ♣K also. You have eight tricks, but to get nine you will need to squeeze some of those winners out of West. Run the diamonds, throwing two clubs and a heart from hand. West follows to the first two diamonds, then pitches a heart, a spade, and two clubs. Now what?

These are your remaining cards:

♠ 5
 ♥ K Q J
 ♦ —
 ♣ J

 ♠ 10
 ♥ 10 4
 ♦ —
 ♣ A Q

West still has three spade tricks and the ♥A, so there is room for only one club. Your best shot is to lead a club to the ace, hoping to drop his king. Careful counting is required for this type of ending. West has defended well: if he pitched another spade winner, you could just exit with the ♥K now, not caring who had the ♣K.

Love called this type of squeeze a **surplus winner squeeze** because you squeeze the defender out of the extra winners you can't afford to let him cash. Note that for squeezes where you are going to lose later trick(s), the usual L rules do not apply. On this hand you had five losers less one for the Trick 1 duck, or a total of four losers when the squeeze operated. In fact, you need at least two losers for strip squeezes, since you plan to lose a trick later.

This squeeze is also called a **triple squeeze** or **three-suit squeeze** because West has assets in three suits (his spade winners are crucial as well as his ♥A and ♣K). You can have three-suit squeezes that work to gain two tricks:

♠ A K 9 8 7
 ♥ 3 2
 ♦ 8 6 5
 ♣ 4 3 2

 ♠ 5 3
 ♥ A K Q J 8 7 5
 ♦ A J
 ♣ A J

West opens 1♣ and you overreach considerably to a contract of 7NT. Is there any hope of making it on the lead of the ♣K?

You have only eleven tricks so you need a squeeze that will produce two extra tricks. The chance is that West holds the king-queen in both minors as well as the only squeeze stopper in spades (either four spades, or the ♠QJ10 alone). Play off all but one of your hearts to reach this ending:

East: irrelevant

That spade suit is called an *extended menace* or a *two-trick menace* because giving up the squeeze stopper in that suit gives you two extra tricks. If you only had one potential extra spade trick (say dummy started with ♠AK9 alone), West could get out of the second trick gain by giving up his spade stopper. The second squeeze would fail because both minor-suit menaces lie under West.

Again, this chapter has been a brief look at some of the basic principles of how squeezes and endplays operate. It should help readers to understand many of the more complex positions described later in this book.

TOOLS FOR ANALYZING A HAND

Beginners are taught that the most important thing to do as declarer is to make a plan. Yet they have difficulty doing so, even with the limited number of tactics available to them. The more advanced player must juggle many more possibilities, as we've begun to see in the first two chapters. How, then, does the expert player approach the task of choosing a line of play from the many weapons in his arsenal? Let's again look at the key elements, in this case the analytical tools that you have to work with.

COUNTING LOSERS

The most important thing to me is simple: *count both winners and losers*. This way you will know how close you are to making a contract (winners) or being set (losers). Say West leads the ♥Q against your 4♠ contract on this layout:

♠	K 4 3 2
♥	A 7 6
♦	K Q J
♣	8 6 5
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px 0;"></div>
♠	Q J 10 9 6
♥	K 8 3
♦	7 6
♣	K Q J

By promoting high cards, you can get four trump tricks, two hearts, two diamonds and two clubs for ten tricks. So if you only went that far you might decide just to knock out the ace of trumps. However, you are in danger of losing a heart trick as well as the three aces you must lose. A count of four potential losers implies you must do something to get rid of one of them, so you must establish a diamond for a heart pitch. You need to win the heart in hand to save the dummy entry (the defenders might hold up the ♦A one round) and lead a diamond to knock out the ace.

Is this plan foolproof? Certainly not. The unlikely dangers are a 6-1 split in hearts or clubs, but in that case you might go down even if you led trumps right

away. More likely problems are 6-2 diamonds, where they kill your winner by ruffing, or a switch to clubs to secure a ruff when they are 5-2. However, this must all be risked.

Suppose instead West leads a trump, which is ducked. Now you have the timing to continue trumps and guarantee ten tricks (barring a very unlikely ruff).

Sometimes you have fewer losers than the number you can afford:

♠	A 7 5
♥	K Q 9 3
♦	A K 6 4
♣	Q 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>
♠	9 2
♥	A J 10 8
♦	Q 5 3
♣	A K 7 6

Partner eschews the nearly laydown 6♥ and puts you in 6NT. West leads the ♥6. How do you play?

You have eleven winners, and no losers (by that I mean no particular trick that *has* to be lost). For example, you could play off the ace, king and queen in both minors, neither suit splitting, and then lose two minor-suit tricks, or you could lose them in spades, etc. This is a bit confusing because the same term is used for squeeze play, where you would say the loser count is two (you have all but two tricks on top), versus what you might call ‘specific unavoidable losers’ in a particular suit (of which you have none).

The term ‘loser’ is so embedded in bridge literature for both situations that I propose calling each type of loser something slightly different:

squeeze losers = number of cards left minus the number of top tricks.

hand losers = unavoidable losers in particular suit(s) for the purpose of selecting a line of play.

In the 6NT hand, you have 2 SL (squeeze losers) but 0 HL (hand losers). Some time ago I coined the term **+L** to signify the number of tricks you can afford to give up at any particular point in the hand. You contracted for twelve tricks so you can afford to lose one trick, yet you have no HL (hand losers). Thus I would say you are +1L — you have one surplus hand loser.

In the 6NT contract, once you note that you have no suit you can develop (i.e. promote extra winner(s) by conceding a trick or tricks), counting HL or SL will get you to the same place: duck a safe trick, which must be in spades since ducking a minor kills that menace, hoping for a squeeze (or a 3-3 break in a minor).

It is very important to note +L situations because they open up a whole family of plays where you can afford to lose the lead for squeezes, endplays, establishing suits, keeping the dangerous opponent off lead, etc. Here is a 3NT contract from a match I played the day before writing this chapter:

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

Dealer South			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

At the other table, West selected the ♠2 for his lead, and the first trick continued low, ten, queen. Declarer now led a heart to the jack and East's queen. East thought West had started with ♠KJxx so she led back a spade. Now the contract was made. Jeff Meckstroth made a nice falsecard, if you can call it that, by winning the first spade with the queen when many would win the king.

Against the same contract at the other table, I chose to lead the ♥6, so declarer tried the jack from dummy, which went to East's queen and declarer's king. Now he played four rounds of spades, each defender pitching an encouraging club (and declarer a heart). At this point he has 4 spades, 2 hearts and 1 diamond = 7 winners. He has only 1 HL, the ♣A. Thus he is +3L, i.e. he can duck or concede three more tricks (at least potentially — that doesn't mean it is necessarily right to do so).

The obvious trick source was diamonds so he passed the ♦8 to my ten. I got out with the ♥10 to dummy's ace. Next he played a diamond to the queen and I falsecarded with the ♦J. He was now up to eight winners. It was time to *restock* and recount HL (hand losers). *Each trick you duck reduces '+L' by 1*. Thus, by virtue of having ducked a diamond, declarer was down to +2L.

Believing that I had led from a four-card heart suit, he decided clubs were 4-4 and placed me with 3=4=2=4 shape. As he was still +2L he was prepared to have me take two hearts (the ♣A was already counted as a top loser). Accordingly, he exited with a heart. Unfortunately for declarer, partner won this and switched to the ♣Q and down he went.

Why didn't he test the diamonds by cashing the ace? He was so sure I had only two diamonds that he 'knew' exiting a heart was a lock strip. If he cashed the ♦A first and then played a heart, he would go down if my partner had the ♣A because

she would have a diamond trick to cash at the end (we would make two hearts, two diamonds, and one club).

Declarer missed several clues here, but it makes a point: *the hardest part is figuring out what to play for*. That is, as long as you can do basic analysis. As an aside, note that neither player on opening lead chose a club, which gives the ninth trick away immediately.

Control Units and the Establishment Race

Another key concept in counting W (winners) and HL is what I call a **control unit**. A control unit is very much like a stopper, but it can also be the ability to trump. Going back to the 4♠ example right at the beginning of this chapter, West led a heart, leaving you with only 1 control unit in hearts. Leading trumps then diamonds would mean conceding 2 control units (for the opponents), so the defenders would win what has been called the ‘establishment race’ — their crucial trick(s) would be established before yours.

A number of play concepts can be simplified into arithmetic. If you have the lead and you have 1 control unit (in a crucial suit) and have only 1 control unit to knock out, you win the establishment race. If *they* are on lead in this situation, they win the race if they lead the correct suit.

- *If you have the lead, you win if control units are equal.*
- *If they have the lead, you need one more control unit than them.*

Let’s look at control units (CU), along with W and HL, in a 3NT contract.

♠	A 3
♥	A Q J 4
♦	Q 10 8 7
♣	9 7 6
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; margin: 5px 0;"></div>
♠	K 2
♥	7 6 3
♦	J 9 4 2
♣	A K Q J

You are in 3NT and West leads the ♠Q. How do you play?

You have seven top tricks and can establish two more in diamonds. However, you have only 1 CU left in spades after winning the opening lead and you have 2 CU to knock out in diamonds. So, you will lose the establishment race if you work on diamonds. Counting losers, you would lose at least three spades and two diamonds, too many.

You need two extra winners, and you have a good chance to get them in hearts. Win the spade in hand and take a heart finesse, making your contract if the heart

finesse works or hearts are 3-3 (or both!). You might lead the ♥A first, catering to RHO's singleton ♥K. This gives up an overtrick if hearts are 3-3 with the king inside. If you take this 'safety play', you need to save the ♠A in dummy as a late entry.

If instead West leads a heart, you can guarantee the contract by winning the *ace*, then working on diamonds. Taking a heart finesse is a good play to try to make overtricks, but it risks going down if East wins the ♥K and switches to a spade. The whole deal might be:

	♠ A 3	
	♥ A Q J 4	
	♦ Q 10 8 7	
	♣ 9 7 6	
♠ Q 10 4	<div></div>	♠ J 9 8 7 6 5
♥ 10 8 5 2		♥ K 9
♦ A 5 3		♦ K 6
♣ 10 8 5		♣ 4 3 2
	♠ K 2	
	♥ 7 6 3	
	♦ J 9 4 2	
	♣ A K Q J	

Think of it like this: counting W and HL, with the aid of CU, gives you a *map*, as I call it, of your position. There are many things you can think about on a bridge hand, especially on many 'real' hands, which are more complex than the carefully selected deals you find in many books. With this map, you can narrow your focus of attention, being able to eliminate choices that won't (or are unlikely to) help and look for something better.

The concepts of control units and the establishment race need to be understood in the broader context of the entire deal. Another 3NT contract:

♠ K 3 2
♥ Q J 3
♦ A Q J
♣ J 9 4 3
<div></div>
♠ A 7 6
♥ K 9 4
♦ 7 6
♣ K Q 10 8 5

Dealer South			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1♣
1♠	2♠*	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠5 to East's jack. How do you plan the play?

If you just casually say, ‘I will lose three spades and two aces if I work on clubs and hearts’, you might conclude you need the diamond finesse. However, when you can sever the opponents’ communication you can often stop the running of a suit. Duck the ♠J and then win the second spade. Now knock out the ♣A to come to 2+0+1+4=7 sure tricks. If East has the ♣A, you are home because he has no more spades to lead (you set up the other two tricks you need in hearts).

Should West win the ♣A and set up his spades, you will have to guess what to do.

You can try the diamond finesse, giving up an extra undertrick if it loses and West has the ♥A. If the diamond finesse wins, you can run your tricks and then decide whether the ♦K is really onside, or whether you should try to knock out the ♥A. If East has both the ♥A and the ♦K and finds the smooth duck of his ♦K, you might go down in a makeable hand, but that’s life.

If the hand is a bit different, you can find a lock line of play:

♠ K 5 2

♥ A Q 9 3

♦ A 5

♣ 10 9 5 3

♠ A 8

♥ J 10 4

♦ K 4 3 2

♣ K Q J 4

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♣
1♠	dbl*	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

This time the lead is the ♠Q. You could duck this, but it is simpler to win, planning to knock out the ♣A, getting you up to 2+1+2+3 = 8 tricks. The ♣A is West’s only possible entry and you can take the heart finesse later. Just be sure to duck the next spade lead before winning the ♠K, running clubs, and taking the heart finesse. Once spades are established, West becomes the dangerous opponent and East becomes the safe opponent. You are simply planning to lose any *late* trick to the safe opponent.

COUNTING WINNERS

Let’s take a closer look at how to count winners:

- First count only your top, guaranteed (or virtually guaranteed) tricks.
- If you need more tricks, look at the various suits to see where you might get the needed tricks.
- Bear in mind that you need to consider the various problems associated with your ‘not on top’ tricks, such as:
 - If you are in a trump contract, you need trump control to take (at least some of) these tricks.
 - You need entries to tricks you develop.

- You need to consider whether you might lose the establishment race.
- Some of the potential tricks may not be at all certain, depending on the location of missing honors and/or how the suit splits.

Ideally, you want to find a lock (100% certain) line of play. If one isn't available, you want the percentage line, the line most likely to succeed. Many times combining chances in two suits is best, even if you don't know exactly how to calculate the odds:

♠ K 7
 ♥ A J 8 3
 ♦ A Q 4 2
 ♣ J 7 6

 ♠ A 2
 ♥ K 4 2
 ♦ K 6 5
 ♣ K 8 5 3 2

West leads the ♠J against 3NT. Your plan?

You have $2+2+3+0 = 7$ top tricks. You will have only 1 CU left in spades, thus 3 HL in spades (at least 3HL, and that's if spades split 5-4) should you lose the lead twice. Thus trying to develop clubs is very unlikely to work (you need ace-queen doubleton onside, and failing that you will have $3+2 = 5$ HL, one too many).

If diamonds are 3-3, that will get you up to eight tricks but you still need a ninth trick from hearts or clubs. If diamonds are not splitting you need *two* more tricks and your best shot is to try a club first, hoping the king wins (you revert to hearts) or that East plays the ace and the queen later falls. If the club play fails you will need four heart tricks.

The key here is to realize that you need to know how many diamond tricks you have before deciding whether, or how, to play on the other suits. The hand is actually tougher if diamonds *do* split, since you have more options in that case.

Say you play three rounds of diamonds, ending in dummy, and they do split 3-3. These are the cards you have left:

♠ K
 ♥ A J 8 3
 ♦ 4
 ♣ J 7 6

 ♠ 2
 ♥ K 4 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ K 8 5 3 2

The first thing you should do is lead the thirteenth diamond, making them discard, since it won't hurt you to pitch a club. Say East throws a spade and West a club. What now?

You have two basic choices: work on clubs and if that doesn't work try hearts, or work on hearts only. These are sensible options because you have the possibility of developing dummy's fourth heart into a trick. If the hearts were AJx in dummy facing Kxx in your hand, the choice would be clear: lead a club toward your king, with the heart finesse as your fallback. The issue becomes: is it better to try two different suits, or to give yourself better odds in one suit?

Leading a club now will work when the ♣A is onside or when East has a singleton ♣Q, about 52% in all. (I will discuss odds calculations in more detail later in the chapter.) However, even if the club finesse loses, you can win the spade return in dummy, and you can then try the heart finesse. So your overall odds are about 76%.

If you work on hearts first, you will make if the heart finesse works or the suit splits 3-3. If the heart finesse loses, a spade comes back and it will be too late to work on clubs. So, which line is better? We can figure it out the simple way, by taking out what works on both lines, i.e. the heart finesse. Thus we can compare the club finesse (52%) with a 3-3 heart split and the heart finesse losing. Even if we don't know how to calculate the heart suit odds exactly, we know that a 3-3 split is about a one in three chance, so it is worse than the club finesse which here is a little better than 50%.

Based on the above analysis, you should play clubs first. However, you may have noticed that there is another possibility: you can cash the ♥AK, possibly dropping a doubleton ♥Q, then lead a heart toward the jack. This picks up a singleton or doubleton queen offside, any position with the queen onside and any 3-3 break. I'll return to this hand and finish the discussion later in the chapter.

COUNTING THE HAND

Fourth suit forcing is a popular bidding convention, but I use the same term to help players learn to count the hand. There are many references to hand (and suit) distributions in this book. To follow the narrative, and be able to visualize the possibilities yourself, you need to be able to count an opponent's hand.

One of the great symmetries of bridge is that the distribution of each player's hand, among the four suits, is four numbers that add up to 13. The same is true of the distribution of one suit among the four hands. Here are the possible distributions, either of a hand or of one suit, if no holding is longer than six cards:

4333	4432	4441	5332	5422	5431	5440	5521
5530	6322	6331	6421	6430	6511	6520	6610

Many times you will be playing or defending and get a count on three of the four suits or three of the four hands in one suit. As an example:

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

Dealer South Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♦	3♦*	pass	4♠
all pass			

You cash the ♦AK (declarer dropping the jack) and continue with the queen, declarer ruffing. Whenever one of the unseen hands shows out in a suit, you should know the entire layout of that suit. Stop to *assimilate* this information.

You know that declarer started with two diamonds. You can also tell yourself that the original diamond layout was 5-3-3-2 (going clockwise around the table, starting with your own holding).

Next declarer cashes the ♠AK, partner discarding a club on the second spade. Assimilate again: 2-4-1-?, so the fourth number (declarer's spade length) must be 6. The four numbers must add to 13, so the fourth suit (or length in the same suit, as here) has to be 6. This is what I mean by fourth suit forcing.

So, declarer is 6=?=2=? . Now declarer cashes the ♣AK, discarding a heart from hand on the second club. Assimilate again: declarer is 6=?=2=1, so fourth suit forcing means he must have 4 hearts! He ruffs dummy's last club in his hand. What are your thoughts at this point?

I've talked about counting winners and losers. The other type of counting in bridge involves high card points, distribution and tricks. This enables you to decide which of the possible layouts is realistic given the bidding. For example, if someone opens 1NT showing 15-17, you want to play them to be at least close to that range (say 14-17).

On our example deal, you can count nine tricks for declarer: 6+1+0+2. You have no possibility of taking any more tricks in any suit but hearts, so you need two tricks from hearts to set the contract. Declarer has eliminated all the cards in diamonds and clubs, and his next move is to play ace and another heart. You win with the ♥K to arrive at this position:



Note how the basic tools of counting and assimilating enable you to do the real work of an expert, which is **visualization**. You need to be able to visualize the following:

- The key is to find a solution to your particular problem in the middle of play with the minimum amount of work (i.e. calculation and visualization). On our example deal, if you visualize a heart layout where you can get two more tricks, you realize that you need partner to have the ♥QJ due to the ruff-sluff danger if you hang on to your ♥K.

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practice counting and visualizing, and of course you want to try to do it as much as you can when you play.

Here is an example using a combination of counting and visualizing:

♠ K Q 3

♥ 10 4 3

♦ Q J 10 9 7

♣ K 3

♠ J 10 9 8

♥ K J 5 2

♦ A 3

♣ 10 8 2

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

You lead the ♠J to the queen in dummy and partner plays the two (standard signals). Declarer runs the ♦Q to your ace. What do you play next?

When declarer has made a limited bid, such as opening 1NT or 2NT, it is particularly useful to start by counting his HCP and dummy's, to get an idea of how many HCP partner can have. I suggest starting with declarer's *minimum* to give you partner's *maximum* HCP. Here 15+11 (in dummy) = 26, add your 9 HCP: 26+9=35. So partner has at most 5 HCP.

The next part is to ask yourself, 'What can my partner (reasonably) have that will allow me to set the hand?' Declarer is marked with the ♠A (partner would win Trick 1 and return your suit if he had the ♠A). If partner has the ♣A, that is 4 HCP. That means declarer has the other important cards: the ♦K, ♥AQ and ♣Q. Now, count his tricks: 3+1+4, and he can develop a ninth trick in clubs. If you want you can visualize declarer's hand (with respect to his high cards, since you don't have a count of his length in any suit yet). His hand would look something like:

♠ A x x	3 spade tricks (AKQ)
♥ A Q x	1 heart trick (A)
♦ K x x x	4 diamond tricks (5 in dummy missing the ace)
♣ Q x x	1 club trick (K or Q)
= 9	

Declarer's club trick is 'slow', i.e. he will have to knock out the ♣A. However, he has two spade stoppers left and you can't lead hearts successfully either, so he will win the establishment race whatever suit you lead next. Thus partner having the ♣A is called a **losing case**. You have to look at other possibilities.

What if partner has the ♦K? Then he might have the ♥Q or ♣Q but nothing else (K+Q = 5 HCP, his maximum). The ♣Q won't help because declarer will have 3+1+3+2 = 9 tricks, but you can perhaps succeed if partner has the ♦K and the ♥Q, if partner has four hearts. Consider these possible declarer hands:

1) ♠ A x x
♥ A x
♦ x x x x
♣ A Q J x

2) ♠ A x x
♥ A x
♦ x x x
♣ A Q J x x

3) ♠ A x x
♥ A x x
♦ x x x
♣ A Q J x

If declarer has hand #1, a heart switch beats the hand; you get three hearts and two diamonds. If declarer has hand #2, he has nine tricks. If declarer has hand #3 he can still make nine tricks by ducking hearts twice — to beat the hand partner had to make the very tough play of rising with the ♦K at Trick 2 and switching to a heart.

The final possibility is that partner has the ♥A. If he has the ♥A, at least third, a heart switch will defeat the contract also. Declarer might have this hand:

♠ A x x
♥ Q x x
♦ K x x x
♣ A Q x

So it can be established that as long as declarer has something resembling what he has shown, only a heart switch gives you any chance to set the hand.

Once you get considerable practice, your thinking might go like this: '26+9=35, max of 5. Club ace no good, but ♥Qxxx + ♦K, or ♥Axx(x), beats the hand'. And you switch to a heart. So you can learn to be more efficient with your analysis.

On other deals you won't be able to determine the correct play quite so readily; in many of these you'll just have to make your best guess because you have no solid information. Even so, these techniques are invaluable, often later in the deal when you get more information and still have a chance to make a winning play.

ASSUME THE BEST — OR THE WORST

Analyzing a hand is easier if you assume it matters what you play. Thus if you can find a *necessary assumption*, your task is made a bit easier. Suppose you are in 6♥ on either of the deals below:

(a) ♠ A K 3 2
♥ K 4 2
♦ K 3
♣ A Q 10 4

♠ 8 7 6
♥ A 8 7 6 3
♦ A J 4 2
♣ K

(b) ♠ A 3
♥ K 8 7 6
♦ A Q 3
♣ A K 4 3

♠ K 5
♥ A J 9 4 3
♦ K 9 4
♣ Q 5 2

In (a), West leads the ♠Q. You can't make the hand unless trumps split 3-2. Thus a 3-2 trump split is a necessary assumption, so you can count $2+4+2+3=11$ top tricks. It is easy to get a twelfth trick by ruffing a diamond in dummy. This is completely safe if you cash the ace and king of trumps first. Once both opponents follow, cash the ♣K, cross to the ♦K, throw a spade and a diamond on the high clubs, and you ruff your last diamond in dummy, not caring if they ever ruff in.

I have named this type of line-of-play **cash and thrash**: *cash* one or more top trumps, then *thrash*, i.e. lead your other winners. Calling it cash and thrash implies there will be at least one trump out but that you don't mind.

In (b), the lead is the ♠J. Again you have to assume only one trump loser but here the hearts represent a **suit combination**, a term I will use to mean a suit that has some possible interest in the way it is played. You have $2+4+3+3=12$ tricks. So, you assume not only that you have at most one trump loser, but also that it matters how you play to lose only one trump trick. This is easy if trumps are 2-2 or 3-1 so again, assume they are 4-0. Can you cater to either 4-0 trump break?

The answer is yes, using a **safety play**. Doing an asset survey, you are missing ♥Q1052 (realizing that the ♥5 is not important, you can say ♥Q10xx). By leaving the ♥K87 in one hand and the ♥J9xx in the other, you can pick up Q10xx on either side for one loser, so lay down the ♥A first. If trumps are 4-0, one defender will show out and you play accordingly.

A SHORT MATH BREAK

Once you understand the various concepts we have been discussing, it is good to know how to put them together. There are some techniques for calculating the odds that help you do this. If this scares you, feel free to skip this section on first reading — but eventually you are going to have face up to most of it.

Let's start with something simple, such as the odds of a finesse winning.

(a) ♠ A Q 3	(b) ♥ A J 10
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px 0;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px 0;"></div>
♠ 6 5 4	♥ 8 6 5

In (a), the odds are 50-50 that the finesse is onside. In (b), assuming you can be in your hand twice to finesse twice, you just need at least one of the heart honors to be onside. There are four possibilities: West has no honor, the king, the queen, or both. So the chances of success are about 75%¹ (only West having no honor is a losing case). The footnote gives slightly more accurate numbers, which take into account the principle of **vacant spaces**, explained later in the chapter. It's worth noting here, though, that finesse odds can change considerably if you have information about the layout. For now we'll go with the simple odds, which apply when you have no such information.

1. In fact, West having no honors is a 24% chance, as is the chance that he has both the king and queen. West will have one specific honor 26% of the time for each (queen or king). So the double finesse is actually a 76% shot.

It is good to know the approximate percentages for basic splits. Most of the time, you are missing 4, 5, 6 or 7 cards in a suit combination.

You have	They have	Split	Approx. Frequency
9 cards	4 cards	2-2	40%
		3-1	50%
		4-0	10%
8 cards	5 cards	3-2	68%
		4-1	28%
		5-0	4%

Notice that when you are missing an even number of cards, 4, the probability that they split as evenly as possible, 2-2, is less than 50%. The opposite is true when you are missing an odd number of cards: the 3-2 split of 5 cards will happen about two-thirds of the time.

Why? When you are missing an odd number of cards, a 3-2 split means that either LHO has 3 and RHO has 2, or the other way around. When an even number cards are missing, there is no ‘double counting’ since each opponent has the same number.

Let’s show this specifically:

♠ A 10 9 7 6

♠ K 8 5 4

You are missing: QJ32

LHO	RHO	
Q J 3 2	—	Two 4-0 splits.
—	Q J 3 2	
Q J 3	2	Eight 3-1 splits (four 3-1, four 1-3).
Q J 2	3	
Q 3 2	J	
J 3 2	Q	
Q	J 3 2	
J	Q 3 2	
3	Q J 2	
2	Q J 3	
Q J	3 2	Six 2-2 splits.
Q 3	J 2	
Q 2	J 3	
J 3	Q 2	
J 2	Q 3	
3 2	Q J	

There are eight 3-1 splits (including 1-3 and 3-1) versus only six 2-2 splits. This is why a 3-1 split is more likely. Note also that there are $2+8+6 = 16$ possible distributions of the opponents' cards when you are missing 4 cards. Let's look at 5 cards missing; this time you are missing QJ432:

LHO	RHO	
Q J 4 3 2	—	Two 5-0 splits
—	Q J 4 3 2	
Q J 4 3	2	Ten 4-1 splits. The five where LHO has 4 cards are listed: just reverse the holdings so that RHO has 4 cards to get to ten.
Q J 4 2	3	
Q J 3 2	4	
Q 4 3 2	J	
J 4 3 2	Q	
Q J 4	3 2	Twenty 3-2 splits. The other ten are the same but reversed.
Q J 3	4 2	
Q J 2	4 3	
Q 4 3	J 2	
Q 4 2	J 3	
Q 3 2	J 4	
J 4 3	Q 2	
J 4 2	Q 3	
J 3 2	Q 4	
4 3 2	Q J	

That gives us $20+10+2=32$ possible splits, twice as many as when 4 cards are missing. In fact this is the pattern:

1 card missing:	2 cases
2 cards missing:	4 cases
3 cards missing:	8 cases
4 cards missing:	16 cases
5 cards missing:	32 cases
6 cards missing:	64 cases
etc.	

2ⁿ (read '2 to the nth power') = the number of possible layouts when n cards are missing. So, you can get a rough estimate of the odds of a particular split by enumerating the cases that work, and dividing that into the total number of possible layouts. For example, the probability that LHO has all 4 missing cards is 1 in 16 — there are 16 layouts, and only 1 of them counts. The probability that LHO has exactly 2 cards when 5 are missing is 10 (1/2 of the 3-2 splits) in 32.

Counting Combinations

Is there a way, other than by counting each specific case, to count relevant holdings?

Suppose you have this trump suit, and need to play it for no losers (!):

♥ A K 7 4 2
□
♥ 10 9 3

You need to ask yourself two questions:

- Which of the possible splits matter for your play?
- How many of the cases win for each play option?

This is a fairly simple position, so it's not hard to figure out. You can play for QJx onside with 8x offside (run the ten and then the nine), or you can play for either opponent to have doubleton QJ (cash the ace and king). Those are your only winning layouts.

Clearly there are two cases of doubleton QJ, one for each opponent. If East is to have ♥8x, we can choose his smaller spot card one of two ways, so there are two cases here too. In this instance, the math gives us no guidance — both lines of play (cashing the ace, king or finessing) have equal (and pretty small) chances of success.

Let's look at a more complex example.

♠ K 2
□
♠ A 10 9 4 3

You need four tricks from this suit, and have a side entry to the South hand. You play a spade to the king and another back toward hand, seeing all small cards. How do you play?

Since some cards in the suit have already been played, here you have one more question to ask yourself:

- Which original splits are no longer possible?

At this point, you have these cards left:

♠ —
□
♠ A 10 9 4

LHO has played a small spade, RHO has played two small spades. So we can eliminate 6-0 splits and we know LHO does not have five spades (RHO would show out the second time). We can also eliminate either opponent having QJ doubleton, and RHO having a doubleton honor or QJx. LHO's stiff honor is also eliminated. So these initial holdings are still possible:

RHO has two small.
 RHO has three small.
 RHO has Qxx or Jxx.
 RHO has Qxxx or Jxxx.
 RHO has QJxx.
 RHO has QJxxx.

The next question is, 'Which holdings matter?' RHO having two small doesn't matter; LHO has two winners regardless. Any 3-3 split doesn't matter either. RHO's QJxxx doesn't matter because we need four tricks, not three. So we are left with RHO holding either honor-fourth or QJxx. In the first case you need to rise with the ace to drop LHO's doubleton honor; in the second case you need to stick in the ♠10.

We can enumerate each specific case:

RHO: Q876 Q875 Q865 Q765 J876 J875 J865 J765
 RHO: QJ87 QJ86 QJ85 QJ76 QJ75 QJ65

This means the odds are 8 to 6 in favor of going up with the ace.

This is quite an onerous task, so let's seek a shortcut. Note that the spades could be considered in two groups: the important cards (the Q and J) and the unimportant cards (the x's). There are four x's, 8765. So we want to count Qxxx and Jxxx, versus QJxx.

The mathematical technique we need is called *combinations*². You have four x's, so we need to count the combinations of x's for each relevant holding. If a player has Qxxx, you need to count the number of ways he could have three of the four x's. Looking at it the easy way, if RHO has three x's, LHO has only one x. It should be clear that there are four ways for this to happen as LHO can have each specific missing x. Take a look at the specific cases for Qxxx and confirm that this is true. If there are four ways to have Qxxx (or Jx on the other side), then there are also four ways to have Jxxx opposite Qx. Thus there are 4+4 = 8 ways that RHO can have honor fourth opposite honor doubleton on the left.

If RHO has QJxx, then LHO has xx. This time we need to count the ways that you can have two of the four x's. If you study the specific layouts above, you will see that there are six of those. This gives us the 8:6 odds I spoke of.

2. The mathematical formula for combinations is $nCr = n! / r!(n-r)!$ In the case of QJxx facing xx, it is $4C2$, or $4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 / 2 \cdot 2$, or 6 — the number of ways to choose 2 items from 4.

Let's look at this in the context of a full deal. This one came up in a knockout match I played shortly before writing this section:

♠ K 3
♥ J 10 8 4
♦ Q J 9 4
♣ K 9 4

♠ Q J 5 2
♥ A 6 5 3
♦ K 8 5
♣ A 5

Dealer South			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1NT ¹
pass	2♣*	pass	2♥
pass	4♥	all pass	
1. 14-16.			

The lead was the ♣6. With two aces missing I needed to lose only one trump trick, so I rose ♣K and led the ♥J. This went king, ace, deuce and now West played the ♥7 when I led a second heart from hand. What should I do?

Originally, missing five cards in hearts, there were 32 possible layouts, but most of them have been eliminated. One that remains, East having ♥KQ9, is not relevant since there is no winning play for me. The holdings that matter are where West started with ♥972, ♥Q72 or ♥Q972.

The relevant heart holdings East could have are:

♥ K Q
♥ K
♥ K 9

With the first two, playing the ♥8 is right; with the last one, playing the ♥10 is right. Note that there are no insignificant cards left, so this is not a combinations counting exercise *per se* like the ones we have been considering. It would appear that the mathematics (two cases to one) tell me to play dummy's ♥8; in fact, I played the ♥10, dropping East's ♥9, to make the hand (and win the match by 5 IMPs). Why?

First of all, the 4-1 split, where East has the stiff king, is a little less likely than either of the others, so the two cases to one don't exactly translate into 2:1 odds. However, there is a more practical consideration — as there so often is. Much of the time when West has four trumps, I can't make the hand. Let's say the ♥8 wins and East discards a club. If I cross in clubs and lead another trump, West wins and clears the hearts and I lose trump control. Better is to lead the ♠K, but a club return puts me in a similar bind. I would need to knock out the ♦A and hope both that there is no diamond ruff and that the defense can't keep leading clubs to advantage. So I decided to give up on 4-1 trumps and focus on the 3-2 breaks: I would play East for either K9 or KQ.

At first sight, it seems that there is nothing to choose between these cases. However, the ♥K and ♥Q are touching cards so the Principle of Restricted Choice comes into play. If East had KQ doubleton she could have played either card, so it is half as likely that she played the king from that holding. I went with the 2:1 odds in playing her for K9 rather than KQ, and this time, virtue was rewarded.

Vacant Spaces

I said earlier that the odds of a finesse can vary substantially depending on what information you have about the hand, for example:

♠ A Q 3

♠ 8 7 6

If you know that West has 5 spades and East 2, then the odds are 5:2 in favor of the ♠K being onside. The odds that West has any particular spade are 5:2. Similarly, if East has 4 spades, the odds are 4:3 that the ♠K is offside.

The rule ‘nine never’ means don’t finesse missing four to the queen (unless someone shows out to mark the finesse):

♠ K 9 4 3

♠ A J 10 8 7

You lead the ♠A from hand and lead toward dummy, seeing the three small spades. What are the odds of the finesse versus the drop? You have seen two cards from West, so he has 11 unknown cards or ‘vacant spaces’; you have seen one card from East so he has 12 ‘vacant spaces’. Thus the odds are 12:11 in favor of playing for the drop.

However, if you have other information, the odds can change considerably.

♠ K 9 4 3

♥ A 6 5

♦ J 8 7

♣ Q 9 3

♠ A J 10 8 7

♥ 10 7 3

♦ A 2

♣ A K 4

West	North	East	South
pass	4♠	3♦ all pass	3♠

West leads the $\spadesuit 3$, surely a singleton. You win East's $\heartsuit 9$ with the ace and cash the $\spadesuit A$, all following low. You lead the $\spadesuit J$ and see a low spade again. What are the odds?

Ignoring the $3\heartsuit$ opening, the odds are 12:11 in favor of playing for the drop. Once we know East has 7 diamonds and West one, West has 10 vacant spaces (13 minus 2 spades minus 1 diamond), while East has 5 vacant spaces (13 minus 1 spade minus 7 diamonds). Thus the revised odds are 10:5 (2:1) in favor of taking the finesse.

Combining Chances

You usually improve your odds when you can combine more than one chance of success, but not always. The key is how to figure it out. Returning to our 3NT contract from earlier in the chapter:

\spadesuit	K 7
\heartsuit	A J 8 3
\diamondsuit	A Q 4 2
\clubsuit	J 7 6
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>
\spadesuit	A 2
\heartsuit	K 4 2
\diamondsuit	K 6 5
\clubsuit	K 8 5 3 2

West led the $\spadesuit Q$ and you won in hand to save a late entry to possible red-suit tricks, then tested diamonds and found them 3-3, getting you up to eight tricks. You cashed the last diamond and paused to calculate the odds of trying the club finesse then the heart finesse, versus trying for three heart tricks by cashing the $\heartsuit AK$ and leading a third heart up to the jack.

The ‘clubs-then-hearts’ line works right away 52% of the time (when clubs work). Only if the club finesse loses do we then worry about hearts, so we make when the club finesse loses and the heart finesse wins. *So, we are looking at the 48% of the time a club play doesn’t work.* In that subset, the heart finesse works half the time for a total of 24%. Once you get the total for each ‘piece’, add them together: $52\% + 24\% = 76\%$. Here it is in another form to make it easier to understand:

	52%	clubs work
+	24%	48% (clubs fail) x 50% (heart finesse wins)
=	<div style="border-top: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 100px; text-align: right;">76%</div>	

Note that if you don’t take out the 52% where the club play works, when counting your chances of the fallback plan of leading hearts, you will be double counting

some winning cases and inflating the chance of success beyond what it really is. This is the *wrong* way:

	52%	clubs work
+	50%	heart finesse wins
<hr/>		
=	102%	

This adds up to more than 100%, so you know it is wrong!

Let's compare the 'clubs-then-hearts' line with the 'hearts only' line. If you play hearts to best advantage, ♥AK and a third heart up to the jack, you succeed when West has the ♥Q, when hearts are 3-3, or when East has ♥Qx. Here are the correct odds, with no double-counting:

	50%	West has ♥Q
+	18%	50% East has ♥Q x 36% (chance of 3-3 split)
+	8%	48% (chance of all 4-2 splits) x 50% (East has 2 cards) x 33% (East has doubleton ♥Q when 6 cards are missing)
<hr/>		
=	76%	

Note that there is no double-counting with the doubleton queen offside, since that case features neither the finesse winning, nor a 3-3 split.

So here is a case where the odds of the two alternative lines of play seem almost identical! If you got this far, is there anything nitpicky that can tip the scales? Two things make the heart play a bit better: (1) dummy has the ♥8, meaning that if West has ♥109 doubleton you will get three heart tricks, adding about 1%, and (2) if West has a stiff heart, you will be in the wrong hand but you can at least lead a club out of your hand, trying for a miracle (stiff ace now flops). That might add another 1%.

As you see, odds calculations can get quite involved even when the hand itself isn't that complicated. Still, it is useful to know what the tools are if you want to try to work it out, even approximately.

On many hands the possibility of dropping an honor, especially in trumps, is a mirage, in the sense that it won't be necessary with correct technique. Look at this next hand from a recent Regional:

♠ A K 4
 ♥ 8 7 6 5 4
 ♦ K Q J 9
 ♣ 4

 ♠ J 10 9 8 3
 ♥ K 3
 ♦ 6
 ♣ A J 8 5 3

Dealer North			
NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	2♠	pass	4♣
all pass			

West leads the ♣K to your ace, and you lead a diamond. West plays the two (standard signals) and your king loses to the ace. East cashes the ♥A and plays a second heart to your king (West plays the ten and the nine). How do you play from here?

You have lost two tricks so you are +1L. You could ruff a club in dummy, then hope to drop the ♠Q. If it doesn't drop, however, you will take 4+1+2 (no ♦10 dropping) + 1 + 1 club ruff = only nine tricks. If you find it easier to look at your hand (the long trump hand) as the 'master hand', you have four club losers and this line disposes of only three of them, leaving you with the ♠Q and the ♣Q as losers.

Better is to try to ruff twice in dummy: it seems very unlikely that West has six clubs, and you have strong spade spots. So ruff a club, cash two diamonds pitching a club, then ruff a heart high. If West can overruff and return a trump, you play your ♠3 under dummy's king and crossruff the rest of the tricks.

The **drop mirage** arises because dummy has the ♠AK. If dummy had ♠KQx you would play correctly automatically as you would have no shot at dropping the ace of trumps!

What if you had only ♠J10932? Now the crossruff option is risky, but you can try to set up hearts: ruff a club, cash two diamonds, then ruff a heart with the jack. If West pitches, you try a spade to the king and ruff another heart high. Once this lives, cash and thrash (see p. 65) by playing a trump to dummy's ace and pitching your last club on dummy's good heart.

On the actual hand, West overruffs the heart with the ♠Q and returns a trump to dummy's king in this position:

♠ A
 ♥ 8 7
 ♦ 9
 ♣ —

 ♠ 10 9 3
 ♥ —
 ♦ —
 ♣ J

East follows so there are two trumps out. If West's 'odd number of diamonds' is 3, then he can overruff either red suit. So you have to guess: are trumps now 1-1, in which case you ruff a heart high to set up the fifth heart then cross to the ♠A? Or is West out of trumps, in which case you should try to ruff something (may as well try a diamond) with the ♠3 to ruff your last club?

West doesn't have six clubs (East would have overruffed), so if he started with 2-2 in the majors and an odd number of diamonds, he must be 2=2=5=4. If he has both remaining spades he started with 4=2=3=4 and you can't make the hand. If he started with three spades he is either 3=2=3=5 or 3=2=5=3.

There are more layouts where ruffing a heart high and trying to split the trumps works so I think this is the percentage line.

Sorry for the lengthy analysis, but there is much to be learned by comparing your line of play with slight (but material) variations in the layout.

TRICK PACKAGES

This is the final concept of this chapter. I coined the term *trick packages* to mean groups of extra tricks from one or more suit(s) that you might combine (if there is more than one suit) to get to the required number of winners.

Consider this 3NT contract:

♠ K 7 6
 ♥ K Q 10 3
 ♦ A Q 10 4
 ♣ J 2

 ♠ A J 8
 ♥ 9 8 4
 ♦ J 8 3
 ♣ K Q 9 4

West leads the ♠4 to East's ♠10 and your jack. How do you plan to play?

You have 4W (top tricks) and 2HL (top losers) so you are +2L. You also need to develop five more winners. There are lots of possibilities for the trick packages that might add up to five tricks:

- 3 hearts and 2 clubs.
- 2 hearts, 2 diamonds, 1 club.
- 1 heart, 2 diamonds, 2 clubs.
- 3 diamonds and 2 clubs.

This could get confusing fast. The easiest way is to see what tricks you can get in each suit for sure, given time (i.e. surviving the establishment race) and see if you

can make it work. You can develop 1 heart and 2 diamonds and 2 clubs for sure, so you just have to check for snags.

If you lead a heart to the king and it holds, you then lead the ♣J and, if that holds, another club to the king. If that holds, you lead the ♦J and take at least nine tricks. If you can see all this quickly, it pays to play fast as the defenders might give away the position of the high cards by their tempo. Also, if East has the ♥Axx he might well duck, trying to give you a guess if you are missing the jack or to make communication difficult if you do have the jack. On this hand East does best to win the ♥A and return a spade.

You win the spade in dummy and lead the ♣J, which West, the danger hand (because of his spade suit) does well to duck. Now if you lead a club to the king and ace and a third spade comes, you have a problem: if you don't cash the club you might lose it, but if you do cash the ♣K and East has ♣10xxxx and the ♦K, you will go down after you finesse the diamond. However, you only lose if West has ducked the doubleton ♣A; if West has more clubs than that, East can have only one club trick to cash and since you were +2L you can afford to lose the ♦K and the ♣10.

If the ♥K won the trick and you drove out the ♣A in two leads, losing to West who returned a spade, you have a lock if you win in dummy and lead a diamond toward your jack. You no longer have to worry about cashing the ♣Q or losing it.

Fortunately, on complex hands like this you don't have to foresee all the possible variations at Trick 1. Just work on the suits in the logical order. You want to finesse the diamond last, into the safe opponent, knocking out aces first or taking your tricks there if they duck their ace(s). You hope you need only one heart trick, and you want to lead toward your high cards, so while in hand it is natural to play a heart first.

Note that the principle of trick packages has validity even if we modify the hand to make it less of a sure thing, for example by giving dummy the ♦9 instead of the ♦10. You still hope to take two extra diamond tricks but it is far from certain missing the ♦10. You can start the same way, though, leading a heart toward dummy and seeing what happens. Sometimes East will win the ace and return a club from A10xxx for example. If the play does go the same awkward way (East wins the ♥A and returns a spade; West ducks one club then wins the second and clears his five-card spade suit), then you are left with these cards:

♠	—
♥	Q 10 3
♦	A Q 9 4
♣	—
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>
♠	—
♥	9 8
♦	J 8 3
♣	Q 9

Restocking, you still are +2L but West has established two spade tricks so you can't let him have the lead. You have developed three of the five tricks you need so you can do a restocking trick package, if you will. You could hope to get the two extra tricks you need from:

- 2 heart tricks.
- 2 diamond tricks.
- 1 club trick and 1 red trick (both would be assured with finesses into the safe opponent). The ♣10 would need to drop to get another club trick.
- 1 heart and 1 diamond trick.

To try to get two heart tricks, cash the ♣Q, throwing a diamond, and run the ♥9. This will work for sure if the finesse wins. If the finesse loses and East cashes the ♣10, you will almost certainly go down if he has a heart to exit with. Dummy will be endplayed, and you'll need to find a stiff ♦K (you have lost four tricks already).

To try to get two diamond tricks, cash the ♣Q throwing a heart from dummy, then lead the ♦J. If West has the ♦K you want to stop it from taking a trick. If you do an asset survey you see that you have the ♦9 and ♦8, so once the jack is covered you can drive out the ♦10 and get the two extra diamond tricks you seek. The problem will arise if West has ♦K10x(x) as he is the dangerous opponent. Of course if East has the ♦K, you need to drop the ♦10 later.

To try for one extra heart trick, you could lead to dummy's ♥10, with the idea that if it loses you have the ♥9 to get back to hand to try the diamonds. Possibly losing a trick to the ♥J is a problem because if East can get the ♣10 and the ♥J, you need the diamond finesse.

My instinct would be to take the ♣Q, pitching a heart, and lead the ♦J. Most of the time West won't duck a doubleton ♣A. Here are the possible diamond layouts:

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>	
x	K 10 x x x	4
x x	K 10 x x	6
10 x	K x x x	4 (winning case)
K	10 x x x x	1 (winning case)
10	K x x x x	1 (winning case)
K x or K 10	x x x x or 10 x x x	5 (winning case)
10 x x	K x x	6 (winning case)
x x x	K 10 x	4 (winning case)
K x x	10 x x	6 (winning case)
K 10 x	x x x	4
K x x x	10 x	4 (winning case)
K 10 x x	x x	6
10 x x x	K x	4
x x x x	K 10	1 (winning case)

Of the 56 (out of 64, which is 2^6) cases that are at all likely (forget the two 6-0 splits, and West having five diamonds — 6 cases), you win in 32 of them. If East has ♦K10xx, not all is lost. The original deal might be:

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

If so, when West leads the third spade, what is East supposed to discard? If he throws a club then your clubs are good (3+1+1+3=8, just finesse the diamond for 9+ tricks). If East pitches a diamond, then you can set up a third diamond trick easily. If he pitches a heart, stiffing his ♥J, you can cash the ♣Q throwing a diamond, then finesse the heart, and East will be endplayed after winning his ♥J and ♣10.

I know this ordinary-looking hand got quite involved, but that is what many ‘real’ bridge deals are like. At least you are now armed with some of the basic analytical tools. And, of course you have all the stuff in the rest of the book!

MAKING YOUR PLAN

THE BASICS

We are now ready to face that moment when the opening lead has been made, the dummy hits the table, and you begin to make a plan for the play. There are four things you should do once the opening lead has been made and dummy has been revealed.

1. Read the position

Your first step is to make a preliminary analysis. Study the lead, and see what information it gives you. The possibilities are too many and varied to try to list them all here, but some obvious examples are:

- If the opening lead against notrump is from a four-card suit, LHO almost certainly has nothing longer.
- If you are missing the ace and king of a side suit in a trump contract, and neither is led, then the opening leader probably does not have them both.
- An opponent who preempts and then leads a trump is unlikely to have shortness in one of the other side suits.

Likewise, you can take inferences from the bidding about the probable distribution and placement of high cards — remembering that actions not taken are sometimes as telling as calls that were actually made.

Later in the hand, too, it may be appropriate to go through this process again, in light of the play to date.

Take a look at this deal from the final of the 2004 U.S. Team Trials:

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Nickell	Zia	Freeman	Rosenberg
			1NT
pass	2♣*	pass	3♣*
pass	3NT*	pass	4♣
pass	4♣	pass	4NT*
pass	5♥*	dbl	5♣*
pass	5NT	all pass	

Agreeing clubs after a transfer sequence, Rosenberg and Zia found themselves off two aces and put the brakes on in 5NT. Nick Nickell led the ♦9; Dick Freeman took the ♦A and returned the ♦8, which declarer won with the ♦K. Postponing the play of the critical club suit, declarer now cashed his spade tricks and on the third round of the suit West pitched the ♥5, following that with the ♦6 on the next round. How should declarer tackle clubs?

West's opening lead (ignoring his partner's double) suggested that he must be short in hearts and long in diamonds, and he was known to have only two spades. That appeared to mark him with length in clubs and even if he held only three he was still a favorite to hold the jack. Declarer cashed the ♣Q and then played a club to the ten. When he opened his eyes, he discovered the ten had held the trick.

On Board 95 out of 96 in the final of the 2001 Venice Cup in Paris, Daniela von Arnim took a similar inference to secure a dramatic win for Germany.

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

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Bessis	Auken	d'Ovidio	von Arnim
			pass
2♣	dbl	pass	3♦ ¹
pass	3♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Showing some values.

Perhaps not surprisingly, West failed to find the killing club lead, tracking a normal-looking ♠7. Dummy's ♠K held, and East played the ten. Declarer tested diamonds, and on the third round East pitched the ♥2, a very suggestive card. With a good seven-card suit, East would surely have bid clubs or even doubled the final contract. With five or six clubs she might well have pitched one rather than a heart, especially looking at four hearts in the dummy. So at this stage West looks to have started with six spades, three diamonds and probably two or three clubs. She thus has two unknown cards to East's five (East started with two spades, two diamonds, and at least four clubs). Declarer therefore cashed the last diamond and played a heart to the nine. That was worth 10 IMPs (the contract in the other room was 3♦ by South, making four). Board 96 was a push, and Germany won the match by 2 IMPs.

Technically, once East discards on the third diamond there is a case for cashing a top heart, just in case West has a singleton jack. The fourth diamond is the entry for the last heart after the winning finesse.

Here's a deal from the final of the 2004 Spingold:

♠ K 9 8 7

♥ Q J

♦ J 9 8 6 4

♣ 9 2

♠ A

♥ AK 10 4 3

♦ A Q 10 5

♣ K J 8

♠ 10

♥ 9 7 5 2

♦ K 7 3 2

♣ A 5 4 3

♠ Q J 6 5 4 3 2

♥ 8 6

♦ —

♣ Q 10 7 6

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Rodwell	Demuy	Meckstroth	Wolpert
			2♣
dbl	pass	3♥	pass
4♠ ¹	pass	5♣	pass
6♥	all pass		

1. Keycard ask in hearts.

Gavin Wolpert led the ♠J. Jeff won with dummy's ace and cashed the ♥A, North following with the jack. The Principle of Restricted Choice suggested that declarer should come to hand and finesse in hearts, but there were two additional factors to consider. First, North was known to have a significant number of spades, but had not taken any action: that argued against him holding a singleton heart. By the same token, South was unlikely to be long in hearts given his known spade length. Accordingly, Jeff cashed the other top heart and felled North's queen. Now he had a lock strip: he could simply play four rounds of diamonds, putting North on play and forcing either a lead into the club tenace or a ruff and discard.

2. Make a map

Step 2, mapping, involves considering your basic position using the tools described in Chapter 3. How many winners and losers do you have? Can you afford to lose more tricks of one type or another (and thus consider ducking something)? Mentally list your potential trick packages. Think about the control unit situation. And so forth.

The higher the contract, the simpler this calculation becomes, as in this example from the 1997 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer West
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>
1♣ ¹	3♦	3NT	pass
6NT	all pass		

1. Precision.

South led the ♦9 and North took the ace and returned the queen, South discarding a heart. It was easy to see that I had four tricks in spades, four or five in hearts, one in diamonds and one in clubs. So, regardless of what happened in the heart suit, I was going to need the club finesse.

That decided, I won the ♦K, and played a club to the jack, noticing that South had played the ♣9. When that held, I unblocked the top spades and returned to hand with a heart to cash two more spade winners. On the fourth round South was still following, and I was at a decision point. If the hearts were breaking, I needed to pitch a club from dummy, and if they were not, I was going to have to play South for ♣K9.

South's early discard of a heart persuaded me to play for the suit to be 6-1, so I guessed right. Next time I might choose to defend 3♦ doubled, which goes for at least 1100.

3. Go over the basic options

On many deals declarer will have to consider three things: his offensive potential in each suit, the various threats available to the defense (such as ruffing, leading trumps to cut down ruffs, leading through tenaces and high cards, knocking out entries or simply cashing enough winners to defeat the contract) and the possibility

of adopting a passive ‘wait and see’ strategy. One way to remember these factors is to use the acronym **ODP**: O — Offensive Potential, D — Defensive Threats, P — Passive Strategy.

This deal from the 2009 Bermuda Bowl illustrates the merits of a passive approach by declarer:

♠ K 7

♥ A Q 9 8

♦ 7 5 2

♣ A 8 6 5

♠ Q 4

♥ 6 5 4

♦ 9 8 6 4

♣ Q J 9 2

♠ A J 10 8 5 3 2

♥ K 3

♦ K Q 3

♣ 7

♠ 9 6

♥ J 10 7 2

♦ A J 10

♣ K 10 4 3

Dealer East

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Wang	Rodwell	Zhuang	Meckstroth
		pass	pass
1♠	dbl	pass	2♥
2♣	pass	pass	dbl
pass	3♥	all pass	

West led the ♠A and continued the suit. With the spade suit already eliminated, Jeff was happy to postpone playing either minor and at Trick 3 he played the ♥Q from dummy. West won with the king and switched to his stiff club, declarer taking East’s jack with the king. He drew trumps ending in dummy and played a low club toward his hand. East went in with the ♣Q and switched to a diamond, but declarer simply put in the ♦10 and although West could win, he was endplayed.

This deal from the 2006 Blue Ribbon Pairs saw more than half the field miss a basic technical point:

♠ Q 9 8 5

♥ K 5 3

♦ A J 5

♣ 10 6 4

♠ A 6

♥ Q 8 6 2

♦ 9 7 2

♣ Q J 9 2

♠ 7

♥ 9 7 4

♦ K Q 10 8 6 4

♣ K 8 7

♠ K J 10 4 3 2

♥ A J 10

♦ 3

♣ A 5 3

Dealer North

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Hamman	Meckstroth	Zia	Rodwell
	pass	pass	1♠
2♦	2NT*	dbl	4♣
all pass			

West led the ♦K and I won in dummy, ruffed a diamond and played a spade to the queen. East took the ace and switched to the ♣Q. I took the ace, crossed to

dummy with a spade, ruffed a diamond and exited with a club. Sooner or later someone had to lead a heart or give me a ruff and discard.

This is quite a simple deal, and the key point is to ruff a diamond at Trick 2. If you make the mistake of playing a trump instead and East ducks, you no longer have the entries to eliminate the diamonds and you have just turned a 100% proposition into a 50-50 one.

4. Analyze

Although many deals simply depend upon the play in a single suit, declarer will frequently have to envisage the various combinations of extra tricks that might be available from two or even three suits in ‘trick packages’. This will of necessity have to include keeping an eye open for possible snags and pitfalls before coming up with the best idea.

On this deal from the 2010 NEC Cup, declarer had to consider how best to combine his chances in two suits:

♠ Q 9

♥ A Q 10 8 7

♦ A K 6 5 4

♣ 10

♠ 6 2

♥ J 9 6 2

♦ Q 8 2

♣ Q 9 5 3

♠ A 5 4

♥ K 5 4

♦ 10 3

♣ A J 6 4 2

♠ K J 10 8 7 3

♥ 3

♦ J 9 7

♣ K 8 7

Dealer West

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Ino</i>	<i>Meng</i>	<i>Abe</i>	<i>Tsai</i>
pass	1♥	2♣	2♠
3♣	3♦	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

West led a trump and dummy’s nine was allowed to win. When declarer played a club, East went up with the ace, cashed the ♠A and went back to clubs. Declarer won in hand and drew the outstanding trump. Perhaps deciding that West must have something for his raise, declarer now took the heart finesse. East won and the defenders could cash a club trick for one down.

Clearly declarer does much better to play a heart to the ace and then ruff a heart. He crosses to dummy with a diamond and ruffs a third heart. When the king falls he can claim, but even if it does not he still has chances in diamonds.

This deal is from the 2005 Venice Cup:

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

Dealer South			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
<i>Stansby</i>	<i>Gaviard</i>	<i>Rosenberg</i>	<i>d'Ovidio</i>
			1♥
pass	2♦	pass	3♦
pass	4♥	all pass	

West led the obvious ♠Q. Declarer is in a decent contract and has several chances for a tenth trick, the most obvious being a good guess in clubs or a 3-3 diamond break. Since there are not enough entries to draw trumps and test the diamonds before playing a club, the natural line is simply to play a club at Trick 2 (which is what the declarer did at my table in the Bermuda Bowl).

Here, though, declarer won the ♠A, drew trumps and exited with a low spade, an inferior choice which should have led to her downfall. If West plays the ♠3 on that trick, East will win with the king and can simply play back a club. Now declarer must lose three more tricks — and this should not have been difficult to envisage. Unfortunately West went in with the ♠10, crashing her partner's king and surrendering a spade trick to the lucky declarer.

DEFOGGING — MORE ON THE THOUGHT PROCESS

With luck, a 'sure-trick' answer will occur to you without having to go through all these various stages. They are designed to allow you to see a solution early, if one is available, without missing something important. I consider this to be a proper and acceptable sequence in which to consider things. However, life isn't always that straightforward.

Before I move on to discuss technical plays, the subject of much of the rest of this book, I want to suggest a number of questions that you can ask yourself to help with any unresolved issues in your analysis. While we are still primarily thinking about the start of play here, you will find many of these questions useful in the middle of the hand too.

1. What are my options and what are the implications of each one?

Many mistakes are made because a certain option was never considered. By considering the implications of each, you hope to unlock the secret of why one should be selected over another. For example, a player might reason, ‘I could duck a round of trumps in order to maintain control, but only if the opening lead was not a singleton’, etc.

Before embarking on a finesse, you always want to ask yourself, ‘What will happen if it loses?’ If the answer is something catastrophic, then you should spend some time trying to find alternative options. Look at this deal:

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

Dealer North			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	2♣
3♠	4♣*	pass	5♣
pass	6♣	all pass	

West led the ♥J, and when declarer won with dummy’s ace, East followed with the ♥Q. Declarer played a club to the jack and could see that provided the hearts were 3-2 there would be no problem. He cashed the ♥K, but West discarded a spade. One possibility now was to play a diamond to the queen, hoping to discard a heart on the ♦A. If that failed, however, that would be that.

Declarer looked a little more deeply into the position and realized he did not need to risk the diamond finesse. Instead he played a spade to the ace to eliminate the suit, cashed the ♦A and followed that with the ♦Q. If East had followed with a low card, declarer was going to discard a heart. If West won the trick he would have to return a diamond, ensuring a diamond trick for dummy’s ♦98, or surrender a ruff and discard. When East covered the ♦Q, declarer ruffed, went back to dummy with a trump and played the ♦9, again intending to discard if East played a small card. East covered, declarer ruffed and returned to dummy one last time to discard a heart on the established ♦8.

2. Does the Control Unit situation dictate any particular line?

A control unit is a card that protects you and allows you to win the lead. (This idea was discussed in Chapter 3.) For example, if you are declaring, you have (one hopes) a high-card stopper in the suit they attack. If you are in a trump contract,

your remaining trumps also serve as control units. For the defenders, control units are the cards that declarer must knock out. So, if declarer has two control units and the defenders have two control units, the defenders will win the establishment race since they have the lead (assuming they lead the correct suit).

So, an analysis of control units can lead declarer to take evasive measures (a holdup play, avoidance, knocking out the entry in the danger hand first, etc.) when needed. If declarer is ahead in the control units game, he is fine as long as he doesn't squander them.

♠ J 10 9 8 3
♥ J 10 7
♦ K Q 10 4 3
♣ —

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

♠ 2
♥ A K Q 9 2
♦ 8
♣ K Q 10 8 7 6

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	2NT*	1♠ ¹	2♠ ²
all pass		3♣	4♥

1. Precision, 11-15.
 2. Four hearts and a longer minor.

West leads the ♠K and switches to a trump. What are your prospects?

You can only get seven trump tricks by ruffing losers in dummy, so you must establish a minor suit. It is tempting to lead a diamond but unless West (a very strong player) takes the ace, the hand will be difficult to play (you are sure to need a winning guess in the club suit to get home). The sounder plan is to try to set up the clubs. This will require a 3-2 trump break and probably a favorable club layout. After winning the trump switch in hand, you ruff a club and draw trumps.

If hearts turn out to be 4-1 you will have to play the ♣K and hope for the best. When they prove to be 3-2, you still have two control units and can afford to play a diamond before going on with the club suit.

If West ducks, you win in dummy and can now take on East. A spade from dummy forces a cover and you ruff and play a top club. One way or another you must come to ten tricks. If West goes in with the ♦A, the fall of East's jack simplifies matters. If East instead were to follow with a low diamond, West would continue with a diamond, forcing you to guess what to do in the suit. It might be right to put in the ten, playing West to have started with ♦AJxxxx (when cashing the ♦A at Trick 2 before switching to a trump is the winning defense) but keep in mind that the defenders will often go wrong in this type of situation.

This next deal, from the 2008 World Seniors, illustrates how declarer's line of play may vary when he has only one control unit in a suit:

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

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Dumbovich	Eisenberg	Kovacs	Lev
pass	2NT*	pass	1♠
pass	6♣	all pass	4♠

Here the ♥A represents declarer's only control unit in the heart suit, and if West leads a heart then declarer will have to win, draw trumps, eliminate the clubs and then exit with a heart, hoping to negotiate the diamond suit for no loser.

When West leads a trump, which is what happened here, there is no immediate threat of a heart loser. Declarer can simply draw trumps and play three rounds of clubs. Then he cashes the ♦K and plays a diamond to the ten. Now he has enough time for two diamond finesses, this line giving him an almost 78% chance of a third diamond trick.

3. Do I have to do this right now?

Asking yourself this question alerts you to the notion that you might be committing yourself to the key play prematurely, without testing other options first, or before getting enough information in non-critical suits to enable you to make your best guess in the critical suit.

Here's an example from a recent Regional:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♠	pass	1♦
pass	6NT	all pass	2NT

West leads the ♥6 to the jack, and you run four spades, pitching two diamonds from hand. West pitches a discouraging club, East pitches a heart. What now?

You could believe the discard and finesse the club, but you have no chance to make if it loses. Try instead playing a combination diamond finesse, by leading low to the ♦8. If this loses to the ten, you can still finesse the club.

If West wins the diamond with the king or queen, then the odds are about 2 to 1 in favor of the next diamond finesse. I (West) actually had ♦Kx and ♣Qxxxx so the suggested line would have worked.

Of course, it is just possible that a judicious falsecard could do you in, if I were to win the ♦8 with the ♦Q or ♦K when holding ♦KQ10 and no ♣Q, but that is just too bad.

4. When does it matter what I do?

Asking yourself this question will help you sort out the irrelevant from the relevant/important. Everyone knows that Trick 1 is an important moment for the defense, but if you have retained the lead then Trick 2 can be equally critical.

Take a look at this deal:

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

Dealer South				
EW Vul.				
West	North	East	South	
				1♣ ¹
pass	2♣	pass		2♣
pass	4♣	pass		6♣
all pass				
1. Precision.				

With little to go on, West leads the ♦A and East encourages. With useful cards in both the side suits, West might easily fall into the trap of playing a second diamond. With three trump entries to dummy, declarer can both establish and enjoy dummy's clubs. By switching to a trump at Trick 2 West removes a vital entry to dummy.

5. Is this a tightrope situation?

A **tightrope** is a situation where the plays are forced, up to a certain point. Recognizing this kind of position simplifies the analysis; follow the play tightrope until someone has to make a choice and go from there.

Take a look at this deal from the 2010 Women’s European Championship:

♠ Q 7 6 5 4

♥ J 9 6 5

♦ Q 9 7

♣ J

♠ A 10 3 2

♥ A 10 4 3

♦ K

♣ A K 8 7

♠ J 8

♥ Q 2

♦ 8 6 5 4

♣ 10 9 6 4 2

♠ K 9

♥ K 8 7

♦ A J 10 3 2

♣ Q 5 3

Dealer West

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Sivelind</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Rimstedt</i>	<i>Dhondy</i>
1♣	pass	1♠ ¹	pass
3NT	pass	6NT	all pass

1. Diamonds.

You want to be in 6NT here, which obviously has excellent chances assuming a reasonable diamond break. North led the ♠5 and declarer took South’s jack with the ace. Clearly the diamonds have to be tested, so you might as well get on with it, and see what information you can gather along the way.

Declarer cashed the ♦K and a top club and crossed to the ♣Q, North discarding a spade. Declarer now played the ♦A and ♦J, discarding a heart and a spade from hand to arrive at this position, with North on lead:

♠ Q 7 6

♥ J 9 6 5

♦ —

♣ —

♠ 10 3

♥ A 10 4

♦ —

♣ K 8

♠ 8

♥ Q 2

♦ 8

♣ 10 9 4

♠ K

♥ K 8 7

♦ 10 3

♣ 5

So far, all the moves have been just about forced, as a chess player would say. Now there are two variations.

If North returns a spade declarer wins in dummy, cashes the $\spadesuit 10$ (discarding a heart) and then plays the last diamond. When South discards a club, declarer does the same and now plays a club to the king. North, down to the $\spadesuit Q$ and $\heartsuit J96$, is squeezed in the majors.

If North plays a heart instead, declarer has more than one way to get home. Say she wins the heart in hand, taking South's queen with the ace. She then crosses to the $\spadesuit K$ and cashes two diamonds, pitching a heart and a club from hand. North is now down to the $\spadesuit Q$ and $\heartsuit J9$ and once again a club to the king executes the squeeze. If declarer wins the heart switch with dummy's king she can make the hand on a criss-cross squeeze, cashing two diamonds, pitching a heart and a club from hand, then crossing to the $\clubsuit K$ to squeeze North.

6. Can I create the extra entry that I need?

When entries are crucial declarer can resort to all sorts of tactical maneuvers — for instance, jettison plays and unnatural-looking unblocking plays may help.

Here is an example from the 2005 Venice Cup:

	\spadesuit J 4 3 2	
	\heartsuit J 8 7	
	\diamondsuit A K 8	
	\clubsuit 8 6 4	
\spadesuit 9		\spadesuit A K 10 6 5
\heartsuit Q 10 4		\heartsuit A K 6 3
\diamondsuit Q J 10 9 7 3		\diamondsuit 2
\clubsuit A 10 9		\clubsuit Q 7 2
	\spadesuit Q 8 7	
	\heartsuit 9 5 2	
	\diamondsuit 6 5 4	
	\clubsuit K J 5 3	

Dealer North Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Brunner	Auken Goldenfied	Von Arnim	
	pass	1 \spadesuit	pass
2 \diamondsuit	pass	2 \heartsuit	pass
2NT	pass	3NT	all pass

When North leads a low club declarer should put up dummy's queen (a kind of *entry fly* — see p. 106). This ensures a second entry to hand so as to be able to establish and enjoy the diamonds.

At the table, declarer played low and South put in the $\clubsuit J$. Declarer could hardly make the double dummy play of ducking and when she won and played a high diamond, North won that and played another club. Now if declarer puts up dummy's queen it is easy enough for South to duck. In fact, declarer played low from dummy, so South took the $\clubsuit K$ and returned a club to dummy's queen. That forced declarer to try finessing the $\heartsuit 10$ and she finished two down.

This next deal from the 2003 Bermuda Bowl final contains an instructive point:

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

Dealer North
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Hamman	Bocchi	Soloway	Duboin
	pass	pass	2♠
2NT	pass	3NT	all pass

North led the ♦6 and Bob Hamman, reasoning that North must have a powerful suit of his own not to lead a spade, put up the queen, felling South's jack. The winning line now is to play a club to the ten. If that loses, the ♣K still gives declarer an entry to lead toward the ♠K. When declarer instead cashed the ♣K before taking a losing club finesse, North won and cashed his top diamonds. Declarer had to discard the ♥10 and now North exited with a heart. This endplayed declarer, who had to surrender the last two tricks to South's ♠AQ.

7. What end position am I angling for?

As baseball great Yogi Berra once commented, 'If you don't know where you're going, you probably won't get there.' Projecting the play and visualizing the final end position can be important when you are considering the possibility of an endplay, squeeze or coup.

Here's a deal from the 2011 NABC in Louisville:

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

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♦ ¹
2♥	3♥*	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Precision, 2+ diamonds, 11-15.

West leads the ♠9, which goes to the ten, jack and king. The reason to cover is so if West has the ♠98, East won't know he can continue spades safely. How do you play from here?

Prospects aren't great. If you can run diamonds you are fine, otherwise you will need a ninth trick and the most likely source is in hearts, perhaps via an endplay. In any event you must attack diamonds now before the ♠A is knocked out. I led the ♦6; West played low, and when I played the nine from dummy, East pitched a low club (encouraging)! That's a surprise. What now?

West is likely 5-6 in the red suits, with an unknown black card (6-6 is possible but I think unlikely; he would have overcalled 1♥ not 2♥). My plan was to force a split in diamonds, eliminate his black card, then engineer a red-suit endplay. So I led a club to the jack and ace (West pitching a diamond), and then a diamond up, taking West's jack with the ace (East pitched a spade). Now I cashed the ♠A, to which West followed. These were the remaining cards:

♠	3
♥	10 5 4
♦	K 10 2
♣	8
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>
♠	7
♥	A J 3
♦	—
♣	10 5 4 3

How should I play?

I can exit a low diamond, but West will win and lead hearts: that gives me two heart tricks but then he is off any diamond endplay. So, I led a heart to the jack and king. After some thought West returned the ♥9. Should I cover with dummy's ten?

If West has ♥KQ98x, the ♥10 will win but I have no way to endplay him for a diamond lead. So I ducked in dummy, playing East for doubleton ♥Q. When East's queen did indeed appear, I won with the ♥A, cashed the ♥10, and now the ♦2 endplayed West for +600.

Many players will be familiar with endplaying an opponent who holds a doubleton honor in a suit, the idea being to force them to give you a ruff and discard. This is a frequent play when declarer is one trick short and appears to have one inescapable loser.

If a suit is distributed like this:

	♠	10 8 5 3		
♠	Q 9 4 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>	♠	K J
	♠	A 7 6		

then declarer can simply play the ♠A and exit with a spade.

However, if the suit looks like this:

	♠ 10 8 5 3	
♠ Q J 9 4	<div></div>	♠ K 2
	♠ A 7 6	

East can avoid the endplay by dropping the king under the ace.

	♠ 10 8 5 3	
♠ K J 9 2	<div></div>	♠ Q 4
	♠ A 7 6	

When the suit looks like this East will be endplayed if he wins the second trick, but West can come to the rescue by going up with the king — the so called ‘Crocodile Coup’ in which West’s ♠K swallows his partner’s card.

When declarer is going to attempt this type of endplay it is usually a good idea to cash the ace early in the play, as it may not always be obvious to a defender that an unblock is necessary. However, even late in the hand a defender may not always get it right, as on this deal from the 2001 Vanderbilt final:

	♠ A 9 7 4	
	♥ K J 8	
	♦ K 8 5	
	♣ 8 3 2	
♠ Q 10 5 3	<div></div>	♠ K 2
♥ 10 5		♥ 9 6
♦ J 9 3		♦ Q 7 6 4 2
♣ K Q 10 5		♣ A 7 6 4
	♠ J 8 6	
	♥ A Q 7 4 3 2	
	♦ A 10	
	♣ J 9	

Dealer West
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Hamman</i>	<i>Petrudin</i>	<i>Soloway</i>	<i>Gromov</i>
pass	pass	pass	1♥
pass	2♣*	pass	4♥
all pass			

South is clearly in a poor contract (3NT is where you would like to be) but watch what happened. West led the ♣K and the defenders played three rounds of the suit. Declarer ruffed, cashed the ♥A and played a heart to the jack. When he next cashed the ♠A East did not unblock, so declarer played three rounds of diamonds, ruffing, and then exited with a spade, forcing East to concede a ruff and discard.

This type of endplay usually involves the higher honors, but that is not always the case, as on this deal:

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

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♣ ¹	pass	1♥
3♣	4♥	all pass	

1. Strong club.

West led the ♠K. Declarer won with dummy's ace, cashed the ♥AK and played a diamond to the queen. West took the ace, cashed a spade and exited with a diamond. Declarer won in dummy, cashed his other diamond and played a club to the king. When West did not release the jack, the next club left him endplayed.

Even if you can see the endplay coming, it's not always right to dump your honor. Here is a cautionary tale from the 2008 Buffett Cup:

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

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
		2♥	dbl
4♥	pass	pass	5♣
5♥	6♣	all pass	

West led the ♥8. Declarer won, crossed to dummy with a trump and eliminated the red suits before going back to dummy with a trump. Now there is a choice of plays. One possibility is to play a spade to the jack, hoping West started with both missing honors. When West wins with the king and returns a spade you put up dummy's ten — and go down on the actual layout. Another option is to play a spade to the ace and then exit with a spade, hoping an opponent started with a doubleton honor, and as the cards lie that would work on this deal. For various reasons, West is more likely to have the ♠KQ than East is to have honor doubleton, so it's not clear declarer was going to get this right. However, when he played a spade from dummy, East resolved the issue of which line to take by putting up the

queen! He was playing for the situation where West held ♠KJxx and wanted to avoid any chance of his partner missing the Crocodile Coup.

This concept of visualizing the end position can help even on a complex deal where it is very difficult to work out how you can make your contract (both what layout you need and how to proceed). This deal, which first appeared in *Adventures in Card Play* by Ottlik and Kelsey, is a good example.

♠ A Q 10 3

♥ 5 4 3

♦ 10

♣ Q 9 6 5 4

♠ 2

♥ A K 6

♦ J 8 7 6 5

♣ A 7 3 2

West	North	East	South
		1NT ¹	pass
2♣*	dbl	2♠	5♣
all pass			
1. 16-18.			

West leads the ♥2 (fourth best) to the ten and ace. What is your plan?

Even if trumps are 2-2 it is difficult to see how you can avoid losing three tricks. East has ♠Kxxx, so you can't finesse the spade. You can't ruff three spades in hand and also cash your long diamond, as there will still be trumps outstanding.

It is very difficult to see the possibility, but what you have to do is threaten a crossruff with a long diamond in tow. You must draw some trumps also. You lead a diamond from hand, West plays the ♦2 (standard signals), and East wins dummy's ten with the queen. He comes back the ♥J, which you win. Now you ruff a diamond in dummy and lead a club — *the queen*. You are hoping East has ♣K8 doubleton, so that he can't overruff a late red card.

If you set up a long diamond, West will get a chance to discard a spade unless he has the ♠J. So, this is the original layout you are looking for:

♠ A Q 10 3

♥ 5 4 3

♦ 10

♣ Q 9 6 5 4

♠ 2

♥ A K 6

♦ J 8 7 6 5

♣ A 7 3 2

♠ J x x x

♥ Q 9 x x

♦ 9 x x

♣ J 10

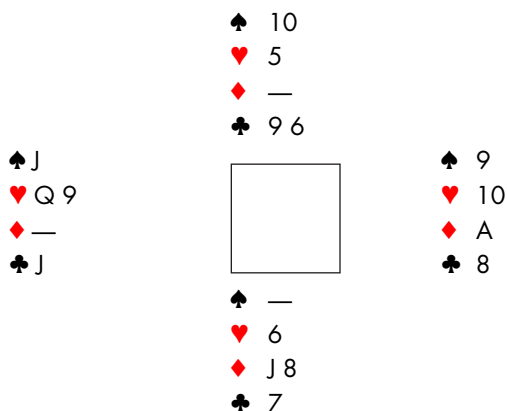
♠ K 9 x x

♥ J 10 8

♦ A K Q x

♣ K 8

How do you plan the play? *You need to visualize the end position you are angling for.* You will have ruffed two diamonds in dummy and two spades in hand. You need to ruff another diamond and then ruff a spade (and not get overruffed), so that you can lead your good diamond. So, this is the ending you want to reach:



You have lost a diamond and must lose the ♣J, so you need three of the last four tricks. When you lead the ♦8, West can't ruff lest you pitch the heart loser. Also, he can't pitch the ♠J or you would ruff in dummy and cash the ♠10 to discard your heart loser from hand. So, he pitches a heart and you ruff, ruff the ♠10, and lead the fifth diamond, scoring the ♣9 *en passant*.

Note that this ending won't work if West has two spades left since the ♠10 is not then a threat. So, after playing a diamond to the queen and a second heart return to your king, you know you need to ruff two spades and two diamonds ending in hand, and that means you need to start by ruffing diamonds: diamond ruff, ♣Q covered by the king and ace, spade to the ace, spade ruff, diamond ruff, ♠Q covered by the king and ruffed, leading to the desired end position.

This is a very difficult hand indeed but this is the technique that you would need to employ to get it (or an easier hand) right.

8. *What plays might anyone (including partner) make that would be abnormal, and what would be the implications of those various actions and plays?*

I call these abnormal events **triggers**; that is, they are supposed to trigger a noticing and thoughtful reconsideration from oneself.

This deal is from the 1999 Bermuda Bowl:

Dealer East

Both Vul.

	♠ 9 7 5 4	
	♥ K J 5 4	
	♦ A K 5	
	♣ J 5	
♠ K Q J 8 6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> </div>	♠ 10 3
♥ A 3		♥ 6 2
♦ —		♦ J 8 7 6 4 3 2
♣ Q 10 8 7 4 3		♣ A 9
	♠ A 2	
	♥ Q 10 9 8 7	
	♦ Q 10 9	
	♣ K 6 2	

Several East-West pairs found themselves defending 4♥ by South after a Michaels overcall from West. In order to defeat it the defenders have to secure a diamond ruff, but not everyone managed that.

The play generally started with the ♠K, which declarer won with the ace to play a heart. West went in with the ace, cashed a spade and switched to a club. East took the ace but did not always find the diamond return.

You might argue that given the auction, East should be alert to the possibility that his partner has very few diamonds, and that West's switch to the ♣3 may well be screaming for a diamond ruff. However, maybe West can make it even clearer?

Since the jack is on view in dummy, maybe the best card for West to return is the *queen* of clubs in an attempt to trigger East.

9. What the heck is the position?

It can be quite easy to overlook the necessity of making a preliminary analysis once the opening lead has been made and dummy comes down. If you forgot to do this first, it is very helpful to go back and do it before you get bogged down in some obscure analysis.

♠ A 7

♥ 8 6 3 2

♦ K Q 9 8 5

♣ K 9

♠ —

♥ A K J 9

♦ J 7 2

♣ J 8 5 4 3 2

♠ K J 9 5 4 2

♥ 4

♦ A 4 3

♣ A Q 6

♠ Q 10 8 6 3

♥ Q 10 7 5

♦ 10 6

♣ 10 7

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♠
dbl	redbl	pass	pass
2♣	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	4♠	pass	4NT*
pass	5♣*	pass	5♦*
pass	5♥*	pass	5♠
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

When West leads the ♥A it is clear that East's double can only be based on a significant trump holding — probably all the missing spades. To arrive at eleven tricks you will need to take either six trump tricks and five in the minors, or seven trumps and four outside. East's failure to bid 2♥ suggests that he will hold no more than four cards in the suit and if hearts are 4-4 then it will probably only be possible to score four tricks in the minors.

East follows to the first heart with the ten and when West continues with the king he plays the five. You ruff and test the trumps by crossing to the ♦K and playing the ♠7. When East covers with the eight you play the nine and West discards the ♣2. By now you should have a very good picture of the layout, and there is more than one way to get home. With East holding all five spades and probably four hearts you cannot take five minor-suit tricks. One way to get home now is to play a diamond to dummy and ruff a heart. A club to the king is followed by another heart ruff. Now you cash the ♣A, ruff a club with the ♠A and exit with a diamond. East has to ruff and lead into your ♠KJ.

10. Is there one card I can place in one of the unseen hands?

Once you can place an important card in one of the unseen hands, it will reduce the number of possible hands that they can have considerably.

Failing to place a high card can have fatal consequences, as on this deal from the final of the 1982 World Pairs Championship:

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

Dealer West
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	Kantar		Lawrence
pass	pass	1♥	pass
1♠	pass	2♦	pass
3♥	pass	4♥	all pass

Lawrence led the ♣5 and declarer ruffed Kantar's king. Next he ran the ♠Q, North winning with the king and playing the ♣A, which declarer ruffed. At this point it is clear that South has the ♥A, so declarer should continue with the ♥K. South can win and try another club, but declarer can ruff and is in no danger. However, declarer played a heart to the queen and, when that held, he belatedly realized that another heart might enable South to draw trumps. So he cashed his spade winners, pitching a diamond. It would not help South to ruff, so he discarded a diamond and a club. When declarer now played on diamonds, South continued to pitch clubs until North was able to ruff in, leaving South to take the last two tricks with the ♥AJ.

Here is another example from the same event; this time it was the absence of a bid that enabled declarer to figure out the position:

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

Dealer West
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Rodwell	Nippgen	Meckstroth	Bitchené
pass	1♣	1♦	1♥
3♦	pass	pass	3NT
pass	4♥	all pass	

I led the ♦Q and declarer won in hand and played a spade to the ten. When that held, he placed me with the ♠AQ and the ♦QJ, in which case it was clear I could not have the ♣K. So declarer played a low club from the dummy and when Jeff played low his ten held the trick. I took the next trick with the ♠A and returned a club. Declarer won with the ace, felling East's king, cashed two trumps ending in hand, ruffed a diamond and played on clubs, happy to give up two trump tricks.

Often on defense you have to assume partner has the card or cards you need him to hold. Here's a deal from the 2011 Spring NABC:

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

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♥	1♠	3NT
all pass			

Partner leads the ♠7 (third best in partner's suit), and it goes to the jack, king and ace. Declarer now leads the ♥8 to dummy's queen and your king. What do you do now?

Is it possible partner has ♠Q10x(x)? Almost certainly not: declarer is an expert and would have bid the hand more slowly in that case, either to avoid 3NT or to let his partner play it if that is the final contract. So he has ♠AQ10x. What about the hearts? Partner must have the ♥A; holding ♥Ax declarer would almost certainly lead ace and another in case you have a stiff king. Declarer likely has another heart so if he gets in he will establish the suit. A hand with ♠AQ10x and four heart tricks means he has nine tricks if he has the ♦A. So, you must lead a diamond now, hoping not only that partner has both red aces but that he can establish another diamond trick.

Should you lead the ♦9 (*middling*, see p. 169)? This will get you four fast diamond tricks if partner has ♦AJ8x. However, you only need three diamond tricks so don't risk confusing partner by leading the ♦9: lead low. He has the ♥A anyway as an entry.

The full deal was:

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

So we beat the hand two tricks. It is true we could still beat the hand (maybe only one though) if I don't switch to a diamond but partners sometimes get other ideas (like a club switch). Bob Hamman at the other table opened 2♥ as North and played there, making +140.

11. *Is there an error I can play for?*

Even when things look hopeless, it may be possible to induce your opponent(s) to assist you. Look at this deal, from the 2011 Spring Nationals:

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

With East-West vulnerable, I opened 1♥ as South and partner raised me to 4♥ (yes, this was the real bidding). West led the ♥5, and I got a shock when East pitched an encouraging club! Winning the ♥6, I led a diamond; West ducked and I won the ♦K. What next?

I have 1+4+1+1 = 7 tricks, so I need to ruff in hand twice (to get up to 5 trump tricks) and dummy twice. West seems bent on leading trumps so I want to lose a spade trick to East. So I led the ♠9, hoping for a cover. East duly covered with the king and I ducked. He assisted me with another diamond lead and I was able to ruff, play a club to the king and ace, a spade to the ace, a spade covered by West's queen and ruffed, diamond ruff, spade ruff.

Now I am down to ♥AJ and two club losers and West has all four trumps, so I merely lead a club. She has to ruff and lead back into my ♥AJ: +420!

Later in the book we'll be discussing situations where it is right to play second hand high, but this was not the time for East to do so. If he ducked the spade, West could win and lead another trump and set the hand. Leading the ♠9 off dummy made it more tempting for him to cover.

Years ago, there was an Italian Blue Team hand where declarer had this spade combination:

♠ 9 x x
 []
 ♠ A K 10

He needed to squeeze West, and East rated to have three spades. So he crossed to dummy and led the ♠9, and East covered from Qxx, perhaps worried that declarer had K10x. The effect of the cover was to isolate the spade guard with West and the squeeze now operated.

If the opponents, especially strong players, know a lot about the deal, you are much less likely to make a hand with trickery than if they are in the dark. I played this one at the 2011 Spring NABC:

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♣ ¹	2♥	pass
3♥	pass	pass	3♠ ³
pass	4♣	all pass	

1. Precision 1♣, 16+ any shape.
2. 6-7 any shape, or 8+ with no good bid.
3. 6-7, five-card spade suit.

West, Lew Stansby, leads the ♦Q. What are your prospects?

If diamonds are 3-3 the cause is hopeless unless I duck the diamond in both hands and they continue the suit. However, East will surely discourage a diamond continuation so that is unlikely to work.

If diamonds are 4-2, I need to knock out West's only entry. If West has either club honor, I expect that East will rise with his honor (even the king) when I lead from dummy so this won't work. My only chance would be to concede a heart trick first and hope that East has the ♣AK.

If diamonds are 5-1 I am in much better shape, as long as West has only one side entry, but I must draw trumps. As this appeared to be my best chance, I

ducked the diamond in dummy, East played the eight (discouraging) and I won with the king. I played the ♠Q, then a spade to the ace, on which East pitched a heart. Now what?

West still has the ♠10, so I can't draw the third trump (they can lead hearts and get two heart tricks). I can try a heart now, hoping for East to have the ♣AK, but all they need to do is keep leading hearts and, when East gets in with the last club, lead another heart for a trump promotion. I think playing for this mistake was my best shot, but I tried a low club from dummy. East won with the ace, led another diamond, and West got in with the ♥A to cash the diamond, down one.

At the other table a trump was led so making ten tricks was easy. Did I have a legitimate play for it by leading a club? Diamonds would have to be 5-1, East would have to have something like

♠ x ♥ A 10 9 x x x x ♦ x ♣ A K x x

or

♠ x ♥ A K 10 x x x x ♦ x ♣ K x x x

both hands where West has only one entry. Most players would bid more than 2♥ with these hands and I feel sure that Chip Martel would have also.

So I was likely dead either way. I can make the hand if I leave trumps alone, play for diamonds 4-2 and lead a heart first, but I think 5-1 diamonds with West having *any* one side entry is the better percentage chance. I can also make via the double dummy play of running the ♠8! Then when I play a second trump I can concede a heart and avoid any trump promotion.

12. Control/Alt/Delete

This is the sequence of keys for re-booting a computer that is caught in an infinite loop or has had an unrecoverable system error. It applies equally well if you find yourself stuck on a lot of speculations and tangents. Go back to basics:

Read the position; **Map** your basic position (winners, losers, entries); do **Basic Options Analysis** (check offensive prospects suit-by-suit, defensive threats, and merits of passive strategy); and finally do **Full Analysis** (trick packages that would give you the extra tricks needed to succeed — analyzing them all if necessary).

PART 2

ADVANCED CARDPLAY MANEUVERS

DECLARER PLAY

In Part 1, I discussed two broad topics: first, some of the basic cardplay techniques that are available to you, and second, how you go about analyzing a hand and making a plan for the play. Now it's time to move on to more advanced maneuvers. Some of these ideas may be familiar to you, but I suspect many will not be. For the most part they are not complicated, but are things that are hard to visualize until someone has shown them to you. Once seen, they are generally not difficult to apply when the occasion arises. I have, as always, given them names, for purposes of reference and as an *aide-memoire*.

THE ENTRY OR K.O. FLY

I mentioned earlier my credo that 'entries are the lifeblood of bridge'. So let's start with some maneuvers that revolve around creating or preserving entries. The first I have named the **Entry Fly** or **K.O. Fly**.

Here, LHO leads RHO's suit (presumably with a doubleton) and you have some holding where RHO can duck to preserve communication. You can't prevent this, but at least you can go up (fly) in dummy to get a free entry there, since RHO does not want to win this trick.

This is the type of position you should be on the lookout for:

♠ 10 x x
 []
 ♠ A J x

When West leads the ♠9 you can go up with dummy's ten.

♥ Q x x
 []
 ♥ J x x

Here you are in notrump, East has bid hearts, and West leads the ♥8. Since East will want to duck this trick, you can go up with the queen and gain an entry to dummy.

Let's see this tactic at work in a full deal:

♠ J 5 4
 ♥ 8 6 5
 ♦ Q J 10 8
 ♣ A 4 3

 ♠ A 10 7
 ♥ A Q J
 ♦ 9 5 4
 ♣ K Q J 8

Dealer East
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
		1♠	1NT
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠9. What is your plan?

To retain the option of taking a heart finesse, play the ♠J from dummy. If East has

♠K Q 8 6 3 ♥K 7 3 ♦A 2 ♣10 7 5

he may duck the ♠J on the theory that if you have ♠A107x you have three stoppers anyway. That being the case, he might as well hope that his partner has a doubleton spade and the ♦K.

Once the ♠J holds the trick your only hope is the heart finesse, but playing the ♠J gives you the extra entry to take it twice. If East covers the ♠J, duck hoping for split diamond honors.

Here is an example where declarer makes the K.O. fly play in order to preserve an entry to hand. It comes from the 2005 World Transnational Open Teams.

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

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

Dealer North
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Spector</i>	<i>Dai</i>	<i>Bramley</i>	<i>Yang</i>
	1♣ ¹	1♠	2NT
pass	3♣	pass	3♦
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. Strong club.

When West leads the ♠10, declarer should seriously consider going up with dummy's king. If East takes his ace, declarer has two extra entries to hand and needs only to guess the heart suit to arrive at nine tricks.

THE ENTRY OVERTAKE

In any situation where you are short of entries you may be able to execute an overtaking play, even if this gives up a trick. For example, with

♦ A J 10 9 x
[]
♦ K

you can overtake the king with the ace and then force out the queen to set up the suit. You need only one entry outside diamonds to pull this off.

Here is a full deal that illustrates the principle:

♠ 8
♥ 9 6 3
♦ A 8 4
♣ A K 10 9 8 6

♠ Q J 10 7
♥ K 10 5 4
♦ K 9 2
♣ 4 2

[]

♠ 9 5 4 3
♥ Q 7
♦ J 10 5
♣ J 7 5 3

♠ A K 6 2
♥ A J 8 2
♦ Q 7 6 3
♣ Q

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	2♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠Q and declarer wins. With only one outside entry to dummy, he overtakes the ♣Q with the king, cashes the ace and then forces out the jack. The ♦A is the only side entry required.

When entries are at a premium, declarer should always be alive to the possibility of an overtaking play. This combination:

♠ A Q 10 8
[]
♠ K J 9 7

can yield no fewer than four entries to the North hand — overtake the king with the ace, the jack with the queen, etc.

THE EXPOSING OVERTAKE

In this play, declarer, with a wealth of high cards (usually in the trump suit), makes an overtaking unblock to create the possibility of a subsequent finesse should one be needed. I can show the basic idea with this deal I played many years ago in the Grand National Pairs, partnering Jim Reiman:

♠ J 8 4 2

♥ K Q 10 7 3

♦ A K 5

♣ Q

♠ 7 5

♥ 9 5 4 2

♦ 4 2

♣ AJ 10 6 5 3

♠ 6

♥ A J 8 6

♦ Q 10 9 8 6

♣ K 9 2

♠ AKQ 10 9 3

♥ —

♦ J 7 5 3

♣ 8 7 4

Dealer East

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
	Reiman		Rodwell
		2♠	dbl
pass	4♦ ¹	pass	4♥
all pass			

1. Diamond control, slam try in hearts.

The defenders started with two rounds of spades, and I ruffed with the ♥8 (spades could hardly be 7-1). Next I played the ♥J to the king (the *exposing overtake*) to take a spade ruff with the ♥A, on which West pitched a diamond. Now a heart to the seven allowed me to claim +480.

Geoff Hampson, that famous ex-Canadian, came up with an even safer variation — ruff the second spade with the ♥A, then lead the ♥8 to the king (seeing the void), and ruff the next spade with the ♥J. This rules out any chance of an overruff even if East did have a seven-card weak two-bid. As chessmaster Bobby Fischer once said, ‘When you see a good move, look for a better one!’

The exposing overtake is a recurring theme, so here is another example:

♠ —

♥ A Q J 2

♦ A 3 2

♣ A K Q J 10 4

♠ AKQJ 9 8 5

♥ 6

♦ K Q J 4

♣ 9

♠ 7 6 2

♥ K 9 7 4

♦ 7 6

♣ 7 6 5 3

♠ 10 4 3

♥ 10 8 5 3

♦ 10 9 8 5

♣ 8 2

Dealer West

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♠	dbl	pass	2♥
4♣	6♥	all pass	

West leads the ♠A, forcing dummy to ruff. If you ruff with the two of hearts the 4-1 trump break spells defeat, as there is no way to get to hand and draw the last trump. However, if you ruff high, you can then cash dummy's two remaining top hearts, draw trumps via a finesse against East's ten and then enjoy the clubs.

Here is a deal from a recent Regional where I used this technique (playing IMPs) to have a free shot at an overtrick in 3NT.

♠ A K 4 3

♥ A Q 9 4 3

♦ 9 2

♣ Q 3

♠ 7 6

♥ 10

♦ K 8 4 3

♣ A K J 10 8 2

Dealer South			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			2♣*
pass	2♦*	pass	3♣*
pass	3♥*	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♠Q to dummy's ace. I have nine certain tricks and a vulnerable diamond holding, so I should only take the heart finesse for an overtrick if I'm 100% safe. The first key is to see the exposing overtake in clubs: I can lead the ♣Q and if East follows, I can overtake, being able to finesse the ♣8 later if East has all five clubs. This is necessary if I want to finesse the heart early (in fact I can run six club tricks safely, pitching two spades and two hearts, and have another heart to pitch should they take three diamond tricks, but this was faster and easier).

The problem is a possible diamond switch if the heart finesse loses, and an asset survey shows I am missing ♦AQJ10xxx. If East leads a medium diamond honor, I am safe as long as I don't cover the first diamond honor, but do cover the second. Look at this potential diamond layout:

♦ A Q 7 6

♦ 9 2

♦ K 8 4 3

♦ J 10 5

I am missing four diamond honors, and if I cover one of them they spend two on one trick, so as long as they can't communicate to trap my eight, I'm safe. I call this handling of the diamond suit *delayed cover protection*.

So I led the ♣Q to the ace and finessed in hearts, to make the overtrick.

Other Variations

(a)

♠	A K J 9 7 4 2
	<div></div>
♠	Q 3

Overtake the queen (if West follows, which is always a condition). This lets you enter dummy safely twice if East is void.

(b)

♥	A K J 10 7
	<div></div>
♥	Q 5 4

Leading the queen to the ace protects you against ♥98632 with West.

(c)

♦	A Q 10 8
	<div></div>
♦	K J 3 2

Leading the king to the ace, then later the jack to the queen, produces no fewer than four dummy entries on any 3-2 break, or when West has ♦9xxx(x) or when either opponent starts with the singleton ♦9.

THE RE-ENTRY UNBLOCK

This is a similar type of play where unblocking a sequence of three or more cards will preserve entry options later. Suppose West leads a diamond (trumps) when you have this combined holding:

♦	10 9 8 6
	<div></div>
♦	A K Q 7

Play the ♦10 and, provided you don't think West has ♦Jxxx (and you don't have some other reason to let the ten hold), overtake it with the ace. This gives you maximum flexibility later. Note that this play is most advantageous if you think West will lead the next trump.

THE CHINESE HIGH CARD PROMOTION

You are trying to establish a suit (normally a 5-3 fit) and can afford two losers in it. If you need to get it going without creating entry problems, you can consider leading high from a holding of honor-third, as in this situation:

♦ K J 7 4 2
 []
 ♦ Q 6 5

By leading the queen, you make life very tough for West if he has ♦A109x. If West ducks the ace, you have taken a successful Chinese finesse to promote your high cards in dummy — hence the name.

Chinese High Card Promotion can also be used in situations where you are just trying to promote *two* tricks in a 4-3 fit without letting them build a second trick for themselves, as in this example:

♠ Q J 8 3
 []
 ♠ K 7 2

Leading the king sets up two fast tricks. If West has ♠A1094, playing low to the queen first will inevitably establish a second trick for him as you develop your own second trick. However, if West ducks the king when you lead it, you have Chinese finessed him.

This deal from the 2010 Vanderbilt illustrates that this type of play can be made when declarer's combined holding is even weaker:

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

Dealer North			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♦
1♥	pass	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♠K and, when East discouraged, switched to the ♣6. Obviously, declarer couldn't allow East to gain the lead to play a spade through, so he went up with dummy's king and led a diamond, hoping to be able to duck this trick to West. However, East produced the ♦9 and declarer had to win with the king. Another club saw West produce the queen, so declarer ducked. West exited with a diamond, which declarer was forced to win in hand, and this was now the position:

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

The winning play here is the ♥K. If West ducks, declarer simply plays another heart, so West has to win and exit with a heart. Declarer takes dummy's queen, cashes his club tricks and exits with a diamond to force East to surrender the last trick to the ♠A.

I used Chinese High Card Promotion on this recent deal:

♠ K 7 6 5
 ♥ Q 4 3
 ♦ A K Q 4
 ♣ 10 8

 ♠ J 9 3
 ♥ K 9 7 6
 ♦ 9 5 3
 ♣ A K 3

Dealer South
 Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♦*
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♣7 and the ten wins in dummy. That's nice; what next?

You have six top tricks and can develop another in hearts. If diamonds are 3-3 that gets you to eight, and you need one more. The best place to try is in hearts, your stronger suit. You don't want to come to hand in clubs to lead toward dummy's queen, so you should lead the ♥Q from dummy, Chinese High Card promotion. Then if they lead back a club you can try ducking a heart.

When you play the ♥Q, East wins the ♥A and returns a club to your king, West playing the six. Now what? You do want to duck a heart, but there is no reason not to lead toward your high cards so you play a diamond to the ace and lead a heart. East plays the ♥J and you duck, West pitching a club. Now a heart comes back. You win the nine, West pitching another club. You cash the winners in hand and when diamonds are 3-3 you make nine tricks.

The full deal:

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

We missed a variation on this play as defenders during the 2009 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer West
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Wang	Rodwell	Zhuang	Meckstroth
pass	pass	2♣*	pass
2♦*	pass	2NT*	pass
3NT	all pass		

Jeff led a diamond and I took the king and returned the suit. A third diamond now allowed declarer to win in dummy and play a spade to the king, establishing a ninth trick. If we are to beat the hand, with two tricks in the bag Jeff has to find the difficult switch to the ♥K. If declarer ducks, another heart sets up two tricks for me, but if he takes the ♥A immediately he has to cash the ♦A or never score it. Unfortunately, that card suicide squeezes declarer — he can't afford to part with a card in either major, while discarding a club simply leaves him short of tricks.

PLAYING HIGH AS DECLARER

I've already discussed some positions, and the Chinese High Card Promotion is a good example, where it is necessary for declarer to lead or play a high card rather than a small one. Here are some other situations where the same ploy is useful.

a) The Promotion Smother Play

Sometimes declarer can prevent a trump promotion by preserving a high trump to overruff with. Suppose this is your trump suit, and you are worried about West scoring a ruff.



If East is presumed to have the trump ace, lead low from dummy. When East ducks and your king holds, rather than guess on the way back (no re-entry to dummy), lead the *jack* now. This is clearly only going to be effective when both dummy and declarer are also void in the same suit as West.

This might be the full deal:

♠ A 8 7

♥ Q 3 2

♦ 8 7 6 3

♣ 9 7 6

♠ 9 6

♥ 10 8 7

♦ J 9 5 4

♣ 10 8 5 4

♠ K Q J 10 5

♥ A 9

♦ Q 10 2

♣ J 3 2

♠ 4 3 2

♥ K J 6 5 4

♦ A K

♣ A K Q

Dealer East

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
		1♠	dbl
pass	1NT	pass	2♥
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

The opening lead is the ♠9 to dummy's ace. A heart from dummy goes to the nine and king, and now it's important for declarer to lead the ♥J, for the *promotion smother play*.

b) Unblocking a suit to guarantee a later entry

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

Dealer East
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♥ ¹
2♠ ¹	4♥	4♠	5♥
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

1. Intermediate.

West leads the ♣2, obviously a singleton, and it also likely that West has the trump ace and another ace. If that is the ♠A, you can execute a Scissors Coup by going up with the ♣K and leading the ♠K to jettison your diamond. Of course, you need 3-2 trumps, but that is likely on the bidding and the opening lead. Note that playing the ♣K has a dual purpose: to win the trick and to unblock clubs.

You execute your Scissors Coup, and West wins and returns a spade, which you ruff. Now you play a trump. You can afford to play low to the queen and back to the king; if West ducks twice, just play the ♣A and ruff out the ♣Q. If West wins either early trump lead, win the third round in dummy and finesse the club.

c) The Chinese Danger Count Declarer Play

If LHO is the danger hand and might well have a doubleton in the suit you are about to attack, then by leading a middle card for a Chinese finesse (a ducking play actually) you might avert an awkward guess later...

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

When West leads the ♥K you decide to win and return the jack. West wins, cashes the ♥10 and exits with a heart. East, who started with a singleton heart, discards two spades and a diamond, while you discard a diamond. When you play dummy's ♠Q, East covers and you win and cash two more spades, West following as East discards a diamond.

This is the position:

♠	—
♥	—
♦	A 8 4
♣	A 6 3
	<div></div>
♠	—
♥	—
♦	K 7
♣	Q 9 5 2

Now what?

From East's discards it sure looks like West is 3=5=3=2. You need two club tricks but can't afford to lose two clubs and the long heart to West. Thus, you lead the ♣9 from hand, planning to run it. If West has ♣Kx, he is 'done like dinner' as his king will fall under the ace on the next round, obviating any guess. If East has the king, the third round of clubs will establish your queen.

As usual, if West has ♣10x or ♣Jx, he should cover — *danger hand high* (see Chapter 10). Now when you win the ace and return the suit, you have to guess whether West started with doubleton ♣K10 or ♣KJ or with ♣10x.

The full deal might look like this:

	♠ Q 7 3	
	♥ 9 8 6 2	
	♦ A 8 4	
	♣ A 6 3	
	<div></div>	
♠ 9 6 2		♠ K 8 5 4
♥ K Q 10 7 3		♥ 4
♦ Q 10 2		♦ J 9 6 5
♣ J 8		♣ K 10 7 4
	♠ A J 10	
	♥ A J 5	
	♦ K 7 3	
	♣ Q 9 5 2	

d) The Avoidance and Finesse-Establishment Duck Declarer Play

♠ 7 5
♥ 8 4 2
♦ A 8 7 6 4 2
♣ 8 3

♠ A K Q 6
♥ A J
♦ K 5
♣ K J 7 6 5

Dealer East NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
		1NT ¹	dbl
2♥	3♦	pass	3NT
1. 12-14.			

When West leads the ♥6 it is clear that you will need East to have started with a doubleton heart. After ducking East's ♥K and winning the second round, your next move should be to lead a club honor from your hand. You need to find East with ♣AQx; if that is the case, you can set up the suit by crossing to dummy with the ♦A to play a second round of clubs.

You are hoping the full deal looks like this

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

Notice that East can foil your plan by switching to a diamond at Trick 2 (even the queen is good enough) — the defense eventually gets two clubs, one heart and two diamonds.

THE FINESSE THROUGH SAFETY

It is very common to find yourself in a situation where you can afford to lose a trick to one opponent but not the other. Beginners are taught early on to try to lose tricks to the 'safe' opponent: here's a recent example from the 2011 Spring NABC:

♠ A Q 8 5 2
 ♥ K 4 3
 ♦ 8 6 2
 ♣ K 4

 ♠ 10
 ♥ A 10 6
 ♦ K J 10 3
 ♣ Q J 10 8 7

Dealer South
 Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♠	3♣ ²	pass	1♦ ¹
all pass			

1. Precision, 11-15 with 2+ diamonds.
2. Forces partner to bid 3NT.

An interesting decision by partner, but the job is to make 3NT on the lead of the ♥Q. East-West play Rusinow leads, where the jack would normally be led from QJ. I inquire, and they tell me they need 4+ cards in the suit to lead Rusinow; with three or fewer they lead the top card.

I can expect the spade finesse to win (also because East didn't double 3♠), and I can make four club tricks and two hearts, so without a defensive error I need at least one diamond trick. I don't mind losing a trick to West, as he can't continue hearts safely. Also, if I conceal my club strength, he might switch to a club instead of an awkward spade.

Thus I win Trick 1 with the ♥K in dummy (East plays a discouraging ♥7) and lead a diamond to the jack and queen. West switches to the ♣6. As I doubt either defender has five clubs and blocking the suit might be awkward, I play the ♣K from dummy (which also conceals my club strength in hand). East wins with the ♣A and returns the ♥2. What now?

It sure looks like West has ♥QJx, and if East has the ♦A I need to block the suit by winning the ace now. I then lead the ♦K — East does indeed have the ace but can't get his long heart: 3NT made.

The full deal:

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

Note that if I lead the ♣K from dummy at Trick 2, East winning and playing another heart, I will have to guess the diamonds to make 3NT (also, communications are very awkward).

Real life is usually more complicated than just taking finesses into the safe hand, however. In the *finesse through safety*, declarer leads *through* the safe opponent, planning to duck if they go up but to go up if they duck. Sometimes a very favorable assumption as to the layout of the cards must be made (such as finding the safe opponent with Kx or KQx in the ducking suit). This play can be used during suit establishment, or for stripping the hand of exit cards and rectifying the count for a strip-squeeze.

Here is a typical case:

♠ 7 5
♥ A 8 3 2
♦ 7 5 4
♣ A K 7 6

♠ A 6 3
♥ K 4
♦ A K 10 3 2
♣ 5 4 3

Dealer South			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1♦
1♠	dbl*	pass	1NT
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠K and you duck, winning the third round with the ace (East follows, dummy pitches a heart). What now?

You need the diamond suit and you need to keep West off lead. If you lead the ♦A, it is curtains, as East unblocks a doubleton queen. You need to cross to dummy (a club to the ace) and lead a low diamond as a *finesse through safety*. If East plays the ♦Q, duck. If East plays low, win the ace.

If West follows to your ace with a diamond honor, you can cash the ♦K, catering to ♦QJ tight, and still have an entry in dummy to lead toward your ♦10xx should West have a stiff honor.

If West plays low on the ♦A, cross back to dummy (in hearts this time) and try a diamond up again. You duck if the ♦Q appears; if you don't see the queen, win the ♦K, hoping East has three diamonds. This is the full layout:

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

Sometimes these avoidance positions are complicated, not to mention harder to spot:

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

Dealer West
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♦	dbl	1♥	1NT
2♦	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♥J and East plays the ♥Q. You want to prevent a lead through your ♦K10xxx, hoping for an endplay late in the day. If you just run your tricks, West pitches diamonds (and East hearts) and you must lose five tricks as long as West unblocks spades at the right time.

The solution is to lead spades yourself, but you need to finesse through safety by leading through West. Win the ♥K and lead a spade. If West doesn't split, you win the ace, cash your winners, and exit a spade hoping for the above layout. When West does split, you duck. He leads a second heart to your ace, so you cross to the ♣9 and lead another spade, giving West the same choice. You still have the ♣Q as an entry so West can't get out of it by cashing the ♦A and exiting with a spade.

What if instead your clubs were Qxx? Would all be hopeless (against best defense)? This time you need to lead a spade from *dummy* at Trick 2, so win the ♥A at Trick 1 and lead a low spade. East can stick in the ♠8 and return a diamond,

but West is left with king-queen tight in spades. He returns the ♠K to your ace, leaving this position:

♠	9 6
♥	6 5
♦	—
♣	A K J 10 5
	<div></div>
♠	—
♥	K 7
♦	K 10 6 5
♣	Q 4 2

West has the stiff ♠Q left, ♦AQJ98 and three small cards between hearts and clubs. If he is 3=2=6=2 originally, cash the ♥K, ♣J and ♣A, then lead a spade to force a diamond play. Running clubs won't work because West will throw three diamonds — then if you try exiting with the spade from dummy, West has a heart to get out with.

However, if West started with 3=1=6=3 you have to run your clubs to take out West's exit cards. You also need to retain the ♥K as a late hand entry for a diamond play. If you play an early heart to the king, West keeps three clubs and forces you either to abandon club winners in dummy or to allow him to jettison his ♠Q on the long clubs, or to leave him with a club exit card if you don't cash at least three club winners.

You have to guess which layout is more likely. Mathematically, West having 3=2=6=2 is more likely. (West having any two clubs is just as likely as him having any three clubs. The difference is that there are five cases of ♥Jx and only one stiff ♥J.) If you think you know enough about their style to be sure that East would not bid with

♠	J 10 8 x	♥	Q 10 x x x	♦	x	♣	x x x
---	----------	---	------------	---	---	---	-------

then that might tip the scales.

THE FINESSE THROUGH DANGER

The *finesse through danger* is closely related to #7, the finesse through safety. As we have just seen, that one involves leading through the safe hand, ducking if he plays a high card. You do just the opposite when leading through the danger hand — going up when he goes up, and ducking when he ducks.

♠ 7 6 5

 ♠ A K 10 4 3

If East is the danger hand, lead a spade from dummy, covering East's card. You can even succeed if East has ♠QJ92 or ♠QJ82, as long as you need only three tricks (run the ♠5, then play a spade to the ten).

In many cases you are just hoping to slip past the danger hand, without being put to an awkward guess.

♥ 3 2

 ♥ A Q 10 6 5 4

If East is dangerous, you finesse the ♥10 first and then later the ♥Q. But what if East plays the ♥K on the first round and you have no sure usable re-entry to hand? You are cooked if he has ♥Kx (if you win, your suit is dead; if you duck, then the danger hand is in). If he has ♥KJx, you need to finesse again; if he has ♥Kxx you must play for the drop of the offside jack doubleton. Basically, you just have to guess what to do. It is for this reason that it is often right to play *danger hand high* on defense — an idea we'll get to in Chapter 10.

THE CROSSOVER STOPPER

While we're on the topic of situations where one defender and not the other can cause you a problem, let me introduce the concept of the *crossover stopper*. I use this phrase to describe a card that doesn't stop the run of a suit on power, but does require them to *cross over* an extra time to play the suit.

♠ K Q 3 2
 ♠ A J 10 8
 ♠ 9 5

East leads the ♠J around to the king. Your nine is a crossover stopper — West will have to lead the suit twice to run it. Another way to look at it is that you have the potential pusher card they need to lead through strength — the one that would either hold the lead (to lead through again) or allow them to run the suit if it were covered. In the example, if West held the ♠9 he would only have to get in one more time to set up spades.

It can be very valuable to realize that you have a crossover stopper. In that situation, it is not attractive for you to lead the suit yourself in an attempt to break the defenders' communications, unless you think that West has only one card left in the suit.

THE RODWELLIAN INTRAFINESSE

Let's move on now to some situations where the way you handle a specific suit can make all the difference in the number of tricks you take. You may be surprised at how much value you can extract even from quite small spot cards.

The *intrafinesse*, one of the few modern discoveries in cardplay technique, was popularized by the Brazilian Gabriel Chagas. The standard intrafinesse position is:

♠ A 9 x
[]
♠ K 8 x x

You play low to the ♠9, then cash the ace and finesse the ♠8 to win when West started with a doubleton honor.

Here are a couple of examples of the Rodwellian version, in which declarer makes the play while missing a major honor:

♥ J 3
[]
♥ A Q 9 8 5

If you think LHO has four hearts, run the nine (if you can handle everything, including the post-mortem when East has a singleton or doubleton ten).

♠ K 4
[]
♠ Q J 9 8 3

Once again you can consider running the nine when you think the length is on your left.

Here are a few more variations of the normal intrafinesse:

♣ A 9 6 3
[]
♣ Q 8 4 2

The standard way to tackle this combination is by playing low to the ace and then low toward the queen, but if you are pretty sure West has the ♣K, that's not going to work. To take an intrafinesse, you start by playing low to the eight and then run the queen on the next round, hoping to find RHO with ♣Jx or ♣10x.

♦ A 9 5

 ♦ Q 8 7 3

As in the previous example, the classical way to play this suit is by cashing the ace and then playing the nine, putting up the queen if East plays only small cards. If you know West has the king, you might try starting with low to the ace and then ducking the next round. However, that will not provide a third trick if West has ♦Kx. Instead, you can begin by leading low to the nine. If East has ♦J10xx, ♦Jxxx or ♦10xxx, you will lose only one trick.

♠ A 10 4

 ♠ 9 7 6 3

In this case, low to the ten caters to West having honor doubleton (or ♠KQJx), but loses to KQ, QJ or KJ doubleton or a singleton honor on the right. You will score two tricks almost 68% of the time.

Here is a complex (and famous) example where declarer is missing three honors in the vital suit:

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

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
	Kaplan		Helgemo
2♥	pass	4♥	6♦
all pass			

Declarer ruffed the heart lead, drew trumps and played a spade to the seven. East won with the jack and returned the five, but declarer ran it to dummy's nine. The club loser went on the fourth spade.

The intrafinesse has many variations. Here is a hand I defended at a recent Regional:

♠ A K Q 7

♥ K 7 5 4

♦ K 10 2

♣ 10 8

♠ 9

♥ Q 10 9 6 2

♦ A 9 4 3

♣ Q 9 3

Dealer East

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♣
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

Partner inquires whether opener can have four spades, and the answer is, “if he is 4333”. Partner then leads the ♣4. How do you plan the defense?

$12+15=27+8=35$, so partner cannot have the ♣AK. Partner likely has four spades (he would lead one with five), so give declarer $4=3=3=3$. If dummy plays the ♣10 you will cover of course, but what if dummy plays the ♣8?

It matters if declarer has ♣AJx or ♣KJx. If the former, playing the queen forces declarer to win and then partner can duck the next round. However, declarer is likely to make the hand if he can get two club tricks. He might have, for example

♠ J x x x ♥ A x x ♦ Q x x ♣ A J x

Thus, your best bet is to stick in the ♣9, an intrafinesse on defense! Declarer wins the jack and you plan to win the first diamond lead and return the ♣Q. The full deal was

♠ J 8 3 2

♥ 8

♦ 8 7 6

♣ A 7 6 4 2

♠ A K Q 7

♥ K 7 5 4

♦ K 10 2

♣ 10 8

♠ 10 6 5 4

♥ A J 3

♦ Q J 5

♣ K J 5

♠ 9

♥ Q 10 9 6 2

♦ A 9 4 3

♣ Q 9 3

We were +100, and at the other table 3NT made an overtrick.

Suppose you have this layout:

♠ K Q 9 3
 ♥ Q 8 7 6
 ♦ Q 7 3
 ♣ 9 2

 ♠ A J 10 4
 ♥ 10 9 3
 ♦ A J 6 2
 ♣ A K

East opens a natural 1♦, you overcall 1NT and partner raises to 3NT. West leads the ♣5 (fourth best) to the jack and ace. How do you play from here?

You expect the diamond finesse to work, which gets you to eight tricks, but of course diamonds aren't going to be 3-3. Your heart tricks are too slow, so is there a way to try to get a third diamond trick? You should cash two spade tricks, ending in hand but saving two entries to dummy. Then lead low toward dummy's ♦Q7x, planning to stick in the ♦7. This is the full layout:

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

This is an intrafinesse against three cards, the ♦1098. If West plays one of those cards, you will have to guess the position (was it a singleton, from 109, 108 or 98 alone, or perhaps an unlikely high from a doubleton?).

THE INTRASQUASH

The *intrasquash* is a type of intrafinesse safety play. The idea is that a specific intermediate singleton can be squashed; otherwise all is a wash (if a certain minimum number of losers can be afforded).

Here are a couple of examples:

♥ A 4
□
♥ K 10 8 7 5 3

With this combination your only hope of six tricks is to find someone with the doubleton ♥QJ. However, with spots this good it costs nothing (assuming no 5-0 break) to run the ♥10 — which gives you slightly more than a 79% chance of five tricks. If West has a singleton queen, jack or nine, you will win in dummy and lead to your spot on the way back. If East has the singleton queen or jack, your only chance is an erroneous cover by West. However, if East has a stiff nine then you legitimately lose only one trick.

You may think this is an exercise in esoteric theory, but Patrick Jourdain of Wales brought this play off in a Camrose match against England in 1989, Graham Kirby as East accompanying the play of his singleton nine with the comment, 'I think this is what you are looking for'. At the other table David Burn was the declarer who didn't find the safety play, playing, he claimed, for a trump coup. David Price was dummy and asked about his heart holding. When Burn mentioned the ten but not the next one down Price asked again and was told about the eight. He asked again and was now told about the seven. Then Price pointed out the safety play. The Vugraph commentator didn't understand Jourdain's play until a member of the audience pointed out that it was the textbook line.

♣ K 4
□
♣ Q 9 7 6 5 2

The idea is the same in this case; run the ♣9 in case East has the stiff ♣8. You take four tricks nearly 82% of the time.

Suit combinations are a fruitful field for analysis, as sometimes the way in which you tackle a suit may be affected by how you place the missing honors. Look at this deal from the 2005 Venice Cup Final:

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

Dealer East
 Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Willard	Auken	Cronier	von Arnim
2♥	3♠	1♦	1♠
4♥	all pass	pass	pass

When the defenders start a diamond, which is what happened at the other table, then if declarer decides to tackle the trump suit at once, running the ♥Q is the only hope of avoiding a trump loser. However, here North, perhaps unwisely, led the ♠A. Declarer ruffed and had a chance to make the contract if she could hold her total losers in hearts and clubs to three. She crossed to dummy with the ♦A, discarded a diamond and a club on the top spades, and then ran the ♥Q. That eventually saw her lose two trumps and two clubs for one down.

Once declarer decides to play South for the ♥K there is a lot to be said for running the ♥8 at Trick 2. This gains legitimately when North has ♥KJx or a singleton king and is likely to work when North has ♥Kx unless she is very sharp.

THE SKY MARSHAL FINESSE

This one got its name because you have to lead a high card for maximum tricks against certain distributions of the opposing honors — the bad guys.

♠ A 2

 ♠ Q 10 9 8 6

For years everyone thought this combination should be tackled by cashing the ace then playing low to the queen. This works when the jack is singly or doubly guarded on your left and is clearly better than playing the ace followed by low to the ten, which only gains when there is Kxx on your left. The chance of making four tricks is around 39%.

However, the best chance (*a priori*) to win the most tricks in the suit is to start by leading the queen. You pick up Kx in front of the A2 (the gaining case), and otherwise it is a wash with the play of ace and low to the queen (assuming requisite entries). This improvement gets you up to a near 43% chance of four tricks.

This is an analogous situation:

♦ A 2

 ♦ J 9 8 7 5

Starting with the jack will win three tricks when there is a doubleton ten or doubleton KQ, as would playing low to the ace and then back to the jack. It gains when ♦Kx or ♦Qx is in front of the ♦A2, and also when you get an erroneous cover from ♦KQxx, ♦K10xx, or ♦Q10xx. You only lose when there is a singleton honor. Altogether this gives you almost a 72% chance of three tricks.

♣ K 2

 ♣ J 9 8 7 5

You might tackle this combination in the same way by starting with the jack, although the computer reckons leading low is best — delivering three tricks more than 47% of the time (you put up the king then play back to the jack).

THE MARTELLIAN SQUASH

The name for this play comes from a hand I played long ago against Chip Martel, who was on my left. I had this combination in the spade suit:

♠ J 5 4 3

 ♠ A Q 8

I needed three spade tricks, and I needed to keep LHO off lead. I knew at that point that if anyone was short in spades it was Chip on my left, so hoping for a stiff ten or nine I led dummy's jack. East played the king, and Chip played the ♠6 under my ace.

I crossed back to dummy to lead the ♠3, and East produced the ♠2 — and now, as I didn't want to go down an extra 100, I went up with the ♠Q. In fact Chip had ♠76 doubleton, so I had had a blind spot. I could have stuck in the ♠8, completely 'squashing' his ♠76 doubleton. It wouldn't have helped RHO Lew Stansby to split, since he didn't have the winners to cash.

I subsequently named this the *Martellian squash* because Chip had the exact holding I could squash and I missed it. Some examples of other suit combinations:

(a) ♥ J 9 2

 ♥ A 7 5 3

(b) ♦ A K 10 6

 ♦ J 2

In (a), you need three tricks. Do you see any chance?

The only hope is that LHO has ♥108 doubleton, and to take advantage of that possibility you need to lead low from hand. This trick goes eight, nine, queen, then you lead the ♥J from dummy: king, ace, ten. Now you have 7-5 over RHO's 6-4 and can finesse against it. LHO's ♥108 doubleton is the victim of a Martellian squash.

In (b), do you have a legitimate play for four tricks if there is no stiff queen?

The only hope is that RHO has ♦987 tripleton, in which case LHO can't gain by covering the jack. Of course, if you lead the ♦J LHO won't cover sometimes when he should. In case you think this would never come up in real life, there was a deal in the 2010 Blue Ribbon Pairs where the club suit was laid out just this way.

I managed a Martellian squash of sorts in the trump suit on this deal from the final of the same event:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♣ ¹	dbl	1♠ ²	pass
all pass			

1. Can be a two-card suit in a balanced hand.
2. Artificial, like a 1NT response.

West led the ♥Q, so I went about trying to score ruffs in hand. I won the ♥K, played the ♦A and the ♦K shedding a heart, then ruffed a diamond. Now I crossed back to the ♥A and ruffed a heart, noting that they broke 3-3. I was now in hand with the ♠J8 and the clubs, so I exited with the ♠J: the trick proceeded nine, three, queen. East now led the ♣8 to West's queen, and he cashed the ♣A and played a third club. At this point it looked like West had K109 or A109 of trumps, and had started with at least three cards in each of the other suits. If his thirteenth card was a diamond I wanted to ruff my good club in dummy and ruff a diamond. However, East overruffed the club with the king and returned a diamond. I ruffed with the ♠8, West overruffed with the ♠10, and now at Trick 12 he returned his last club.

Dummy was down to the ♠5 and the ♥9. I ruffed and East had to pitch, his only remaining trump being the two. The defense lost its way at several points, but by carefully doing an asset survey, you won't miss the opportunity to score dummy's small trump. In effect, West's ♠109 were subjected to a pseudo Martellian squash.

The Martellian squash is obviously closely related to the Rodwellian intrafinesse.

♦ J 5



♦ A 8 7 3 2

♣ J 3



♣ A 8 7 6 2

Suppose with the diamond combination, which I had at the 2011 NABC in Louisville, I need three tricks. A 3-3 split is fine, and if West has KQ64 I am also good: I lead toward the jack, and later, when in dummy, run the jack. This also picks up K10, Q10, K9 or Q9 on my left, a form of Martellian squash.

Change the suit ever so slightly to the club combination, and I can now take a Rodwellian intrafinesse, leading the six from hand and planning to run it if West plays low. Then when I lead the jack from dummy I pick up West's 10x or 9x, as well as king or queen plus ten or nine doubleton. Of course, West can give me a guess by playing the 10 or 9 with all two-card holdings when he has it (from a holding of 10x or 9x, playing high would be an *intrapop*, p. 259) giving me a guess whether to lead back to my eight or try to drop honor doubleton. In practice it is very hard for West to duck honor-ten or honor-nine doubleton. I can also pick up 109 doubleton, which is what I would play for if West plays the nine on my six, or if the trick goes six, ten, jack, queen.

Note that if West has KQxx, he can duck. Now if I run the six I lose three tricks, when if I had put up the jack I would lose only two — but there are more holdings to pick up by running the six.

THE SPEED OF LIGHTNING PLAY

Now let's move on to some general tactical ideas — some of them are legitimate, in the sense that the opposition can do nothing to counter them, while others depend on inducing an (often slight) error. The *speed of lightning play* is one of my favorites. As any fan of the band Queen will anticipate, it can be very, very frightening.

If RHO is the dangerous opponent, you can often lead away from a holding like AJx in dummy toward holdings in the closed hand headed by the ten, on the theory that RHO won't go up with Qx(x). A common variation is where you lead low from KJx toward 109xxx in hand. Of course, you must be able to afford to lose a trick to RHO later on. This play is most valuable when you have something like Qx opposite AJx in hand in the suit they led (dummy's queen having won Trick 1), where East can't hurt you later, only now.

This play is so named because East will play low *at the speed of lightning*, as a matter of habit. In fact, if he knows that he is the dangerous opponent, there is every reason for him to play the queen (danger hand high!) since if he ducks, declarer will doubtless try some coverage ducking play.

Here's a full deal showing the play in its purest form:

♠ Q 3
 ♥ A 9 4 2
 ♦ K J 3
 ♣ 8 7 5 4

 ♠ A J 5
 ♥ K 3
 ♦ 10 9 6 5 4
 ♣ A K 3

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	2♣*	pass	2♦*
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠6 to dummy's queen, East playing low. With only six top tricks you need to develop the diamonds. As long as East doesn't get in on the first diamond lead, with the queen, you are safe. So your best shot is to lead the ♦3 from dummy at Trick 2, hoping East, dealt Qx, plays low at the speed of lightning. The whole deal is:

	♠ Q 3 ♥ A 9 4 2 ♦ K J 3 ♣ 8 7 5 4 <input type="text"/>	
♠ K 10 8 6 4 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ A 8 2 ♣ 10 6	<input type="text"/>	♠ 9 7 2 ♥ J 10 7 6 ♦ Q 7 ♣ Q J 9 2
	♠ A J 5 ♥ K 3 ♦ 10 9 6 5 4 ♣ A K 3	

This type of play can have some unforeseen consequences if we expand it to include other situations where players reflexively play low when they could play an honor to win a trick:

With this combination:

	♥ K 8 6 5	
♥ A 10 3	<input type="text"/>	♥ Q 9 2
	♥ J 7 4	

declarer played low to the jack. When that held, he played low to the king and then a third heart — the suit splitting 3-3 for three tricks!

You might also get away with three tricks with something like:

♠ K 7 3

 ♠ J 8 6 2

You play low to the king, then low to the jack, hoping West has ♠Axx and ducks twice (I have seen it happen!).

Sometimes the purpose of the play may be to steal a single trick. This deal is from the final of the 1982 World Pairs Championship.

♠ K 9 3 2
 ♥ A K 4
 ♦ 9 8
 ♣ J 8 4 3

♠ A Q 10
 ♥ J 8 7 5
 ♦ A 5
 ♣ A 9 6 2

♠ J 8 6 5
 ♥ 10 9 6
 ♦ Q J 6 4 2
 ♣ 5

♠ 7 4
 ♥ Q 3 2
 ♦ K 10 7 3
 ♣ K Q 10 7

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Martel</i>		<i>Stansby</i>	
	pass	pass	pass
1♣	dbl	1♦	1NT
dbl	pass	2♦	dbl
pass	pass	redbl	pass
2♥	pass	pass	dbl
all pass			

Three rounds of trumps would have destroyed 2♥ but North led the ♦9, covered by the queen, king and ace. Realizing that North's double (and his apparent lack of the ♥AK) made it likely the ♠K would be offside, declarer played the ♠10 from hand, risking going two down. When North withheld the king, declarer could cash the ♣A, ruff a club, cross to the ♠A and ruff another club. With a diamond and a heart to come, he was assured of eight tricks.

As we saw in this last example, it not always necessary to be leading up to the closed hand — there are many positions where it is instinctive for the defender to duck. This deal comes from the 2010 ACBL Spring Nationals in Reno:

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

Dealer West NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
<i>Gottlieb</i>		<i>Fredin</i>	
1♦	pass	1♠	pass
2♣	pass	3♣	pass
3♦	pass	6NT	all pass

This was a matchpoint event, hence East's decision to play in notrump. South led the ♥10 and dummy's queen held the trick. Realizing that South had made a short-suit lead, declarer decided that this suggested awkward holdings in the minors, so he came to hand with a diamond and led the ♣3! When South played low it was all over.

THE NOTRUMP FORK

The expression Morton's Fork originates from a policy of tax collection devised in 1487 by John Morton, Lord Chancellor of England under Henry VII. His approach was that if the subject lived in luxury, he obviously had sufficient income to spare for the king. Alternatively, if the subject lived frugally, he must have substantial savings and could therefore afford to give some to the king. These arguments were the two prongs of the fork: regardless of whether the subject was rich or poor, he did not have a favorable choice.

Most readers will be familiar with the bridge version, the Morton's Fork Coup. In this coup declarer leads through a defender toward a high card. The defender can choose to duck, after which declarer's remaining loser in the suit is discarded elsewhere, or go up and have his winner 'beat air', setting up an extra trick in the suit. The *notrump fork* is a more general version of this — if the defender rises, it sets up one or more winners for declarer, while ducking allows declarer to steal a trick and possibly turn his attention elsewhere. There are two basic types.

Sure trick

The play is guaranteed to be successful, given enough entries.

♣ Q J 7 5 4

♣ K 6 3 2

Lead low from hand. The suit runs unless it breaks 4-0. However, if West has four of them, you can force him to duck (twice, if you cross back to your hand and repeat the procedure) since going up is immediately fatal. If you can then build your tricks in another suit, you have successfully completed a notrump fork.

Conditional

You need either a mistake or a favorable (or not too unfavorable) lie of the suit.

♥ Q 7 4

♥ K 8 6 5

Here, if you need three tricks from this suit (or to steal one trick), the move is legitimate only if you happen to lead through ♥Axx.

♦ Q 9 8 3

♦ K 6 4 2

In this case, the lead is successful unless a defender can rise with AJ10x(x) (presuming you need three tricks, or to steal just one).

Such *forking* suits can be straight two-way guesses, like this:

♠ Q x x

♠ K x x x

or one play may be favored — for example, with

♣ Q J x x

♣ K 9 x x

lead toward dummy, being able to pick up A10xx in RHO's hand but not LHO's.

If a guess is required, lead through the opponent who would be dangerous if he were to capture one of your honors; otherwise (depending on the rest of the hand) take your best guess.

Suppose the Qxx opposite Kxxx scenario occurs when you believe that West has at least a six-card suit that he has led and that you have double-stopped. You have already used one of your stoppers, and East is known to be unable to return the suit (having started with an initial stiff or void). You have a finesse into West that yields only eight winners if it loses but nine if it wins.

If three tricks from Qxx opposite Kxxx would see you home, then you can legitimately lead through West and make your contract when he has Axx in that suit, as West can't afford to go up with the ace. This is just giving you an extra chance — you claim if West ducks. If West wins, you can cash the king and queen to see if the suit splits 3-3; if not then you can fall back on the finesse. You may get other chances too — you may be able to cater to a stiff king offside (you can afford a loser but only to East), or if West has four-card length in the fork suit, then he can be strip-squeezed.

♠ K 4 3

♥ Q 4 3

♦ Q J 9 3

♣ K J 6

♠ A 6 5

♥ K 8 7 6

♦ A 10 8 7

♣ A Q

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
3♠	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♠Q, East pitching a club. How do you plan to play?

If the diamond finesse wins, you have nine tricks. The problem layout is when West has the guarded ♦K and the ♥A. Start by winning the spade in hand and then play a low heart right away. If West ducks, take the diamond finesse for the overtrick.

If West wins and leads another spade, win to save the third spade for a possible endplay (East pitches a diamond). You lead the ♥K and both follow, but West pitches a spade on the third heart. Time to restock. What now?

You are up to eight tricks, and West started with 7=2=?=?. You have lost only the ♥A so you are +3L. However, West has four good spades left so you can't put him in at this point. Your next move is to cash the clubs. If West follows, then he has at most a singleton diamond. East has a good heart and probably a good club, but that is all, so you can afford to play ace and a diamond, waiting for East to give you a diamond at the end.

If West started with two or three diamonds, then if he keeps at least two diamonds you exit with a spade for a diamond return. If West keeps one diamond

and East keeps three winners, then they have defended well and you will have to guess who has the $\heartsuit K$.

If the key suit is trumps, this type of play may be necessary to avoid a trump promotion, as on this deal from the 2003 Bermuda Bowl:

	\spadesuit A 8 4	
	\heartsuit 8 5 3	
	\diamondsuit K J 9 5 3	
	\clubsuit 9 6	
\spadesuit K 9 6		\spadesuit Q J 7 5
\heartsuit K Q 10 7 2		\heartsuit A 9
\diamondsuit A 7		\diamondsuit Q 10 8 4
\clubsuit J 5 3		\clubsuit Q 8 4
	\spadesuit 10 3 2	
	\heartsuit J 6 4	
	\diamondsuit 6 2	
	\clubsuit A K 10 7 2	

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Duboin	Helness	Bocchi	Helgemo
1 \heartsuit	pass	1 \spadesuit	pass
1 NT	pass	2 \heartsuit	pass
2 \clubsuit	all pass		

South started with the $\clubsuit A$. Realizing it would take more than just a club ruff to have a chance to defeat the contract, he now switched to the $\diamond 6$. Declarer ducked, so North won with the king and went back to clubs, South taking the king. North ruffed the third round of clubs and exited with a diamond. Declarer won with dummy's ace and played a spade to the jack. When that held he played a spade back to the king and North could win and play a diamond, promoting his partner's $\spadesuit 10$ into the setting trick.

The notrump fork would have prevented all this. When the $\spadesuit J$ held, declarer could have cashed the $\heartsuit A$, crossed to dummy with a heart and played the $\spadesuit 9$. That avoids the trump promotion and is also proof against North having started with $\spadesuit A 10 8 4$.

CASH AND THRASH

This type of play arises when you have solid outside values but a modest trump holding: say, Axxx opposite xxxx.

Suppose the defenders start by attacking a suit in which you hold Axx facing a singleton. You win, **cash** the ace of trumps and then **thrash** by playing your side-suit winners. The point of this play is that by cashing the ace of trumps you avoid the risk of a player ruffing in with a singleton trump. You also avoid the danger of playing a second round of trumps, which might give them the chance to draw trumps and then run *their* side suit. The play is equally valid if you start by simply ducking a round of trumps, planning to cash the ace on the next round.

This scenario can arise with different trump holdings, for example AKxx facing xxxx, or AKxxx facing xx when you are forced to ruff in the long trump hand at an early stage.

Here is a deal I was involved in:

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

Dealer West Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
pass	1NT ¹	pass	3♣ ²
dbl	redbl	all pass	
1. 11-14. 2. Puppet Stayman.			

I sat East, and yes, this was the real bidding!

Partner led the ♥2 and declarer (a famous World Champion) won with dummy's ace and played a club to the seven and partner's ten. He ruffed the heart return, played a club to the jack and ace, ruffed a heart and played three rounds of diamonds, carelessly winning the third round in dummy as partner discarded a spade. When declarer played a spade now, I went in with the ace and played a heart, setting up a long heart and an extra trump for West.

This is a classic cash and thrash scenario. After ducking one round of clubs to discover they are 4-1, declarer can simply knock out the ♠A. Alternatively, declarer can cash the ♣A first and then knock out the ♠A (or even run the diamonds). Whatever happens, the defenders will never get more than three trumps and a spade.

At the other table the bidding was:

West	North	East	South
pass	1♣	2♣*	2♠
3♥	3♠	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♥10 (on a low heart declarer can put in the eight to good effect), covered by the jack and queen. However East, perhaps concerned that West had started with ♥109x, led back the ♥3, blocking the suit, so now 3NT was cold.

Here is an example where declarer knew in advance that there might be a singleton trump lurking around:

♠ A K 8 6 4

♥ 10 8 2

♦ 6 2

♣ J 9 3

♠ 9 3

♥ K Q 9 4

♦ Q 10 9 8 3

♣ A Q

♠ Q J 10 5 2

♥ J

♦ J 5

♣ K 8 5 4 2

♠ 7

♥ A 7 6 5 3

♦ A K 7 4

♣ 10 7 6

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	2♣	2♥
dbl	all pass		

West led the ♠9 and declarer won with dummy’s ace and crossed to the ♥A. He cashed two top diamonds and ruffed a diamond, ruffed a spade and ruffed his last diamond. That was seven tricks. Now when declarer played the ♠K West had to ruff, and in due course South made another trump trick.

You need to exercise some care when making this type of play:

♠ 10 9 8

♥ Q J

♦ 8 7 5 4 2

♣ 7 6 4

♠ 3

♥ A 10 9 6 5

♦ 10 3

♣ A Q J 9 3

♠ K Q 7 6 5

♥ 4 3 2

♦ A 9 6

♣ K 8

♠ A J 4 2

♥ K 8 7

♦ K Q J

♣ 10 5 2

Dealer South

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
2♣ ²	pass	4♥	1NT ¹ all pass

1. 14-16.

2. Hearts and a minor.

When South leads the ♦K, declarer sees he is faced with the loss of a spade, two trumps and a diamond. The obvious line is to play on clubs, hoping to get rid of the losing diamonds from hand while the defenders take a profitless ruff. As the cards lie that works rather well, as neither defender can gain by ruffing the fourth round of clubs and declarer can ruff his losing diamond.

However, if declarer, perhaps thinking it cannot matter, cashes the ♥A first, then North can ruff the fourth club and play a spade. South wins and now plays the ♥K and a heart, leaving declarer with a losing diamond.

With a much more tenuous trump fit, this type of play is less likely to work. Take a look at this deal from the 2006 U.S. Team Trials:

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

Dealer West			
NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Zia	Rodwell	Rosenberg	Meckstroth
pass	1♦*	pass	1♥
pass	1NT	pass	2♦*
pass	2♥	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
pass	4♥	all pass	

We had a bidding accident on this deal but arrived in a very interesting contract. West led the ♦J; Jeff ruffed this and then ducked a heart. He ruffed the diamond return, cashed the ♥A and played on clubs. However, West could ruff the second round and play another diamond, removing dummy's last trump and leaving East with a host of winners.

Declarer can make things much tougher for the defenders by retaining the ace of trumps and simply playing on clubs. If a defender ruffs in and plays another diamond, declarer ruffs in hand, crosses to the ♠A, cashes the ♥A and carries on with clubs. That way declarer loses only three trump tricks. The defenders have a counter-measure, but it's not obvious. They must discard on the early rounds of clubs rather than ruffing. Simplest is for East to get rid of all his small spades: then he ruffs a club and plays a diamond, and the defense prevails.

Often you must duck a trump before you cash and thrash. If one opponent is dangerous, this will involve an avoidance play also:

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

Dealer West			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
1NT	2♦ ¹	pass	4♠
all pass			
1. Majors.			

West punts with a heart lead. How do you plan the play?

It seems likely that the ♦AQ are offside, but you should be okay if you can duck a trump to West then cash the trump ace and thrash your heart tricks, discarding diamonds. You want to keep East off lead, so you win the ♥9 in dummy and float the ♠6. You make easily as the full deal is:

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

If West plays a second heart, you win, cash the ♠A and the ♣A, ruff a club and play hearts, discarding diamonds from hand. If West refuses to ruff, you can ruff a diamond in hand and still have a trump trick to come.

However, what if East plays danger hand high (see p. 249) and covers the ♠6 with his doubleton honor (the jack in this case)? You are tightroped into winning the ♠A and, unless you want to bank on the unlikely diamond finesse, you must find another way home.

On the layout above, you can make 4♠ if you switch horses to a semi-crossruff: ♣A, club ruff, heart to the king, club ruff, ♥A *ruffed*, and another club ruff. West is down to the ♦AQx and his trump winners, and a trump exit now endplays him (since West has trump control and ♦AQx, your diamond spots save the day for you).

Note that if West started with five clubs and two diamonds, putting up the ♠J would defeat the contract.

DUCKING PLAYS FOR DECLARER

Refusing to win a trick that you could take is a very common tactic, both for the defenders and declarer. Let's look at some less common applications of the idea.

a) Greek Gift

Putting up an honor will in general see the next player cover it if he can. So if you don't want him to play an honor...

If the layout of a suit looks like this:

♣ 10 6 4

 ♣ A J 7 2

and West leads the ♣9 (East having bid clubs), you can cover with the ten to ensure three tricks in the suit. However, should you need two *fast* winners, then ducking might see East duck as well.

b) Preserving a winner

This is quite a well-known tactic, but it is not inappropriate to mention it here as it is a ducking play.

Look at this partial layout — hearts are trumps and West leads a heart:

♥ K J 5
 ♦ A 4

 ♥ A Q 10 9 3
 ♦ K Q 8 6 5

You win in dummy and can now consider playing the ♦A and ducking a diamond, which guards against the possibility of a 5-1 diamond break. It might come from this full deal:

♠ A 7 6 5

♥ K J 5

♦ A 4

♣ 9 7 6 5

♠ 2

♥ A Q 10 9 3

♦ K Q 8 6 5

♣ A K

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	3♦
pass	3♥	pass	4NT*
pass	5♣*	pass	6♥
all pass			

You decide to be conservative and stop in 6♥. West leads a trump to dummy’s king, East following. How do you plan to play?

You have eleven top tricks and are +1L, having no top or sure loser. Thus, you can play safe by laying down the diamond ace and leading a diamond back, ducking in hand. This way you retain your eleven top tricks and the ability to ruff a diamond for a twelfth. The full layout:

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

If you play an honor on the second round of the suit, West ruffs and returns a trump. You can attempt a squeeze to try to recover, but on this layout it will fail.

BLOCK DUCKING

Block ducking is a ducking play that preserves communications in the suit itself. It is easier to demonstrate than to define:

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

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♥	pass	2♦
pass	3♣	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♥*	pass	6♠
all pass			

West leads the ♠9 against your Moysian (4-3 fit) slam. How do you play from here?

You have ten top tricks. Against this lead, ruffing two diamonds in dummy and getting back to hand to draw trumps is a problem. However, one diamond ruff will do if you can get a fourth heart trick. Since you are +1L, you can try ducking a heart immediately! This is expedient not only to avoid the defense playing a third round of hearts, but also for trump control and re-entry purposes. You are blocking the suit, which is why I call this block ducking.

They play a second trump, which you win and then you play the ♦A and ruff a diamond. Now you lead a heart to the ace and draw trumps, claiming if neither major splits worse than 4-2.

The full deal:

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

THE 322/1/6 SUPER DUCK

The **322/1/6 *super duck*** is (obviously) another ducking play (don't worry about the name — I'll get to it in a moment). This is the standard position:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

You win the spade lead in hand and take a diamond finesse; East ducks. You will probably duck a club now (you might instead lead a heart to the ten and jack). They win and return another spade. You win in hand, repeat the diamond finesse, and down you go.

The winning play is to duck the first round of diamonds *completely*! This is such a counter-intuitive play with this combination that I call it a ***super duck***. The numbers **322** describe the number of stoppers you have in each suit. You need 3 in the suit they led (spades), because ducking then finessing (in diamonds) means conceding two control units. However, you also need 2 stoppers in any suit they could switch to, for the same reason.

The **1** in the name means you have exactly one entry to the long suit. If you had two entries you wouldn't need to bother with the duck. The **6** means you have six winners on the side, which means you need three tricks from the crucial suit (here, diamonds). Hence the name: **322/1/6 super duck**.

The play is equally valid with ♦KQJ54 opposite ♦83.

This is an example of why you have to guard against the possibility of a defender making an astute duck with a doubleton king:

♠ J 6 2
♥ 8 4
♦ A Q J 5 3
♣ K 7 4

♠ K 7
♥ Q 10 7 6 2
♦ 10 9 7 2
♣ Q 2

♠ Q 10 8 4
♥ 9 5 3
♦ K 8
♣ J 10 9 6

♠ A 9 5 3
♥ A K J
♦ 6 4
♣ A 8 5 3

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♥6 and declarer wins with the jack. When he now plays a diamond to the queen, East should duck smoothly. If declarer returns to hand with the ♣A and plays a diamond to the jack, East wins and simply returns a heart. Now, with neither minor suit behaving, eight tricks are the limit¹.

Instead, declarer can afford to super duck the first round of diamonds, allowing East to win with the eight. He takes the heart return and plays a diamond to the queen. East wins, but now declarer has three winning diamonds and nine tricks in total. It is worth noting that this play will be a spectacular failure if West has ♦K109xx, but East having ♦K10xx or ♦Kx is much more likely.

THE TRUMP PROMOTION PREVENTION DUCK

You might not see this one at the table very often, but it's worth being aware of it — then it just might pop into your mind when or if the occasion for it ever arises. I discovered the play looking at a computer-generated deal:

1. If declarer leads a low spade toward dummy's jack, West must duck. East wins the jack with the queen and leads another heart. With the hearts now good, West's SxK prevents declarer from ducking a spade to retain communication.

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

Dealer West
 Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♠	2♥
dbl*	4♥	all pass	

West leads the ♦K and switches to a spade. You ruff a diamond in hand, and play the ♠KQ, pitching a club. Spurning a club play at this point, you ruff another diamond (East showed odd diamond count) and lead a low trump toward dummy. When West doesn't play the ♥Q, if you place this card with East, then the layout could well be what you see above. In any event, to make the hand at this point you must *duck* the heart.

If West holds the trick, his best move is to lead another trump. You can't draw the last trump (dummy is squeezed), so you win and lead the ♣K, a Chinese high card promotion. West has no winning choice, since ducking the club allows you to draw the last trump and play another club up, scoring the queen as well as the king. The best he can do is win and return the ♦K, but dummy's queens are now good and you draw the last trump.

Instead, East can try overtaking the ♥8 with the ♥10. If he returns a trump, it is the same as if West wins and returns a trump. If he leads a spade, your retaining the ♥J in dummy is crucial — you pitch a club loser and ruff with the ♥J. If East returns the ♣9, you play the ♣K, succeeding as previously described.

West's support double, showing three spades, makes the 'duck a heart and leave a trump outstanding' line more attractive. If West could get out with a fourth spade you would be defeated (he taps you with the ♦K, East pitching a club. You can't draw trumps or lead a club to the queen, and if you lead the ♣K West must duck).

SHORTSHAKE

While we're on the subject of avoiding defensive ruffs, overruffs and promotions, I should mention the *shortshake*. A shortshake involves discarding a non-loser so that you can take a ruff in this suit earlier in the play and (you hope) avoid getting overruffed.

♠ 2
 ♥ 4
 ♦ A Q 9 8 4
 ♣ J 9 6 5 4 3

 ♠ A Q 10 5 4 3
 ♥ A K 3
 ♦ K 6
 ♣ A 2

You arrive in 5♣ as South, after opening a strong 1♣. North has shown both minors and you a spade suit plus a doubleton diamond, so West leads the ♥Q, which you win with your ace. How do you play from here?

You need to assume only two trump losers. Then, you need either to run diamonds (you could try to ruff one in hand, hoping the opponent with two diamonds has exactly three clubs) or to pitch a diamond, if necessary, on spades (via either a finesse or ruffing out the suit). Which do you favor?

I decided to work on spades, hoping for a 3-3 split or ♠Kx. To reduce the risk of ruffs, I led the ♥K at Trick 2 and pitched a spade, the shortshake. I then ruffed a spade and led a club to the ace. If East had played an honor I would have had to consider now playing another trump, but both played low. I ruffed a second spade, West playing the jack. I then exited with a low club to West's queen. It appeared that my line of play had failed, as the full deal was:

	♠ 2	
	♥ 4	
	♦ A Q 9 8 4	
	♣ J 9 6 5 4 3	
♠ J 6	<input type="text"/>	♠ K 9 8 7
♥ Q J 10		♥ 9 8 7 6 5 2
♦ J 10 7 5 3		♦ 2
♣ K Q 7		♣ 10 8
	♠ A Q 10 5 4 3	
	♥ A K 3	
	♦ K 6	
	♣ A 2	

However, West now exited with the ♦7, allowing me to win with the eight and claim eleven tricks. This was not a good play, but he was afraid that the heart continuation would set up a heart trick. He figured the diamond return was safe as I appeared not to have... the ♠A!

THE RUNNING SUIT ERADICATION ENDPLAY

This is the first of a number of situations involving the endgame that I'm going to discuss.

We are all familiar with throwing in an opponent to lead away from an honor, giving us an extra trick or tricks. In this particular maneuver you endplay an opponent with a long running suit, primarily to sever communications and isolate the danger hand. It's easier to show you an example than to try to define it.

♠ 5 4 3
♥ K 10 2
♦ 7 6
♣ A Q 9 5 4

♠ A K Q 2
♥ A 9 4
♦ K J 10
♣ J 8 3

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♣ ¹
2NT ²	3♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Strong, 16+.
2. Red suits.

West leads the ♦8, fourth best, and East plays the ♦2 (upside-down count). After winning the ♦J, you lead a club and West pitches the ♥8. How do you continue?

It appears that West has ♦AQ98xx so you can't let East have the lead. West is at least 6-5, so spades aren't splitting and you therefore have only seven tricks. You can't endplay West in diamonds because he will cash five diamond tricks. However, if you can put him in with a heart, he will be forced to lead a diamond, which eradicates the threat of him running this suit. So win the ♣A, cash the ♠AK and play three rounds of hearts. West scores two heart tricks and the ♦A, but the diamond suit is now dead. You then set up your ninth trick in clubs (and thus must not create a fifth defensive winner for East by cashing the third high spade).

Can anything go wrong? What if West unblocks his hearts? Remember you have only seven tricks and nowhere to go for a ninth without letting East in for a diamond through if he does unblock. To help protect against this possibility, unblock your ♥10 and ♥9 under the ace and king. If West was not dealt the ♥3, he can't avoid the endplay.

The full layout is:

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

THE FREEZE-PASSING ENDPLAY

Sometimes you need tricks from a frozen or half-frozen suit. If that's the case, it may be possible to play the suit at a time when the opponent will be endplayed, thereby *passing the freeze*. Take a look at this deal:

♠ K 8 6 5
♥ 10 3 2
♦ A K 10
♣ A 3 2
<div></div>
♠ Q 10 4
♥ 6 5
♦ Q 9 8 7 6 5
♣ K 4

Dealer East			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
		1♣	pass
1♥	dbl	2♥	3♦
pass	pass	3♥	4♦
all pass			
1. Promising four trumps.			

West leads the ♣Q. What is your plan?

You need to negotiate the spade suit for one loser. In an effort to get more information, you win the ♣K, cross to the ♦A and lead a low heart. East plays the ace, king and queen of hearts and you ruff. You play a diamond to the king, the suit splitting 2-2 (East has jack doubleton). Now what?

The opponents play a 15-17 notrump, and it seems that East has the ♠A, so he has 14 HCP known. Thus, West has the ♠J. You play a club to the ace and ruff a club, West playing low (not the best play to conceal the club layout). At this point you know East is ?=4=2=3+, so 3=4=2=4 seems most likely. Is there anything you can do about it?

If East has ♠A9x, you can lead the ♠10. West must cover with the jack and you play the king. East wins the ♠A but must either give you a ruff-sluff or return a spade, which you duck around to dummy's ♠8. You passed the freeze in spades at a point when East would be endplayed, hence the name.

The full layout:

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

If East had four spades, playing the ♠10 would still work except when West had ♠J9 doubleton.

THE LUNAR MENACE ACCESS SQUEEZE

In their classic *Adventures in Cardplay*, Ottlik and Kelsey described a squeeze threat to which there is no entry as being ‘on the moon’ — hence the name ‘lunar menace’. The idea is to set up a squeeze or endplay that forces an opponent to give you access to the lunar menace. It sounds far-fetched, but here is a deal from recent play:

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

Dealer South			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠Q; you win the ace and try the ♦J. West looks it over and plays low, allowing East’s king to win the trick. They run four more spade tricks. What cards do you come down to?

You have to make three discards from each hand. It would be dangerous to discard down to 2-2 in hearts, or to stiff either honor, so you can afford one heart from each hand. You want to keep your three club tricks, so you can part with one club from dummy. You want to try to establish diamond trick(s), so you pitch two diamonds from hand and one from dummy. In other words, dummy throws one card from each suit, while you throw a heart and two diamonds from hand.

East has the long spade (on which West discards a club), and he returns a club after the spades run out. Naturally you keep the position flexible by winning the ace and then you lead a diamond, but East pitches a club on this trick. West returns another club. The cards left are as follows:

♠ —

♥ Q 4

♦ 8 7

♣ Q

♠ —

♥ A 10 9

♦ —

♣ K J

You have three of the five remaining tricks (*restock*) and would like a fourth. West still has one top diamond so you can't surrender any tricks to him, except perhaps in diamonds. What are your options at this point?

1. You could win with the ♣Q and lead the ♥Q. This only works if East has the ♥KJ. Worse, if this trick goes queen, king, ace and West then wins your ♥9 with the jack, you will have to guess which winner to pitch at Trick 12 when West cashes his diamond.
2. You could win with the ♣Q and lead low to the ♥9, winning if East has the ♥KJ. At least this way if you are wrong you will still take three tricks.
3. You could win with the ♣Q and exit with a diamond, hoping West has no more clubs; you would then have a guess on his forced heart return. West would have to be 4=3=3=3, not 4=2=3=4.
4. You could overtake with the ♣K in hand and cash the ♣J. Your plan is to play West for the ♥J and East for the ♥K. The problem is that West might have ♥Jxx and you would be left with a diamond loser in dummy. However, in this four-card ending:

♠ —

♥ Q 4

♦ 8 7

♣ —

♠ —

♥ J x x

♦ A

♣ —

♠ —

♥ K x x

♦ —

♣ x

♠ —

♥ A 10 9

♦ —

♣ J

when you lead the ♣J, West is squeezed. If he discards a heart, you lead the ♥9, planning to run it and overtake the heart return to drop the jack. If West pitches his ♦A, establishing the ‘lunar menace’ in dummy, then you run the ♥9 and let dummy take the last two tricks.

Which line is best? I think the last one. East very likely has the ♥K since he didn’t switch to a heart. If he has the ♥K he is less likely to have the ♥J, both from raw probability and the fact that West might have discarded a discouraging heart with only low cards in the suit.

INTENT TO DECEIVE (THE LAIR PLAY)

I haven’t talked much yet about falsecards, and I shall indeed get to them in Chapter 8. However, before we end our discussion of tactical ideas for declarer, I want to mention one specific situation where falsecards can be useful.

Count signals help a lot on defense, but without help from the auction, an opponent may not be able to narrow down his partner’s exact holding right away. It might be difficult to determine whether an even count signal is from a two- or a four-card holding, for example. Declarer can sometimes take advantage of this with a well-timed falsecard. I executed this one against Mark Lair (the Texan expert and professional player, on occasion my teammate).

♠ A K 2
♥ A 10 8 7 6
♦ J 5
♣ J 8 4

♠ Q J 10 9 8 6 4
♥ —
♦ Q 8 6 3
♣ 9 3

Dealer West
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♦*	3♣
pass	4♣	all pass	

West (Lair) led the ♦A and continued with the king. I dropped the queen on the second round, which created the impression that I was 7=0=2=4. When Mark switched to a trump, I could organize two diamond ruffs in dummy while the ♥A took care of a losing club.

Chapter 6

DEFENSE

I want to turn now to tactics that are available to the defenders. Some of them, as you might expect, are related to the declarer tactics I described in Chapter 5; others are quite distinct. As I did in the previous chapter, I'll start with some ideas that revolve around entries — often a weakness for declarer that the defense can exploit.

GOUGING

Gouging involves leading or following suit with a high card which, although unable to win the trick or promote anything, nevertheless pins declarer in the wrong hand. This type of play can be made for a variety of reasons.

	♠ Q 10 7 4 2	
♠ A J 6	<div></div>	♠ 8 3
	♠ K 9 5	

When declarer leads low to the king, you can win and if necessary return the jack to pin declarer in the dummy. This gouging play will be successful when partner has a trump and declarer can't get off the dummy, or when you have a finessable trump position and declarer can't get to hand in time for the finesse.

Here is a full deal example of gouging:

	♠ K 3
	♥ Q 10 7 6 5
	♦ 7 5 4
	♣ A 5 2
♠ A Q	<div></div>
♥ A J 2	
♦ A K Q J	
♣ K 8 4 3	

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
3NT	4♠	pass	2♠
dbl	all pass		pass

Playing matchpoints, you lead three top diamonds. Declarer ruffs the third round and plays a spade. Not wanting to use up your fourth diamond exit card, you win the ♠A and return the ♠Q, putting declarer in dummy. He leads a heart (partner contributes the ♥8, playing standard signals) and you win declarer's king with your ace. What now?

It appears that declarer was $6=3=2=2$, so partner still has a trump declarer would like to draw. You could lead a club now, hoping partner has the queen, but if he has that card you can make 3NT easily and you can't beat $4\spadesuit$ doubled enough to compensate. If declarer has the $\clubsuit Q$, though, you can get an extra trick by returning the $\heartsuit J$, gouging. Dummy must win and partner gets to ruff the next heart. The full deal is:

	\spadesuit K 3	
	\heartsuit Q 10 7 6 5	
	\diamondsuit 7 5 4	
	\clubsuit A 5 2	
\spadesuit A Q		\spadesuit 7 6 4
\heartsuit A J 2		\heartsuit 8 3
\diamondsuit A K Q J		\diamondsuit 9 6 3 2
\clubsuit K 8 4 3		\clubsuit J 9 7 6
	\spadesuit J 10 9 8 5 2	
	\heartsuit K 9 4	
	\diamondsuit 10 8	
	\clubsuit Q 10	

If you play back a club or diamond instead of the $\heartsuit J$, declarer wins in hand, draws the last trump and finesses the heart to get out for down one.

Here is an example from the 2010 Women's European Championships that demonstrates the effect of locking declarer in the wrong hand:

	\spadesuit A Q J 5 4 3	
	\heartsuit 9 5 3	
	\diamondsuit —	
	\clubsuit K 10 3 2	
\spadesuit 9 7		\spadesuit 10 6
\heartsuit 10 6		\heartsuit A 7 2
\diamondsuit A K 9 7 6 5		\diamondsuit Q J 10 8 4
\clubsuit J 9 8		\clubsuit A Q 4
	\spadesuit K 8 2	
	\heartsuit K Q J 8 4	
	\diamondsuit 3 2	
	\clubsuit 7 6 5	

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Beliankina</i>	<i>Schaltz</i>	<i>Badrankova</i>	<i>Cilleborg</i>
pass	1 \spadesuit	2 \diamondsuit	2 \heartsuit
4 \diamondsuit	4 \heartsuit	all pass	

West led the $\diamondsuit A$; declarer ruffed in dummy and played a small heart to the queen. When the ace didn't appear, she ruffed her last diamond and returned to hand with the $\spadesuit K$ to play a heart honor to East's ace. East's spade return locked declarer on the table and the defenders had to score three more tricks.

The winning line for declarer — difficult to see — is to play two rounds of spades ending in hand and only then play a heart. This is a Dentist’s Coup — it extracts East’s second spade, after which there is no defense.

DAYS OF THUNDER

In the Days of Thunder play, the defenders lead declarer’s solid suit to create impossible entry problems. This device takes its name from a Tom Cruise action movie about NASCAR racing — I felt it expressed the potentially dramatic effect since several tricks may be gained.

This is the type of situation I have in mind:

♠ K Q J 8 5

♥ —

♦ —

♣ A K

♠ A 3

♥ —

♦ —

♣ Q J 8 7 4

If the defenders play a spade at this point, declarer has to guess which suit is breaking. If he gets it wrong, declarer cannot take all the tricks.

Benito Garozzo found a play of this type in the 1979 Bermuda Bowl final:

♠ 8 4

♥ Q 8 7 4

♦ 10 4

♣ A 7 6 4 2

♠ A

♥ K 9 6 4

♦ K J 7 3 2

♣ Q 10 9

♠ Q J 7 3 2

♥ J 10 2

♦ A Q 8

♣ K J

♠ K 10 9 6 5

♥ A 5

♦ 9 6 5

♣ 8 5 3

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Passell	Lauria	Brachman	Garozzo
1♦	pass	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	2♣*	pass
2♥	pass	3NT	all pass

Lauria led a club and Passell won the ♣K at Trick 1 as Garozzo played the ♣8 (upside down count and attitude). Then declarer played a spade to the ace, crossed to dummy’s ♦Q, and led the ♠Q, pitching a heart as South won with the king.

Rather than return a club, Garozzo played back a diamond, a Days of Thunder play. Passell won the diamond in dummy and his best shot seemed to be to cash the ♠J, the potential ninth trick. (In fact, running the diamond winners works as long as declarer reads North's discards correctly.²) However, this set up two good spades for South. When declarer continued with the ♣J, North won the ♣A and led a heart to the ♥A to allow South to take the setting tricks.

An alternative for declarer after the diamond return is to strand the good spade and lead the ♥J, but South can foil that attempt by rising with the ace and playing another heart, setting up two tricks for North.

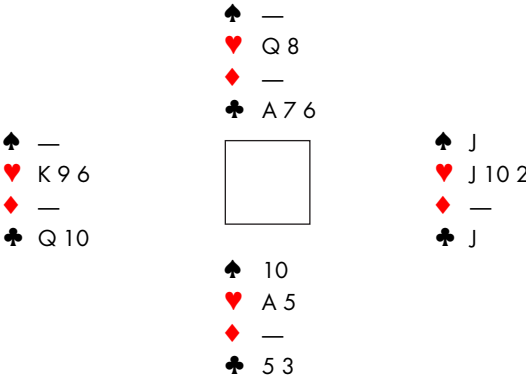
Declarer did nothing terrible here. The diamond play was so effective because it compelled Passell to choose from several unappetizing alternatives:

- blocking diamonds by winning in hand
- stranding the spade winner
- cashing the ♠J while both round-suit aces were still outstanding

The possible effect of the diamond play could be inferred from declarer's work on spades, a scrappy 5-1 fit, which made it quite evident that he thought nine tricks were there for the taking on the expected club return. Declarer couldn't be weak in hearts, so all that was left was to attempt to screw up his communications.

Here is another example where, by coincidence, the pivotal suit was again diamonds:

2. The end position after the diamonds are cashed is:



Now declarer must play North for the ♥Q and lead a low heart toward dummy. If North takes the ♥Q and leads a club, dummy wins the jack and cashes the spade. If North plays ace and another club, South must give dummy the ♠J at Trick 13. Dummy's ♣J is a *duck-preventing honor*.

♠ J 8 7 3
 ♥ A 2
 ♦ K Q J 5
 ♣ J 6 4

♠ A 6 5
 ♥ 6 5 4 3
 ♦ 3 2
 ♣ K 10 8 2

♠ K 10 9 2
 ♥ K 8 7
 ♦ 10 9 8 7
 ♣ Q 5

♠ Q 4
 ♥ Q J 10 9
 ♦ A 6 4
 ♣ A 9 7 3

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT ¹
pass	2♣*	pass	2♥
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. 12-14.

West led the ♣2. When declarer played low from dummy East put up the queen, declarer winning with the ace. Now he played a heart to the ace, a heart to the jack and a third heart, discarding a spade from dummy. East, Gunnar Hallberg, took the ♥K and switched to a diamond, a play that won him the 1997 Sender Award from the IBPA for best defense of the year. That messed up declarer's entries. If he won in hand and led a club, he would never score the ♥Q. If he tried cashing the heart first, he would squeeze the dummy.

To complete a trilogy involving the diamond suit, take a look at this deal from the 1999 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ 10 9 5 2
 ♥ A
 ♦ J 6
 ♣ K Q J 9 8 6

♠ 3
 ♥ K J 10 9 6 4
 ♦ A 9 7
 ♣ 5 3 2

♠ K Q J 8 7 6
 ♥ 8
 ♦ 5 4 3
 ♣ A 10 4

♠ A 4
 ♥ Q 7 5 3 2
 ♦ K Q 10 8 2
 ♣ 7

Dealer West
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Furunes</i>	<i>Chagas</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Branco</i>
2♥	3♣	pass	3♦
pass	3♠	pass	3NT
all pass			

As an aside, it's surprising East didn't take the opportunity to double 3♠ (my partner did in an analogous situation). Anyhow, without a double West led a hopeful ♥K, but hit the wrong singleton honor in dummy. Declarer won, played the ♣K and, when that held, followed it with the jack. East took the ace and switched to a sneaky low spade. Declarer could not afford to let West win and clear the hearts, so he went up with the ace and played a diamond. Dummy's ♦J was allowed to score

and declarer cashed the clubs and then played a diamond, leaving West to present him with a ninth trick.

Do you see where West went wrong? When declarer plays a diamond he should go in with the ace and simply return the suit. Whichever hand declarer wins in, he can score no more than eight tricks.

Here’s an example from the 2011 Spring NABC in Louisville, where the Days of Thunder play disrupts declarer enough to prevent him squeezing you:

♠ A K 4 3 2

♥ K 7 4 3

♦ 4 3

♣ K 3

♠ Q J 7 6 5

♥ A 2

♦ J 7

♣ Q 8 7 6

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	2♥	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West, your partner, punts with the ♠10. Declarer wins dummy’s ace and leads a heart to the jack and partner’s queen. West returns the ♥2 to your ace and you switch to the ♠Q, which declarer allows to hold as partner discards an encouraging diamond. Reading partner for good diamonds you try the ♦J, which holds the trick. Now what?

It appears that declarer has one diamond honor, likely the ace, so he should have the ♣AJ for his 2NT bid. He can get 2+2+1+3 in that case, and he has lost four tricks, so you will get squeezed in the black suits unless you can break it up. The only suit you can lead to trash declarer’s communication is a club, Days of Thunder.

This is the full deal:

♠ A K 4 3 2

♥ K 7 4 3

♦ 4 3

♣ K 3

♠ 10

♥ Q 9 6 5

♦ K Q 9 8 2

♣ 9 5 2

♠ 9 8

♥ J 10 8

♦ A 10 6 5

♣ A J 10 4

♠ Q J 7 6 5

♥ A 2

♦ J 7

♣ Q 8 7 6

The club play works because the heart suit is blocked. If you return a diamond or spade, declarer unblocks the ♥J, cashes the ♦A if he still has it, leads a club to the king, and squeezes you by cashing the ♥K.

SUIT SUFFOCATION PLAY³

The idea of this play is that a defender leads away from his honor into a long semi-solid suit in the dummy, playing declarer for a singleton in the suit. The thinking behind it is that partner will have a losing trump left to ruff with when declarer continues with a ruffing finesse. It works well when the suit is 2-6-4-1 round the table, with you sitting over the dummy holding Kxxx or Axxx.

Other conditions of the play are:

- Declarer can draw partner's trump (the *suit suffocator*) if you don't lead dummy's long suit.
- Declarer needs to establish more than two tricks in dummy's long suit.
- Dummy lacks the two entries declarer needs to establish the rest of the suit and then get back to dummy after trumps are drawn.

Here is an example:

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

Dealer North			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
	1♠	pass	2♥
pass	4♥	pass	4NT*
pass	6♥*	all pass	

Partner leads the ♦6 (an unreadable spot card), ruffed in dummy. When declarer plays dummy's ♥Q, you cover with the king and it holds the trick! Now what?

Declarer would be unlikely to duck holding ♥AJxxxx, so it is reasonable to place him with ♥AJxxx. He didn't know dummy was going to turn up with a diamond void, so he can't be missing the ♣A. Partner would likely have led a spade with a singleton, so place declarer with the stiff. If you lead back anything but a spade, declarer will have little choice other than to draw trumps and try the (successful) ruffing finesse in spades, with the ♣K as a re-entry.

This is the layout you are hoping for:

3. I confess that my original name for this play was inappropriate for a family audience, and I was persuaded that some revision was in order. *E.R.*

	♠ A Q J 10 9 5	
	♥ Q 7 3	
	♦ —	
	♣ K 7 4 3	
♠ 8 3	<div></div>	♠ K 7 6 2
♥ 9 6		♥ K 10 5
♦ 10 7 6 3		♦ A J 8 4 2
♣ J 9 8 5 2		♣ 10
	♠ 4	
	♥ A J 8 4 2	
	♦ K Q 9 5	
	♣ A Q 6	

The suit suffocation play works quite well. On a spade shift declarer can win the ♠9 and then run the ♠10. Now, though, he has to draw trumps and he can't do that ending in dummy. The best he can do is to take three spades, five trumps (including the diamond ruff) and three clubs for eleven tricks.

True, declarer might make, double dummy, by taking your ♥K, drawing a second round of trumps and then playing a spade to the ace and the ♠Q (which would be a losing line with spades 3-3). But this does not detract from the beauty of the spade suit suffocation play.

The play is so named because you are reaching into their good AQJ10 suit and smothering the life out of it. The suit can't live if you don't give it room, and time enough, to breathe.

PROTECTING A MINOR TENACE

When you think that partner has led a singleton, it is usually right to reject what might otherwise be an automatic cover. If declarer is short of entries, you can create real problems for him.

Suppose clubs are a side suit that declarer has bid and partner leads the ♣2 in this situation:

	♣ 10 8 4 3	
♣ 2	<div></div>	♣ Q J 6 5
	♣ A K 9 7	

Don't cover if declarer plays the eight or ten from dummy. The idea is that declarer can't repeat the finesse now (lest partner ruff), and if he is short on dummy re-entries, this could let you take a trick eventually. He will need to draw trumps, then re-enter dummy twice to pick up the suit.

Here's an example in a full deal:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♣
pass	1♦	dbl	3♠*
4♥	5♣	5♥	6♣
all pass			

Partner leads the ♦2, and declarer plays the nine from dummy. *Duck* this trick — now declarer needs two entries to dummy to pick up the diamonds.

THE LEFT JAB

The *left jab* is a very common tactic. It occurs when you play an unsupported honor to disrupt the timing of an opponent's attempt to set up his suit. It's a form of Chinese High Card Promotion, but in a suit that the opponent holds strongly.

Look at this situation:

♦ K 8 4 or	♦ A J 10 6
♦ Q 8 4	

When declarer leads this suit, it can be effective to go up with your honor if declarer has two small. One of several good things might happen. Declarer might play you for ♦KQx, and waste a re-entry to hand to lead this suit again. Alternatively he might duck, or he might not have enough dummy entries to develop the tricks he needs.

Don't use the left jab from honor third versus a 6-2 fit; count on partner to duck with honor doubleton offside. If partner knows you would always go up with honor doubleton, he can duck with honor doubleton if you fail to rise, knowing you have honor third. Of course, you have to be willing to let them take two fast tricks as a trade-off for killing the suit.

The left jab can also be effective if declarer is trying to take a combination finesse against two cards of unequal rank in your hand, as in this example:

♣ A J 9 3

♣ K 10 6 or

♣ Q 10 6

Now when you rise with an honor, declarer has to guess whether to finesse the nine next round or play you for the KQ.

Here is a tough example that I missed in the 1997 Bermuda Bowl final.

♠ Q 9 6 3
♥ K 2
♦ A 9 5 3
♣ 8 6 3

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

♠ K 10 8 7 2
♥ Q 10 5
♦ J 10 8 4
♣ J

Dealer East			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
<i>Levy</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Mari</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
		pass	pass
1♥	pass	2♣*	pass
2♦*	pass	2♥	pass
4♥	all pass		

Jeff led the ♠6 (at the other table after an analogous auction, North found the only lead to defeat the contract legitimately when he selected a club). Declarer won with dummy's ace and ran the ♥6 to the king. Jeff cashed the ♦A and when I discouraged switched back to spades. There was nothing more to be done and in due course declarer picked up my hearts for ten tricks.

I could have made life much harder by going up with the ♥Q when declarer led dummy's six. Say he wins with the ace and plays a diamond. Jeff takes the ace and plays a spade, and I win and switch to my singleton club, setting up a ruff when partner gets in with the ♥K. This is hardly clear-cut at single-dummy, however.

In basic terms, you should go up with your honor when they lead toward dummy if you think declarer has two or three small. They must win (or be Chinesed) and lead again toward dummy from hand, which they may not be able to do.

I said at the start of this chapter that often similar ploys are available to both the defenders and declarer, and the left jab is a case in point. Indeed, the left jab is easier to spot as declarer where you know your side's combined assets, as in this case:

♥ K 10 6

 ♥ Q 7 4

When West leads the ♥9 you can go up with dummy's king. Either East ducks and gives you two tricks (or wins and continues and you run the lead to dummy's ten) or he wins and must wait for West to get in again to establish the suit for him.

The left jab can also be used when attacking a suit, even one that declarer is not trying to establish.

♠ 7 4
 ♥ A 10 5
 ♦ A K Q J 6 4
 ♣ Q 3

♠ A 9 5
 ♥ Q 7 4
 ♦ 8 7 3
 ♣ A 6 5 2

Dealer West
 Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

You lead the ♣2; when declarer puts up dummy's queen, partner follows with a discouraging nine. Declarer cashes three top diamonds, discarding two spades from hand, then leads a club to the king and your ace as partner plays the ♣8. For you to have any chance, partner must have the ♥K and either the ♠QJ or the ♠K. Even so, that will not be enough to defeat the contract if declarer has the ♥J and a slow spade stopper unless you can find a way to develop another trick. The way to do that is to force declarer to squeeze himself on the run of the diamonds!

This is the situation you are hoping for:

♠ 7 4
 ♥ A 10 5
 ♦ J 6 4
 ♣ —

♠ A 9 5
 ♥ Q 7 4
 ♦ —
 ♣ 6 5

♠ Q J 8
 ♥ J 8 3
 ♦ —
 ♣ J 10

♠ K 10 2
 ♥ K 9 6 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ 4

Try the ♥Q, the left jab!

If declarer ducks, he suffers the Chinese Promotion when you play a second heart, and suddenly has five losers. If he wins, he must cash the diamonds or lose them forever. If he leaves any diamonds in dummy, you will get two hearts (via a duck from partner), two spades and a club. If he runs the diamonds, he can pitch a club and a heart from his hand, but then what?

If declarer sees this coming, he may realize that the club play at Trick 5 is a mistake. A spade instead is the winning line, although the way home is far from straightforward.

This is the full deal:

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

THE 007 PLAY — LICENSE TO KILL

In the *007 play* you continue playing a suit even though that establishes a winner for the opponents, knowing that you can keep leading it and let partner ruff the winner with a worthless trump. It is most commonly used as a defense against a potential squeeze (on yourself, later), but could equally well be used just to kill a winner, as in this example:

	♠ Q 6	
	♥ J 10 9 5	
♠ A 4		
♥ A K Q 5		

Defending against a spade contract you lead the ♥K and partner plays the two, promising an odd number. You can continue with your remaining top hearts, setting up dummy's jack, knowing that you can win the first round of trumps with the ace and play your last heart: partner will ruff and kill dummy's winner. Of course, if declarer has advertised a long spade suit you run the risk of partner having either a singleton trump, or doubleton king in trumps, so this play is not automatically correct.

The 007 play may sometimes bring an extra dividend in the form of a trump promotion, as it would have on this deal from the 1999 Bermuda Bowl final:

♠ K 9 6 4 3
♥ J 8 6 2
♦ K Q 6
♣ 3

♠ J 2
♥ 9 7
♦ 10 9 4 3
♣ K 10 9 7 2

♠ A 8
♥ A K Q 10 5
♦ 5
♣ Q J 6 5 4

♠ Q 10 7 5
♥ 4 3
♦ A J 8 7 2
♣ A 8

Dealer East
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Branco</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Chagas</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
pass	2♣	1♥	dbl
pass	4♣	pass	3♣
		all pass	

Chagas cashed the ♥K but then switched to the ♣Q, so Jeff could win with dummy's ace, cross to a diamond and play a spade toward the queen. East won and (too late) played two more rounds of hearts — Jeff ruffed with the queen, drew trumps and claimed. If instead the defense continues with hearts at Tricks 2 and 3, declarer can still ruff with the queen and play a spade to the nine, but now East wins and plays a fourth heart, and West scores the ♠J.

Here is another example, from the 1980 Cavendish Pairs:

♠ K Q 9 7
♥ A K Q 10 7
♦ 10 8
♣ 8 2

♠ A J 5
♥ 4 3
♦ 5 4 3
♣ A K J 7 5

♠ 10 3
♥ 9 6 5 2
♦ 9 7 6 2
♣ 6 4 3

♠ 8 6 4 2
♥ J 8
♦ A K Q J
♣ Q 10 9

Dealer West
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♣	dbl	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	2♣
pass	3♣	pass	4♣
all pass			

On this deal, 4♣ can only be defeated if West starts with three rounds of clubs, setting up declarer's ♣Q. Then he wins the first round of spades and plays a fourth round of clubs to secure a trump promotion thanks to East's precious ♠10. Both Peter Nagy and Alan Sontag found this sparkling defense.

Another benefit arises when partner is able to discard from another short suit and score a ruff as on this type of deal — this is analogous to the shortshake, which we saw in Chapter 5:

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

Dealer South			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
pass	2♣	all pass	1♠

West leads the ♦K and continues the suit. When East plays two more rounds of diamonds, West is able to discard two clubs. Winning the first trump lead, West now switches to a club and the defense scores a ruff to defeat the contract.

RUFFING DECLARER’S LOSER

Part 4 of this book discusses many situations on defense where it is necessary to do something counter-intuitive. Here’s a glimpse of what’s to come there: even when declarer leads a card from dummy that you are sure your partner can win, it might still be right to ruff. For example, you may want to be on lead

- to continue with a forcing defense.
- to return a trump in order to kill ruff(s) or break communications.
- to play a side suit from your side.

Here’s an example:

♠ A 10 3
 ♥ 5 4
 ♦ A 7 6 5
 ♣ J 6 3 2

♠ 9
 ♥ Q 10 9 8 7
 ♦ K J 9 8 2
 ♣ A 4

♠ 7 6 5 4
 ♥ 3 2
 ♦ 10 4
 ♣ K 10 9 8 7

♠ K Q J 8 2
 ♥ A K J 6
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ Q 5

Dealer South
 Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
2♠*	3♥*	pass	1♠
all pass			4♠

With no attractive lead, partner (West) punts with his singleton trump. Declarer wins in hand, plays the two top hearts, and ruffs a heart in dummy with the ♠A. How do you defend?

Partner has shown odd heart count, so declarer still needs to ruff another heart in the dummy. There is no chance if declarer has a winner, or a hand entry, in either minor, so prepare yourself to get in by discarding a diamond on the third round of hearts. Then, when declarer plays ace and another diamond, you ruff and return a spade to remove dummy's last trump.

Declarer can do better as the cards lie by playing the ♥A, the ♦A and the ♥K and then exiting with the ♦Q to the king. Then the way for the heart ruffs is clear.

UNBLOCKING FOR A PUSHER

We've looked at some special suit combinations from declarer's point of view, but there are many situations where a defender has to unblock or be alert to a potential problem.

For example, with KJ108 in front of A5 in dummy, it can't really cost to stick in the ten when partner returns the suit. If partner has say 973, your unblock has made room for his 'pusher' (the nine) to be effective in retaining the lead to trap declarer's queen. This is the position you are catering for:

♥ K J 10 8 ♥ A 5
 ♥ Q 6 4 2 ♥ 9 7 3

The play goes seven, two, ten, ace, and you run the suit if East gets in again to lead the ♥9, his pusher. This play is also effective if West has AJ108 in front of Kx or Qx.

THE UNBLOCKING CONCESSION

In this play you are conceding a trick and unblocking at the same time (thus, leading a middle card). The idea is to retain communication with partner, and/or not to rectify the loser count.



When you lead the king or queen, declarer wins the ace, partner playing the ♥8. Next time you are in, lead the ♥10, and either steal a cheap trick or set up your long card while maintaining flexibility.

MIDDLING

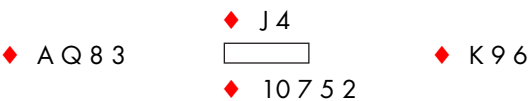
Middling is a play where the middle card of a holding is led, usually by a defender, in order to be able to run a suit. Middling is an unblocking play and should be distinguished from a *surrounding play*, which works like this:



Here West leads the ♠J, enabling the defense to run four tricks in the suit. If dummy covers, East wins the ♠A and West's ♠K9 *surrounds* the ♠10. By contrast, here are some examples of middling:



If West starts with the king and then follows with the nine, declarer ducks and East has to win with the jack (note that declarer's ♠10 is a crossover stopper). If four tricks are needed from this suit, West will need another entry to lead it. However, if West leads the nine first time and declarer plays low from dummy, East can win with the jack and return the six. Now when West wins with the king the defenders can cash two more tricks at once.



Here, East must lead the nine to secure four fast tricks.

♥ A Q 8 3	♥ J 6 [] ♥ 9 7 4 2	♥ K 10 5
-----------	---------------------------	----------

To ensure four tricks can be taken on the go, East must start by leading the ten. West wins with the queen and returns the three.

♣ K 10 3	♣ J 8 6 2 [] ♣ 9 5	♣ A Q 7 4
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Once again it is vital for West to start with the ten if the defenders want to get four tricks immediately.

These plays can be hard to recognize because the middle spot looks like top of nothing when it is led (this is especially true on the opening lead). The context, i.e. the need to run this suit, should serve to alert partner to what you are doing.

THE REESE PLAY

This is related to middling, but now it is the player with the four-card length who has to do the hard work, leading high to preserve communication with partner, who has honor third. The idea is to establish the suit so that it can be run with only one subsequent lead from the honor third hand, not two.

Here's the basic situation (the position was first described by Terence Reese in his classic *Reese on Play*):

♠ Q 10 7 5	♠ J 9 [] ♠ A 8 4 2	♠ K 6 3
------------	---------------------------	---------

Suppose West starts with the five. Declarer takes East's king with the ace, and now in order to run the suit East will need at least one and possibly two entries. If West leads the queen instead, the best declarer can do is duck the first round (if he wins the ace, the suit is ready to roll and either player can lead it when they get in). When the queen holds, West leads the ♠5 to East's king; declarer must either win and hope to keep East off lead, or duck and make West the danger hand.

The following deal occurred during the 1976 Italian Team Championships:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Garozzo		Belladonna	3NT*
all pass			

West led the ♦Q and East went up with the ace and switched to the ♠A. Now a low spade collected South's queen and a third round of the suit enabled East to take the setting tricks.

With this hand:

♠ Q 8 3 ♥ A Q 9 8 ♦ K 10 4 2 ♣ 5 4

what would you lead versus the auction 1NT-3NT?

Suppose you lead the ♦2 and this dummy arrives:

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

Declarer wins partner's queen with the ace and leads the ♦7 to dummy's eight, partner following. Now he plays a third diamond, partner pitching a middle spade and declarer the ♣8. What next?

It isn't clear what to do, but if you decide to break hearts now you need to lead the queen, the Reese play. The full deal is:

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

If you lead a low heart to the jack and king, you are ripe for an endplay (declarer will strip your two clubs and give you the high diamond). A spade switch breaks a frozen suit. A passive club play leaves you endplayed when declarer takes two rounds of clubs ending in dummy and gives you the ♦K. The other winning defense is to cash the ♦K and get out with a club. As you might have noticed, declarer initially had a number of alternative lines of play that allowed him to make his contract.

THE MORTON'S FORK CONCESSION

As I reminded you in the previous chapter, Morton's Fork is a coup that forces an opponent to choose between two evils: letting declarer establish one or more extra tricks in the suit led, and losing the opportunity to win any trick in that suit.

The *Morton's Fork concession* arises when a defender concedes an opponent's winner before that winner can be used as a Morton's Fork threat, and/or before the requisite position for the Fork has been established.

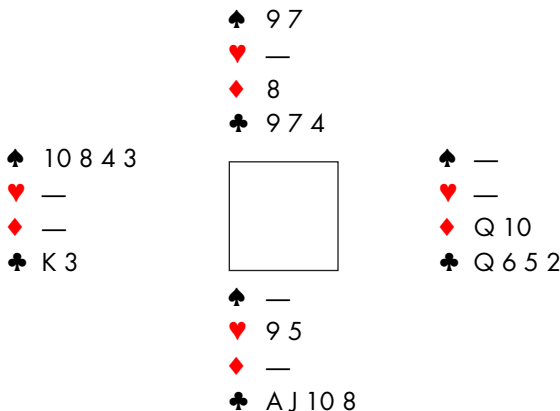
This is a typical example:

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

Dealer East
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
		3♦	4♥
all pass			

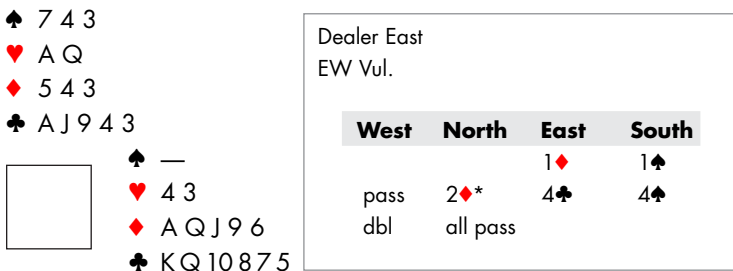
When you lead the $\heartsuit J$, declarer wins with dummy's ace and plays four rounds of hearts. After winning the $\heartsuit J$, you exit with the $\spadesuit K$. Declarer takes the ace and returns the jack. When you win this trick you have reached this position:



If you think you know the club position (see *empty signal* — the next section), now is the time to lead a low spade. That will leave declarer in the dummy when it won't do him any good (if he takes a club finesse, you win and exit with a high spade).

If instead you exit with the natural-looking ♠10, declarer (who has a count on the hand) can ruff and lead the ♣J from hand to leave you with a choice of evils. First, you can duck and have your ♣K fall under the ace next time. Second, you can win and allow declarer to repeat the club finesse (either you have to play a club yourself or you have to give him access to dummy with the ♠9). Note that by playing the ♣J, declarer was unblocking for a pusher.

Here is another example from a recent Regional tournament:



Partner leads the $\spadesuit 2$ (playing third- and fifth-best leads) and declarer plays the $\spadesuit 10$ under your ace. What now?

It looks like trumps are 5-5 between declarer and partner, since partner doubled. Declarer should have most of the missing high cards to bid $4\spadesuit$ on a five-card suit. Given the $\heartsuit 10$ play, it certainly appears that declarer has two diamonds,

probably the $\heartsuit K10$. Partner would likely have led a club if he had a singleton or doubleton, so he is probably void. Thus partner is likely $5=5=3=0$.

The danger of a diamond return is that declarer will be able to score a small trump by ruffing a diamond from dummy. However, if you lead the $\clubsuit K$ now, partner can discard one of his diamonds, poised now to overruff. The whole layout was:

	\spadesuit 7 4 3	
	\heartsuit A Q	
	\diamondsuit 5 4 3	
	\clubsuit A J 9 4 3	
\spadesuit J 10 8 5 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> </div>	\spadesuit —
\heartsuit K 9 8 7 6		\heartsuit 4 3
\diamondsuit 8 7 2		\diamondsuit A Q J 9 6
\clubsuit —		\clubsuit K Q 10 8 7 5
	\spadesuit A K Q 9 6	
	\heartsuit J 10 5 2	
	\diamondsuit K 10	
	\clubsuit 6 2	

East did play another diamond, so I won and played a heart to the queen. Now I could afford to test one round of trumps before playing a heart to the ace and taking a diamond ruff in hand. I played the $\heartsuit J$, covered by the king and ruffed, came back to hand with a spade, cashed the $\heartsuit 10$, and led a club. Lobbing toward the $\clubsuit A$ in this position is a ruffing Morton’s Fork Coup: if West ruffs, I have no club loser (or if he leads a heart I score my other small trump), and if West doesn’t ruff, the $\clubsuit A$ is my tenth trick.

If instead East returns the $\clubsuit K$ and West pitches a diamond, I win the $\clubsuit A$, play a diamond to the king, a heart to the queen, cash the $\heartsuit A$, cross back to the $\spadesuit A$ and lead the $\heartsuit J$. When West covers I ruff and can play another spade to hand and cash the $\heartsuit 10$, but I have no way to score any small trumps. I could prevail in various ways if only I had the $\spadesuit 8$.

Returning the $\clubsuit K$ is indeed a Morton’s Fork Concession in that it executes the Morton’s Fork before I’m ready, at a point when West has a winning defense, the diamond discard.

THE EMPTY SIGNAL

It hardly needs stating that signaling is a critical part of defending. Let’s look at some situations where you may not have thought about the possibility of conveying a message to partner.

If you have honor fourth in a suit, with very low spots, such that they can never be promoted, it could be helpful to partner to pitch one to say ‘my holding is

This was the position with West to play:

♠ 10 8 4 3	♠ 9 7	♠ —
♥ —	♥ —	♥ —
♦ —	♦ 8	♦ Q 10
♣ K 3	♣ 9 7 4	♣ Q 6 5 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	
	♠ —	
	♥ 9 5	
	♦ —	
	♣ A J 10 8	

How can you tell which holding declarer has?

CASHING THE IMPUTED TRUMP ACE TO ASK FOR A RUFF

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Here's an example of the situation you are catering for. Defending 4♠, partner leads a heart and you see this dummy:

♠	K Q J 6		
♥	7		
♦	A K Q 5 3		
♣	K Q 8		
	<div></div>	♠	A 7 4
		♥	A 8 6 5 2
		♦	9 6 4
		♣	J 4

Since trumps are 3-2, your only chance for three more tricks is two black aces and a ruff in one of the minors.

You take the ♥A and return a club. Partner will duck this; then, when you get in with the ♠A, you can play your remaining club. If partner has the ♣A, you will score a ruff on the third round of the suit. Just as you assume that partner has the ♣A, without which there is no chance for you to beat 4♠, partner must assume that you have the ♠A. Given that, when you don't cash the ♠A partner can infer that your club is a doubleton. Instead, if your hand is

♠A 7 4 ♥A 8 6 5 2 ♦9 7 6 4 ♣J

then after winning with the ♥A you should cash the ace of trumps first, and only then lead a club. Now partner will know you have a singleton and return a club for you to ruff.

You might also have to cash the ace of trumps to draw partner's attention to the possibility of a ruff in another suit, as in this type of situation:

♠	K 6 2		
♥	K J 3		
♦	9 3		
♣	A K J 10 6		
♠	Q J 10 9 3	<div></div>	♠ A 8 4
♥	A 8 2		♥ 6 5
♦	10 7 6 5 4		♦ Q J 8 2
♣	—		♣ 9 5 3 2
	♠ 7 5		
	♥ Q 10 9 7 4		
	♦ A K		
	♣ Q 8 7 4		

Dealer North
 EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
1♠	2♥	2♠	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠Q, and it collects the two, four and five. If West continues with the ♠J or ♠10 East is unlikely to overtake, and even if he does then the obvious move is a switch to the ♦Q. A better plan is for West cash the ♥A at Trick 2 and then continue with the ♠3. Now East will win and surely find the club switch.

CLARIFYING THE LEAD OF AN UNSUPPORTED HONOR

I'll finish this chapter with three quite general ideas that you should add to your arsenal.

One of the awkward areas for the defenders is when they have to attack a suit where dummy has a modest holding such as three small. Sitting over the dummy it can be helpful to lead the king from, say, K75 when partner has something along the lines of AQxx or AJxx. You might also consider leading the queen from Qxx, particularly if you need to run the suit. If dummy has 10xx and you find partner with AKxx, this would save him from having to guess whether to underlead back to you or to try to drop declarer's Qx. This play would also expose declarer's duck from Kxx.

If dummy has three small, then a common agreement is to lead a low card from suits headed by the ace or king and second highest from other combinations unless you have a worthwhile sequence.

Another reason to consider an eccentric lead arises after a lead-directing double, which may persuade you to try something unusual. For example, imagine the layout looks like this (an approximate reconstruction of a deal from the 1993 Camrose Trials):

♠ A Q 8 6 5

♥ A J 6

♦ K 7 4

♣ Q 5

♠ 10 9 2

♥ Q 2

♦ Q 6 2

♣ 10 9 8 3 2

♠ 7 3

♥ 10 9 3

♦ A J 10 9

♣ J 7 6 4

♠ K J 4

♥ K 8 7 5 4

♦ 8 5 3

♣ A K

Dealer North

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Horton</i>	<i>Rigal</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Czerniewski</i>
	1♠	pass	2♥
pass	2NT*	pass	3♣*
pass	3♥	pass	4♣*
pass	4♦*	dbl	4♥
all pass			

If West leads the ♦2, declarer eventually wraps up eleven tricks. If West leads the ♦Q, the defense get the first three tricks, and the play of the thirteenth diamond promotes a trump trick for East.

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BAIT-AND-SWITCH

The *bait-and-switch* play derives its name from the idea that before setting up your long card(s) — usually in a 4-4 fit — you switch to another suit. A common example is one in which you lead through declarer’s ace when he can’t afford to win the trick (lest he open up that suit), with the idea that partner will win and switch back to your 4-4 fit.

This is a typical situation:

♠ J 7 4

♥ 7 5

♦ K J 10 5

♣ K J 10 4

♠ K 9 8 3

♥ J 10 6 3

♦ A 6

♣ A 7 3

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

Partner leads the ♥2, which goes to the five, ten and ace. It looks like declarer has ♥AKx, but two hearts and two aces still comes to only four tricks for the defense. When a minor is led, win and return a spade, the bait-and-switch play. If declarer can’t afford to go up, you are hoping partner will win and work it out.

This is a possible layout:

♠ J 7 4

♥ 7 5

♦ K J 10 5

♣ K J 10 4

♠ Q 6 2

♥ Q 9 8 2

♦ 9 8 4 2

♣ 6 2

♠ A 10 5

♥ A K 4

♦ Q 7 3

♣ Q 9 8 5

♠ K 9 8 3

♥ J 10 6 3

♦ A 6

♣ A 7 3

Unless declarer is playing a very deep game, partner should realize it must be right to go back to hearts after winning with the ♠Q.

One way to help partner make the right decision if you are trying for a bait-and-switch is to lead a higher card than necessary (for example, the ♠9 here), to let partner know not to keep leading the suit.

Here's an example of this theme, where the defender switches to a high spot card to make it clear that he is not interested in partner returning the suit:

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

Dealer South				
Neither Vul.				
	West	North	East	South
				1NT ¹
	pass	2♣*	pass	2♦*
	pass	3NT	all pass	
1.	11-14.			

When West leads the ♥3, declarer puts up dummy's jack and East wins with the ace. It is easy to see that the defenders can take three heart tricks and a diamond, but where will a fifth trick come from? The answer is for East to switch to the ♣8. Declarer cannot afford to play the ace so West can win the king and go back to hearts.

OPTION-REMOVING PSEUDO-SQUEEZE

We have seen that a good declarer tries to combine as many chances as possible, rather than putting all his eggs in one basket. Your job as a defender is to force him to commit as early as you can, preferably steering him toward a losing line of play. For example, when an opponent has several options that he hasn't been able to test, if you can make him discard early he might go wrong.

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

Dealer South				
Neither Vul.				
	West	North	East	South
				2NT ¹
	pass	3♣*	pass	3♠
	pass	6NT	all pass	
1.	19+ to 21.			

Partner leads the ♥9. Declarer wins with the ace, plays a spade to the king, and then leads a club to dummy's king. How do you defend?

Is it possible that declarer does not have the ♠Q? To have even 19 HCP he would need all the other facecards. If his hand is

♠ A K Q 10 ♥ x x ♦ A K Q J ♣ x x x

he needs two club tricks if spades aren't running, and surely wouldn't play the suit this way. It seems highly unlikely.

So, give declarer the ♣Q. If this is the case, then if declarer is missing the ♦Q, you can try messing with his communications. Duck two rounds of clubs and win the third (partner follows, so declarer started with ♣Qxxx). Now that dummy is out of side entries, return the ♥J.

Here's the full deal:

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

Declarer has to cash the third heart now or lose it, and that means he has to guess whether to pitch his spade or the ♦J. The percentage play is to throw the spade, and down he will go. You have removed his options, but the squeeze is pseudo (not legitimate) hence the name.

Declarer would have been advised to anticipate this problem and, after the second club was ducked, to test the spades. As long as the player with the long spade (should they not split) doesn't have the ♣A, he will be able to fall back on the diamond finesse. Of course if spades split then he knows what to pitch on the third heart winner.

PART 3

DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

TRUMP CONTRACTS

In this part of the book, I'm going to look at 'big-picture' defense — broad general ideas that you need to bear in mind when you're planning your strategy. Of course, each of them breaks down into specific situations and tactics, and I'll try to give as many different examples as I can. I've also tried to organize the topics as coherently as possible, but inevitably there are some that could have appeared in a different spot with equal logic.

Let's begin by looking at some ideas that are specific to trump contracts — either you want to wrest trump control away from declarer or you are trying to prevent him from using his trumps in the way that he would like to.

TAPPING THE DUMMY

We all learn as beginners how effective it can be to *tap*, or *force*, declarer, shortening his trumps until he loses control of the hand. There are situations, however, where it is necessary to tap the dummy, the *short* trump hand. Let's look at some of the reasons why this might be a good idea:

1. To promote trump tricks

Tapping the dummy is most likely to produce extra trump tricks when it contains strong, but not long, trumps.

Here is a deal from the 1999 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ —	
♥ A 10 9 5	
♦ K 8 6	
♣ Q J 10 6 4 3	
♠ AKJ6432	♠ Q 10 8 7
♥ —	♥ J 7 4 2
♦ AJ 5 2	♦ 10 9 7 4
♣ A 9	♣ 5
♠ 9 5	
♥ K Q 8 6 3	
♦ Q 3	
♣ K 8 7 2	

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Martel</i>	<i>Soloway</i>	<i>Stansby</i>	<i>Hamman</i>
		1♠!	pass
2NT*	pass	pass	3♥
4♠	5♥	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		

East's opening bid can be explained by the situation in the match — his opponents had a substantial lead. Declarer ruffed the spade lead with dummy's ♥10 and then played the nine to his queen. Next he played the ♦Q, which West took with the ace. Now West could simply have played another spade to ensure a trump trick for his partner, but instead he returned a diamond. Declarer won the trick in dummy and played a club to the king. West ducked that and won the next club perforce. A spade would still beat the hand, but West played a diamond, forcing declarer instead of dummy. Now declarer could ruff, draw trumps and enjoy the clubs.

This next deal is from the Irish Team Trials in 1969:

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

Dealer West
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	2♦	2♣
pass	4♣	all pass	

West led the ♦A and switched to the ♣7. East won with the ace and returned a club to West's jack. Now a third club forced dummy to ruff and declarer had to lose a trump trick.

2. To prevent declarer from establishing dummy's suit followed by drawing trumps ending in dummy

This is most effective when dummy has honor-third of trumps in an eight-card fit with no side entry, where declarer wants to draw three trumps in three rounds, finishing with dummy's honor. However, it can also be used against a 4-4 fit:

♠ A K 10 9 3 2

♥ A Q 7 6

♦ 9 3

♣ 3

♠ 7 6

♥ 5 2

♦ Q 7 6 5

♣ 9 7 6 4 2

♠ Q J 5 4

♥ 10 9 3

♦ J 2

♣ A K 10 8

♠ 8

♥ K J 8 4

♦ A K 10 8 4

♣ Q J 5

Dealer South

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♦ ¹
pass	1♠	pass	2♥
pass	4NT*	pass	5♥*
pass	6♥	all pass	

1. Precision.

West leads the ♣7 and East wins with the king. The only winning defense is to play the ♣A, forcing dummy to ruff and removing a vital late entry.

Tapping the dummy can also be effective against a nine-card fit when dummy has 10xx or when dummy has 10xxx and one defender holds Jxx — in either case, the ten can no longer be used as a late entry. Here's an example:

♠ 7 3

♥ 9 4

♦ A K 9 6 4 2

♣ 10 8 5

♠ K Q J

♥ A K Q 10 6

♦ J 5

♣ 7 3 2

♠ 9 8 6 5 4 2

♥ 8 5 3

♦ Q 10 8

♣ 4

♠ A 10

♥ J 7 2

♦ 7 3

♣ A K Q J 9 6

Dealer South

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♣ ¹
1♥	2♦	pass	3♣
pass	4♣	pass	5♣
all pass			

1. Strong.

West leads the ♥K, and when East shows an odd number, he cashes the ace too. If West now makes the natural-looking switch to the ♠K, declarer has an easy time.

He can win, draw two rounds of trumps, then establish the diamonds and use the ♣10 to reach them. However, if West plays a third round of hearts forcing dummy to ruff, the potential entry is removed prematurely and the contract goes down.

3. *To put declarer under pressure when he has four or five small cards in dummy's short suit*

When declarer has a modest holding facing shortness in dummy, the defenders may be able to create a situation where declarer either loses control or gets left with losers in the suit.

This deal comes from the 1958 Bermuda Bowl (fifty years ago, the bidding was more restrained):

♠ J 5 3 2

♥ K

♦ Q 5 4 3

♣ 10 7 4 3

♠ Q 8 7 6

♥ 9 8 6 4 2

♦ A 9 6

♣ 9

♠ —

♥ A Q J 3

♦ J 10 8 2

♣ K Q 8 5 2

♠ A K 10 9 4

♥ 10 7 5

♦ K 7

♣ A J 6

Dealer South

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Rapee	Belladonna	Silodor	Avarelli
pass	pass	dbl	pass
2♥	2♠	3♥	pass
4♥	all pass		

North led the ♠2. Declarer ruffed in dummy and played the ♣Q. South won this trick and found the only way to defeat the contract by playing a top spade, forcing dummy for a second time. However, that was not quite the end of the story. When declarer played the ♦8 from dummy, South failed to find the second-hand-high play of going up with the ♦K, which would have given declarer an insoluble problem. (If declarer wins and returns a diamond, North wins and gives South a diamond ruff. Then a top spade from South promotes a trump trick.)

Once South failed to rise with the ♦K, declarer could let the ♦8 run to North's queen. He ruffed the spade return, cashed the ♥A, discarded a spade on the ♣K and came to hand with a diamond, collecting a second red king. All that remained was to force out the master trump. Interestingly, if declarer plays a diamond at Trick 2 there is no effective defense as the cards lie.

TO RUFF OR NOT TO RUFF

Refusing to ruff is not common (although I will talk about one such situation shortly), but there are a number of reasons why a player may refuse to overruff and many of them are well known. For example, in the following position:



If South ruffs something with the queen or jack, West gains a trick by refusing to overruff. Let's take a look at some other reasons why a defender may need to keep his trump holding intact, or to do something else unusual.

1. You can win the battle for trump control

This deal, one of the most famous examples of refusing to overruff, comes from the final of the 1985 North American Team Trials:

♠ Q 6 2

♥ 10 9 8 7 4 2

♦ J 8 5

♣ 7

♠ K 10 8 7

♥ Q J 3

♦ 4 3

♣ K Q 10 8

♠ A J 9 5 4 3

♥ A K 5

♦ 10 9 2

♣ 4

♠ —

♥ 6

♦ A K Q 7 6

♣ A J 9 6 5 3 2

Dealer South

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Wolff	Cohen	Hamman	Bergen
			1♣
pass	1♥	2♠	3♦
4♠	pass	pass	4NT
pass	5♦	dbl	all pass

West led the ♠7. Declarer ruffed East's jack, cashed the ♣A and ruffed a club low. Rather than overruff, Hamman made the far-sighted play of discarding a heart. When declarer continued with a heart, East won and played a spade. Declarer ruffed and then ruffed a club with the ♦J, but when he had to get back to hand on the next trick he lost trump control and went three down for -800. If East overruffs at Trick 3, declarer escapes for one down. If declarer ruffs the third club with the eight, East does best to overruff (to stop eight trump tricks on a crossruff) and then continue the tap. This defense leads to the same down three.

This deal from the 2010 Cavendish Teams illustrates the same principle — a refusal to overruff sees declarer lose control:

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

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Wrang	Drijver	De Knijff	Brink
		pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	3♦
pass	4♦	pass	4NT*
pass	5♥*	pass	5NT*
pass	6♦*	all pass	

West led the ♠5. Declarer went up with dummy's ace, discarding a club, played a heart to the ace and ruffed a heart. A club to the ace was followed by a heart ruffed high, a spade ruff and a heart ruff. When East refused to overruff, discarding the ♣J, declarer had to lose two tricks.

In passing it should be noted that declarer missed an opportunity. At another table, where Geir Helgemo was declarer in the same contract, a spade was also led. Helgemo paused for some time. Then he called for dummy's queen and, when East could not cover with the king, discarded a heart. South continued with a heart to his ace, a heart ruff with dummy's ♦6, the ♠A to take a club discard, a club to his ace, a heart ruff with the ♦K, a spade ruffed in his hand (West playing the king), and a heart ruffed with the ♦3. East, who knew that West had a spade left, could have discarded but it would not have helped. Helgemo would have ruffed a club in his hand and taken two spades, one heart, five diamonds, one club and three ruffs in the dummy. When East overruffed and returned a spade, declarer ruffed with his ♦8 and claimed.

2. It promotes another trump trick

I have already mentioned the idea of not overruffing AQJxxx with K10x.

There are also these two positions:

♥ K 9 7 ♥ 6 4 3
 ♥ A Q J 8 5 ♥ 10 2

♦ Q J 2
 ♦ 10 6 ♦ K 9 5
 ♦ A 8 7 4 3

In both, the winning move is *not* to overruff the queen.

The following deal is another very famous example of a refusal to overruff that creates a trump trick — it comes from the 1967 European Championships:

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

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Belladonna</i>		<i>Mondolfo</i>	
	pass	1♦	2♣
dbl	all pass		

West led the ♥Q; when that held, he switched to the ♦3. East won with the king and cashed the top hearts, on which West discarded both his remaining diamonds. When East continued with a diamond, South ruffed with the ♣9 and West simply discarded a spade. Declarer tried a low club but West went in with the queen and exited with a spade, locking declarer in dummy and ensuring another trump trick.

This next example involves not refusing to overruff, but refusing to ruff one of declarer's winners. It comes from the match between Norway and Great Britain in the 1948 European Team Championships:

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

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Simon</i>		<i>Reese</i>	
pass	pass	pass	1♠
dbl	1NT	2♥	4♠
pass	all pass		

West started with three rounds of clubs and East ruffed. Declarer used the diamond entries to dummy to collect the trumps without loss. As Reese himself pointed out later, if East discards a diamond at Trick 3 then declarer must lose two trump tricks.

3. You are attempting a deception

A deceptive overruff, using a higher card than necessary, can pay dividends — indeed it may be essential.

♠ Q 10 9 4

♠ A 8 7 5

♠ K J 6 3

In this situation, suppose dummy ruffs something with the ♠9 and you are in a position to overruff. If you overruff with the jack declarer can pick up your remaining trumps, but if you overruff the nine with the king, declarer will almost certainly cash the ace next.

This is a celebrated example from the 1964 Olympiad:

♠ A 9 3

♥ A K J 8 4 2

♦ K Q

♣ 7 6

♠ K J

♥ 10 6 5

♦ J 7 3 2

♣ K 5 4 3

♠ 8 5 2

♥ Q 7 3

♦ 10 9 5 4

♣ Q 10 9

♠ Q 10 7 6 4

♥ 9

♦ A 8 6

♣ A J 8 2

Dealer East

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Garozzo		Forquet	
		pass	1♠
pass	2♥	pass	2♠
pass	4♣ ¹	pass	4♣ ²
pass	4NT*	pass	5♥*
pass	6♣	all pass	

1. Asking bid.

2. Ace of clubs.

Given that North had made an asking bid in clubs, West inferred that must be his weakness and led the ♣3, East's queen losing to the ace. Declarer unblocked dummy's diamonds, cashed the ♥A, ruffed a heart and discarded a club on the ♦A. He ruffed a club, then cashed the ♥K, discarding a club.

♠ A 9

♥ J 8 4

♦ —

♣ —

♠ K J

♥ —

♦ J

♣ K 5

♠ 8 5 2

♥ —

♦ 10

♣ 10

♠ Q 10 7 6

♥ —

♦ —

♣ J

This was now the position as declarer led a heart from dummy. East discarded his club and declarer ruffed with the ♠10. If West overruffs with the jack and plays a club, declarer will be forced to ruff with dummy's ♠9. Then the ♠A will fell West's king and East's ♠85 will be trapped when declarer leads a heart from dummy. However, West overruffed with the ♠K! He returned the ♣K; declarer ruffed with dummy's ♠A and ran the ♠9. His face must have been a picture when West produced the ♠J.

In the ending declarer could have made the contract by cashing the ♠A before playing a heart from dummy, but that fails if West has, say, ♠K52 and East ♠J8.

4. *You are waiting to get in to cash your master trump and draw two of their trumps for your one*

This deal comes from the 2003 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ 7

♥ 8 7 6 5

♦ 10 8 5

♣ 10 8 6 4 3

♠ K 6 5 2

♥ Q 2

♦ Q 2

♣ A K J 9 5

♠ Q 9 8 4

♥ J 10 9 3

♦ A K J 9

♣ 7

♠ A J 10 3

♥ A K 4

♦ 7 6 4 3

♣ Q 2

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>
1♣	pass	1♦ ¹	dbl ²
1♠	pass	4♠	all pass

1. Transfer to hearts.

2. Spades and diamonds.

North led a diamond and declarer played four rounds of the suit, discarding his losing hearts. North ruffed and switched to a heart. Declarer ruffed, cashed the top clubs, and reached this position:

♠ —

♥ 7 6 5

♦ —

♣ 10 8 6

♠ K 6 5

♥ —

♦ —

♣ J 9 5

♠ A J 10 3

♥ A 4

♦ —

♣ —

♠ Q 9 8 4

♥ J 10

♦ —

♣ —

At this point, he ruffed a club with the ♠Q. If South overruffs, declarer is in business. He ruffs the ♥A return, then ruffs a club with the ♠9. South can overruff again but then has to play a heart, giving declarer an entry to dummy to take the spade finesse. However, in the diagrammed position, South simply discarded the ♥4 instead of overruffing, and declarer was helpless. He played a spade but South took the ace and forced declarer with a heart to ensure two more trump tricks.

In order to make the contract declarer must play only three rounds of diamonds, discarding one heart. Then he can get home in several ways as long as he eliminates North's spade, either by playing a spade to his king or, after crossing to hand with a club, playing one to dummy's queen.

5. You would be endplayed if you overruffed

This deal was reported by Charles Goren in the July 1967 issue of *Bridge Magazine*.

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

Dealer East
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	2♣	1♥	1♠
all pass		pass	4♣

West led the ♥J. East took the ace and returned the queen, hoping to ruff out South's king. A diamond to the ace was followed by a spade and when East showed out declarer went up with the ace, played a club to the ace and ruffed a club. A diamond to the jack was followed by another club ruff, and then a diamond to the king saw declarer ruff dummy's last club with the ♠Q. West was down to the ♠K105 and the ♦7. If he overruffed he would be endplayed, forced to lead away from his spade tenace or give a ruff and discard. Discarding the diamond would see declarer play a heart and now West would be forced to ruff and give up a trump trick. However, West found the neat counter of underruffing. Now he could discard his diamond on declarer's heart exit and take the last two tricks with the ♠K10.

6. You want to weaken their matrix for an entry-shifting squeeze

Although this is hardly an everyday situation, it is important to appreciate that, in certain positions, it will pay to postpone the decision to overruff until the

opponents' trump fit has been reduced to 2-2. This possibility was first pointed out by Géza Ottlik and Hugh Kelsey in *Adventures in Cardplay*:

♠ K 9 8 7 5

♥ K

♦ 5 3

♣ 10 7 5 4 2

♠ —

♥ 10 8 4

♦ K Q J 8 7

♣ A K Q 9 6

♠ A Q 3

♥ J 9 7 6 5 3 2

♦ 10

♣ 8 3

♠ J 10 6 4 2

♥ A Q

♦ A 9 6 4 2

♣ J

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♥	1♠
2♣	2♠	3♥	3♠
4♥	4♠	dbl	all pass

West cashes a top club and then switches to the ♦K. Declarer wins, crosses to the ♥K, ruffs a club and discards dummy's remaining diamond on the ♥A. When he ruffs a diamond, East must refuse to overruff. If he does overruff and cashes the ♠A, West can discard a heart, but on the next spade declarer puts in the ten and West is caught in an entry-shifting trump squeeze. If he discards a club, declarer overtakes with dummy's king and ruffs a club. If he discards a diamond, declarer retains the lead in hand and ruffs a diamond.

East must continue to refuse to overruff until this position is reached:

♠ K 9 8

♥ —

♦ —

♣ 10

♠ —

♥ 10

♦ Q J

♣ A

♠ J 10

♥ —

♦ 9 6

♣ —

♠ A Q 3

♥ J

♦ —

♣ —

When declarer ruffs a diamond, East finally overruffs and cashes the ♠A, West discarding a heart. When East exits with his last trump, West will discard according to where declarer is going to win the trick.

ACCURATE FORCING DEFENSE WHEN A DEFENDER HAS Axxx OF TRUMPS VERSUS A 5-3 FIT

A defender who holds Axxx of trumps can always consider the possibility of a forcing defense; by the same token, a defender who holds a singleton trump should be alive to the possibility that partner has four trumps.

The general technique is as follows:

- Tricks 1-2 Cash a winner, then tap the five-card trump length with your long suit.
- Trick 3 Duck the trump ace.
- Trick 4 Win the trump ace.
- Trick 5 Tap the five-card length again. Now you have two small trumps while declarer and dummy each have a singleton honor.
- Trick 6+ Declarer must try for trump surrogates, running a suit through you so that when you ruff he can overruff and then re-enter his hand to draw your last trump. What can the defense do to counter this? You have to try to dump all your cards in declarer's re-entry suit before ruffing a surrogate winner. Then declarer is pinned in the other hand, forced to give you a ruff.

This deal illustrates the process:

♠ Q 8 7

♥ 6 5 4 3

♦ Q J 10 2

♣ K 4

♠ A 5 4 3

♥ A K J 8 7

♦ 7 6

♣ 7 5

♠ 2

♥ Q 10

♦ 9 8 5 4 3

♣ 9 8 6 3 2

♠ K J 10 9 6

♥ 9 2

♦ A K

♣ A Q J 10

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	2♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

You cash two high hearts and lead a third round, which is ruffed. Declarer leads the ♠J, and you let that hold the trick. When a second spade is led, you rise ace and play a fourth heart, which is ruffed again. You have achieved the desired position: two small trumps in your hand and two big singletons in theirs. Declarer can try running clubs but as long as you pitch all your diamonds before ruffing you will set the hand. It doesn't help declarer to cash his diamonds because you can ruff

the third club, leaving declarer stranded in dummy, and then you score your other small trump.

Note that ducking the trump ace twice wouldn't work — declarer would cash the ♦AK then play clubs through you. With only one small trump left, you have no second small trump to promote. If declarer knew you had four spades (perhaps you doubled), he could decide not to lead a second trump, instead cashing two diamonds and running clubs as before (the difference is that he hasn't ruffed a second heart so he is still in control). As it is, declarer might elect to try to cash four tricks in the minors then crossruff, paying off to 3-2 trumps and a minor-suit singleton in your hand — a line of play that would work nicely on this layout.

This deal from the 2007 Spingold is typical of those where you have to be alert to the possibility that partner may have four trumps

♠ A J 8 6 2

♥ Q 10 6

♦ 9 5 4

♣ A 9

♠ Q 10 9 7

♥ 2

♦ K 8 6 3 2

♣ K 10 3

♠ K 5 4

♥ A 7 5 4

♦ J

♣ Q 8 7 4 2

♠ 3

♥ K J 9 8 3

♦ A Q 10 7

♣ J 6 5

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Sementa	Rodwell	Henner-Welland	Meckstroth
pass	4♥	all pass	1♥

West led the ♠10; Jeff won with dummy's ace, cashed the ♣A and played a club to the jack and West's king. West switched to a trump, which East won to play a second round. Declarer could win in hand, ruff a club and play a diamond. When the jack came up he could take the ace, draw trumps and give up a diamond.

If West places East with four trumps, then it becomes clear to continue with a spade at Trick 4. That leaves declarer with no effective counter. Whilst it is generally a good idea to follow your partner's defense, notice that East could have switched back to spades after taking the ♥A — and that's still good enough to defeat the contract.

A forcing defense may also be the answer even when the defenders have a weaker trump holding, as on this deal from the 1999 Venice Cup final:

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

Dealer East
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Sokolow</i>	<i>Vriend</i>	<i>Molson</i>	<i>van der Pas</i>
		pass	2♣*
pass	2♦*	pass	3♦
pass	3♥	pass	3♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

West led the ♥A. Declarer ruffed, cashed the ♠A, then took the ♦A and ruffed a diamond.

She came to hand with a club and ruffed another diamond. If East overruffs and plays a low heart, she establishes equal trump length with declarer, who still has to surrender a trick to the ♦K. When she does that, another heart will ensure two more tricks for the defense.

In the Bermuda Bowl final, my partner was in 5♠ on this same deal. Play followed similar lines, but instead of ruffing a third diamond he ran the ♦Q. East ruffed and played a heart, but Jeff could ruff that and then ruff another diamond. East could overruff, but declarer could ruff the next heart and draw the outstanding trump.

On this amusing deal from the final of the 2007 Bermuda Bowl, a defender had to lead a fifth round of a suit in order to get his partner's trumps into the game:

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

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Helness</i>	<i>Rosenberg</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>	<i>Zia</i>
		pass	1♥
pass	1NT ¹	pass	2♣
pass	2♦ ²	pass	2♥
pass	3♥ ³	pass	4♥
all pass			

1. Semiforcing.
2. Weak heart raise or some strong hand.
3. Three-card raise, suitable for notrump.

West led the ♦3 and declarer put in dummy's queen. When that held, he cashed the ♦A, discarding a club, and took the club finesse. West won and played another

diamond. Declarer ruffed and played a spade, but West went up with the king and played the ♦K, reducing declarer to three trumps as East discarded a club. Declarer crossed to dummy with the ♠Q and ran the ♥Q. For the third time West won with a king, and now he played a fifth diamond. Declarer ruffed in dummy but East could overruff and declarer had to lose one more trick.

As the play developed, declarer might have played a heart to the jack at Trick 7. Then he could ruff the diamond return with dummy's ♥Q, discarding his spade loser, and would then get home if he guessed to drop the ♥10.

FOILING DECLARER

Back in Chapter 1, I talked about the issue of choosing between an ‘active’ and a ‘passive’ line of defense. We usually think of active defense as doing something to set up our own tricks; however, quite a lot of the time it involves simply doing something to prevent declarer having it all his own way. Under three broad headings, this chapter looks at some tactics defenders have available for foiling declarer’s dastardly plots.

DEFENDING AGAINST A POSSIBLE ENDPLAY

We all hate being endplayed, and surprisingly often, if we are alert to the possibilities early in the play, we can prevent it. Let’s look at some of the ways to accomplish this.

1. Cash a winner in a suit where declarer has a singleton

This type of play usually happens when dummy has a minor tenace over you and you cash the ace to avoid being ‘forked’ later. In the fork situation, either you duck and let them steal the king, or you win and get endplayed. One typical situation arises when you have AQx in front of KJx(x).

In this example from the 2008 World Bridge Games, the defenders had to be wide awake.

♠ 6		
♥ QJ985		
♦ J64		
♣ A943		
♠ AQ1075		♠ 9432
♥ AK106		♥ 742
♦ KQ2		♦ 85
♣ 6		♣ K1082
		♠ KJ8
		♥ 3
		♦ A10973
		♣ QJ75

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Malinowski	Stefanov	Sandqvist	Aronov
	pass	pass	1♦ ¹
dbl	1♥	pass	2♣
2♣	3♣	3♠	pass
4♣	all pass		

1. Precision.

North led the ♥Q, and declarer won in hand and played the ♦Q. When South won and returned the suit, declarer took the king, ruffed a diamond and played a spade to the ten. When that held he played a club — the fork. North could win, but was endplayed: a club provides an entry to dummy for a spade finesse, and a heart eliminates declarer’s loser in the suit. The winning defense is for South to switch to a club at Trick 3. North takes the ace and now goes back to diamonds. With only one entry to dummy, declarer must lose a trick in each suit.

I also declared 4♠ on this deal, but North led a helpful trump, more or less handing me the contract.

2. Upset their entries

Attacking entries is a continuing theme, as you’ve probably realized by now. From earlier in the book, you’ll remember Days of Thunder (see p. 156) as one way to accomplish this. There are other tactics that have the same purpose, which I shall cover in Part 4 (the *Merrimac Coup* is one example).

3. Duck to keep communications with partner open

It is sound defensive technique to retain communications with partner, and refusing to win a trick is sometimes the way to do that. Apart from being a potential defense to a throw-in, it prevents declarer taking on one opponent at a time.

Suppose dummy has KQx and you sit over it with the ace. If you can tell you need two tricks from this suit, it can be a good move to duck with the ace, either as a deceptive move or to avoid being endplayed, especially if you have nothing good to return if you win the trick.

I reached 6♥ versus the Dutch team in the 2009 Bermuda Bowl on this deal:

Dealer South				
Neither Vul.				
	♠ 6			
	♥ A K J 5 4 3			
	♦ 10 8 7 5			
	♣ A 2			
♠ J 9 8 4 3 2				
♥ Q				
♦ A J 4				
♣ Q 10 7				

West	North	East	South
<i>Bertens</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Bakkeren</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
			1NT ¹
pass	2♦*	pass	3♥
pass	3♣*	pass	4♣*
pass	4♣*	pass	5♦*
pass	6♥	all pass	

1. 14-16.

You lead a low spade to partner’s queen and declarer’s ace. He draws trumps in two rounds, as you discard a spade. Declarer then plays a club to his king and cashes the ♠K. He ruffs his last spade in dummy (partner following), and cashes the ♣A (partner having shown an even number of clubs). These cards are left:

	♠ —	
	♥ K J 5	
	♦ 10 8 7	
	♣ —	
♠ J 9		
♥ —		
♦ A J 4		
♣ Q		

Declarer leads the ♦7 off dummy. Partner plays the three (upside-down count), declarer the king... and you?

The defender with these cards was concerned that declarer (me) might be trying to get him to duck, holding

♠ A K x ♥ 10 x x x ♦ K x ♣ K J x x

So he won this trick with the ♦A. Now he was afraid to lead a club, in case I actually was 3=4=4=2 and would get a ruff and sluff, so he led back a low diamond! My hand actually was

♠ A K 10 ♥ 10 8 7 2 ♦ K Q 6 2 ♣ K 6

West had to guess whether I was dealt ♦K2 or ♦KQ92. If I had my actual holding, he could expect me to misguess if he won and led back a low diamond. Sure enough I played him for A9x and ducked the diamond return, down one. As to my

analysis, I hope I am being objective, but I would do the same again (duck West's diamond back).

4. *Play a middle card*

Sometimes when you can see the endplay on the horizon, you have to play a middle card and hope partner has the spots to save you.



Play the jack when a low club is led from dummy, if you feel an endplay threatening. Partner will need ♣108x or better if declarer can be given the lead, and ♣109x or better if partner wins a late trick.

5. *Unblock*

One step further than playing a middle card is **unblocking**. You can follow with a big card under their bigger card, cash winners, or unblock a doubleton or tripleton honor.

This example comes from the Nordic Championships in the 1970s:

♠ 8 6 4

♥ 9 8 2

♦ 8 5 3

♣ K Q 6 5

♠ Q 10 9 5 3

♥ J 4 3

♦ 4 2

♣ A 8 7

♠ J 2

♥ Q 7 5

♦ A 10 9

♣ J 10 4 3 2

♠ A K 7

♥ A K 10 6

♦ K Q J 7 6

♣ 9

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Boesgaard		Schaltz	
			1♦
1♠	pass	pass	dbl
pass	2♣	pass	2♥
pass	2♣*	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♠10 and declarer ducked East's jack. He won the second spade and played the ♦K. East won with the ace and, realizing that declarer had a singleton club, switched to that suit. West took the ace and cleared the spades. Declarer won, cashed his diamonds and then played ace, king and a third heart. Naturally, East got rid of the queen to avoid the looming endplay.

This one is from the 2003 Venice Cup:

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

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Von Arnim	Vriend	Auken	van der Pas
	pass	1♣ ¹	1♠
1NT	pass	2♥	pass
4♥	all pass		

1. Strong.

South led the ♠Q, which declarer won in hand to play the ♥K. South took the ace and, reluctant to play another spade (although that is the winning defense), switched to the ♦10. Declarer won in hand with the jack and drew two more rounds of trumps, ending in dummy. She played the ♦Q, covered by the king and ace, and South fatally hung on to the nine. She had to win the next diamond and was endplayed.

There is a beautiful unheard melody in this deal. Say declarer ducks the ♦10. South continues the suit (as good as anything) and declarer wins with the jack and cashes the ♥Q, unblocking dummy's nine. After unblocking the ♦A, declarer crosses to the ♥J and cashes the master diamond. She then comes to hand with a trump to reach this position:

	♠ 4	
	♥ —	
	♦ —	
	♣ Q 9 7	
♠ K 5		♠ 10 8
♥ —		♥ 3
♦ —		♦ —
♣ 8 3		♣ K
	♠ J 9	
	♥ —	
	♦ —	
	♣ A J	

When declarer plays her last trump, South has to part with a club and is then thrown in with the ♣A to lead into the split spade tenace.

6. *Jettison a blocking or throw-in card on another suit*

Sometimes declarer gives you the chance to pitch danger cards on another suit. This deal is from the 2008 World Bridge Games in Beijing:

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

Dealer East
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Ja.Hackett</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Ju.Hackett</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>
		pass	1♦ ¹
dbl	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	3♠	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Precision.

West led the ♥2, which went to the queen and ace. Jeff crossed to dummy with a club and played a diamond, covered by the ten, queen and ace. West played another heart and declarer won in hand with the nine. A computer might now extract West's hearts before playing two more rounds of clubs, but a human is naturally loath to give up his last entry to hand, so after two more rounds of clubs West was on play again.

He exited with a heart. Declarer won and cashed his remaining heart to reach this ending:

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

Now declarer cashed the ♣10, West discarding the ♦2 and East parting with the ♠4. Declarer exited with a diamond and East had to win. He exited with the ♠10, but when West, who could not afford to put up the ace, ducked, so did declarer! That left East on play, forced to lead into declarer's diamond tenace.

East's error was failing to discard the ♠10. Had he done so, he would have been able to get off play with the ♠4 and West could have simply inserted the ♠8, endplaying the dummy.

Here is a recent deal, again played by Jeff:

♠ 7 6 5 4

♥ Q J

♦ 10 9 3

♣ A Q 6 5

♠ Q 8

♥ 9 8

♦ A J 8 7 6 5

♣ 10 7 4

♠ J 10 9 2

♥ A 10 7 5 3

♦ 2

♣ K 9 8

♠ A K 3

♥ K 6 4 2

♦ K Q 4

♣ J 3 2

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
2♦	pass	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West got off to a good start by leading the ♥9. East does best to duck, especially with possibly establishable hearts, both black-suit stoppers, and only a stiff diamond, but she won and led a diamond to the king and ace. Now West accurately led a second heart to the queen. Jeff played a spade to the jack and ace and then finessed the club. East won, and would have been well advised to switch to a low spade now, but she returned the ♣9. Jeff was tightroped into cashing the clubs (West couldn't be 3-3 in the black suits so only one black suit could be splitting), so he did so, pitching a heart. West had one last chance, to ditch the ♠Q. When he didn't, Jeff ducked a spade to force a diamond return for the game-going trick.

On this deal from the 2010 NEC Cup it was fairly easy to see the necessity of getting rid of high cards to avoid an impending endplay:

♠ K Q 10 9 5

♥ 10 3

♦ J 9

♣ 9 8 7 4

♠ 8 7 4

♥ 7 4

♦ 10 7 4 3

♣ Q J 6 3

♠ A J 2

♥ A K J 8 2

♦ A 6

♣ A 10 5

♠ 6 3

♥ Q 9 6 5

♦ K Q 8 5 2

♣ K 2

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Kopecky</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Macura</i>
pass	2♠	dbl	pass
2NT*	pass	3NT	all pass

North led the ♠K; when that held, he switched to the ♣8. South won with the king and returned a club, so declarer won in dummy and cashed two more clubs, discarding a heart as South parted with two diamonds. Declarer took the spade finesse, then cashed the ♥A and the ♠A. On this card, South got rid of the ♦K. Declarer tried the ♦A now, but South followed to that trick with the queen and the game had to go down.

Sometimes it may be impossible to avoid the impending throw-in. In that case the defenders' only hope may be to discard deceptively and hope declarer misreads the ending, as on this deal:

♠ 10 6 4

♥ 8 7 5

♦ J 9 8

♣ 10 6 5 3

♠ A Q 7 5 3

♥ K 2

♦ Q 6 5

♣ J 8 7

♠ J 8

♥ J 10 9

♦ A 10 4 3

♣ A K Q 4

♠ K 9 2

♥ A Q 6 4 3

♦ K 7 2

♣ 9 2

Dealer North

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Kovacs</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Dumbovich</i>	<i>Czyzowicz</i>
pass	1NT	pass	pass
2♥*	pass	2♠	pass
3NT	all pass		

When this deal came up in a match in the Seniors International Cup in Beijing in 2008, South led a heart against East's 3NT.

Declarer won in hand and cashed four clubs, South discarding a spade and a diamond. Declarer then led the ♠J, covered by the king and ace. After cashing the

♠Q, declarer exited with the ♥K and in due course South was forced to lead away from the ♦K.

South could not afford to discard the ♥A, of course — that would simply give declarer his ninth trick. However, he might have discarded two diamonds, rather than a spade and a diamond. Then if declarer follows the same line, South will be able to produce the ♠9 at Trick 12. When the deal was played in our match, Bob Hamman did indeed discard two diamonds as South, and declarer went down.

As a defender you have to be able to see the throw-in coming. On this deal from the 2010 U.S. Team Trials, both defenders had to think about the possibility of being thrown in at some point.

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Hamman	Martel	Zia	Stansby
			pass
pass	1♦	pass	1♥
dbl	2♥	3♠	4♦
pass	4♥	all pass	

West led the ♠2 and declarer put up the king. East won with the ace and switched to a trump, which went to the queen and ace. Declarer ruffed a spade, crossed to the ♦K and ruffed another spade. West, who was worried about a possible throw-in, played the queen on this trick. Declarer drew trumps, discarding a club, and then played off his last trump. Forced to keep the master spade and unable to part with a diamond, East had to throw a club.

The ‘obvious’ play is to discard the ♣8, but then declarer plays the ♦10 next, forcing East to cover. Dummy is re-entered with the ♦9 and now declarer exits with a club. West can’t overtake the ♣K, and after cashing the ♠J East must give declarer the last trick. However, East saw this coming and pitched the ♣K rather than the ♣8. Declarer still played the ♦10, covered by the jack and queen, and then went to dummy with the ♦9 to play a club. Now, however, the defenders scored two clubs and a spade for one down.

There are several points of interest. First, West’s delayed double suggested that East would have the diamond length. Second, declarer’s play to the first trick is surprising — it looks more natural to retain the ♠K as a potential threat. Finally, West’s decision to unblock the ♠Q might have turned out badly if declarer had found the winning line that then becomes available. It’s not easy to see, but the way to ten tricks is to play a club after the second spade ruff. Declarer is essentially

Keeping communications open with

4.5.1.2 Dealer North

West	North	East	South
	<i>Rodwell</i>		<i>Meckstroth</i>
	pass	1♠	2♦
pass	2♠*	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

If declarer has $\spadesuit\text{AJx}$, it is hopeless; however, if declarer had that holding he could not have won his ninth trick in any case. If declarer holds $\spadesuit\text{K}$, then he has

The key is that partner has to signal to let you know whether or not he has the

The full deal:

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

8. Create a loser

Once you are aware of the possibilities, it becomes easier to make spectacular unblocking plays as a defender if you are anxious not to be put on lead. For example, you might unblock from a holding of J10xx when declarer cashes the AKQ. I call this **trick trashing**. Keep in mind that this type of play will gain only if you were going to be forced to give them two or more tricks when thrown in, for example by giving declarer access to several stranded winners.

This deal from the 1998 Rosenblum gave both a defender and the declarer a chance to show their unblocking skills:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Hamman	Andersson	Soloway	Gullberg
pass	1♥ ²	pass	1♦ ¹
pass	2♣*	pass	1NT
pass	3♣	pass	2♦*
all pass		pass	3NT

1. 17+.
2. Negative.

West led the ♥2. Declarer took East's king with the ace and played the ♠J, covered by the queen and king. A diamond to the jack lost to West's king and he switched to the ♣7. In dummy for the last time, declarer played a spade to his seven and

West's ten, won the diamond return in hand with the ace and tested the clubs. When West discarded a spade on the third round, declarer cashed the ♥Q and played a diamond to the ten. East won and could cash another diamond, but then had to lead into declarer's club tenace.

However, if East had allowed dummy's ♦10 to hold, the last three tricks would have gone to West. The counter is for declarer to discard the ♦10 on the third round of clubs, after which East cannot avoid the endplay. But even that will fail provided West retains the ♦7 and East unblocks one of his *middle* diamonds on the first round of the suit.

Here is a deal I defended in a recent Regional:

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

Dealer East
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
		1♦	1NT
all pass			

Partner led the ♠4, which went to the jack, king and ace. Declarer now led the ♣K, and followed with the ♣9 to dummy's ten and my jack. Partner echoed in clubs, a Smith echo showing interest in a spade continuation, so I returned the ♠2. Declarer ducked, partner played the three and dummy won with the eight. Now declarer led the ♣Q, jettisoning the ♠Q.

My partner, Anne Hawkes, won the ♣A and, seeing what was happening, switched to the ♦10. Declarer won the ♦Q, cashed the ♦A (spade pitch from partner) and played a third diamond. On the ♦A I unblocked the nine, and after winning the ♦J, I led back a low diamond, letting declarer win the seven! Otherwise I would have to lead ace and a heart after cashing the last diamond, conceding the contract.

Declarer, with four cards left (all hearts), now led to the ♥K. I won with the ace and cashed my long diamond. I returned a low heart, hoping partner had at least queen-nine or that declarer would misguess if he had jack-nine. Declarer so far had shown up with

♠ A Q x ♥ ? x x x ♦ A Q 7 x ♣ K 9

so this was possible. As it was, he had the ♥Q and made 1NT. Real bridge is often like that.

9. Refuse to win a trick that would rectify the count for a squeeze

Even the Rueful Rabbit knows that when the Hog wants him to win a trick, it's probably in his best interests to refuse it. Preventing declarer from rectifying the count is a powerful weapon against a potential squeeze.

This deal came up in the 1996 World Teams Olympiad:

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Helgemo	Jansen	Helness	Westerhof
			1NT
pass	2♣*	pass	2♥
pass	3NT	all pass	

West led the ♦3 and declarer put up dummy's ace and played a spade to the king. When that held, he played a club to dummy's queen, which East won. A diamond return now would have cooked declarer's goose, but East played back his remaining spade. West took declarer's jack with the ace and returned the ♠9. Declarer won in dummy, East discarding a heart, and then played a diamond to the queen, West following with the five. Now declarer tested the hearts, cashing the ace and king, but West discarded the ♦8 on the second round and the ♦10 when declarer crossed to dummy with the ♥Q. It seemed clear that West had started with a 4=1=5=3 shape and was holding on to the ♣Jx, so declarer threw him in with a spade to lead into the split club tenace. West now cashed both the ♦K and the cunningly preserved ♦2.

The real point of this deal, however, is West's duck of the ♦Q. If he wins and cashes the master spade, East can safely part with a club, but even if declarer does the same he will subsequently be able to squeeze East in hearts and clubs.

10. Kill the menace (the 007 play)

You will recall that the 007 play (see p. 165) involves continuing a suit even if it sets up a winner for declarer, the idea being that partner will be able to ruff with a worthless trump.

This deal is from the 1998 Rosenblum:

♠ A 5 3

♥ A 7

♦ 9 6 4 3

♣ Q 9 3 2

♠ Q 10 7 4

♥ 9 3

♦ QJ 10 7 5

♣ 5 4

♠ K 8 6 2

♥ K Q J 8 5 2

♦ —

♣ A 7 6

♠ J 9

♥ 10 6 4

♦ A K 8 2

♣ K J 10 8

Dealer East

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♥
dbl*	1NT	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

West led the ♣5; when declarer played low from dummy, East put in the eight. Declarer decided to win at once and played three rounds of spades, West winning the third and playing his remaining club. East won with the ten and continued with the king and jack — no endplays in clubs! In fact, that forced declarer to ruff high (else West would score a club ruff) and since he needed to ruff his last spade with the ♥A, the defenders had to score a trump trick.

Declarer is actually tightroped into winning the ♣A at Trick 1, as East should shift to a trump and stop any spade ruffs if the ♣8 is allowed to hold.

11. Refuse a proffered throw-in trick

This type of defense can appear in many guises. This example comes from a Pairs tournament in Paris and involves a number of themes I have already mentioned:

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

Dealer East			
NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
<i>Forquet</i>		<i>Sharif</i>	
		3♠	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♠Q; when that held, it was clear that South's bid was based on a powerful diamond suit. Trying to drive out a potential entry, West switched to the ♣K (a Merrimac Coup, [see p. 299](#)). Declarer won with the ace and cashed a top diamond. East's spade discard was a blow, but declarer continued with three more rounds of diamonds, West winning and exiting with the ♣J. This was the position after declarer won with dummy's queen:

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

Declarer continued with the ♣9, expecting West to win and subsequently have to lead away from the ♥K. However, West ducked the ♣9 and now declarer had to lose three more tricks.

Declarer could have played differently, of course. The simplest line is to take the ♠A at Trick 1 and play a diamond, ducking when East discards. More subtly, declarer could retain the ♣2 alongside the nine: then West cannot avoid the endplay.

12. *Crashing honors to prevent partner from being endplayed*

This play may sometimes involve the loss of trick, but there are many situations where it will be essential, especially toward the end of a deal, as on this one from the 2008 World Bridge Games:

♠ 10 9 6 3
♥ A 9 8
♦ Q 10 9
♣ J 7 5

♠ A 8
♥ K 7 3
♦ J 4 3
♣ AQ1093

♠ 4
♥ J 10 6 5 2
♦ 8 7 5 2
♣ K 6 2

♠ K Q J 7 5 2
♥ Q 4
♦ A K 6
♣ 8 4

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Moss	Wang	Radin	Liu
	pass	pass	1♣ ¹
pass	1♦*	pass	1♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

1. Precision.

The normal contract is 4♠, and it looks as if declarer should lose a trump, a heart and two clubs.

West led a diamond and declarer won with dummy's nine, knocked out the ♠A, and won the diamond return. Then she took all her trumps and the ♦K to reach this position:

♠ —
♥ A 9
♦ —
♣ J 7

♠ —
♥ K 7
♦ —
♣ A Q

♠ —
♥ Q 4
♦ —
♣ 8 4

♠ —
♥ J 10
♦ —
♣ K 6

Declarer exited with a club and West put in the queen. When East inexplicably failed to overtake, the defense had engineered the endplay declarer was hoping for. Of course, East must take most of the blame, but West could have spared her partner's blushes by taking the ace and exiting with the queen.

In this next example the reason for overtaking is more complex than taking partner off an endplay:

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

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	6♥	all pass	3♥

West leads the ♥7; declarer wins with dummy's king and plays a diamond to the king. That holds the trick, and he exits with the ♦9. When West's queen appears it is essential for East to overtake, even though it sets up declarer's jack, and switch to a spade, attacking dummy's late entry. If West is left on play an exit in either black suit is immediately fatal, and even if declarer puts in dummy's ten on a club exit, West can subsequently be squeezed in the black suits.

13. The Endplay Prevention Cover

The *endplay prevention cover* involves covering an early honor (from touching honors) when it is led, something you wouldn't normally do. The idea is to prevent your being thrown in to lead around to the other honor later. Typically, this occurs when you hold Kxx(x) over QJx in dummy. Here is deal from a recent knockout match:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	2NT

West led the ♠2, fourth best, which went to the jack and the queen. Things didn't look good at all, but I led a low club to West's king, and he played the ♠K. Doing an asset survey, I watched to see if East had ♠J8 doubleton, which would allow me

to power out a third spade trick, but no such luck. I decided to win this trick, both in case I wanted to exit in spades later and to avoid giving West the count in spades (if he pitches one that is good for me).

Rather hopefully, I now played the ♣A, West dropping the ♣J, and led a low club. West pitched the ♥5 (encouraging); he didn't know what I had and was catering to my having king fourth of diamonds. I won this trick with the ♣Q and led the ♦Q from dummy, and East missed his chance when he didn't cover. With both defenders fully isolated from each other, I led a heart to the queen, cashed the ♥A and exited with a third heart. As I was +3L, East could take the ♣10 and two heart tricks, but he had to give me a trick with the ♦J at the end.

Note that, since East holds the ♦9, the cover is safe (if I had ace-ten doubleton West would pitch a diamond). If he has ♦Kxx, there is some risk my diamonds might be ♦A98 and that covering will cost a trick. This will matter only if West has the ♥Q (same endplay if he doesn't) and in that case three diamond tricks give me only eight tricks. The real risk is that my hand is

♠ A Q x x ♥ A J ♦ A 9 8 x ♣ A 9 x

and now the diamond cover from Kxx will be a disaster. However, that leaves West with ♠K108x and ♥Q9xx as his majors, from which many players would lead a heart, not a spade.

14. Avoid the trump-tight ending

It is common for a textbook to explain why you should not double a 6♠ contract sitting behind the long suit with ♠KQx: declarer will try to eliminate all your side-suit cards, leading to a trump-tight ending, and endplay you. The same is true of other 'strong' trump holdings.

Try this deal, from the 2011 NABC in Louisville:

♠ A J 10 9
 ♥ 7
 ♦ A K J 8 5
 ♣ K 10 9

 ♠ 2
 ♥ A J 6 3
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ J 6 5 4 3 2

Dealer North
 NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♥
2♥ ¹	dbl ²	pass	4♣
pass	5♣	dbl	all pass

1. Natural.
 2. Extra values, takeout.

West leads the ♥K and you win with the ace. How do you play from here?

If you figure East to have ♣AQ87 for his double, then you need to get to the right trump-tight ending. If East has a second heart, then if you lead trump now he just leads his other heart to tap dummy and build a third trump trick. So you want to ruff in hand with your small clubs. Playing the ♠A and ruffing a spade seems like a good start; now, what ending are you angling for?

If you ruff a heart and have to lead a club from hand at any point, East gets three trump tricks. So, you have to be in dummy at a point when East is trump tight, or has a heart left. In any event, East has seven cards in spades and diamonds and you must eliminate them before he can ruff in or discard his remaining heart.

You want the key late lead to be off dummy. Since you need to ruff one or perhaps two more spades, you need to use dummy's diamond honors as entries: play a diamond to the ace, then a spade covered by the king and ruffed, and now the ♦Q overtaken in dummy and the ♦J. When West discards, it looks like East is ?=2=4=4, so 3=2=4=4 (fourth suit forcing).

Thus, you should lead a fourth diamond, ruffing in hand, and ruff a heart. East is now trump tight. When you lead a spade from dummy he ruffs with the ♣7. You overruff, lead a heart and *discard* from dummy. East must ruff and lead from his ♣AQ into dummy's ♣K10 at Trick 12 to let you make the hand.

I don't know if Steve Weinstein would have found this line of play if I had doubled 5♣ with the East cards, but as I smoothly passed at all points he took the normal line of leading a trump at Trick 2. I did have ♣AQ87, so I merely cashed two high trumps and led a heart to tap dummy for the setting trick.

The full deal looked like this:

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

COUNTERING A HOLDUP PLAY

There are many situations where declarer can cause the defenders problems by holding up, i.e. delaying taking his winner in the suit they are attacking. This can cut communications, and also can create tenace and crossover stopper positions. However, the defense is not without potential counter-measures.

1. Crossing over to partner to return the suit

It's usually obvious to a defender when a suit cannot be continued from his side. In that situation, you need to find partner's entry, or his most likely entry, for a lead through.

♠ J 5 2

♥ 8 5 3

♦ A Q J

♣ K Q 10 8

♠ 9 8 3

♥ K Q 10 9

♦ 7 6 3

♣ A 9 2

♠ A 10 7 6

♥ 7 4 2

♦ 9 5 2

♣ 6 4 3

♠ K Q 4

♥ A J 6

♦ K 10 8 4

♣ J 7 5

Dealer South

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT ¹
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. 14-16.

West leads the ♥K, asking East to unblock an honor or give count. When it holds and East follows with the two, it is clear that South started with ♥AJx. West needs to get his partner in to play a heart through declarer. A diamond is one possibility, in the hope that partner might have the king, but declarer might well be able to go up with the ace on a diamond switch and then drive out the ♣A. So switching to the ♠9 is a better chance. East takes the ace and switches back to hearts, leaving declarer dead in the water.

2. *Switching and never letting them get to a stranded holdup card*

This is a deal from a recent team game:

♠ A 9 3

♥ 10 7 6 5

♦ 10 7 6

♣ 7 6 5

♠ Q 10 8 4 2

♥ 8 2

♦ 9 4 2

♣ 9 8 3

♠ K J 5

♥ Q J 9 3

♦ Q J 8 5

♣ A 4

♠ 7 6

♥ A K 4

♦ A K 3

♣ K Q J 10 2

Dealer South

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
			2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

Sitting West, I led the ♠4, which was ducked to the king, and overtook partner's ♠J return, declarer again ducking. With the spade suit now dead, I felt my best hope was to strand the ♠A by exiting in another suit, and the ♣9 looked like the safest switch. Indeed, as long as East pitches one card from each suit on the run of the clubs, 3NT goes down.

3. *Stealing one or more tricks then switching to a new suit*

One of the great arts of defending against notrump contracts is knowing when to switch the attack to a new suit. This may happen (as on the previous example) when a defender has taken one or more tricks in his long suit but is then entryless. However, it can also happen even when a defender has a possible entry, as on this deal from an international event cited in Forquet's *Bridge with the Blue Team*:

♠ K

♥ J 8 6 5

♦ K 6 4

♣ A J 8 7 6

♠ Q J 10 9 7

♥ K 9 7 4

♦ A 7 5

♣ 2

♠ 8 3 2

♥ Q 3

♦ 10 9 8 3 2

♣ Q 10 9

♠ A 6 5 4

♥ A 10 2

♦ Q J

♣ K 5 4 3

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Sinsiscalco</i>		<i>Forquet</i>	
	pass	pass	1NT ¹
pass	2♣*	pass	2♣
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. 13-15.

West led the ♠Q. After winning perforce with dummy's king, declarer played a diamond to the ten and queen. If West wins and plays a spade, declarer simply ducks and is in control despite having to lose a club to East.

However, West ducked the ♦Q. If declarer now went after the clubs, East would win and the defenders would be able to clear the spade suit while West still had an entry, so declarer played a second diamond. West had to win that, and now he played a second top spade, which declarer had to duck. Having stolen a spade trick, West switched to a diamond, and when East got in with the ♣Q he had two diamond tricks to cash.

This deal features good play on both sides:

♠ K 8 5

♥ 6 3

♦ A K J

♣ Q J 10 9 3

♠ J 9 7 6 2

♥ 8 2

♦ 8 7 5 2

♣ A 6

♠ Q 3

♥ K Q 10 9 4

♦ 10 6 3

♣ K 7 5

♠ A 10 4

♥ A J 7 5

♦ Q 9 4

♣ 8 4 2

Dealer North

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♥	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♥8 and East passes his first test by putting in the nine. If he plays the queen, declarer ducks, and if East then switches to the ♠Q, declarer can duck in both hands and is in control. However, declarer is also on the ball and he too ducks the ♥9. Realizing a switch is in order, East tries the ♠Q, which is taken by dummy's king. When declarer plays the ♣Q from dummy, East puts up the king and plays his remaining spade. That sets up West's spades and he can cash them when he gets in with the ♣A.

4. Bait-and-Switch

I talked about this in Chapter 6, but it's an important concept, so there's no harm in mentioning it again here — especially as it is closely related to the last point. You will recall that in bait-and-switch, the defenders start with one suit, steal a trick in another suit, and finally switch back to their main threat. This is a typical example:

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

Dealer South			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠6. When declarer decides to duck, fearing the lead might be from a five-card suit, East wins with the jack. East can see that his side can only score three spade tricks, so he switches to the ♦9 (second highest from a suit without the ace or king). Declarer is forced to duck, so West wins and can now switch back to spades, setting up enough defensive tricks.

OBLIGATORY FALSECARDS

I promised earlier that I would discuss falsecards, and the time has now come. There are numerous situations where a defender can make declarer work for a living by following with the right card. Many of these falsecards are obligatory, in the sense that the play should be automatic.

♠ K 2 ♠ A J 7 4
 □
 ♠ Q 8 6 3 ♠ 10 9 5

Follow with the nine or ten when declarer plays low to the jack — he may play you for doubleton ten-nine.

♥ Q 9 4
 □ ♥ J 10 5

If declarer lays down the ace, you should play the jack or ten, again making him guess next round.

In the 2009 World Bridge Championships, a trump suit was distributed like this:

♠ J 10 5	♠ 4 3 [] ♠ A Q 9 8 7 6	♠ K 2
----------	-------------------------------	-------

When declarer, short of entries to dummy, played the ace from hand, West forgot to contribute an honor, so there was only one winning play possible on the next round.

This is a similar situation:

♦ J 10 4	♦ 5 []
----------	------------

If declarer plays the ♦5 from dummy and puts on the queen or king from hand, West should be ready to follow with an honor.

If declarer knows you are good enough to make these plays, it muddies the waters even when you have a holding that can be picked up. Here is a classic example from the final of the 2001 Bermuda Bowl. On this deal, declarer had to decide whether a defender had played a true card or a (standard) falsecard.

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Brogeland</i>	<i>Larsen</i>	<i>Sælensminde</i>	<i>Meltzer</i>
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
2♦	pass	3♣	pass
3♦	pass	3NT	all pass

South led the ♠5 and declarer won with the jack and played a diamond to the five, king and jack. The question now was, did North have ♦J10 doubleton, or was he falsecarding to protect South's doubleton ♦A? Declarer reasoned that, as South appeared to hold long spades, she was more likely to be short in diamonds. Also, with ♦A52 South might have played the two on the first round (notwithstanding

any signaling obligations). That suggested playing a low diamond, hoping to find South with a doubleton ace. On the other hand, even the best players do not always remember to play an obligatory falsecard... When declarer elected to continue with a low diamond he finished three down.

♣ 10 8 5 3

♣ K J 9 4

If this suit is trumps, then when declarer leads a low card you should put in the eight in case partner has the stiff ace; declarer may misread the position and cash the jack next.

♠ Q 10 8 7

♠ J 9

If declarer leads the ace or king, drop the jack (if you think declarer has a doubleton).
The falsecard from a J9 doubleton holding paid off in spectacular fashion on this deal from the 2001 Cap Gemini:

♠ 7 6 4

♥ 7 4 3

♦ J 7 3

♣ Q 10 8 2

♠ A 3 2

♥ AK10852

♦ Q 4

♣ J 7

♠ K Q 10 8 5

♥ J 9

♦ A K 9 6 2

♣ 4

♠ J 9

♥ Q 6

♦ 10 8 5

♣ A K 9 6 5 3

Dealer North			
NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Jassem	Robson	Tuszynski	Zia
	pass	1♠	pass
2♥	pass	2♠	pass
4♠	pass	5♣*	pass
5♥*	pass	6♣	all pass

Zia cashed a top club and continued the suit, declarer ruffing. When the ♠K landed on the table next, Zia contributed the jack. Declarer played a diamond to the queen, a diamond to the ace and ruffed a diamond with the ♠A. Then came an expectant spade to the eight...

Mentioning Zia reminds me of this deal:

Dealer North	♠ K 3 2		
NS Vul.	♥ 7 3		
	♦ A 4		
	♣ A K Q 10 8 4		
♠ 10 9 8 5 4		♠ J	
♥ A J 10		♥ Q 9 8 6 5	
♦ J 10 8 2		♦ Q 9 5	
♣ 7		♣ 9 6 3 2	
	♠ A Q 7 6		
	♥ K 4 2		
	♦ K 7 6 3		
	♣ J 5		

Against Zia's 6NT West led the ♠10, which went to the two, jack and ace. Before considering the possibility of playing for the ♥A onside, Zia advanced a sneaky ♣6, running it when West played low. If West had split his spades, Zia might well have gone for the strip-squeeze, but just suppose East had started with ♠J8 — the jack would have been a good card to play at Trick 1.

Perhaps the best-known of the obligatory falsecards is where a defender plays the nine holding J9xx of the trump suit — so, playing against an expert, it's hard to tell whether a nine is a singleton or from J9xx! This example is from the 1998 Cap Gemini tournament:

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

Dealer North
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Branco</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Chagas</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>
	pass	1♦	pass
1♥	pass	3♠*	dbl
redbl	pass	4♣*	pass
4NT*	pass	5♠*	pass
6♥	all pass		

I cashed the ♣A and continued with the eight. The only question in the play is how you should tackle the trump suit. Suppose you cash the ♥A and only small cards appear. Since you can only pick up ♥J9xx with North, the next move will be low to the queen. However, if North produces the ♥9 when the ace is cashed, you can

now pick up ♥Jxxx in the South hand. (If East is declarer, then starting by leading low from the ♥Q876 makes it harder for North to play the ♥9 from ♥J9xx, as South just might have a singleton ♥10.) Here, when declarer played a low heart toward the ♥AK105, I produced the ♥9. Sure enough, declarer played me for ♥J9xx so Jeff scored a trump trick.

Those eights and nines often make for interesting possibilities. Here's another position:

♠ A J 4		♠ K 10 8 5
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>		

If this suit is trumps and declarer leads low to the jack, you can play the eight, hoping the suit looks like this:

	♠ A J 4	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	
♠ 2	♠ Q 9 7 6 3	♠ K 10 8 5

Declarer may try running the queen next, hoping to find you with ♠108 alone (or ♠8 alone).

	♥ J 9 8 4 2	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	
♥ 10 5		

Suppose you have grounds to believe that declarer has ♥Axx in this position, and he leads low toward the dummy. If you put in the ♥10 (I call this an *intrapop* — see p. 259), declarer might play you for honor-ten doubleton. If you play low, declarer will put in the eight and then play to pin your ten on the next round.

♦ Q 9 5		♦ K 10
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>		

If declarer leads the ♦5 from dummy here, put up the king if you think he has ♦AJxxx (in trumps, perhaps).

	♣ K J 4	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	
♣ Q 8 7 5		

Duck smoothly if declarer runs the jack of trumps into you. It looks like he is trying to keep control; if he leads the king next he may not be able to handle it.

Sometimes you can give declarer a nudge in the wrong direction, as on this deal from the final of the 2002 US Team trials:

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Zia	Meckstroth	Rosenberg	Rodwell
			1♥
pass	2♣	pass	2♥
pass	2♣ ¹	pass	2NT ²
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. Relay.
 2. Interpreted by North as denying a club fit.

Zia led the ♦Q, and I ducked that and covered the next diamond. East won and returned a diamond, which West won and then switched to the ♣Q. I took that with the ace and played a heart to my ace. Zia dropped a cunning ♥J, and when I took the bait and cashed the ♥K, I had to go two down.

Playing a card you are known to hold, to keep the situation obscure, should be routine. This is one of the best-known positions:

♥ Q 10 5
 ♥ K J 4

They lead through your hand to the jack. When they cash the king, play the queen, leaving them to guess who has the ten.

It can also pay to play the card you are *about* to be known to hold. Look at this deal from the 2009 European Open Championships:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Micescu	Pachman	Lungu	Ginossar
			1♥
pass	2♦	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West led the ♠2 and declarer played low from dummy, taking East's jack with the queen. When he played a diamond to the king, East won with the ace and

played another spade, which declarer ducked to West's king. Now West made the farsighted play of switching to a club. Declarer played low from dummy, so East put in the queen; when that held, he switched back to spades.

Although the defenders were assured of four tricks, it appeared that declarer would make his contract, thanks to the fall of the ♥J. However, when declarer won with the ♠A and crossed to dummy with the ♥A, the jack made an unexpectedly early appearance! Convinced that he could no longer hope for five heart tricks, declarer decided he needed to score a trick in clubs. That looked to be safe — West had failed to clear the spade suit, so it seemed logical to place the ♣A with East. Accordingly, declarer played the ♣K; however, it was West who took the trick and his last spade defeated the 'unbeatable' game.

COUNTERING A MENACING SIDE SUIT

One of the scariest situations for a defender is when declarer has a long side suit, either in hand or (more usually) in dummy. You know all those tricks are coming over the hill at you eventually unless you can do something about it. Fortunately, there are many ways that you might be able to do just that.

WHEN DECLARER HAS ENTRY TROUBLE

Again, we come back to entries: the lifeblood of bridge. If declarer is in trouble for entries, there are a number of things the defenders may be able to do, some of which we have already encountered.

1. Force the run of the long suit before an entry is built to the opposite hand (suicide squeeze)

This revolves around timing — the defenders force declarer to cash his long suit before he has all his tricks set up elsewhere. In the ideal situation, discarding becomes a problem.

Here's an example:

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

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♦	3♣	pass	3NT
dbl	all pass		

West leads the ♦J. Declarer wins with dummy's queen and plays a low club to his jack and West's king as East discards the ♥2. It would be easy to panic, but West should realize that as long as his partner has the ♠Q, he can always hold declarer to eight tricks by the simple expedient of cashing the ♥A and then exiting with a club. In the four-card ending, West keeps the ♠A5 and ♦A10. Declarer is down to the ♠K10 and ♦K8 and must unguard one of the pointed suits on the last club.

Here is an example where the defenders might be able cut declarer off from his hand — it comes from the 1997 Bermuda Bowl final:

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

Dealer East
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Levy</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Mouiel</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
		pass	pass
1♣	1♥	1♠	pass
2♦	pass	3NT	all pass

I led the ♥3. Jeff won with the ace and decided the best chance was to try to lock declarer in dummy, hoping to secure three diamond tricks to go with the two aces. He cashed the ♠A and when I discouraged, he switched to the ♣Q. My ♣9 denied declarer an entry to his hand, but my diamonds were not quite good enough.

If North tries a low spade at Trick 2, declarer must guess right, otherwise with an extra trick in the bag the endplay on dummy works. I have a feeling declarer

would have got this right, expecting me to raise partner’s overcall if I had an ace as well as three hearts — but we’ll never know.

2. The Left Jab

We have already discussed (on p. 162) how the left jab play of a high card in front of the long suit can make life difficult for declarer. Here is an example from a practice match played between the Netherlands and Team Angelini in 2010:

♠ 10 7

♥ 8 6

♦ A J 10 5 4

♣ 10 6 3 2

♠ A 9 6 4 2

♥ K 3

♦ Q 3 2

♣ Q 7 5

♠ J 8 3

♥ J 5 4 2

♦ K 7 6

♣ A K 4

♠ K Q 5

♥ A Q 10 9 7

♦ 9 8

♣ J 9 8

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Nunes</i>	<i>Brink</i>	<i>Fantoni</i>
pass	pass	pass	1NT ¹
1. 12-14.			

West led the ♠2, which went to the ten, jack and king. When declarer advanced the ♦8 West put up the queen, ensuring the maximum penalty for the defense. With no way to generate any tricks, declarer finished three down.

3. Hold up an offside honor

It can be incredibly effective to duck when declarer takes a finesse, and I’ll discuss this at greater length in Chapter 13. This classic example is a deal from the 2010 NEC Cup:

♠ J 2

♥ A K 9 8 6 4

♦ A 10 2

♣ Q 8

♠ Q 9 6 3

♥ Q J 10 3

♦ J 9 6

♣ K 9

♠ K 10 7 5

♥ 7 5

♦ K Q 7 3

♣ 5 4 3

♠ A 8 4

♥ 2

♦ 8 5 4

♣ A J 10 7 6 2

Dealer East

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Yokoi</i>	<i>Nunn</i>	<i>Kono</i>	<i>Hans</i>
pass	1♥	pass	pass
pass	2♥	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♠3. Declarer took the first spade with the ace, crossed to dummy with a heart and ran the ♣Q. When that held, he repeated the finesse, but this time West won and was soon posting +200 for four down.

A decent alternative for declarer is to play a low club toward the queen at Trick 2. West might well give the game away on this layout, and if the king is inside no harm is done.

4. The Suit Suffocation Play

You will recall from the description in Chapter 6 (see p. 160) that this play involves a defender leading into a long, semi-solid suit. This deal is from the final of the 2009 D'Orsi Seniors Bowl:

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

Dealer North			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Romanski	Price	Kowalski	Simpson
	pass	pass	pass
1♣ ¹	1♠	pass	pass
2♥	pass	2NT	pass
3NT	all pass		
1. Polish Club.			

South led the ♠6 and North allowed dummy's ten to hold. Declarer cashed the ♦A and led the jack; South won this and returned a spade. Declarer won with dummy's ace and played a heart to the jack and king. Although it was not absolutely essential on this layout, South calmly returned the ♥10, locking declarer in dummy, which eventually led to the demise of the contract.

5. Attack the entry

Attacking the entry to the long suit is a self-evident tactic. This next example combines a number of ideas I have already discussed:

♠ K

♥ K J 5

♦ J 10 9 7 5 2

♣ 7 4 2

♠ J 9 8 7 4 3

♥ Q 7 4

♦ A K

♣ Q 3

♠ 6 5 2

♥ A 9 3

♦ 6 4 3

♣ J 10 8 5

♠ A Q 10

♥ 10 8 6 2

♦ Q 8

♣ A K 9 6

Dealer South

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
2♣	3♣ ¹	pass	3NT
	all pass		

1. Transfer to diamonds, invitational plus.

West leads the ♠7. Declarer wins with dummy's king and plays a diamond to the three, queen and king. It is clear there is no future in spades and declarer is about to clear the diamonds. The only hope is to attack the potential entry in dummy by switching to a heart. Not just any old heart, though — it must be the queen, and if declarer covers, East must duck.

This might be called *Chinese Soft Entry Destruction*, to distinguish it from leading the queen through A10x.

6. Days of Thunder

You will recall that this play (see p. 156) involves a defender deliberately leading into a suit that is known to be solid so as to cause entry problems. The defense on this deal would be difficult to find unless you were already familiar with the idea:

♠ A K J 2

♥ A 10 7

♦ K Q J 6 3

♣ Q

♠ 10 7 5

♥ J 9

♦ 7 4 2

♣ J 10 8 6 2

♠ 6 3

♥ K 8 5 4 3

♦ 10 8

♣ A K 5 3

♠ Q 9 8 4

♥ Q 6 2

♦ A 9 5

♣ 9 7 4

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	4♣*	pass	4♦*
pass	4♥*	pass	4♠
pass	6♣	all pass	

West leads the ♣J and East wins with the king. It should not be difficult to see that declarer must be close to twelve tricks — five diamonds, a heart and five trump tricks (counting a ruff in dummy). If declarer can secure a second club ruff he will be home. A trump switch is a possibility, but if declarer has the ♠Q10 or (as here) the ♠Q98, there will be enough entries (although on this layout declarer has to finesse the ♦9 to make sure of that). A better try is to switch to a diamond. Even though declarer can win in hand with the nine and ruff a club, he does not have enough entries to organize a second club ruff and get back to draw trumps.

DEFENDING WITH A LONG SIDE SUIT IN DUMMY

When the long suit is in dummy, the situation is a little easier, since dummy often has fewer high cards, and therefore the entries are more vulnerable to attack. However, that's not the only weapon available to the defense.

1. *Get your own tricks first*

If you have enough top tricks to beat the contract, it is usually just a matter of recognizing that. On occasion you have to create the setting trick, and sometimes this can require a little bit of imagination, as on this deal:

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

Dealer South				
Both Vul.				
West	North	East	South	
1 ♠	2 ♥	pass	1 ♥	4 ♥
all pass				

On the surface East-West appear to have only three tricks, two spades and a diamond, but when West leads a top spade East plays the ♠8, pretending he had started with only two spades. When West continues spades, if declarer ruffs the third round high he will go one down.

If you fail to cash out, declarer may be able to draw an important inference, as on this deal from the final of the 2003 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ K 7 4
 ♥ J 8 7 4
 ♦ A J 9 6 5
 ♣ Q

♠ 10 5
 ♥ A 9 6
 ♦ 10 7
 ♣ A J 9 7 3 2

♠ A 6
 ♥ K Q 3 2
 ♦ Q 3 2
 ♣ K 10 6 5

♠ Q J 9 8 3 2
 ♥ 10 5
 ♦ K 8 4
 ♣ 8 4

Dealer West
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Hamman</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Soloway</i>	<i>Versace</i>
pass	pass	1NT ¹	2♦ ²
3NT	4♥ ³	dbl	4♠
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

1. 14-16.
2. One major.
3. Pass or correct.

West led the ♠5. East took the ace and had to consider the merits of trying to cash out or playing to cut down potential club ruffs. When he returned a trump, declarer won with dummy's king. Now, reasoning that East would surely have tried to cash out if he were not looking at the ♦Q, declarer played the ♦J and ran it when East did not cover. That gave him an overtrick.

2. Return a trump to take out an entry prematurely

This is an especially a good idea when declarer has Axxxx in dummy opposite a singleton and you win the first lead. Return a trump to remove the entry needed for the long card.

This is the classic case:

♠ Q 9 3
 ♥ A J 8 6 3
 ♦ K 3
 ♣ 9 5 3

♠ 7
 ♥ 7 4 2
 ♦ 10 9 8 5 2
 ♣ K J 7 4

♠ 8 5
 ♥ K Q 10 5
 ♦ A Q 7 4
 ♣ Q 10 2

♠ A K J 10 6 4 2
 ♥ 9
 ♦ J 6
 ♣ A 8 6

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	2♠	dbl	1♠
all pass			4♠

West leads the ♦10 and East takes the first two tricks. It looks obvious to switch to a club, but declarer wins with the ace, crosses to the ♥A and ruffs a heart with the ♠4. A trump to dummy, a heart ruff, a trump to dummy, another heart ruff and finally the carefully preserved ♠2 allows declarer to cross to dummy once more to

cash the established heart. To prevent this, East must switch to a trump at Trick 3, removing a vital entry.

When you are confident you have all the side suits under control, a trump lead is usually a good idea — but there are exceptions, as on this deal:

♠ K 7

♥ K Q 9 8 3

♦ 9 8 5

♣ 9 6 5

♠ 9 2

♥ A 10 2

♦ J 10

♣ Q 10 8 4 3 2

♠ J 10 4

♥ 7 4

♦ A K Q 7 6 4 2

♣ 7

♠ A Q 8 6 5 3

♥ J 6 5

♦ 3

♣ A K J

Dealer East

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
		3NT*	4♠
5♣	dbl	5♦	dbl
all pass			

South leads the ♣A and, seeing no danger, switches to the ♦3 (any major-suit card will work!). Declarer wins with dummy's ten, ruffs a club, crosses to the ♦J and ruffs another club. He draws the outstanding trump and can still get to dummy with the ♥A to cash three clubs, taking care of his losing spades.

3. The trump holdup

In some situations it can be a good idea to discard even if you could win the trick by ruffing. In essence this is a type of holdup play, just like ducking a winner. The most common type is when they have a running suit in dummy but no side entry.

♠ 8 7

♥ 9 5 4

♦ A K Q 10 5 4

♣ J 7

♠ J 10 4 3

♥ A K Q 10 3

♦ —

♣ K 9 5 3

♠ J 10 4 3

♥ A K Q 10 3

♦ —

♣ K 9 5 3

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
2♥	3♦	pass	1♠
pass	4♣	all pass	3♣

You lead three rounds of hearts, declarer ruffing the third round. He now plays the ace, king and queen of trumps, partner following twice (!) and then pitching a low club. Declarer now leads the ♦J. What is your plan?

You just need to hold up your trump until declarer has no more diamonds. Partner will give count. Just make sure you keep a heart winner. The full deal is:

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

On this deal you can actually afford to ruff the fourth diamond but not the first or second.

The following deal is from the IMP Pairs at the 2011 Spring NABC. My partner was Paul Lewis.

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

Dealer South			
NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
pass	4♠	all pass	2♠

West leads the ♥2 and you win in dummy. How do you play from here?

At IMP Pairs you aren't too concerned with overtricks, so you should consider the implications of a 4-1 trump break. Our declarer led the ♦K off dummy to my partner's ace and he switched to the ♣K, which South ruffed. Now he took a diamond ruff, cashed the ♠K, ruffed another club and played the ♠A. That saw my partner show out, pitching his other heart to make the position in that suit clear to me.

I was then able to execute the trump holdup play by discarding on the next heart lead and ruffing the third round, allowing a passive club exit in case declarer had the ♦J. The full deal was:

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

Do you see what declarer might have done?

I think his best shot, in case spades are 4-1, is to lead the other high heart from dummy at Trick 2, dumping the ♥Q from hand. Now to beat it I must refuse to ruff, a slightly tougher play in this situation as it appears that declarer is going for club discards.

As an aside, declarer can also employ this same technique to shut out a long suit held by the defense:

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

Dealer West			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
2♥	dbl	3♥	4♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥K and you win the ace, pitching a club from hand. Next you lead a spade to the ten and West wins with the king and returns a low heart to his partner's jack. What now?

You have plenty of tricks; your problems are trump control and L. Hearts are likely 6-3 on the vulnerability, so you can discard on the second heart, ruff the third, and cash the ♠AQ, making five if trumps are 3-3 and four if East has four trumps.

4. *Lead the long suit, hoping to kill one or more winners when partner can ruff*

Sometimes it pays to lead the long suit itself, hoping partner can ruff some of the winners with otherwise useless small trumps. This spectacular example comes from the 2002 Blue Ribbon Pairs in Phoenix.

♠ A K Q 5 4

♥ —

♦ K J 10 2

♣ K 10 6 2

♠ J

♥ 8 3 2

♦ A Q 7 6

♣ 9 8 7 5 4

♠ 9 8

♥ K Q J 10 5 4

♦ 8 5 4

♣ J 3

♠ 10 7 6 3 2

♥ A 9 7 6

♦ 9 3

♣ A Q

Dealer East

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Cohen	Roren	Berkowitz	Sælensminde
all pass		pass	3♥

West led the ♠J. Declarer won in dummy and tried to cash a second spade, but West ruffed with the ♥3 and switched to a club. East won with the queen, cashed the ace and went back to spades. Declarer ruffed high and continued with a high trump which East won to play a fourth spade. Declarer ruffed high again and cashed the ♥10. Hoping the outstanding trumps were now 1-1 he exited with a heart, but East could win, draw the last trump (squeezing dummy into parting with a diamond) and play a diamond. West scored two tricks in that suit, leaving declarer four down.

5. *Lead the long suit to try to cut it off while trumps are still out*

This particular tactic is more effective when you have a trump stopper(s) that is not essential. This example is from the quarterfinal of the 1997 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ 3 2

♥ 10 8 7

♦ A K J 9 8 7 6

♣ 4

♠ K 10 7

♥ Q 6 5 2

♦ Q 10 4

♣ 7 6 3

♠ A 9 6 5

♥ 4

♦ 2

♣ A K Q J 10 8 5

♠ Q J 8 4

♥ A K J 9 3

♦ 5 3

♣ 9 2

Dealer North

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Versace	Helness	Lauria	Helgemo
pass		1♥	dbl
3♥	5♦	pass	6♣
all pass			

Remember that when you are looking at all four hands, the winning defense is a lot easier to find, and at the table there may well be a degree of guesswork involved. A critical deal from our 1993 Bermuda Bowl quarterfinal match against Denmark shows how tactics like this can sometimes backfire badly.

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

West	North	East	South
Shaltz	Bergen	Shaltz	Rodwell
2♦*	5♣	pass	6♥
all pass			

This was a key deal as we only won the match by 8 IMPs. West had a tough problem, and his play might well have been correct if I had had a singleton club.

6. Tap dummy before the suit gets established

In Chapter 7, I discussed the idea of tapping dummy to prevent declarer from drawing trumps ending in dummy and running his long suit. This strategy can also work after the suit has been established, as on the following deal from the 2009 U.S. Team Trials:

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

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Ekeblad	Hamman	Weichsel	Zia
	pass	pass	1♥
pass	2♣*	pass	2♦*
pass	4♥	all pass	

West led a diamond and East took the ace. Realizing the potential threat of the club suit he switched to the ♠10, declarer winning with the ace and playing the ♣Q. West correctly ducked that, took the next club and played the ♠K. Declarer ruffed in dummy and played a club, discarding his losing diamond. West ruffed and played another spade. Declarer ruffed, ruffed a diamond, ruffed a spade and played a diamond. East ruffed in with the ♥9 and promoted a trump trick for his partner.

At my table, Jeff and I found a slightly different way to hold declarer to nine tricks. The trump lead went to dummy's ten, and the defense won the second club. Now the ♦J went to the queen and ace, the ♦10 was cashed, and a club return finished declarer.

7. In notrump, don't let declarer steal his ninth trick in another suit

This deal was played at the rubber bridge table during a tournament in Marbella:

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

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Mollo		Munoz	
	1♦	pass	1♥
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♥J. Declarer won in dummy and played the ♠3. With the ♥Q marked in declarer's hand East, Spain's Rafael Munoz, could count eight tricks and a spade would make nine. So it had to be right to go up with the ♠A. It was clear that the

defenders needed four fast club tricks and he found the right way to do that when he switched to the ♣K (the Reese play I discussed on p. 170). West played his part by following with the eight and now a low club to the ace enabled West to complete the defense by returning the two, East's ♣J7 collecting dummy's ♣96.

PART 4

COUNTER-INTUITIVE DEFENSE

REASONS TO PLAY SECOND HAND HIGH

Back in Chapter 1, I talked briefly about some of the basic rules for defensive cardplay. I also warned you that there are times when those rules must be disregarded, and such occasions are the subject of this part of the book.

Let's begin with a chapter on the many reasons why a defender may have to reject the concept of playing second hand low.

PASSING THE FREEZE

The term *frozen suit* is well known and applies to any situation where no one can play a suit to their advantage. This is a simple example:

♠ Q 7 5 3	♠ K 10 6		♠ J 4 2
	<div></div>		
	♠ A 9 8		

If West or East lead this suit they risk surrendering a trick (the best shot is to lead an honor, hoping declarer goes wrong). By the same token, declarer will avoid playing the suit, hoping that eventually the defenders will have to broach it.

Going up with a high card can force them to win when the suit is frozen.

	♥ A J 6	
♥ Q 10 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div>	♥ K 7 3 2
	♥ 9 8 5	

When the nine or eight is led, play the queen. This ‘passes the freeze’ to North, who is forced to win the trick. If you duck instead, declarer lets the nine run and you are Chinesed; if you cover the nine with the ten then East is endplayed if he can’t exit in another suit. Note, however, that the ten would be a good play from ♥107x. Even though East is still endplayed, at least there is a guess for declarer on the way back instead of a sure thing, which would be the case if you ducked.

UNBLOCKING

With no sight of partner’s hand, it is harder for a defender to recognize the need to unblock. Apart from unblocking a high card to avoid being thrown in (a topic I covered in Chapter 8), one of the most obvious reasons is to enable partner to win a trick in a suit, as on this type of deal:

	♠ Q J 4 3	
	♥ Q 8 5 3	
	♦ 8 4 3	
	♣ 6 2	
♠ 7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; display: inline-block;"></div>	♠ 9 8 2
♥ K 10 6		♥ J 9 2
♦ A Q J 9 2		♦ 10 7 5
♣ K Q J 7		♣ 10 9 5 3
	♠ A K 10 6 5	
	♥ A 7 4	
	♦ K 6	
	♣ A 8 4	

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♠
dbl	2♣	pass	4♣
all pass			

West leads the ♣K. Declarer ducks, wins the second round and plays two rounds of trumps, West discarding a diamond. If declarer now cashes the ♥A, West must unblock the king, turning East’s jack into an entry. As you may have noticed, declarer can do better. After two rounds of trumps he plays a low heart, planning to put up dummy’s queen. If that holds, declarer can then play a low heart from dummy, intending to duck the trick to West. To counter that, West must play the ♥10 on the first round of the suit — a different type of unblock in the same suit.

NOT LETTING THEM SLIP A TRICK THROUGH

There are many situations where declarer may be attempting to steal a trick, and the defenders must be wide awake to the possibility.

This example is from the 2003 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ J 10 7 4 3

♥ 9 5

♦ J 3

♣ A 10 5 3

♠ 8 6 2

♥ AKQ 10 6

♦ A 8 5

♣ Q 7

♠ A

♥ J 7 4

♦ K 10 7

♣ K J 8 6 4 2

♠ K Q 9 5

♥ 8 3 2

♦ Q 9 6 4 2

♣ 9

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
1NT	Smolski pass	3NT	Petty all pass

North led the ♠4. With eight tricks on top, declarer won with dummy's ace, crossed to hand with a diamond and played the ♣7 in an attempt to slip his ninth winner through. North was not fooled, however, and went up with the ace and played another spade for a one-trick set.

BEFORE THE RATS GET AT IT...

Sometimes the reason to play a high card is to ensure that your side can cash a winner before declarer can dispose of his loser, as on this deal from the 1999 Bermuda Bowl final:

♠ 10 5 2

♥ 6 5 2

♦ A Q J 10 5

♣ A 5

♠ K Q 3

♥ 3

♦ K 9 4 2

♣ K J 10 8 2

♠ 9 8 4

♥ A Q 9

♦ 8 7 6

♣ Q 9 7 4

♠ A J 7 6

♥ K J 10 8 7 4

♦ 3

♣ 6 3

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Branco	Meckstroth	Chagas	Rodwell
1♣	1♦	2♣	dbl*
3♣	pass	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

West led the ♣J and I won in dummy and played a heart to the jack. When that held I took the diamond finesse and discarded my club loser on the ♦A. Now a second trump from dummy held my losses to three tricks in the majors. If East goes up with the ♥A at Trick 2, cashes the ♣Q and then plays a spade, the contract goes down: West gets in with the ♠Q and switches to a diamond.

THE LEFT JAB

More than once, earlier in the book, we’ve encountered the *left jab* — rising with an honor when declarer plays his long suit. The idea is to prevent declarer from running a suit where there are entry problems.

On this deal from the 2010 England Lady Milne Trials, both defenders had to be awake:

♠ 9 7 3

♥ J 3

♦ A J 10 9 5 2

♣ 10 9

♠ J 10 6 4

♥ 9 7 6 5 2

♦ Q 3

♣ 8 7

♠ 8 2

♥ A 10 8

♦ K 7 6

♣ K J 6 5 4

♠ A K Q 5

♥ K Q 4

♦ 8 4

♣ A Q 3 2

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Brock		Gross	
	2♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♥7 and, when declarer played low from dummy, East put in the ten. Declarer won in hand and played the ♦4. West must put up the queen to restrict declarer to one diamond trick, but that is not the end of the matter. Say declarer takes the ♦Q with dummy’s ace: now when she plays a club from dummy, East must cover.

PREVENTING A CHEAP FINESSE

With an honor or honors in front of a finessing position, it pays to be alert in case the situation demands that you play a high card.

♣ 4

♣ 7 2

♣ K J 10 8

♣ A Q 9 6 5 3

When declarer plays a card from dummy, East must insert the jack or ten this time and play the other one on the next lead from dummy. In case you imagine this type of play to be routine, look at this deal from the 2010 Cavendish:

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

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Bramley</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>	<i>Demirev</i>	<i>Helness</i>
			1♠
2♦	3♣	pass	3♥
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

West led the ♣Q. Declarer won with dummy's ace and played a spade to the queen and ace. West cashed the ♦A and exited with a diamond, which declarer, having unblocked the ♦K, won with dummy's queen. He drew trumps, crossed to dummy with a club and played the ♥8. When East mistakenly followed with the three, declarer was in a position to make the contract by running it. Of course that is a hard play to find as (unless East was attempting a Grosvenor Coup) it would surely be a losing line. After considerable thought, declarer got it right.

Here is a variation on this theme from the 2005 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer East
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Jansma</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>
		pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	2♦
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

West led the ♥10 and, when that held, he continued with the queen. Declarer ruffed and played a club to the ten. East won and switched to the ♦J, but declarer won, cashed his other top diamond and ruffed a diamond with the ♠J. East decided not to overruff, but eventually was thrown in on the third round of trumps and forced to lead a heart or a club.

Play started the same way at the other table, but at Trick 3, Lorenzo Lauria put in the ♣Q, forcing declarer to win with dummy's ace. Now when declarer played three rounds of diamonds, East could overruff and exit with a trump to leave declarer a trick short. Double-dummy, declarer can still prevail by drawing one round of trumps, cashing his top diamonds and then playing a club — but that is a difficult play. However, since the actual layout is a big danger to the contract, you could at least consider playing this way. Of course, if West has

♠ 10 9 ♥ Q 10 9 x ♦ Q 9 8 x x ♣ Q x

this line will fail.

Sometimes you have to rise with an honor to prevent a very cheap finesse, as on this deal from the final of the 2003 U.S. Team Trials:

♠ A 10
♥ Q J 10 3
♦ A K 10
♣ K Q 8 5

♠ J 8 7 4 2
♥ 8 6 4
♦ Q J 3 2
♣ 10

♠ K 9 5 3
♥ 7 5 2
♦ 7
♣ A J 7 3 2

♠ Q 6
♥ A K 9
♦ 9 8 6 5 4
♣ 9 6 4

Dealer West			
NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Hamman	Zia	Soloway	Rosenberg
pass	2NT	pass	3♣*
pass	3♥	pass	4♣
pass	4♦ ¹	pass	4NT*
pass	6♣	dbl	all pass
1. Keycard ask in clubs and spades.			

East doubled expecting his partner to lead a heart (the first suit bid by dummy), but West led a spade. Declarer took East's queen with the king, drew two rounds of trumps ending in hand and led a diamond. If West plays low, declarer puts in the ten and is home, being able to ditch two hearts on the diamonds and organize a ruffing finesse against East. However, Hamman was wide awake and put in the ♦Q to dash declarer's hopes.

Another occasion when you may have to play high is when you need to prevent declarer from taking a ruffing finesse, as on this deal:

♠ 6 4 2

♥ 9 8 7 6 4 3

♦ 8 6 5

♣ 9

♠ J 10 3

♥ K 10 5

♦ 9 7 4

♣ A 7 6 3

♠ 9 8 7 5

♥ A

♦ Q J 10 3

♣ K 8 5 4

♠ A K Q

♥ Q J 2

♦ A K 2

♣ Q J 10 2

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
			2NT
pass	3♦*	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

West leads the ♠J. Declarer wins with the king and plays the ♣2. It is imperative for West to go up with the ace. Failing to do so will allow declarer to take a later ruffing finesse against the ace and eventually dispose of one of dummy’s losing diamonds.

KILLING AN ENTRY

Sometimes the reason for playing second hand high is to deny declarer an extra entry to dummy, as on this deal:

♠ K 9 5

♥ K 2

♦ Q 10 9 7 3 2

♣ J 10

♠ A J 4

♥ 10 7 6

♦ A K 8

♣ Q 7 5 3

♠ 8 7 6 2

♥ 4 3

♦ J 5 4

♣ K 9 8 6

♠ Q 10 3

♥ A Q J 9 8 5

♦ 6

♣ A 4 2

Dealer West

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
1NT ¹	pass	pass	2♥
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

1. 12-14.

West leads the ♦A and switches to a trump. Declarer wins in hand and plays the ♠3. If West plays low then declarer can put in dummy’s nine, ruff a diamond, cross to the ♥K, and ruff another diamond. Now he draws trumps and plays a spade to

gain access to the established diamonds. To prevent this, West must either go up with the ♠A at Trick 3 or put in the jack, in either case leaving declarer an entry short. A neat case of heads I win, tails you lose.

Here's another recent example:

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

Dealer East
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Rodwell		Meckstroth	
		1♣ ¹	3♥
all pass			
1. 16+, artificial.			

Playing with Jeff at a Regional, I led the ♠2 and declarer played low from dummy. Since we play third and fifth, declarer appeared to have zero or two spades, so Jeff stuck in the seven. Declarer won with the jack and led a second spade, Jeff taking the ace and switching to king, queen and another diamond. Declarer ruffed with the eight. This deal was now all about locking declarer in hand, and I was ready to go up with the ♣Q if declarer led a low club, but she led the ♣J. All I had to do was give count and Jeff ducked. When a second club was led he won the ace and led another spade, locking declarer in hand for +50.

In order to succeed on this deal, declarer had to make the *trick-trashing entry fly* of the ♠K from dummy at Trick 1 — if Jeff took the ace she could overtake the jack later for a trump finesse.

DANGER HAND HIGH

This topic formed the basis of my *Bols Bridge Tip* back in 1989. Here's the gist of it. If you are the *danger hand* (you have tricks to cash, or can lead through to partner with effect, for example), playing second hand *high* can seriously embarrass declarer, since he can't afford to let you hold the trick. You may prevent declarer from ducking, a necessary play to establish a suit. Also, you may play on declarer's fear that your holding is better than it is and that might prevent or persuade him from continuing the suit. Sometimes you may convince declarer to try for a non-existent endplay.

Playing second hand high can also destroy declarer's communications — if he ducks, he surrenders a trick and if he wins, a crucial entry is lost.

Let's assume you are West, the danger hand, here:

♠ J 8 7 ♠ K 10 3 2

Defending against notrump, when declarer leads toward dummy you should go up with the jack when this suit is led in most cases. If declarer has ♠Axx or ♠Qxx, he would have stuck in the ten anyway, to lose to the safe opponent. Putting up the jack helps if declarer has ♠Axx and thinks you have ♠QJ(x). The risk to keep in mind is that partner might occasionally have ♠Qx.

♥ Q 5 ♥ A 10 8 7 4

In this case, there is little risk in playing the queen (unless declarer has ♥Jx, or ♥Jxx, when your play will help to unblock the suit). If declarer has ♥Kxx and no side entry to dummy, then this play can be devastating if he can't afford to lose a trick to you.

This was the first example deal in my *Bols Tip*:

♠ A K Q 10
 ♥ 5 3
 ♦ 8 6 5
 ♣ K J 10 4

♠ 9 8 2
 ♥ K Q 7 6
 ♦ A Q 4 3
 ♣ A 3

♠ J 5 4
 ♥ A 10 9 8 4
 ♦ K 9 2
 ♣ 7 6

♠ 7 6 3
 ♥ J 2
 ♦ J 10 7
 ♣ Q 9 8 5 2

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠9; declarer wins in dummy and leads a heart. If East plays low, the ten will force an honor from West. After that, declarer win the next spade in dummy, clear the heart suit, then get back to hand with the ♠J to cash the hearts and play a club to the king. However, if East puts up the ♥J on the first round of the suit, declarer has to win. Now the natural options of continuing hearts or finessing clubs both fail.

Here is another situation that you might encounter.

♥ K 9 3 ♥ A 10 8 2
 □ ♥ Q J 5
 ♥ 7 6 4

In a match in the 2007 Vanderbilt, declarer (in a doubled club partscore) needed to set up a long card in this suit for a spade discard, but could not allow West to get on lead early for fear of a damaging switch (dummy held the ♠AQ, declarer had a doubleton and it was clear the king was offside). When declarer played a low heart from his hand, West put up the ♥K. Declarer could not afford to duck so he took the ace — on which East dropped the jack!

With no quick entry back to hand declarer tried a low heart off dummy, but East followed with the five! West was able to win with the ♥9 and make the killing switch to a spade. It was Poland's Balicki and Zmudzinski who managed this piece of brilliance. Notice that declarer could have prevailed by leading the ten to the second round of hearts.

You may need to be equally creative when partner is the danger hand, as evidenced by this deal from a Canadian Swiss Teams in 1992:

♠ K Q 9 4
 ♥ K 7 6 3
 ♦ Q 8 5 2
 ♣ K
 ♠ 10 7 2 ♠ A J 5
 ♥ 10 5 ♥ Q J 9 4
 ♦ 9 3 ♦ J 10 7 6
 ♣ QJ10972 ♣ 8 3
 ♠ 8 6 3
 ♥ A 8 2
 ♦ A K 4
 ♣ A 6 5 4

Dealer South				
EW Vul.				
West	North	East	South	
			1NT	
pass	2♣*	pass	2♦*	
pass	3NT	all pass		

West led the ♣Q; declarer won in dummy, came to hand with a diamond and played a spade to the king. East took the ace and returned a club. Declarer ducked, won the next club and kept West out of the game by playing a spade to the nine.

Play went the same way at the other table until Trick 3, when East dropped the ♠J under the king! Declarer came to hand with a diamond and played a spade to the queen. Now East could win with the ace and return a club, setting up the suit while West still held an entry in the form of the ♠10. That play was good enough to earn Mike Passell the 1992 Precision Defense of the Year award. I will name this play either *Passell's Gambit* or the *trick-trashing middle falsecard*.

Here's a nice example from the 1997 World Junior Championships, featuring some future stars in a match between Canada and Russia.

♠ 10 8 2
 ♥ Q 10 8 7 2
 ♦ K 7 5
 ♣ 6 2

♠ A Q J 7 5
 ♥ K J 6
 ♦ 8 6
 ♣ A 8 5

♠ K 9 6
 ♥ 9 4
 ♦ A Q 9 3 2
 ♣ J 10 3

♠ 4 3
 ♥ A 5 3
 ♦ J 10 4
 ♣ K Q 9 7 4

Dealer North
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>D. Wolpert</i>	<i>Petrinin</i>	<i>Pollack</i>	<i>Khiouppenen</i>
	pass	pass	2♣*
2♣	pass	3♣*	pass
4♣	all pass		

North led the ♣6, which was covered by the jack, queen and ace. Declarer drew trumps and led the ♦8, hoping to be able to duck the trick to South. His hopes were dashed quickly when North went up with the ♦K! If declarer won with the ace, there would be only one more diamond trick, while ducking would allow North to play a killing second club through.

This deal is from the 2003 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ Q 8
 ♥ A J 8 4
 ♦ K 5 4
 ♣ 9 8 5 2

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

♠ A K 9 6 4
 ♥ Q 2
 ♦ 9 6 3
 ♣ A K 3

♠ J 10 3 2
 ♥ 10 7 6 5
 ♦ Q 7
 ♣ Q 7 4

Dealer North
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Lindkvist</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Fredin</i>
	pass	1♣ ¹	pass
2♣ ²	pass	2♥ ³	pass
2♣ ⁴	pass	2NT	pass
3NT	all pass		

1. Strong.
2. Diamonds, game forcing.
3. Spades.
4. No fit.

South led the ♥6, which ran to declarer's queen. When Jeff played the ♦3 next, South blundered by playing low. North did his best by ducking dummy's ♦10, but declarer simply played a low diamond from dummy next and was assured of nine tricks. If South goes in with the ♦Q, declarer must choose between two evils. Either he ducks, allowing South to continue hearts (and the defense will still come to another diamond), or he wins, after which North controls the diamond suit.

Sometimes a danger hand high play is necessary even when you know partner's holding must be much weaker, as in this example from my *Bols Tip*:

♠ 4 3
 ♥ 4 3 2
 ♦ A 10 6 5
 ♣ A K Q 2

♠ Q 6 5
 ♥ K Q J 10 5
 ♦ Q 4 3
 ♣ 4 3

♠ 10 9 8 2
 ♥ 9 7
 ♦ J 8 7
 ♣ J 10 9 6

♠ A K J 7
 ♥ A 8 6
 ♦ K 9 2
 ♣ 8 7 5

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

You lead the ♥K, which is ducked. Two more rounds of the suit see declarer win the third heart with the ace, as partner discards a spade. When declarer leads the ♦2 you must go in with the queen, otherwise declarer will duck the trick into the safe hand, setting up a ninth trick when the diamonds divide. When you rise, declarer must win with dummy's ace. Now he will probably play a spade to the ace and then cash three rounds of clubs, on which you discard a diamond. Declarer can succeed by taking a diamond finesse, but he might try to drop the ♦J or the ♠Q instead.

Finally, here's an example where you are the danger hand because you can get partner off a threatened endplay, and you need to prevent declarer from ducking a trick or tricks to him instead.

♠ J 9 2
 ♥ 8 7
 ♦ K Q J 10 8 6
 ♣ 6 5

♠ K Q 3
 ♥ A K J 10 5 4 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ Q 10 3

♠ 10 6 5 4
 ♥ 6
 ♦ 4 3 2
 ♣ K J 8 7 2

♠ A 8 7
 ♥ Q 9 3
 ♦ A 9 7 5
 ♣ A 9 4

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
4♥ dbl	5♦ all pass	pass	1♦ pass

It is matchpoints. Since 4♥ can make, the struggle is for 300 versus 500 in 5♦ doubled. Can you see how the defense can maximize its result?

You lead the ♥K. If declarer doesn't falsecard with the correct card (the ♥9 if East-West use standard signals), you will know that partner does not have two small hearts, so you can continue with the ♥J, as a suit preference signal for spades.

This works if East has ♥Qx or a singleton heart, as there is no hope that he can get a trump promotion. Once East ruffs and returns a spade, you exit with the other high heart and get 500 in due course.

The defense is trickier if you continue with a high heart at Trick 2, East pitching an encouraging club. Suppose you play a third heart, ruffed high, as East pitches a spade. Now declarer tests a round of trumps and leads a club from dummy. Last chance: East must insert an honor (second hand high) to stop declarer putting in the ♣9. If declarer can duck the club to you the defense is finished, as he can eliminate the clubs and lead a spade toward the jack (he knows you are probably 3=7=0=3 so no other spade layout works for him).

Even after East puts in the ♣J, the hand is not over. If declarer wins the ♣A, plays a trump to dummy and leads another club, East must rise with his other high club for a spade play.

PRESERVING PARTNER’S ENTRY

This deal is from a recent Regional:

♠ 6 5 4

♥ Q J 10 4

♦ A 2

♣ Q J 4 3

♠ 8 3

♥ 7 5 3

♦ Q J 9 8 5 4

♣ K 5

Dealer East

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
		pass	1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠7 (fourth best) and declarer wins the ten. The Stayman auction marks South with exactly three spades. Declarer crosses to the ♥Q and leads a low club from dummy. How do you defend?

It is just possible that declarer has Axx(x) of clubs and is making a clever play (‘lead toward your high cards’). That would be a farsighted play indeed, say from a hand like:

♠ K Q 10 ♥ A K x ♦ 10 x x x ♣ A x x

Even if he has that hand, and he wins the ♣A and leads a club to your king, he has nine tricks on the spade return. The greater danger is that declarer has no second spade trick, say with ♠KJ10.

However, it is easy to get bogged down in this type of speculation when it is more likely that declarer is missing the ♣A and is trying to slip past your king. You should play for this and rise with your ♣K to return a spade. The full deal:

	♠ 6 5 4	
	♥ Q J 10 4	
	♦ A 2	
	♣ Q J 4 3	
♠ A J 9 7 2	<div></div>	♠ 8 3
♥ 9 8 2		♥ 7 5 3
♦ 7 6		♦ Q J 9 8 5 4
♣ A 9 2		♣ K 5
	♠ K Q 10	
	♥ A K 6	
	♦ K 10 3	
	♣ 10 8 7 6	

This fine defense was found by Jim Hawkes, playing with Jeff Meckstroth.

CREATING A LOSING OPTION

If you can play your cards in such a way as to create options for declarer, there's at least a chance he'll choose the wrong one. There are many situations in which a defender can attempt to lead declarer up the garden path.

	♣ A J 9 3	
♣ 10 8 4 2	<div></div>	♣ K
	♣ Q 7 6 5	

If you put in the eight when this suit is led for the first time and the trick is completed by the jack and king, it might induce declarer to cash the ace next, playing East for ♣K10xx.

	♦ K 10 6 2	
♦ A J 9	<div></div>	♦ 7 5 3
	♦ Q 8 4	

Here, putting in the jack might just see declarer try a low one to the eight on the next round.

I call this the *Zia Play*, as in the following example from the 1994 Spingold:

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



♠ 9 8 5
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ K J 5 4
 ♣ Q 8 6 3

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Rosenberg</i>		<i>Zia</i>	
pass	1♠	pass	1♣
pass	2♦*	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	2♥

West led the ♦7, and when declarer played low from dummy, Zia put in the jack. (At the other table, East took the king and returned the suit, declarer winning in hand and attacking spades to score ten tricks.) Declarer won with the queen and, since he thought the ♦K was on his left, he was in no hurry to try the spades. He cashed three rounds of hearts and then took the diamond finesse. Zia won with the king that West was supposed to hold and switched to the ♣Q, catering for West to have ♣AJ9 as well as his actual holding. The defense cashed three clubs and the fourth heart for one down.

This is a related situation:

♥ 10 8 7 4 2
 ♥ 5
 ♥ K Q 9 3
 ♥ A J 6

Here, putting in the jack when the ♥5 is led off the dummy might induce declarer to play you for J10(x) and lead a high heart on the next round. The late Peter Nagy did this defending against me once, and as I fell for it I propose to christen it the *Nagy Play*.

Playing second hand high caused the declarer to misjudge the situation on this deal from the final of the 2009 Gold Cup:

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

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Tredinnick</i>	<i>Bakhshi</i>	<i>Tredinnick</i>	<i>Forrester</i>
	2♦ ¹	pass	2♥*
pass	3♦ ²	pass	3♥*
pass	3NT ³	pass	4♠
all pass			

1. Multi.

2. Any strong 4-4-4-1.

3. Singleton heart.

West led his singleton club, and declarer won in hand and played a spade. West put up the king and declarer won with the ace. If spades are 4-1 declarer might still be able to get home, playing for an ending like this:

immaterial
 ♠ Q 9
 ♥ —
 ♦ 3
 ♣ —
 ♠ J 10 7
 ♥ —
 ♦ —
 ♣ —
 ♠ 8 6 4
 ♥ —
 ♦ —
 ♣ —

Here, when declarer plays dummy's last diamond, East can only score one trump trick. So declarer played the ♦K at Trick 3, aiming to reduce to a winning ending. West won, gave his partner a diamond ruff, received a club ruff and now another diamond allowed East to score the ♠10.

The idea of playing the ♣K on a layout like the one in this deal is worth remembering. You might also try playing the king from ♠KJx in similar situations.

PREVENTING AN OPPONENT FROM EXECUTING AN ENDPLAY DUCK

♥ 5 4 3
[] ♥ 10 7 6 2

In this situation, play the ten when a low card is led from dummy, as declarer may be planning to duck into partner's hand. You need partner to have ♥KJ9. If your holding is ♥Qxx or ♥Jxxx and three tricks are needed, then you may have to go up with your honor (partner having ♥AJ10 or ♥AQ10).

♣ 9 6 3
[] ♣ J 8 5 2

Here, when declarer leads dummy's ♣3, stick in the eight, playing partner for ♣K10x.

Things are more hopeful when you can insert a middle card.

♦ 10 5 4
[] ♦ 9 8 6 3

Play the eight or the nine when declarer leads low from dummy. You need to hope for him to have ♦AJ7 or ♦AQ7 and to misguess when partner returns a low card.

♠ 8 6 5
[] ♠ 9 4 3 2

This time, put in the nine. There is nothing legitimate about this. You are merely hoping to make declarer sweat with ♠AQx (he might go up with the ace and lead toward his hand again, hoping for Kx offside).

These plays are typical when you expect declarer to have three cards in the suit, but they are equally valid when you think he has four (in a 4-3-3-3 distribution). This kind of play might also work if partner has a doubleton, as long as you have two significant cards.

♥ K J ♥ 9 6 4
[] ♥ 10 8 3 2
♥ A Q 7 5

If only two tricks are needed, playing the ♥8 could work when a low card is led from dummy.

THE INTRAPOP

If you are marked with high cards in a suit, or with shortness in a suit, you might give declarer a problem by going up from a doubleton honor if you think he is going to try an intrafinesse.

♠ A 9 4
[]
♠ K 8 6 3

Here declarer leads the ♠3, planning to put in the nine. His next move will be to cash the ace, perhaps planning to finesse on the next round if you produce an honor.

However, suppose you (West) play an honor on the first round of the suit — an *intrapop*? Now declarer has to allow for the possibility that you started with a stiff honor or two honors doubleton as well as honor doubleton. This is hard to deal with, especially if dummy has no side entry.

If dummy has another entry, declarer can take the ace and run the nine (winning if East covers then lobbing toward his eight when back in dummy). If East plays low, declarer plans to take two finesses, losing only if you started with QJ10 tight.

If East covers and declarer has no hand re-entry, he might duck then finesse the third time, but this leads to ignominious defeat if West started with two honors third.

♠ 8 3 2
♥ A 9 4
♦ 7 6 4
♣ 10 6 5 2

♠ 10 7 4
♥ J 3
♦ K Q J 10
♣ K Q J 3

[]

Dealer South				
NS Vul.				
West	North	East	South	
			1♠	
pass	1NT	pass	2♥	
dbl	2♠	3♦	4♠	
all pass				

You cash the ♦K, but partner overtakes the ♦Q with the ace and returns the ♣9 to declarer's ace. Declarer draws three rounds of trumps, partner pitching two clubs. How do you plan to defend from here?

It is clear that declarer is 6=4=2=1 and that you need two heart tricks to set the contract. You need declarer to have only one top heart honor, but he knows by now that you have one or two hearts, so if he has ♥Q10xx or ♥K10xx he will stick in the nine, with a sure thing to come later. You need to hope partner has the ♥10, and ♥Q10xx is his most likely holding (if he has ♥K10xx you are fine anyway). However, if you play low when a heart is led, declarer will put in dummy's nine, taking the marked finesse later.

So you must plan to go up with the ♥J, the *intrapop*. Ducking the ♥J is fatal, and declarer might try that if he places you with two honors doubleton. If instead he wins the ace and returns the suit, he has to guess when partner plays low again.

APPEARING TO HAVE SHORTNESS

Pretending you have shortness somewhere may see declarer (fatally) try another means to enter his hand. Take a look at this deal:

♠ 5

♥ A K 6

♦ A K 8 4

♣ A K 10 7 3

♠ Q 10

♥ 5 2

♦ Q J 10 6 5 2

♣ J 9 5

♠ J 8 7 4 3 2

♥ 8 7 4

♦ 7

♣ Q 6 4

♠ A K 9 6

♥ Q J 10 9 3

♦ 9 3

♣ 8 2

I was East, and our opponents were in 7♥.

My partner led the ♦Q; declarer won in dummy, played a spade to the ace and ruffed a spade high. He returned to hand with a heart and ruffed another spade with dummy's last trump. When declarer's next move was to cash the ♣A it was clear that there were no more losers and that declarer was likely to try to enter hand with a club ruff, so I dropped the ♣Q under the ace. That persuaded declarer to switch back to diamonds and I ruffed the king to beat the grand slam.

This type of play has a high frequency — as long as the defender is up to the mark. On this deal from the 2009 Blue Ribbon Pairs declarer set his sights on a grand slam. At first, things were going smoothly — but then came a hitch:

♠ J 8 4

♥ 7 6

♦ K 10 6

♣ K Q 6 3 2

♠ AKQ10762

♥ 9

♦ A 5

♣ J 5 4

♠ 9 3

♥ A K 8 5 2

♦ Q J 9 8 4

♣ A

♠ 5

♥ Q J 10 4 3

♦ 7 3 2

♣ 10 9 8 7

Dealer East

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Castellino	Demerev	O'Hara	Feldman
		1♥	pass
4NT*	pass	5♣*	pass
5NT*	pass	6♥*	pass
7♣	all pass		

With eight tricks in his own hand opposite an opening bid, West decided to forgo a scientific approach. After discovering that East held the ♥AK and the ♣A, he took a shot at the grand slam.

North rejected the traditional (and here, killing) lead of a low trump in favor of the ♣K. That appears to be catastrophic when you look at all four hands, as declarer can now ruff two clubs in dummy. He won Trick 1 with dummy's ace, cashed the top hearts discarding a diamond, crossed to the ♦A and ruffed a club. He now played the ♦Q, ruffing it in hand, and ruffed his last club.

Now he only had to get back to hand to draw trumps to land his ambitious contract and we can see that a diamond is the way to do it. However, a funny thing happened on the way to thirteen tricks, because on the second round of diamonds North had played the king! That brilliant falsecard saw declarer decide to return to hand by ruffing a heart, and North was able to overruff.

Here's an example from the 2011 Spring NABC:

♠ A K Q 3
♥ 5
♦ 9 6 4
♣ Q J 10 6 2

♠ 10 9 8 6 5 2
♥ Q 10 3
♦ A K Q 2
♣ —

Dealer West				
NS Vul.				
West	North	East	South	
4♥	dbl	pass	5♠	
pass	6♣	all pass		

West leads the ♥A, East dropping the king, and continues a second heart. How do you play?

With the 4♥ opening and the ♥K play it seems very likely that West has eight hearts so you must ruff high and hope for the best. To declarer's dismay, East followed to the second heart and of course had ♠Jxx to beat the contract. This fine play was found by Zia.

COUNTERING A 4-4 FIT

If declarer is in a 4-4 fit with a long suit in dummy that can be established with two ruffs, going up from Kxx of trumps can sometimes destroy the timing. Here's an example:

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

The opponents bid unopposed to 6♠, in an auction where South describes a 4=4=1=4 hand. You lead the ♣Q to the ace. Needing trumps 3-2 with the king onside, declarer leads a low trump toward dummy. If you duck, declarer has the timing to ruff two diamonds and will only lose a trick to the trump king. However, if you go up with the king, you destroy declarer's ability to set up the diamonds. Your simplest exit is the ♠2, since if declarer has the ♠J nothing helps. Note that a prerequisite for this play to work is that you have to have either some potentially promotable holding in trumps or the possibility of being able to knock out a vital side entry.

PROMOTING A TRUMP

Suppose you are East on this layout:

♠ 4 3 2		Dealer South			
♥ 2		NS Vul.			
♦ J 5 4					
♣ A Q 6 5 4 3					
	♠ 7				
	♥ K Q 3				
	♦ Q 6 3 2				
	♣ K J 10 9 8				

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	2♣	4♣*	4♠
all pass			

Playing with an aggressive overcaller, you sell out to 4♠. Partner leads his singleton club. Declarer wins the ♣A in dummy and leads the ♥2. Your queen wins the trick, partner showing odd count in hearts. You return a trump to declarer's ace; he ruffs a heart and plays a diamond to the ace (partner shows even count in this suit). What are your thoughts at this point?

It looks like declarer has four hearts, so his most likely pattern is 6=4=2=1. You need to hope partner has the ♦K, so when a second heart is ruffed and a diamond is led from dummy, you need to play second hand high, the ♦Q, and lead

back the ♣K. If declarer pitches his heart loser, you have taken three tricks and can lead another club, promoting a trump trick if partner started with ♠Jxx. Note that returning clubs at your first opportunity is too soon — declarer can dispose of a diamond loser on the ♣Q. If you don't play the ♦Q, partner will win the trick and can't get you in for the trump promotion.

The full deal is:

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

PROTECTING PARTNER’S HONOR(S)

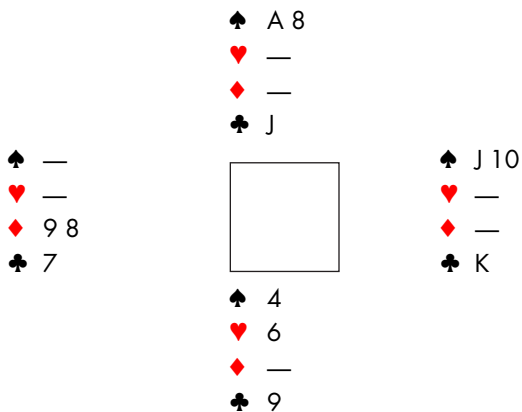
Another reason to play second hand high is to enable partner to retain an honor in a suit that may break up a potential squeeze or endplay. This example is from the 2011 edition of TGR’s Auction Pairs (the U.K. equivalent of the Cavendish):

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

Dealer North
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Bjornlund</i>	<i>Einarson</i>	<i>Sandqvist</i>	<i>Jorgensen</i>
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	3♦*	pass	3♠*
pass	4♦*	dbl	4NT*
pass	5♦*	pass	6♥
all pass			

West led a trump. Declarer won in dummy and played a club, which went to the six, eight and queen. Now declarer was able to organize two diamond ruffs and reach the following ending:



In this position, the ♥6 squeezed East in the black suits. In order to beat the hand, East had to insert the ♣10 at Trick 2. After that, West can hang on to the ♣Q, and there is no squeeze.

REASONS NOT TO PLAY THIRD HAND HIGH

In general terms the accepted principle is that third hand plays high — but it will not surprise you by now that there are many situations where doing so would be a mistake. This chapter looks at some of the reasons why that may be the case.

FUTILITY

Often declarer will lead an honor from dummy to tempt a cover, so the defense must be alert to situations where covering is wrong. Clearly there is no point when your card is trapped in any case. For example, say partner leads the ♦6 in this situation:

♦ 6 2	♦ Q J 10 □	♦ K 9 8 5
	♦ A 7 4 3	

Unless you are anxious to put declarer in the other hand, there is no point in covering.

Likewise, with this trump suit:

♠ Q 8 5 4 2 □	♠ K 7
------------------	-------

if declarer is likely to have six spades, it would be a horrible error to cover the queen — he is almost certainly intending to rise with the ace if you don't.

And here, if hearts are trumps, declarer holding five or six of them:

♥ J 8 5 3		♥ K 7
□		

covering the jack will rarely gain, and could be a disaster if partner has stiff queen or ace.

PRESERVING COMMUNICATIONS

There are countless variations on this theme, which will sometimes depend on the number of side entries you have.

♦ 9		♦ K 10 8 7 4
	♦ Q J 6 □	

Partner leads the ♦9; when the queen is played from dummy, you should duck. Then if partner gets in, a second diamond through will enable you to set up your suit. Of course, declarer could duck the nine all around and exhaust partner's link cards, instead of going up with dummy's queen. If you have two side entries, it is better to cover and pound away at the suit yourself.

♠ 9		♠ A K 8 5 2
	♠ Q 7 4 □	

Here, when partner leads the ♠9 you can duck, retaining communications and setting up four tricks.

♥ 9		♥ K J 10 7 4
	♥ A 8 3 □	

Again, ducking partner's nine preserves communications when declarer plays low from dummy.

♦ 9		♦ K Q 8 7 3
	♦ 10 6 5 □	

Once again you have to duck partner's nine to preserve communications. Note that declarer could go up with dummy's ten, which might gain an important dummy entry when you duck (see Entry or KO Fly, p. 106).

Here's a full deal example from the 1998 Rosenblum:

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

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
	<i>Soloway</i>		<i>Hamman</i>
			1NT
pass	2♣*	pass	2♦*
pass	3NT	all pass	

West led a low heart; declarer won in hand and played a club to the queen. East took the ace and switched to the ♠9. When South covered with the jack, West made the mistake of winning with the ace and returning a spade. Declarer ducked the ♠Q, took the next spade and then decided to play on diamonds to record +400.

At the other table the bidding and defense followed a similar path, but when I switched to the ♠9, Jeff ducked declarer's jack. Now when I got in with the ♦A, the ♠Q from me gave us enough tricks to defeat the contract.

Here is a classic example from a match in the 1981 European Championships between the teams that finished first and second:

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

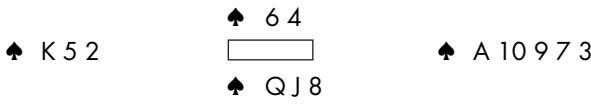
Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Rose</i>	<i>Kudla</i>	<i>Sheehan</i>	<i>Milde</i>
		pass	1NT
pass	2♦ ¹	dbl	3♣
pass	3♦*	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Forcing Stayman.

Having passed on the first round East took the opportunity to double for the lead — reasonable enough, although he would not actually have enjoyed defending 2♦ redoubled! West led the ♦8 against 3NT and when declarer played low from dummy, so did East. Declarer won in hand with the ♦J and played a club to the four, the queen — and the eight. When East followed with the ♣10 on the next round, declarer naturally ducked, so East won and played the ♦K. Declarer ducked, won the next diamond and — still convinced that West must have the ♣A

— decided to test clubs first before falling back on the heart suit. Now East could win and cash his diamonds for one down.

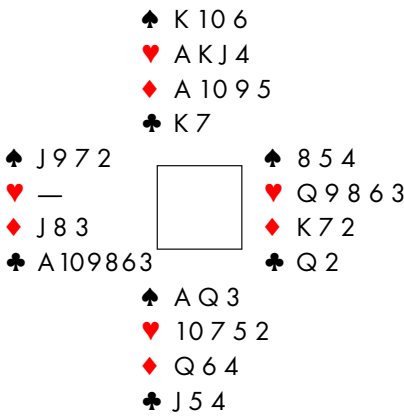


At notrump, you have to duck in this position when partner leads the ♠2 — but this play is really tough, especially as you will look foolish if partner started with ♠K852.



When partner leads a low card against notrump, the queen is a standard play here. If it holds, you can return a low card. This is also correct with ♥AQ973 and with ♥AQ542 (unless you think that declarer has ♥KJ10x).

Here is a remarkable example of a ducking play by third hand:



Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Perron</i>		<i>Lebel</i>	
	1♣ ¹	1♥	dbl*
2♣	3♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Strong.

West led the ♣10 and when dummy played low, so did East! It was virtually impossible for declarer to duck as well, so East preserved communications with his partner.

TEMPTING DECLARER TO WIN AND LEAVE OPEN COMMUNICATIONS

In some positions, the duck to preserve communications involves playing a middle card, sometimes even an honor — although still not your highest card. Here’s a standard situation:

♣ 5 led ♣ 10 4
 □
 ♣ ?? ♣ A Q 6

Dummy plays low, and you play the ♣Q, hoping that either partner has the king or declarer will win the trick with it, leaving your side able to cash the suit. However, this is not risk-free — if partner gets in he may not know the position. It's a better play if you think you will get in before partner does.

This situation generally comes up early in the play, often at Trick 1, but that is not always the case. Look at this deal from the 1999 Spingold final:

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

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Nickell	Beatty	Freeman	Onstott
pass	pass	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West led the ♦3 (notice that if West had led a heart East might have played the queen at Trick 1). Declarer won with dummy's ten and took a spade finesse. When that held he played a club to dummy's jack and repeated the spade finesse. Best now is to play the ♣Q, but declarer cashed the ♠A first and only then exited with his remaining club to West's ace. This was the situation:

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

When West switched to the ♥2, East took the ace, cashed the ♠K (forcing a heart discard from West) and played a diamond. However, declarer won and cashed the ♥K. When East dropped the queen (after all, he didn't want to be endplayed into leading a club to dummy), declarer exited with a heart to force West to lead into the diamond tenace.

The winning defense is for East to put in the queen when partner leads a heart in the diagrammed position, just as he might have done had the suit been led at Trick 1. That ruins declarer's timing and neither defender is any danger of being endplayed.

The middle-card play in the following deal is also quite common:

♠ 4
♥ K J 7 4
♦ K J 9 8 4
♣ A 8 2

♠ A 9 7 3 2
♥ 9 8 6 2
♦ 7 2
♣ 7 4

♠ Q 10 6 5
♥ Q 5
♦ A Q 10
♣ Q J 10 3

♠ K J 8
♥ A 10 3
♦ 6 5 3
♣ K 9 6 5

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Wolff</i>		<i>Hamman</i>	1♣
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♠3, and when dummy played the four, East put in the jack. This saved West from a nasty guess. If East wins the first trick with the king and returns the jack, declarer covers with the queen and now West must decide whether or not to duck (East might have ♠KJ10x).

This play also has some less common variants:

♣ A 3

♣ K J 4

When dummy ducks partner's low club lead, play the jack if partner is likely to have no entry. There is no cost if partner has the queen. If partner has ♣10xxxx and you have two entries, this play will work very well (unless declarer makes the great play of ducking his queen — then just shake his hand).

Here is a perfect example from the final of the 2001 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer South

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Stansby</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Martel</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>
1♦	pass	2♥	pass
2NT	pass	3NT	all pass

1. 10-11 balanced.

North led the ♦J; declarer won in hand with the queen and played a spade to dummy's queen. When that held he played two more rounds of spades, North winning the third and switching to the ♣2. When South played the ♣K, declarer ducked. He won the next club and North was caught on the horns of a dilemma. If he hung on to the ♣Q, the suit would be blocked and declarer could simply take a heart finesse. However, when he unblocked it declarer cashed the long spade, crossed to the ♦K and exited with a club to endplay South.

As declarer was marked with the ♣A, South should put in the jack when North switches to clubs at Trick 5. That enables the defenders to retain communications. Say declarer ducks as before and wins the next club: this time North can keep his queen. If declarer takes a heart finesse, South wins and cashes two clubs, while if declarer tries for the endplay North can win and switch to a heart.

Suppose partner leads a low card and you face one of these situations:

♥ 7	♥ 7	♥ 7
□ ♥ A J 5	□ ♥ K J 6	□ ♥ A 10 5

Here, if you are confident partner can't have an entry and don't mind giving up a trick to ♥Qxxx or ♥Q9xx, putting in the jack in the first two cases, or the ten in the third, might see declarer win from holdings like ♥Q10xx, Q108x, ♥QJxx etc.

This might be the scenario (an example constructed by Terence Reese):

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

Dealer North
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

1. Strong.

Obviously a diamond lead leads to an easy down one, but West leads the ♠4. East, who had been unable to overcall for conventional reasons, does not panic but simply puts in the ♠J. Declarer wins and takes the losing trump finesse. Now East can put West in with the ♠Q, and a diamond return defeats the game.

RETAINING A MAJOR TENACE

It's much better in endgame positions to have a major tenace, so it's often right to duck earlier in the hand in order to create one.

♣ 9 5
 ♣ K Q 6
 ♣ 10 4 2
 ♣ A J 8 7 3

When partner leads the ♣9 in this situation, it is generally sound to duck when declarer plays an honor from dummy.

♠ A 10 5 3
 ♠ 9 8 6 4 2
 ♠ K Q J 7
 ♠ —

You might well duck the first two leads of this suit, especially if you fear getting endplayed later.

This next deal involves a similar situation where ducking is correct.

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

Dealer South
 Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♠3 and declarer puts up dummy's jack. When that holds, he plays a club to the queen and then another club, West discarding a spade. If declarer puts up an honor now East must duck, retaining a major tenace. Then declarer needs two dummy entries to set up and reach the fifth club — but with only one available he must go down. Notice that declarer has a counter measure — he can duck the second round of clubs, forcing East to win. Even if East switches to diamonds, declarer wins the third round and can then force out the ♣A and reach the long club with the ♥A.

MAKING A WITHHOLDING PLAY

When you withhold an honor it is a sound strategy to give count, which may well help partner if he gets the lead before you do.

Holdings for withholding from (pun intended) when partner leads a low card are:

(a) The queen over J109, J10x, J9x, or maybe Jxx (if the J is ducked)

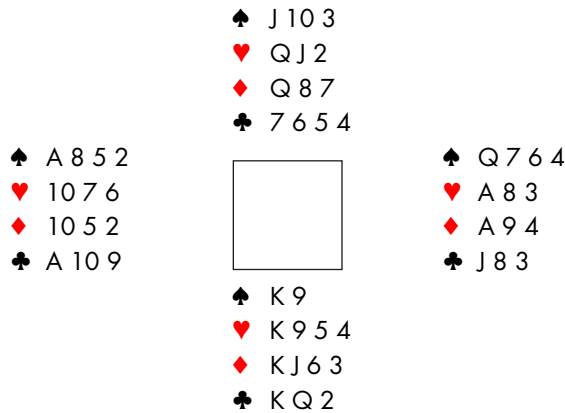
You are playing declarer for doubleton king. Here's a full deal example:

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

South opens 1NT and plays there. Partner leads the ♠2 and dummy plays the jack... how do you plan to defend?

Partner might have ♠AKxx, in which case ducking looks pretty bad. However, suppose you have agreed to lead a high spade from that holding; in that case, make the withholding play of the ♠7 (playing standard signals). Dummy wins the ♠J, and leads the ♥Q. You win the ace and return a low spade. Declarer's king falls to partner's ace, partner returns the ♠8 (to unblock the suit) and you win the queen and cash the seven, declarer discarding a diamond and a club. You return a club to the king and ace, and the ♣10 comes back to declarer's queen: your side will take the ♦A and ♣J to set the contract.

The full layout:

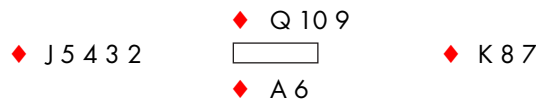


Note that declarer will likely make an overtrick if you cover the ♠J. Even if partner does have ♠AKxx, you are unlikely to get more than four spades and two aces since partner can have at most a jack outside spades.

(b) The king over QJ9, Q109 or Q10x

Here you are playing the declarer for Ax (or AJ in some cases). If dummy has QJ10, go up since partner should lead high from a suit headed by the nine or worse. However, if this is the trump suit, so declarer cannot have Ax, covering QJ9x of trumps when you have K10x gives declarer a guess next time; if he does finesse the nine, you get to lead a third trump (or just gain the lead).

Note that partner must lead attitude when continuing the suit after the initial duck:



Play the ♦8 or ♦7 the first time (giving count according to your methods). If West leads back low, go up, assuming him to have led from Axxx(x)(x). If West leads the jack, duck again.

Sometimes it is right to duck to deny declarer an extra entry to dummy, but even then, some care may be needed, as on this deal from the 1997 Bermuda Bowl:

<p>♠ 6 3</p> <p>♥ A Q 10 9</p> <p>♦ K 7 4</p> <p>♣ Q 5 4 3</p>		<p>Dealer West</p> <p>Both Vul.</p>																					
<p>♠ K 8 4 2</p> <p>♥ 6</p> <p>♦ Q J</p> <p>♣ AKJ1098</p>	<div></div>	<p>♠ Q J</p> <p>♥ K 4 3 2</p> <p>♦ A 8 3 2</p> <p>♣ 7 6 2</p>	<table> <tr> <th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr> <tr> <td><i>Meckstroth</i></td><td><i>Chen</i></td><td><i>Rodwell</i></td><td><i>Lin</i></td></tr> <tr> <td>2♣¹</td><td>pass</td><td>2♦*</td><td>pass</td></tr> <tr> <td>2♥²</td><td>pass</td><td>2♠*</td><td>pass</td></tr> <tr> <td>3♣³</td><td>pass</td><td>3NT</td><td>all pass</td></tr> </table>	West	North	East	South	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Chen</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Lin</i>	2♣ ¹	pass	2♦*	pass	2♥ ²	pass	2♠*	pass	3♣ ³	pass	3NT	all pass
West	North	East	South																				
<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Chen</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Lin</i>																				
2♣ ¹	pass	2♦*	pass																				
2♥ ²	pass	2♠*	pass																				
3♣ ³	pass	3NT	all pass																				
<p>♠ A 10 9 7 5</p> <p>♥ J 8 7 5</p> <p>♦ 10 9 6 5</p> <p>♣ —</p>		<p>1. Six-plus clubs, 10-15.</p> <p>2. Unspecified major.</p> <p>3. Spades.</p>																					

South led the ♦10 and North withheld the king to deny me a later diamond entry to dummy. I cashed a top club and then gave up a club. North took the queen and returned the ♦K, which I won with the ace. Now I played a spade, so South won and switched to a heart. North took his ace and played a third diamond.

If that diamond had been the four, I would have been one down, as South's ♦96 would have been sitting over my ♦83. However, North had followed to the first round of the suit with the four; now when he played the seven I could withhold the eight, and South could not afford to overtake.

FINESSING AGAINST DUMMY

Even when dummy only has one honor in a suit, you may well face a tricky decision at some point if partner leads it and declarer calls for a low card. Should you play your highest card, or finesse against dummy? Richard Pavlicek has devised a rule that works in most situations against notrump contracts:

If your honor is one step higher than one in dummy, finesse if you have the eight or better. If it is two steps higher, finesse if you have the nine or better. Otherwise, play your highest card.

♠ J 7 4		♠ K 9 2
<div></div>		

Here, if partner leads the ♠3, you should put in the nine if dummy plays low. Of course, if partner has AQxx he will not be happy, which is partly why I said above that the rule works in 'most' situations.

Some of these situations are tricky, as you will see from this deal from the 2005 Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup finals:

♠ 10 8 4 2

♥ A K 10 8

♦ 10 5 3

♣ Q 8

♠ K 6

♥ Q 7 5 3 2

♦ J

♣ A K 10 7 3

♠ Q 9 7 5

♥ 9 4

♦ A K Q 9 4 2

♣ J

♠ A J 3

♥ J 6

♦ 8 7 6

♣ 9 6 5 4 2

Dealer East

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
		1♦	pass
1♥	pass	1♠	pass
2♣*	pass	2♦	pass
3NT	all pass		

Every player faced with this lead problem selected a spade. Leading the ♠8 should make life easy for South, but it might also easily surrender a trick on this auction. In fact, at the one table where the ♠8 was led, South erred by putting in the jack and declarer scored ten tricks. At two tables the ♠2 was led, and on both occasions South elected to play partner for the ♠K, again putting in the jack to concede the contract.

At the table where I was declarer, North led the ♠4 (attitude) and I played the ♠7 from dummy. Alfredo Versace decided that his partner was unlikely to have led from the ♠K so he played the ♠A and returned the ♥J to win 10 IMPs.

REASONS TO (ABNORMALLY) PLAY AN HONOR

Since Chapter 10 was on *second hand high*, we've already encountered several non-intuitive positions where a defender needs to play an honor, but there's no harm in revisiting those. There are also some new situations to discuss.

DANGER HAND HIGH

This concept was covered in Chapter 10, but it's important, so a couple more examples won't come amiss.

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

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	1♠	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♣*
pass	3♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠10, declarer holding up until the third round. He plays a heart to the ace and leads a club from dummy. You, the danger hand, must play high. If he ducks, you run spades; if he wins, the clubs are dead. Note that with ♣KJx or even ♣Kxx you can still play danger hand high (the king) and give him a guess.

Here is a deal I played at a recent Regional:

♠ J 10 3
♥ K J 7 4
♦ K 10 7
♣ A Q 3

♠ 9 8 3
♥ A 2
♦ A 9 8 3
♣ K J 4 2

Dealer South NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
pass	1♥	pass	1♦
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West cashed the ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q, East giving a small echo (playing standard signals), then switched to the ♣9, which I won with the ace. What now?

It appears that East has the thirteenth spade, making him the dangerous opponent. So I led the ♦7 from dummy and passed it to West's queen. He returned the ♥10, to the jack, queen and ace. I would now have a squeeze if West started with these twelve cards:

♠ A K Q ♥ 10 9 8 ♦ Q J x x ♣ 9 x

plus a thirteenth in any suit except spades.

West actually had ♦Qxxx, so the fall of East's ♦J solved my problem. What if East had played the ♦J when I led the ♦7 from dummy, though? I might have tried to drop ♦QJ doubleton then taken the heart finesse. Of course clubs would be run first, but the ending is still ambiguous.

CREATING A LOSING OPTION

We saw in Chapter 10 that, with some combinations, covering an honor when you normally wouldn't may offer declarer a losing option:

♠ 7 5 2	♠ J 10 8 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px 0;"></div>	♠ K 9 4
	♠ A Q 6 3	

If you cover the jack when it is led from dummy, declarer might subsequently lead low to the eight.

♥ A J 5 ♥ K Q 9 7 3
 ♥ 8 6 2
 ♥ 10 4

If declarer denied a fit for dummy's suit, then in the first place you should cover declarer's ♥10 to prevent being Chinese finessed with a singleton ten. The bonus is that if you play the jack, declarer might later finesse the seven. (Ira Rubin did that to us in a similar situation when Jeff covered from AJ8x.)

I mentioned earlier that there are some positions where a player might cover because doing so may lead to the defense getting in three rounds of trumps.

♠ Q J 9 4
 ♠ K 10 5

If declarer leads the queen, East can cover. Then if declarer finesses the nine on the next round, East can win and if necessary play a third round.

While not a covering play, the tactic used in this next deal (from a 1985 NABC event) also works by creating a losing option for declarer:

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

Dealer East
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Reygadas</i>	<i>Cannell</i>	<i>Herrera</i>	<i>Gupta</i>
		pass	1♥
pass	1NT*	pass	2♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

West led the ♣5 to dummy's queen; declarer played a diamond to his king and West's ace. When West switched to a spade, East won and returned a club for his partner to ruff. West exited with a diamond and declarer won in dummy and played a heart to the queen, on which West deposited the jack. When declarer tried to cross to dummy with a club for another heart finesse, West ruffed. This type of play needs a name, so let's call it the *finesse creation falsecard*, which in itself is an example of *faking trump shortness*.

You may have realized that declarer's play was not well thought-out — if West really started with ♥Jx he might well have exited with a spade rather than a diamond at Trick 5, in order to tap dummy and protect his partner's ♥K.

YOU WANT TO WIN A TRICK FROM YOUR SIDE OF THE TABLE

Sometimes it's right to win a trick that partner could just as easily have won. We've seen many of these positions already — perhaps you are the danger hand, or you are getting partner off an endplay.

NOT LETTING THEM SLIP THROUGH A RUFFING FINESSE

Don't let declarer take his ruffing finesse without cost — partner may have a position in the suit. Likewise, you must always guard against the Chinese (ruffing) finesse.

Jeff exploited a slip in defense on this deal from the 1992 Cap Gemini Pandata World Top Pairs:

♠ J 2

♥ K J 9 7 4 2

♦ A J 9 8 3

♣ —

♠ K 9 7 3

♥ Q 8 5

♦ 10 6 4

♣ A K 3

♠ A 6 5 4

♥ A 6 3

♦ 2

♣ 10 7 6 4 2

♠ Q 10 8

♥ 10

♦ K Q 7 5

♣ Q J 9 8 5

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Huang	Rodwell	Tai	Meckstroth
1♣	2NT*	3♣	4♦
pass	4♥	pass	5♦
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

West led the ♦4. Jeff won in hand and played the ♥10, putting up the king when West followed with the eight. East took the ace and switched to the ♠4, which went to the eight, king and two. Seeing no danger, West returned the ♦6. Jeff won in dummy, as East discarded the ♣10 (upside-down carding), ruffed a heart and played the ♣8. When West failed to cover Jeff ran the ♣8, discarding dummy's second spade. Now he could ruff a spade, ruff a heart, ruff a spade, draw the last trump and claim.

If West covers the club, Jeff has to ruff and can ruff a heart. But now when he plays a second club, it is covered again and he must lose a spade at the end. If East had retained the ♣10, West would still have had to cover if Jeff had tried the ♣J.

On this deal from the same event, declarer slipped through a vital overtrick:

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

Dealer North
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Leufkens</i>	<i>Zia</i>	<i>Westra</i>	<i>Rosenberg</i>
	1♣	1♦	1♠
2♦	dbl*	pass	3♦*
pass	3NT	pass	4♣
pass	4♠	all pass	

West led the ♦Q, which was covered by the king and ace and ruffed by declarer. With East a heavy favorite to hold the ♥A, declarer led the ♥J and ran it when West did not cover, producing an overtrick worth 2 IMPs against the datum. These 2 IMPs were the exact margin of Zia and Rosenberg's eventual tournament victory ahead of Westra and Leufkens. If West had covered, the result would have been a tie — and Westra-Leufkens would have won the tie break. The difference between first and second was worth almost \$5000, making that a very lucrative Chinese finesse.

PREVENTING A LATER RUFFING FINESSE AGAINST YOURSELF

This is an idea that I introduced in Chapter 10.

♦ A 8 4 2
 ♦ Q J 10 9
 ♦ K 7 6 3
 ♦ 5

Cover dummy's queen when declarer leads it, to prevent the establishment of more tricks with only one loser.

PINNING THE OPPOSITION IN THE WRONG HAND

The *Merrimac Cover* (so-called because it has much in common with the Merrimac Coup — see p. 299) involves covering an honor, even at the cost of a trick, to knock out an entry.

♠ 8 led ♠ Q J 10 2 ♠ K 9 7 6

This is a situation where you need to cover from ♠K9xx if you are desperate to knock out declarer's ace. Here's an example:

♠ Q J 10 2
 ♥ A K J 5 4
 ♦ 4 3
 ♣ 8 3



♠ K 9 7 6
 ♥ Q 10 8 7
 ♦ A 2
 ♣ J 10 2

Dealer North
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♥	pass	2♦ ¹
pass	2♠	pass	3♦
pass	3♥	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Game-forcing.

Partner leads the ♠8. Dummy plays the ♠10... and you?

Declarer likely has strong diamonds, as he rebid 3♦ when holding something in clubs. Your best shot is to cover the ♠10 to drive out the ace, hoping the full deal is something like this:

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

Be sure to tell partner he made a nice lead, since the hand makes easily if he starts a club.

Two other analogous situations involve covering to block their solid suit (a variant of the Merrimac cover) and gouging (pinning them in the wrong hand to prevent them from finessing against you, presumably in trumps, when partner's lead was a singleton). Here's an example showing this kind of Merrimac cover:

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

You should cover with the ♣Q, as ♣109 doubleton seems likely. This deal came up at an invitational tournament in Europe and most defenders did not find the cover. The full deal was:

♠ QJ98	♠ 43	♠ 1072
♥ 1043	♥ J87	♥ Q965
♦ K2	♦ 754	♦ AJ106
♣ Q852	♣ AKJ63	♣ 74
	♠ AK65	
	♥ AK2	
	♦ Q983	
	♣ 109	

As we saw on p. 213 (Chapter 8), if you are in danger of being endplayed, you may have to risk covering in a possibly frozen suit, hoping for the best, to prevent certain death later...

♣ 4 led ♣ Q J 3 ♣ K 6 5

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PREVENTING A GOLDMAN TRUMP FINESSE

The *Goldman Trump Finesse* arises when declarer is playing in a 5-3 trump fit with one hand holding Axx of trumps. If declarer needs to draw four of the five outstanding trumps ending up in the hand that has Axx, then he will have to slip a trick past the holding in front of the Axx. It applies when dummy's source of tricks can only be utilized after four of the five outstanding trumps have been drawn.

In such a situation Bobby Goldman (of Dallas Aces fame) held Q10987 facing A32. He led the seven and slipped it past Bob Hamman's KJx. Now he could play to the ace and lead winners until Hamman ruffed, after which there was still a trump available to get back to dummy.

I thought this deal was quite famous and had been written up in many bridge journals. However, our combined resources, including the vast libraries of Master Point Press, the ACBL and Australian bridge bibliographer Tim Bourke, were unable to track it down. It must, however, have been something like this...

♠ A 3 2
♥ 4 3
♦ QJ 10 8 7 6
♣ 8 3

♠ KJ 4
♥ KQJ98
♦ 9 2
♣ K 10 4

♠ Q 10 9 8 7
♥ A 7 6 2
♦ A K
♣ A 2

♠ 6 5
♥ 10 5
♦ 5 4 3
♣ QJ 9 7 6 5

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	2♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

On the ♥K lead to declarer's ace, there is little hope except running diamonds. You need to draw four of the five trumps ending in dummy, so the play is to lead the ♠7 and run it (cashing the top diamonds early risks a ruff and makes the winning defense easier to find). Once the ♠7 holds, cash the ♦AK, lead a second spade to dummy's ace and lead diamonds, pitching a club. A heart ruff is your entry to dummy if West ruffs.

Are you finished if East wins the ♠J? If he started with ♠Jx and a singleton heart and returns a club now, you have a chance if you run the ♠8, then cash the diamonds (which only works if West is 3=6=2=2 or 3=6=3=1).

In either case, West can beat the hand by covering an early spade (the second spade lead when he has ♠Kxx).

A more common version of the play arises when declarer has something along the lines of QJ(10)xx or better facing Axx. Playing the king on the second round can be a tough cover to find, but if the trump ace is the only dummy entry to an established suit, then it is right to cover.

REASONS FOR DUCKING A WINNER

We have already encountered a number of situations in which it is necessary to duck a winner: preserving communications and avoiding an endplay are just two of them. This chapter will cover some other important reasons for not winning a trick when you are able to do so.

MAKING A HOLDUP PLAY

I'm going to assume that every reader who has made it this far will routinely hold up an ace to sever communications for the opponents. Likewise, I'm sure everyone is familiar with the concept of ducking an offside king when declarer is seeking to establish a suit. However, it can also be right to withhold a high card when you have a suit doubly stopped, as on this deal from the 2009 World Seniors Bowl:

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

Dealer East
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Holland</i>	<i>Lasut</i>	<i>Hallberg</i>	<i>Manoppo</i>
pass	2♦	pass	1♠
pass	3NT	pass	2NT
		all pass	

West led the ♥2; declarer won in hand and ran the ♦Q. East ducked and declarer was dead in the water. He tried a low spade now but West won and switched to a club, setting up enough defensive tricks (West unblocked the ♣J).

Notice that if East takes the ♦Q with the king and switches to a spade, declarer can go up with the ace, cash a heart, overtake the next heart with dummy's ace and clear the diamonds. In the Bermuda Bowl, my partner, Jeff Meckstroth, made 3NT on this same deal when East won the ♦K at Trick 2.

HOPING PARTNER CAN WIN IT

On this deal from the 1980 British Team Trials, it was essential to make a ducking play in the hope that partner might gain the lead:

♠ A K J 4 2

♥ Q

♦ A 9 5 2

♣ Q 7 4

♠ 9 8 6 5

♥ 8 6

♦ K J 7 4 3

♣ 10 2

♠ Q

♥ A 7 4

♦ 8 6

♣ A K J 9 8 6 3

♠ 10 7 3

♥ K J 10 9 5 3 2

♦ Q 10

♣ 5

Dealer North

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
	<i>Forrester</i>		<i>Smolski</i>
	1♠	2♣	2♥
pass	2NT	pass	4♥
all pass			

West found the remarkable lead of the ♠8 and declarer was threatened with the loss of four tricks, provided West could gain the lead to give East a spade ruff. Having won the lead in dummy, declarer calmly played the ♣4 next. East did not have the nerve to play low (although it is a strongly indicated play) and after winning the trick switched to a diamond, which went to the ten, jack and ace. Now declarer played the ♣Q, and when East covered, declarer's last diamond was discarded. With any route to West's hand removed, the rest was straightforward.

WAITING FOR CLARIFICATION

A defender may have to duck a trick so that he can ascertain the meaning of partner's play. For instance, he may need to confirm partner's count signal, or hope to get further information on the next round of a particular suit. Defenders who employ the Smith echo against notrump may also use this technique (assuming time is on their side).

♠ 7 5 4

♥ 8 3 2

♦ A 4 3

♣ K Q J 10

♠ Q J 10 8

♥ 10 4

♦ 10 8 7 6

♣ A 8 6

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♥6 (fourth best) to the ten and jack. Now declarer leads the ♣4 to dummy's king, partner playing the ♣5. You are playing Smith echo, so a high-low from partner here would indicate that he likes the lead he made. How do you defend?

Declarer has three hearts higher than partner's six, and they could be weak (KJ9 or QJ9), or strong (AKJ). If the former, clearly you want to return a heart and run the suit; if the latter, a switch to the ♠Q looks like the best shot. The problem is that you can't read partner's ♣5, which might even be a singleton. There is some risk that if you let declarer win the club then he can run nine tricks, if he has the ♠AK and five fast diamond winners:

♠ A K x ♥ K J 9 ♦ K Q J 9 x ♣ x x

That can't be the case here, since if partner had four small clubs he could afford a higher card than the five.

So you should duck one club to see what partner plays on the second round. If it is a high-low, he is telling you the future is in hearts if you have one to lead back (he knows from Trick 1 what heart honors declarer might have). If he low-highs, he is suggesting doubt, so a switch to the ♠Q is in order. Holding up the ♣A caters to either hand partner might have:

♠ 6 3 2	or	♠ A 6 3 2
♥ A Q 7 6 5		♥ Q 9 7 6
♦ 9 5		♦ 9 5
♣ 5 3 2		♣ 9 7 5

If partner has the first hand, he completes his echo with the ♣2 and you return a heart. If partner has the second hand he continues with a higher club and you return the ♠Q. Note that whichever hand partner has, you can't afford to duck two clubs, only one.

CREATING A GUESS IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEMI-SOLID SUIT

If you are confident that declarer's holding in a suit is very short, you may be able to pose some problems by withholding your honor, particularly when there is a trump suit.

This is the type of situation that might arise:

	♠ A Q J 10 7 4	
♠ 6 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	♠ K 9 8 3
	♠ 2	

When declarer plays a spade to the ten you might duck (although you need to be confident declarer has the singleton).

Similarly, in this position:

	♥ K Q J 10 6 3	
♥ 8 5 2	<div></div>	♥ A 9 7 4
	♥ —	

when declarer plays a top heart from dummy, you duck. Sometimes declarer will now reject the ruffing finesse and attempt to ruff out partner’s hypothetical king or ace. If partner has a small trump, this could also be a legitimate suit suffocation play.

DUCKING TO CREATE A GUESS

The classic position is when a defender ducks the ace when sitting over KQ10. However, there are many other situations where ducking with an ace can give declarer a headache.

On this deal from the 2001 World Championships, ducking the ace was the only way to give declarer a problem:

♠ 6 5

♥ J 10

♦ J 9 8 7 5 2

♣ 10 4 2

♠ K 10 9 8

♥ K 6 5 4 3

♦ —

♣ Q 8 6 5

♠ A 7 2

♥ Q 9 2

♦ A K Q 4

♣ J 9 7

♠ Q J 4 3

♥ A 8 7

♦ 10 6 3

♣ A K 3

Dealer North

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
	pass	1NT	pass
2♣*	pass	2♦*	pass
2♣ ¹	pass	4♥	all pass

1. Four spades and five hearts, invitational.

South started with three rounds of clubs. Declarer won in hand, crossed to dummy with a spade and played a heart to the ten and queen. At tables where South won with the ♥A, declarer had no choice but to drop the jack on the next round, but one South ducked. His declarer faced a guess, and could not be blamed for playing North for ♥A10 doubleton.

This fascinating deal is from the match between Italy and the United States in the 1967 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer East
 Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Kay</i>	<i>Pabis-Ticci</i>	<i>Kaplan</i>	<i>d'Alelio</i>
		1♣	pass
1♦	pass	2♦	pass
4NT*	pass	5♥*	pass
6NT	all pass		

West's initial response meant there was no chance of reaching the makeable 6♥. Against 6NT, North led the ♥7 and declarer played four rounds of the suit, discarding a club from dummy as North discarded a club and a potentially fatal spade. (It is hard to see, but it is better to discard a second club, or even a diamond. Then as long as North ducks the first round of spades, declarer can never come to more than eleven tricks.)

Declarer crossed to dummy with the ♦A and played a spade to the six, nine and five. Well aware that North was capable of ducking the ♠A but uncertain as to the location of the ♠7, declarer went back to dummy with a club and played another spade. Now North took the ace and returned a club, breaking up the impending double squeeze.

CONCEALING THE POSITION OF A HIGH CARD

When you duck a trick instead of winning it, declarer will usually play on the assumption that partner has the missing high card. That can lead to some unexpected dividends. The idea of ducking when declarer takes a finesse is well known (and the play is sometimes essential). The classic case for the duck is when a defender holds the king behind the ace-queen, and it worked in spectacular fashion in the following deal from the 1976 Olympiad encounter between Brazil and Turkey.

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

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Chagas</i>	<i>Akca</i>	<i>Branco</i>	<i>Dagli</i>
	1♦	pass	1NT
all pass			

West led the ♠K. When East followed with the ten, denying the jack, West continued with a low spade to dummy's queen. Declarer ran the ♣J and West dropped the ten under it. When declarer next ran the ♣9, West followed with the four. Perhaps declarer should have smelled a rat, but he continued with a club to the queen and probably fell off his chair when West produced the king.

West now cashed the ♠A and played a spade to East's nine. This was the position (declarer having mistakenly thrown a heart from dummy):

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

When East cashed the ♥A declarer did not try unblocking dummy's queen, so when East continued with a heart, West was able to duck, forcing dummy to win. Declarer could cash two diamonds, but West scored the last two tricks for one down.

If you think ducking twice with a king is brave, take a look at this deal from the 1986 World Pairs Championship:

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

Dealer West
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Smolski	Siebert	Bethe	Siebert
pass	1♦	1♠	dbl
3♣	dbl	pass	4♥
all pass			

West led the ♣6. Declarer took East's king with the ace, crossed to dummy with the ♥K and ran the ♥10. When that held he played a heart to the jack; now West won and, with dummy out of trumps, switched to spades, giving the defenders three tricks in the suit. Of course, this brilliant play wouldn't work so well if declarer had a fifth heart, but West reasoned that declarer would have bid 2♥ over 1♠ if he held five hearts to the ace-jack as well as the ♣AQ.

In this variation from the 2008 World Bridge Games, the key play was to withhold an ace:

♠ A 6 5
 ♥ K
 ♦ K 5 3 2
 ♣ K 9 7 6 5
 ♠ 9 4
 ♥ QJ8753
 ♦ 8 7
 ♣ A 8 4
 ♠ K Q J 7 3
 ♥ 10 6 4
 ♦ Q 9 6
 ♣ J 2
 ♠ 10 8 2
 ♥ A 9 2
 ♦ A J 10 4
 ♣ Q 10 3

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Dhondy	Wang	Senior	Liu
2♦*	dbl	pass	pass
all pass		2♥*	3NT

West led the ♥7 and declarer won with dummy's king. With some good guesses you can make eleven tricks, but when declarer started with a club to the queen, West followed with the ♣8! Naturally, declarer now played a club to dummy's six. East won with the jack, switched to the ♠K, which was ducked, and then went back to hearts. Declarer held up the ace, won the next heart, and played a club to knock out the ♣A, thinking that all she needed to do now was locate the ♦Q. Unfortunately, it was West who now produced the ♣A and she proceeded to cash her heart tricks for +300.

CAPITALIZING ON SHORT-SHORT

If partner is short in their side suit and also in trumps, then by repeatedly ducking your ace in the opponents' side fit you can allow partner to ruff and force them to lose control to your trump length. Here's an example:

♠ A K 4

♥ J 5

♦ Q 7

♣ K J 10 9 7 2

♠ Q 10 8 5

♥ 6 3

♦ A K 6 5 4 2

♣ 5

♠ 7 2

♥ 8 7 4 2

♦ J 10 8 3

♣ A 6 3

♠ J 9 6 3

♥ A K Q 10 9

♦ 9

♣ Q 8 4

Dealer South

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♥
pass	2♣	pass	2♣
pass	3♣	pass	4♣
pass	4♥	all pass	

When the defenders start with two rounds of diamonds, declarer ruffs. Being prepared to suffer one ruff, he now plays on clubs in an attempt to maintain trump control. As East, you must duck both the first and second round of clubs. West ruffs in and returns his other trump.

Not knowing the heart position, declarer wins and drives out the ♣A. When a diamond comes back, it looks natural to ruff in hand and try to draw trumps (rather than assume that West started with only two trumps, in which case declarer must take the ruff in dummy and play winning clubs through East).

REASONS FOR LEADING AN UNSUPPORTED HONOR

Honor leads tend to be from sequences, for obvious reasons. However, there are times when it's right to lead an unsupported honor. This chapter reviews some of those we've already encountered, and introduces you to others which will be new.

LEADING A PUSHER

You will tend to resort to this if you think the opponent's holding in the suit you are going to lead through is moderate. In desperate circumstances, you may need to assume that partner has all of the remaining strength in the suit.

On this deal from the final of the 1992 Camrose Trials, it was clear that the defenders had to attack the unbid suit:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Horton</i>	<i>Czerniewski</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Rigal</i>
pass	3♥	pass	1♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♣*
pass	4♥*	pass	4♣
all pass			

Clearly West must lead a diamond, but the four is not good enough. East can win and switch to a trump, but declarer goes up with the ace and discards two diamonds on the top hearts. Leading the ♦Q, on the other hand, leads to a fast down one.

Similarly, on this deal from the repechage final of the 2009 U.S. Team Trials, Jeff elected to try leading a pusher without a sight of dummy:

♠ 6 3

♥ K 2

♦ A J 10 7 4 3

♣ K Q J

♠ 10 7

♥ Q J 8 7

♦ 9 5 2

♣ 8 7 5 2

♠ A J 8 5 4

♥ A 9 6 5

♦ 8

♣ A 9 6

♠ K Q 9 2

♥ 10 4 3

♦ K Q 6

♣ 10 4 3

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Ekeblad</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Weichsel</i>
pass	1♦	1♠	pass
pass	2NT	pass	1NT
all pass			3NT

It appeared to Jeff that the opponents were ready for a spade lead and in the absence of a negative double from South a heart lead might work. With no side entry, however, he needs to start with the ♥Q — which he did, giving us the first six tricks. On this lead, we’re beating the hand even if I have only one black ace.

PINNING A CARD IN A SHORT SUIT

When declarer is known (or suspected) to be short in a suit, it is often critical to lead a high card in case declarer’s card is significant. West struck gold on this deal, which as you may guess from the bidding was played at the rubber bridge table:

♠ 6 3

♥ A J 8 7 5

♦ Q J 10 3

♣ 5 2

♠ K 5 2

♥ K 6 4

♦ A K 6 4

♣ 9 8 3

♠ 10 9 8 7 4

♥ Q 9 3 2

♦ 7 5

♣ 7 6

♠ A Q J

♥ 10

♦ 9 8 2

♣ A K Q J 10 4

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Shivdasani</i>		<i>Mehta</i>	
dbl	1♥	1♠	1♣
pass	2♦	2♥	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	2NT

West knew his partner held a modest hand that was probably 5-4 in the majors. He reasoned that declarer would have the spades well stopped because of his 1NT bid, so a heart lead seemed indicated. However, to guard against the possibility that

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South held an important singleton, West led the ♥K — the only card to defeat the contract. There was no way for declarer to avoid the loss of two hearts, one spade and two diamonds.

This deal comes from a match between the Austrian and French women’s teams at the 1979 European Championships in Lausanne:

♠ K J 10 6 3

♥ A J 7

♦ J

♣ 10 8 5 3

♠ A Q 7

♥ 10 5 3 2

♦ 6

♣ A K 9 6 2

♠ 8 4 2

♥ K Q 8 6

♦ 8 5 4 3

♣ J 4

♠ 9 5

♥ 9 4

♦ A K Q 10 9 7 2

♣ Q 7

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			3NT*
all pass			

At one table, West led the ♣A and continued with the ♣K, setting up dummy’s ten as declarer’s ninth trick. At the other table West tried the ♣A followed by a low club, and was equally unsuccessful. In fact, the best chance is to switch to hearts at Trick 2, and if you are going to do that the card to start with is the ♥10, just in case declarer has a singleton or doubleton nine. When dummy covers with the ♥J, East (after winning the ♥Q) must return the ♥K to pin the ♥9.

If you have to make a critical decision at Trick 1, you may sometimes have to allow for the possibility that partner has a singleton honor in your suit, as on this deal:

♠ K 9 6 3

♥ A J 9 8 6 5

♦ A

♣ 6 2

♠ J 10 5

♥ K 4 3 2

♦ K Q 9 7

♣ Q 10

♠ A Q

♥ 10 7

♦ J 8 4 3 2

♣ A K J 5

♠ 8 7 4 2

♥ Q

♦ 10 6 5

♣ 9 8 7 4 3

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♥	dbl	pass
2NT	pass	3NT	all pass

With South known to have a very modest hand, North might well attack with the ♥A rather than a low one — and it’s the only lead to beat the contract.

Lest you think this is far-fetched, it is exactly what Bob Hamman led on the same hand (after a slightly different auction) in the 2005 Bermuda Bowl. As it happens, the full deal was not as I showed it above — his partner Paul Soloway actually held ♥Q2 — but the principle is a sound one.

WAITING FOR A SIGNAL

Just as every picture tells a story, for good defenders every card paints a picture. A defender often needs to retain the lead while waiting for a suit-preference signal from partner.

I could have used the idea of soliciting a signal to advantage on the following deal from a recent team game, but didn't think everything through far enough.

♠ K Q 10

♥ 9 8 7 6

♦ 10 9

♣ 9 7 6 5

♠ 9 2

♥ A 3 2

♦ Q 8 7 6 5

♣ A 4 3

Dealer North

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	pass	1♦	dbl
2♥ ¹	pass	2♠	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. Five spades, four-plus hearts, less than invitational.

Partner leads the ♠3 (ostensibly fourth best but easily read as his lowest) when he has shown five spades, implying a weak suit. How do you plan the defense?

Declarer has at least 18 HCP, so partner has at best 7 HCP. Declarer almost certainly has the ♠A, so he is 3-2 in the majors. He can get at most four diamonds without letting you in, so ducking one round of clubs won't let him make a hand that is down off the top and it may get you some extra information. Thus, when declarer wins the first trick in dummy and leads a club, you duck. He wins in hand with the ♣K and continues with the ♣Q around to your ace, partner playing the ♣10. Now what?

Declarer is 3=2=4=4. If he has the ♦AK he has eight top tricks, and nine (or even ten) if he also has the ♦J. Meanwhile, we need five tricks and I have only two on top, so we need three more tricks. At this point, therefore, I switched to a low heart, but this turned out to be a fatal play as the whole deal was:

♠ K Q 10
♥ 9 8 7 6
♦ 10 9
♣ 9 7 6 5

The answer I had missed was to lead the ♥A now. If partner has KQxx he should, if he is fully awake, discourage when declarer plays the ♥10. Even if partner doesn't discourage, declarer's play of the ♥10 or ♥J means he likely has two honors doubleton (partner would surely have led a high heart from ♥KQJx rather than a low spade from a weak suit). With Jx or Qx, declarer would be afraid that falsecarding with his honor would allow us to run the suit if I had A10x, for example.

Many books have been written about opening leads. The fact that a player supports a suit bid by his partner does not necessarily mean that it will be a good idea to lead it, but consider this position:

♦ 93

If West leads the $\spadesuit A$ (East encouraging) and then follows it with the queen, it suggests that he wants to retain the lead. If West wanted East to be on lead, he could play a low diamond at Trick 2.

THE DESCHAPELLES COUP

The *Deschappelles Coup* has been around a long time — in fact it goes back to the days of whist. Its invention (or discovery) is attributed to a Frenchman, the early nineteenth-century whist and chess expert Alexandre Deschappelles. The coup consists of leading an unsupported honor in order to create an entry to partner's hand. It is frequently confused with the Merrimac Coup, an *entry-destroying* tactic that I'll describe in the next section.

This example came up in the final of the 2001 U.S. Team Trials.

♠ 8

♥ 6 3 2

♦ J 10 4 3

♣ K Q 9 7 3

♠ A 10 9 5 4 2

♥ 5 4

♦ Q 7 5

♣ J 4

♠ —

♥ A K J 10 8

♦ K 9 6 2

♣ 10 8 6 2

♠ K Q J 7 6 3

♥ Q 9 7

♦ A 8

♣ A 5

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Molson	Hamman	Shenkin	Soloway
pass	pass	1♥	1♠
all pass			

West led the ♥5. East won and played two more rounds of the suit, West ruffing the third heart and then switching to the ♣J. Declarer would have done better to take that in hand, but not expecting such a bad trump break he took the trick in dummy and played a spade. When East discarded a heart, declarer put up the king and West took the ace to arrive at this position:

♠ —

♥ —

♦ J 10 4 3

♣ K 9 7 3

♠ 10 9 5 4

♥ —

♦ Q 7 5

♣ 4

♠ —

♥ 10

♦ K 9 6 2

♣ 10 8 6

♠ Q J 7 6 3

♥ —

♦ A 8

♣ A

Perhaps thinking it did not matter what he did here, West tried a low diamond. Declarer put up dummy's ♦10 and took East's king with the ace. He cashed the ♣A and exited with a diamond. West won and played another diamond, but declarer ruffed, cashed a top trump and then exited with a low trump, endplaying West.

If West leads the ♦Q (or a club) in the diagrammed position, the situation changes. Declarer can win, cash the ♣A and exit with a diamond as before, but now East wins and plays a heart or a club, allowing West to score a trump and retain an exit card.

THE MERRIMAC COUP

The *Merrimac Coup* is the sacrifice of a high card to knock out a vital entry. The name derives from an American coal carrier that was deliberately sunk in the harbor at Santiago, Cuba in 1898 in an attempt to bottle up the Spanish fleet — it has nothing to do with the U.S.S. Merrimack, the ironclad that famously fought in the U.S. Civil War.

This deal comes from a match between Greece and Bulgaria in the 2005 Balkan Bridge Championships (and could also have been fitted into Chapter 10, since it features a smart second hand high play):

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

Dealer North			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
	Zaikov		Chanaris
	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♥7. Declarer won with dummy's queen and tried a low spade toward the closed hand (a speed of lightning play). East was alert enough to go in with the ♠J and switch to the ♦K, trying to remove the entry to the spade suit. Declarer ducked in dummy, but now East switched to a club and the defenders had to come to five tricks.

Here's a more recent example:

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

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	pass	pass	1♠
pass	2♣*	pass	2♥
pass	2♠	all pass	

I led a trump and my partner, fearing two heart ruffs, played ace and another. This allowed declarer to finesse the diamond into me. What should I play after winning the king?

It looked like declarer had ace-jack tight of diamonds so the key was to knock out the ♣A, and I led the king. Declarer elected to duck this and win the next club lead in hand. She tried the ♥Q now but I ducked and partner got out with the trump nine. All the hearts were now losers and she finished -200.

In fact, if declarer had won the ♣K and played a heart she could still have got home — if East went up with the king to play a trump, she could afford to lose two more hearts. However, the ♣K switch was the only one that gave us any realistic chance.

At the other table the contract was 3♠ and they led a trump, East ducking the ace. My teammate then made the better play of the ♦A followed by the ♦J, after which there is no defense.

This type of coup is usually performed when a defender has a sight of dummy, but on rare occasions it can happen at Trick 1, as on this deal from the 2008 World Bridge Games:

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

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Versace</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>
	pass	1♠	pass
2♦	pass	2♠	pass
2NT	pass	3♥	pass
4♣	all pass		

When South elected to lead the ♣Q, he dealt the contract a mortal blow. This was a remarkable example of a brilliant lead that was also a Merrimac Coup, destroying a vital entry to dummy's diamonds. If declarer ducks, South switches to a heart to set up the fourth defensive trick. If declarer goes up with the ♣K, the defense can prevent declarer from reaching dummy in hearts or clubs, while playing to ruff a heart simply leaves declarer a trick short. Notice that leading the ♣A and then switching to the ♣Q doesn't work — declarer wins the ♣K and has several ways to get to ten tricks: with the ♣J now a trick, the simplest line is to ruff a heart in dummy.

BLOCKING A SUIT

Sometimes, leading a high card can create problems for declarer, especially if entries are at a premium. This type of play may pay dividends if you appear to be endplayed.

Suppose that West is forced to lead a spade in this position:

♠ Q 9 7 3
 ♠ A K J 6 4
 ♠ 10 5
 ♠ 8 2

Clearly, leading a low card risks giving up five tricks, but leading the queen may be very awkward for declarer if there is no side entry to dummy (a suit suffocation play).

It's not difficult to see that there are other situations where this might work out well — for example:

♥ K 10 3

♥ A Q 6 5 4

♥ 8 7 2

♥ J 9

Here, exiting with the king tangles the suit for declarer.

GOUGING

We've seen this idea more than once already. In this example, you can pin declarer in the wrong hand to let partner get a ruff (if you lead low he might duck around to the other hand and draw trumps).

♠ 10

♥ K Q 3

♦ J 10 9 7

♣ 10 9 7 4 2

♠ K 6 5 4 3

♥ A J 7

♦ A 6 3

♣ 8 3

♠ 9

♥ 10 9 8 5 2

♦ Q 8 5 4 2

♣ K 5

♠ A Q J 8 7 2

♥ 6 4

♦ K

♣ A Q J 6

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	1NT	pass	3♣
pass	3NT	pass	4♣
pass	5♣	all pass	

As it happens, both 3NT and 4♠ will make North-South, but that is no reason to let 5♣ slip through. Realizing that declarer must be short in the red suits, you decide to attack with the ♦A. At Trick 2 you must switch to a spade — but not just any spade will do: it must be the king, pinning declarer in hand. If he plays a heart now, you go up with the ace and play a second spade, allowing partner to overruff dummy.

DECEIVING DECLARER

If declarer is marked with a particular card, then leading a high card can sometimes be a good deceptive maneuver.

♦ K 10 2 ♦ J 9 4

♦ Q 7 3 ♦ J 9 4

In either position, if declarer has the ace, then leading your honor may cause him to misplace the remaining high cards.

On occasion, this type of play can pay off even when declarer’s combined holding is stronger, as on this deal from the 2005 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer North			
NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
<i>Holman</i>	<i>Choksi</i>	<i>Cope</i>	<i>Venkataraman</i>
	pass	1♣	pass
1♠	pass	2♥	pass
2♠	pass	3♠	pass
4♠	all pass		

With the club finesse onside, 4♠ seemed destined to come home, but North found the devilish lead of the ♥J! Declarer won with dummy’s king and ran the ♠9. When that held, he continued with the ♠Q. South won, cashed the ♦A and played another diamond to dummy’s king. Declarer came to hand with the ♥A, drew the outstanding trumps and confidently played a heart to the nine. South won with the ten he wasn’t supposed to have, and cashed a diamond for one down.

Elimination play to get the opponents to break a frozen suit is a common tactic. The diagram below shows one of the classic positions, mentioned earlier:

♥ Q 7 3 ♥ A 9 5
 □ ♥ J 8 4
 ♥ K 10 6 2

If you are forced to lead this suit as East or West, you must lead your honor in order to give declarer a guess.

If you can give the impression that you are leading an unsupported honor, then that too can work to your advantage, as on this deal from the 2009 Venice Cup:

	♠ 6 5 3	
	♥ A Q J 7	
	♦ K 10 9	
	♣ 8 5 3	
♠ 9	<div></div>	♠ 10 7 4
♥ K 10 5 2		♥ 9 8 6 3
♦ Q J 7 3		♦ 6 4
♣ A J 6 2		♣ 10 9 7 4
	♠ A K Q J 8 2	
	♥ 4	
	♦ A 8 5 2	
	♣ K Q	

When North-South reached 6♠ in an uninterrupted, strong auction, West knew that her partner’s hand was essentially useless. Needing to conjure a second trick from somewhere, she tried leading a deceptive ♦J. Declarer was taken in and went up with dummy’s king, eventually playing for split honors. Notice that on a passive defense declarer can succeed by squeezing West in the red suits.

PROTECTING PARTNER’S CARDS

This type of play prevents partner’s card from being captured when yours is going to fall.

	♠ A K 9 7	
♠ J 5 3	<div></div>	♠ 10 6 4 2
	♠ Q 8	

In this situation, if you lead a low card you present declarer with four tricks in the suit, but leading the ♠J preserves partner’s ten. This play deserves a name, and I suggest *honor protection lead* as you are leading a card that will protect partner’s honor.

The same thing applies here:

	♥ 5	
♥ 10 6 4	<div></div>	♥ J 8 3 2
	♥ A K Q 9 7	

Here, leading the ♥10 saves a trick.

PREVENTING A DUCKING PLAY

This is related to the Chinese high card promotion back in Chapter 5. On this deal from a match between an American touring team and Australia, played in Sydney in 1970, West had to prevent declarer from ducking a trick to his partner:

♠ K 2

♥ 8 5 4 3

♦ A 10 4

♣ A 8 4 2

♠ J 8

♥ Q 9 7 6 2

♦ K 9 7

♣ Q 9 3

♠ A 9 3

♥ J 10

♦ Q 8 6 3 2

♣ 10 6 5

♠ Q 10 7 6 5 4

♥ A K

♦ J 5

♣ K J 7

Dealer North

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Seres	Robinson	Cummings	Jordan
pass	pass	pass	1♠
pass	1NT*	pass	2♣
pass	4♣	all pass	

West led the ♥6, which kept his side in with a chance. Declarer won in hand and played a spade to the king and ace. He won the heart return, crossed to dummy's ♣A and took the losing spade finesse.

If West exits with a club now, declarer is obviously home. If he tries a heart instead, declarer ruffs and can play ♣K and ♣J, which works whenever the queen is doubleton or the suit is 3-3. On a low diamond exit, declarer plays low from dummy and unblocks the jack from his hand under East's queen, subsequently finessing the ♦10. However, West, alive to all these possibilities, exited with the ♦K — declarer won this, finessed the club and went down.

This next deal, from a recent event, illustrates how easy it is to miss these plays.

♠ K Q 8 7 6 5

♥ 10 2

♦ 7 5

♣ A 5 3

♠ A 9 3

♥ A K J 3

♦ A 4 3

♣ 10 9 4

Dealer East

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
		1NT	2♣ ¹
all pass			

1. Clubs and a higher suit.

Partner led the ♦Q. Hoping declarer had a stiff spade, I won with the ♦A and led back a low trump to declarer's king. Declarer now led the ♠J and partner showed even count, so I ducked and won the second spade, partner following. Now I cashed the ♥K, partner encouraging. How should I plan the defense from here?

I thought it was a good idea to tap the dummy, so I cashed the ♥A and led a third heart, in case partner had ♥Qxx. However, the full deal was:

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

Partner covered the ♥9 with the queen, but declarer discarded from dummy! Now we couldn't beat the contract. I needed to anticipate this and lead the ♥J so that I could hold the lead if she didn't ruff in dummy, ready to lead a spade for a trump promotion. How could I tell? With five diamonds partner would have bid 2♦ (no, we don't play transfers over a 2♣ overcall). He is therefore 2=?=4=3, so he must have four hearts, and I can get this right.

Yes, declarer really did have the hand above. Give her credit for finding the play of discarding on the ♥Q. She ruffed the fourth heart in hand, drew trumps ending in dummy and ran the spades.

CLARIFYING THE LEAD

When dummy has a modest holding the defenders must be able to communicate effectively when they lead the suit.

♠ 10 7 4

Looking at this combination from the East hand you might lead the king from ♠K65, or the eight from ♠Q83 or ♠J83, or top of nothing.

The situation is slightly different when dummy is even weaker.

♥ 7 4 2

Now if you have ♥K65 as East, leading the king means you will be able to set up the suit when partner has ♥Q10xx or better.

As I mentioned earlier, some partnerships have an agreement that in this situation a low card promises either the ace or king, so they would lead the five from ♥K65.

PROTECTING YOUR HIGH CARD

In Chapter 12, I described a concept where the key was to play second hand high and avoid being the victim of a ruffing finesse. Sometimes it is necessary to lead your high card with the same end in mind. Here is a brilliant example:

♠ A K Q 5
♥ A K Q 10 4
♦ 10
♣ Q 7 6

♠ J 6
♥ 8 5 3
♦ K 6 4 2
♣ K 8 4 2

♠ 10 3 2
♥ 9 7 6 2
♦ A 9 8 7 3
♣ 9

♠ 9 8 7 4
♥ J
♦ Q J 5
♣ A J 10 5 3

Dealer North			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Zia	Roy	Masood	Ghose
	1♣ ¹	pass	2♣
pass	2♥	pass	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
pass	4NT*	pass	5♦*
pass	6♠	all pass	
1. Precision.			

Calculating that if an ace was missing it was most likely to be in diamonds, Zia deduced that North's use of Blackwood indicated possession of a singleton diamond. That persuaded him to lead the ♦K — the only card to beat the contract. A low diamond lead, of course, leaves West helpless against a later ruffing finesse.

Similarly, with a suit distributed like this:

♦ K 7 4 ♦ 5
 ♦ A 9 8 6 3
♦ Q J 10 2

West does best to lead the king — a play I found against Rubin and Becker in a Vanderbilt long ago to get an extra vulnerable undertrick in a match won by 4 IMPs.

CASHING TRICKS IN THE RIGHT ORDER

Another recent deal:

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

Dealer South			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1♠
1NT	dbl	2♥	pass
pass	dbl	pass	3♦
pass	3♣	all pass	

You are playing Board-a-Match and partner leads the ♥A. You give suit preference for clubs, the lower suit, by playing the ♥2. Partner switches to the ♣2, fourth best, which goes to your ace and declarer's nine. How do you defend?

Declarer seems to be 5-5 on the face of it, though 5-4 is possible for some players. In any event, it is nice of them to arrange to get to 3♣. Partner should have the ♣K to have led low, but should you return a diamond or a trump to take partner off an endplay?

Partner has at least 15 HCP, so declarer has at most 11. Declarer could have ♠QJ10xx and the ♦AK, making a non-club return a disaster, but if declarer has better spades and is missing the ♦K, you do best to return a diamond. At the table a club was returned but the diamond trick went away as partner had ♠KQx and ♦Kxx. Was there a way to know?

If partner has no card in diamonds then he should lead the ♣K followed by the deuce, to take the tricks in the right order and force the cashing of all club tricks before the next play is made. With the actual hand, if you had ♣AJx you could win the ♣J, return a diamond, win the ♣A, and return a trump, preventing declarer from eliminating the side suits and endplaying partner in trumps in a 3-card ending. The full deal was:

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

REASONS FOR LEADING INTO A TENACE

Leading into a tenace is another defensive no-no, since it appears to be giving up a trick. Once again, there are a number of reasons why on occasion it is the right play.

SETTING UP A FORCE

When the key to the defense is tapping either dummy or declarer, any tenace positions in the force suit become more or less irrelevant. This example comes from the 2005 Venice Cup:

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Wittes</i>	<i>Picus</i>	<i>Mancuso</i>	<i>Levin</i>
			1♣ ¹
pass	1♦*	1♠	2♥
2♠	2NT	pass	3♥
pass	3NT	pass	4♥
all pass			

1. Strong.

North-South never located their excellent diamond fit and wound up in a tenuous heart game. However, declarer's good trump spots make it quite hard to beat. West led a spade; declarer put in the ten and ruffed East's queen. A heart went to East's ace, and at this point East must return a low spade into dummy's tenace. This play concedes a spade trick (which actually is of no value to declarer) but now East has control of the spade position. After that, West will be able to force declarer twice more in spades and set up a fourth trump trick for the defense.

BREAKING UP THE ENTRIES FOR A SQUEEZE

When a squeeze is threatened, often the only defense involves attacking the entries — and that can mean leading into a tenace. This example is from the 1980 Australian National Open Teams:

♠ A K J 7 4 3

♥ 5 4 3

♦ 8 6

♣ 10 4

♠ Q 2

♥ Q 10 9 6 2

♦ Q 10

♣ K 8 7 6

♠ 10 9 8 6

♥ 8

♦ K J 9 3

♣ J 9 5 3

♠ 5

♥ A K J 7

♦ A 7 5 4 2

♣ A Q 2

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Lathbury	Havas	Bourke	Cook
pass	1♠	pass	1♦
pass	2♣ ¹	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Forcing.

West led the ♣6 to the ten, jack and queen, and now a low diamond went to the ten, six and jack. East returned the ♣3; West took the trick with the ♣8 and returned the ♣K to declarer's ace as a spade was pitched from dummy. When declarer played another low diamond, West won and played a club to East's nine. This was the position:

♠ A K J 7

♥ 5 4 3

♦ —

♣ —

♠ Q 2

♥ Q 10 9 6 2

♦ —

♣ —

♠ 10 9 8 6

♥ 8

♦ K 9

♣ —

♠ 5

♥ A K J

♦ A 7 5

♣ —

Now East returned a spade into dummy's tenace — the only way to break up the impending squeeze in spades and diamonds.

TAKING OUT AN ENTRY PREMATURELY

It can be very helpful to remove an entry before declarer can prepare for a finesse or before he can know that a finesse is necessary, as in this situation.

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

South is in 5♦, having shown a red two-suiter, and partner leads the ♠2. You win the first two tricks and, with a potential trump trick and a well placed ♣K, everything in the garden looks rosy. However, unless you now exit with an apparently suicidal club, declarer will have no difficulty making the contract.

Suppose the full deal looks like this:

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

If you continue woodenly with a third spade, declarer ruffs, cashes two top trumps, crosses to dummy with the ♣A and picks up your trumps via the marked finesse. Your club exit forces declarer to use his only dummy entry prematurely. This defense would also be likely to work when declarer had an even better holding in trumps, such as ♦AKQ104.

This next example is a deal that comes from a match between Italy and Norway in the 1970 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ K 5 4 2
 ♥ 5
 ♦ K J 10 7
 ♣ K Q J 10

♠ —
 ♥ Q 10 9 8 4
 ♦ Q 9 8 4 2
 ♣ 6 3 2

♠ A 10 9 7
 ♥ 7 2
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ A 9 8 7 4

♠ Q J 8 6 3
 ♥ A K J 6 3
 ♦ 5 3
 ♣ 5

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Hoie</i>	<i>la Galla</i>	<i>Strom</i>	<i>de Ritis</i>
2♠*	4♠	dbl	1♠ all pass

West led a diamond; East won with the ace, cashed the ♣A and then switched to a heart. Declarer won in hand and played a spade to his king, revealing the 4-0 split. With two entries to dummy — a diamond and a heart ruff — it was possible to pick up East's trumps.

In order to remove a vital entry to the North hand, East needed to continue with a diamond at Trick 3. If declarer wins in dummy and lays down the ♠K, East takes the ace and exits with a heart. Declarer wins in hand and ruffs a heart, but when he plays a spade from dummy, East splits his ♠10 9 7 and must score another trump trick.

On the diamond return, declarer has to play for 4-0 trumps without the luxury of testing the suit by leading the king first; his first trump play must be low from dummy planning to stick in the eight. He might not find this play.

Here is another example where leading into a tenace is the essential play:

♠ 5 4
 ♥ A Q 10 7 4 2
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ 9 5 2

♠ 9 6 3 2
 ♥ J 9 8 3
 ♦ A J 7 2
 ♣ J

♠ J 7
 ♥ K 5
 ♦ K 10 8 5 4
 ♣ Q 7 6 3

♠ A K Q 10 8
 ♥ 6
 ♦ 9 6
 ♣ A K 10 8 4

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1NT	pass	1♠
pass	3♥	pass	3♣
pass	5♣	all pass	4♣

West leads the ♦A and continues the suit, East winning with the king. At this point East has only one good move — to exit with a heart into the jaws of the ♥AQ. Do you see why? Suppose East switches to a spade. Declarer will win this and cash a

top trump. When West follows with the jack, declarer can cross to dummy with a heart and run the ♣9, picking up East's trumps. By exiting with a heart at Trick 3 (not such a tough play as declarer is marked with a singleton), East removes the dummy entry before declarer can use it effectively.

PRETENDING TO HAVE A SINGLETON

Sometimes it is possible to lead into a tenace at a time that makes it look like you have a singleton in the suit. The objective is to dissuade declarer from finessing you in trumps, or making a trump safety play — which would be an *unsafety* play if you truly did have a singleton.

This deal, composed by Robert Darvas, demonstrates the idea:

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

Dealer West

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	2NT	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

West leads the ♥2, and when declarer plays dummy's queen, East wins with the king. Things look bleak, since West clearly has little to contribute and the ♠Q is onside. But perhaps declarer can be persuaded not to take the trump finesse? Suppose East switches to the ♣8, hoping for this type of layout:

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

With the ♣K apparently onside, declarer may reject the spade finesse, fearing that East will score a club ruff. If he does that, and then finesses into East's ♣K, he'll be unable to avoid a loser in each suit.

PRESERVING YOUR OWN POSITION

One reason to lead into a tenace is to preserve your own tenace, as on this deal from the 1999 Cavendish:

♠ K 10 9

♥ A 6 5 3

♦ K 7 5 2

♣ K 2

♠ 7 6 5 4

♥ Q 8 7 2

♦ J

♣ J 9 8 7

♠ A Q 3

♥ 9

♦ 8 4

♣ A Q 10 6 5 4 3

♠ J 8 2

♥ K J 10 4

♦ A Q 10 9 6 3

♣ —

Dealer East

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Weichsel	Gitelman	Sontag	Moss
4♣	5♦	2♣*	2♦
		all pass	

West ignored his partner and led a heart, which did declarer no harm. He won in hand, drew trumps ending in dummy, and ruffed a club. Now he played a heart to the ace and advanced the ♣K, discarding a spade when East put up the ace. Forced to play a spade, East tried the ace hoping his partner held the jack, but that hope proved to be forlorn.

The winning defense is for East to exit with the ♠3! Declarer can win but must still lose a trick in each major. If declarer couldn't enter dummy with the ♦7, a ruff-and-sluff club return would suffice as well, but declarer has the ♦6: he pitches the ♠8 from hand on the club and ruffs in dummy, then plays a heart to the king and runs the ♠J to East's queen. Now when the ♠A is led back, declarer must preserve the ♦6 (by ruffing with the nine) and cross to the ♦7 to cash the ♠K.

PART 5

THE DOS AND DON'Ts OF CARDPLAY

Chapter 16

THE DOs OF CARDPLAY

One could be forgiven for imagining that to become a top-class declarer or defender you require only the ability to master and embrace a number of technical ideas. However, if you are to advance significantly in this area it is also necessary to possess a degree of imagination that will allow you to combine those ideas with the ability to experiment and improvise as the occasion demands.

Most of this book has been a description of cardplay techniques. Many of these, as I promised early on, are concepts that are not hard to employ once you are familiar with them. Let us now return to where we began: how do you set about analyzing the deal you are declaring or defending, and select a plan of attack? Once the play starts, how does your approach change as more information becomes available? Let's start with a list of the things you *should* do, and then we'll move on to those habits you should try to avoid.

1. COUNT HCP'S, SHAPE, WINNERS AND LOSERS

It should be automatic for declarer to make these basic calculations, but it's still surprising how often one or more of them goes by the board. Here is a deal from the 2005 World Transnational Teams where most declarers did not make best use of the information available from the bidding and play:

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

Dealer West
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	4♥
all pass			

At most tables, West led a diamond, East winning with the ace and returning the queen. That strongly suggests that East started with $\heartsuit AQ$ alone, and raises the specter of a possible diamond ruff if West gains the lead.

If declarer simply plays a heart now (which occurred at many tables) then one of two things is sure to happen. Either West will win and give East a diamond ruff, or East will win, play a spade to West's ace and get a diamond ruff. Declarer knows this must be the case, as East is a passed hand and cannot hold all the missing aces.

It is clear that declarer must get rid of the $\heartsuit J$, so at Trick 3 he must take the club finesse. When that holds, he discards a diamond on the $\clubsuit A$ and then plays a trump. Declarer's subsequent play in the spade suit will be based on who has the $\heartsuit A$. If West has that card then East is a heavy favorite to hold the $\spadesuit A$, as West might well have opened holding the $\spadesuit A$, $\heartsuit A$ and $\clubsuit K$.

It is sometimes possible to make an informed decision about the shape of a player's hand at an early stage, as on this deal:

\spadesuit 10 7 5 4 3

\heartsuit K 5

\diamondsuit 9 4

\clubsuit A Q 10 2

\spadesuit Q 8 6

\heartsuit J 7 4

\diamondsuit Q 8 7 2

\clubsuit 6 5 3

\spadesuit A J 9 2

\heartsuit 9 8 2

\diamondsuit A 10 5 3

\clubsuit 9 7

\spadesuit K

\heartsuit A Q 10 6 3

\diamondsuit K J 6

\clubsuit K J 8 4

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1 \spadesuit	pass	1 \heartsuit
pass	3 \clubsuit	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the $\diamondsuit 2$ and East wins with the ace. If East woodenly returns a diamond, declarer will surely take ten tricks. However, an examination of the bidding combined with West's opening lead should enable East to find the right answer. South is known to have five hearts and four clubs. West's opening lead proclaimed a four-card suit, leaving South with three diamonds. Ergo, South can only have one spade. Armed with that information, East can lay down the $\spadesuit A$ and receive instant gratification.

The same sort of inference is available to the declarer, as on this deal from the Bermuda Bowl final played in January, 2000:

♠ K 7 5 4

♥ 6 4 3

♦ A 8 5

♣ K J 2

♠ Q 10 8

♥ J 8 7

♦ Q 6 3

♣ A 6 4 3

♠ 9 3 2

♥ A 10 5 2

♦ 7 2

♣ Q 8 7 5

♠ A J 6

♥ K Q 9

♦ K J 10 9 4

♣ 10 9

Dealer East

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Campos</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Villas-Boas</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
pass	3NT	pass	1NT
		all pass	

West led the ♣3. East won with the ♣Q and returned the five, West taking the ♣A and playing a third club to dummy's king as I discarded a spade.

Clearly the contract depends on locating the ♦Q. At first sight, this is a complete guess, but in reality that is almost never the case. Here the clue lay in the fact that West had led a club from a four-card suit. Given the absence of a Stayman enquiry, he would almost certainly have chosen a major suit had he held one. That strongly suggested his distribution was 3=3=3=4 or 4-4 in the minors, so I came to hand with a heart and ran the ♦J.

Listening to the bidding can pay big dividends, especially when the opponents show a big fit in one suit and then end up playing in another, as on this deal from the 1999 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ J 7 2

♥ 7 4 3

♦ 9 6 4 2

♣ A 7 6

♠ K 8 5 3

♥ A J 10 9

♦ 7

♣ Q J 4 3

♠ A Q 9 6 4

♥ 6

♦ A K 8

♣ K 9 8 2

♠ 10

♥ K Q 8 5 2

♦ Q J 10 5 3

♣ 10 5

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Stansby</i>	<i>Hamman</i>	<i>Martel</i>	<i>Soloway</i>
1♣	pass	2♠	pass
4♦*	pass	4NT*	pass
5♥*	pass	6♣	all pass

North knew East-West had a good fit in spades, so he led the suit at Trick 1, then took the ♣A and played another spade for South to ruff.

2. RECONSTRUCT BOTH UNSEEN HANDS

Counting and reconstructing the distribution is all very well, but as declarer, remember that you have two opponents. Frequently the bidding and play to date will be consistent with a particular construction for one of the unseen hands, but not the other. Both hands must be consistent with what they have done up until now.

Take a look at this deal, from the 1997 Bermuda Bowl.

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

Dealer North			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Meckstroth	Versace	Rodwell	Lauria
	1♠	dbl	3♠
pass	pass	4♠*	pass
4NT	pass	5♦	all pass

South led a spade and I put up the king, ruffing North’s ace and setting up one club discard. I drew trumps, discarded a club on the ♠Q and played the ♣J. When North played low without a flicker I went up with the king — and was one down. It was certainly reasonable to play North for the ♣A on the bidding — but could I have worked out that South had it?

As Terence Reese might have said, I have examined my conscience in the matter, and although South’s jump to 3♠ might be based on a very modest hand, he is vulnerable. That makes his actual hand a little more likely than

♠ 8 7 6 3 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ 4 3 ♣ Q 7 6 5

so perhaps I should have credited him with the possession of an ace. In that case, after two rounds of trumps I should force out the ♥A. When North shows up with that, I may well play South for the ♣A and that turns out to be the winning view in the suit.

Occasionally a player may be able to reconstruct both hands at a very early stage, even when there has been little bidding, as on this next deal from the 1999 Cavendish:

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

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	<i>Lazard</i>		<i>Bramley</i>
	pass	pass	2♥
all pass			

West led the ♣K and switched to the ♦10. East took the ace and played back the ♠3, covered by the jack and dummy's ace. With four certain losers outside the hearts, declarer had to take the right view in trumps to make the contract.

West, who was marked with two spade honors and the ♣AK, could not realistically hold the ♥A and not have bid. By the same token East, who was known to hold the ♠Q or ♠K, the ♦A and the assumed ♥A, could not also have the ♥Q. It was therefore clear for declarer to play a heart to the king, hoping to find West with ♥Qx or his actual holding.

3. PAY ATTENTION TO NEGATIVE INFERENCES FROM EARLIER PLAYS AND/OR BIDDING

Often you can apply the Sherlock Holmes principle of 'the dog that did not bark in the nighttime' by taking into account bids or plays that are *not* made by partner or an opponent. Look at this deal from the 2005 World Transnational Open Teams:

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Shugart</i>	<i>Martell</i>	<i>Robson</i>	<i>Feldman</i>
			pass
1NT	pass	2♦*	pass
2♥	pass	3NT	all pass

With a blind lead, North made the winning choice of a spade, partly because South had not doubled 2♦ to show a good holding in that suit.

I was able to draw a useful negative inference on this deal from the 2006 Spingold:

♠ 8 7

♥ Q 10 8 6 4

♦ 3 2

♣ Q 10 6 5

♠ K Q J 5 2

♥ K 2

♦ 10 8 6 5

♣ K 3

♠ A 6 3

♥ A 9 7 5

♦ A J 9 4

♣ J 8

♠ 10 9 4

♥ J 3

♦ K Q 7

♣ A 9 7 4 2

♠

♥

♦

♣

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Cayne</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Seamon</i>
	pass	1NT	pass
2♥*	pass	2♠	pass
3NT	pass	4♠	all pass

South led the ♠9. I won in hand and drew trumps, North discarding the ♥4 on the third round. When I next ran the ♦8, South won with the queen and switched to the ♣2.

There are several reasons to go up with the king. First, South did not lead a club at Trick 1, which he might have done from a holding headed by the queen; second, in this type of situation a player is much more likely to switch holding the ace; finally, left to my own devices I would play a club to the king in any event.

4. CHECK YOUR WORK FOR ERRORS — DO IT *TWICE*

Once you have made your decision, you should double-check to make sure you have not missed a simple point — either something an opponent can do that may derail your approach, or an even better line of play for your side.

On this deal from the 1997 Bermuda Bowl I made my contract, but missed a stronger line:

♠ A J 6 3

♥ 4 3

♦ J 6 4 2

♣ 6 4 2

♠ K 8 5 2

♥ A 7 6 5

♦ A K 10 5

♣ K

♠ Q 10 9

♥ K Q J 10 9

♦ Q 9 8

♣ A 3

♠ 7 4

♥ 8 2

♦ 7 3

♣ Q J 10 9 8 7 5

♠

♥

♦

♣

Dealer East

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Cintra</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Fonseca</i>
		1NT	3♣
dbl*	pass	4♥	pass
6♥	all pass		

South led the ♣Q. I won in dummy, drew trumps, tested the diamonds and then successfully played for North to hold the ♠J. However, there is a better line. After drawing trumps, I can cash the ♣A, play two rounds of diamonds ending in hand and then play a spade to the king. If North takes the ace and returns the suit, I don't need to run the risk of losing to a doubleton jack — I can take the queen and cash my trumps to squeeze North in the pointed suits.

On this next deal declarer didn't look far enough into the hand, and so failed to realize that the line he chose give him no chance to bring home his contract:

♠ J 10 7 3

♥ K 9 2

♦ J 10 5

♣ A 9 7

♠ Q 4

♥ Q J 5

♦ Q 9 4

♣ K Q J 10 4

♠ A 6

♥ 10 7 6 4 3

♦ 8 7 6 3 2

♣ 3

♠ K 9 8 5 2

♥ A 8

♦ A K

♣ 8 6 5 2

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♣	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

West led the ♣K. When dummy's ace survived, declarer set about the trump suit; thinking it likely that West would have the ♠A for his overcall, he ran the ♠J. West won with the queen, cashed two clubs and there was still the small matter of the ace of trumps.

A little more thought makes it obvious that running the ♠J cannot ever be the right play¹. Even if West had won that trick with the ♠A, he could have cashed two clubs and then played a fourth round, enabling East to score the ♠Q. Once you appreciate this point it becomes clear to play a spade to the king at Trick 2. When that holds, declarer plays a second trump and loses only one spade and two clubs.

This kind of lazy thinking is not restricted to declarers. A defender, having spotted what appears to be a good line, can also make the mistake of failing to look for an even better one, as on this deal from the 1999 Bermuda Bowl:

1. Except in the unlikely case that East has ♠AQx.

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♠ K Q 9
 ♥ A Q J
 ♦ 9 6 4 3 2
 ♣ 8 6
 ♠ 10 6
 ♥ 10 9 2
 ♦ 10
 ♣ AJ109532
 ♠ 8 7 3 2
 ♥ 7 5 3
 ♦ A K Q J 8 5
 ♣ —
 ♠ A J 5 4
 ♥ K 8 6 4
 ♦ 7
 ♣ K Q 7 4

Dealer West
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Ferraro</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>de Falco</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
pass	1♦ ¹	pass	1♥
2♣	dbl*	2♦	2♠
pass	4♥	all pass	

1. Precision: 2+ diamonds, 11-15.

West led the ♦10 and, when that held, he realized his partner was looking for a club switch. Looking no further, he cashed the ♣A and played another club for East to ruff. However, I could ruff the diamond return high, draw trumps and claim.

If East had held a singleton or doubleton club he would undoubtedly have overtaken the diamond lead to play the suit, so West should have been able to draw the conclusion that East must have a club void. A low club at Trick 2 would see East ruff, after which declarer can never take more than nine tricks. The Austrian pair, Doris Fischer and Terry Weigkricht, found this defense playing in the Venice Cup.

Before embarking on a line of play, it's important to ask yourself whether it will actually gain you the number of tricks you need. Keeping an eye on your trick objective is perhaps easier for a defender, but despite the small numbers that are frequently involved it's easy to go wrong, as on this deal from the 2009 Venice Cup:

♠ Q 7 2
 ♥ A 8 5
 ♦ 8 6 2
 ♣ 9 7 5 3
 ♠ A J 6
 ♥ K 7 3
 ♦ KQJ1095
 ♣ 6
 ♠ 9 3
 ♥ Q 10 9 6 4
 ♦ A 7 3
 ♣ 10 8 4
 ♠ K 10 8 5 4
 ♥ J 2
 ♦ 4
 ♣ A K Q J 2

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Baker</i>	<i>Sprung</i>	<i>McCallum</i>	<i>Goldberg</i>
			1♠
1NT	2♣	2NT*	3♣
3♦	pass	3♥	pass
4♥	all pass		

The bidding was nothing to write home about, but I'll concentrate on the defense to 4♥. South led the ♣K and then switched to her stiff diamond. Declarer won in dummy, played a heart to the queen and another heart, scoring a painless +650.

Let's think about South's line of defense, however. Suppose North had held the ♦A and been able to win Trick 2 and give South a ruff: that would have given the defense three tricks, but there would have been little hope of a fourth (North having Q10x of trumps is about it). The percentage play is for South to switch to a spade (the ♠10 is best, as a surrounding play). Once the defenders establish a spade trick, declarer has to guess the heart suit to score ten tricks.

5. ANTICIPATE POSSIBLE SNAGS

You must not only consider your own ideas, but also take into account the opponents' threats and counter-measures, which might range from something as basic as creating entry problems to the complexity of a suicide squeeze. Thinking about possible pitfalls may suggest modifications to your plan or, in some cases, a completely different line of play.

♠ K Q J 7 6

♥ 6 4

♦ 8 7 4

♣ A 10 9

♠ A 10 5 4 2

♥ 9 5 3

♦ 2

♣ J 7 4 3

♠ 9 8 3

♥ 7

♦ K Q J 10 9 6

♣ 8 6 5

♠ —

♥ A K Q J 10 8 2

♦ A 5 3

♣ K Q 2

Dealer East

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
		2♦	dbl
pass	4♠	pass	6♥
all pass			

West led the ♦2 and declarer won with the ace and drew trumps. The bidding made it pretty clear that West had both a stiff diamond and the ♠A. Needing two entries to dummy to establish and then reach the spades, declarer tried a low club, intending to put in the nine, but West adroitly inserted the jack and declarer had to admit defeat.

If you're going to play West for the ♣J, it works better to cash the ♣K, lead a low club to the jack and ace, and then jettison the ♣Q on the ♠K: West can win but is endplayed into giving you the dummy. However, there's something even better — a sure trick line that doesn't depend on West having the ♣J, only on his having the ♠A. After drawing trumps, declarer should play a top club from his hand and overtake it with dummy's ace. Then he runs the ♠K, discarding a diamond. West can win, but with only black cards left in his hand he has no safe return.

This play deserves a name: since you are trashing a trick (in clubs) to create a tenace, how about the *tenace-creating trick trash*?

Here is a very tough deal from the final of the 2005 Venice Cup:

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

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Cronier</i>	<i>von Arnim</i>	<i>Willard</i>	<i>Auken</i>
1♠	4♥	dbl	1♥ all pass

West led the ♠4 and declarer won with dummy's ace, discarding a diamond from hand. Her thought process ran along these lines:

'I am probably going to need things to behave reasonably well, and the obvious line is to play a club to the queen, cash the ♣A and ruff a club. Assuming hearts are not 4-1 that will get me up to nine tricks. Then I play a diamond hoping the ace is onside. Even if the ♦K loses I may be okay, because if they play two rounds of trumps I can win in hand, ruff a diamond, get back to hand with a spade ruff and draw the last trump. If they try forcing me with a spade, I may be able to get home on a crossruff.'

So declarer played a club to the queen and king, and West switched to a diamond. East took the ace and played a trump, and West won and played another trump. As it happens, declarer can run the ♣10 now (pinning the eight) to escape for one down, but she quite reasonably tried to ruff out the clubs and ended up two down.

The problem with this line is that it is almost certain to fail if the ♣Q loses to the king. In fact, as any line is going to involve declarer playing a diamond at some point, there is a lot to be said for doing this at Trick 2. If the ace is onside declarer is well placed, having established a diamond trick and set up the possibility of a diamond ruff in dummy that will provide an entry to play on clubs. With the ♦A onside declarer may be able to get home on a crossruff, while if the opponents lead trumps to prevent this she can play on clubs, the best line being to run the ten. If the ♦A is wrong, declarer will need clubs to be 3-3 with the king onside. Although the general rule is to set about establishing your side suit as quickly as possible, here the early diamond play provides declarer with vital information as to the way in which the hand must be approached.

This next deal is based on one from the 1970 Life Masters Pairs. In order to succeed, declarer needed to foresee the ending and manage his spot cards so that the squeeze could operate properly.

♠ 9
 ♥ 7 6 5 3 2
 ♦ 10 7 6 3
 ♣ Q 6 2

♠ A J ♠ KQ875432
 ♥ A J 10 8 ♥ —
 ♦ A Q 9 ♦ 5 2
 ♣ A 10 7 3 ♣ K 8 4

♠ 10 6
 ♥ K Q 9 4
 ♦ K J 8 4
 ♣ J 9 5

Dealer East
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
		4♠	pass
4NT*	pass	5♣*	pass
5NT*	pass	6♦*	pass
7♠	all pass		

When South leads the ♥K, declarer can count twelve tricks and there are several ways in which an extra one might be generated. Obviously there is the diamond finesse, and declarer might elect to discard a club on the opening lead, draw trumps, play three rounds of clubs ruffing in hand and then fall back on the diamond finesse if clubs fail to break.

However, the opening lead marks South with the ♥Q, and declarer thought there must be excellent chances of a squeeze. He took the ♥A discarding a diamond, drew trumps, cashed the ♦A, ruffed a heart and then started on the trumps, eventually reaching this position:

♠ —
 ♥ —
 ♦ 10 7
 ♣ Q 6 2

♠ —
 ♥ J
 ♦ Q
 ♣ A 10 7

♠ —
 ♥ Q 9
 ♦ K
 ♣ J 9

♠ 7 5
 ♥ —
 ♦ —
 ♣ K 8 4

When he played the penultimate spade South threw the ♥9, dummy a club and North a diamond. On the last trump South had to throw a club and dummy parted with the ♥J. If North had started with the ♦K, the double squeeze would have forced him to discard a club now, but as it was North could discard another diamond.

However, although the double squeeze had failed to materialize, South's initial club holding had caused a guard squeeze to operate. When declarer played a club, South's jack fell, but not having seen this ending coming, declarer had failed to unblock dummy's ten. The now singleton ♠10 in dummy prevented him from taking a useful finesse against North's ♣Q6.

Declarer overlooked a simple point on this deal from the 1968 Gold Cup Final:

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

Dealer North
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Cansino</i>		<i>Milford</i>	
	1♣	dbl	4♣
4♠	all pass		

North led the ♣5. (On this auction, he might have thought about leading the king, a play that here enables him to continue with a low club, which is more than declarer can cope with. The singleton heart also works.)

South took the ace and returned a club, declarer putting in the ♣10 and ruffing North's ♣K in dummy. He next played the ♠K, ducked as South discarded a heart, and the ♠J, which was also ducked. A heart to the jack was followed by the ♦9, covered by the king and ace. Now declarer played a spade to the queen. North took the ace and exited with a club to declarer's queen. A diamond saw North win with the queen and exit with a fourth club. Declarer was forced to ruff in hand and now in the three-card ending had to decide how to reach dummy in order to draw the last trump. He selected a heart and North ruffed to defeat the contract.

Declarer could have avoided this guess quite easily by playing a spade to the queen at Trick 3. If North (who is marked with the ♠A by the auction and his opening lead) ducks, then declarer can play a diamond and is in no difficulty; if North wins the spade, then declarer will have no problem drawing trumps later on.

Having formulated a plan it is important to make sure that you have foreseen any possible counter-measures. In the 2001 Cavendish, Italy's Giorgio Duboin landed this slam neatly thanks to a Dentist's Coup.

♠ K
 ♥ K 10 5 2
 ♦ A K Q 7 2
 ♣ A J 4

♠ QJ 10 6 2
 ♥ A J 4
 ♦ J 8
 ♣ K 8 7

♠ 9 8 7 4
 ♥ 3
 ♦ 10 6 5 4
 ♣ 10 9 3 2

♠ A 5 3
 ♥ Q 9 8 7 6
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ Q 6 5

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Johnson	Ferraro	Meckstroth	Duboin
			pass
1♠	dbl	4♠	dbl
pass	4NT ¹	pass	5♥
pass	6♥	all pass	

1. At least two places to play.

West led the ♠Q. Duboin thought about how to play trumps, and decided it was likely that West held ♥AJx(x). In the first place, West had opened and East-West held only 12 points between them. In addition, East had raised to 4♠ on a mere four-card suit so he was almost certain to have a singleton or void — most probably in hearts. Thus the plan was to finesse against West's ♥J.

Some declarers on this deal, reaching the same conclusion, played a heart from dummy to South's queen. West won with the ace and switched to a diamond. Now declarer could not enter his hand for the finesse since he would get overruffed in diamonds. Duboin foresaw this problem and cashed two top diamonds before touching trumps; only then did he play a heart to the queen. West could win with the ace but now was going to have to let South in, either by playing a club or a spade or by playing a third diamond (if he had one), which declarer would ruff. In practice, West played a club. Duboin won with the queen, finessed the ♥J and made the remainder of the tricks.

Finally, here's a good example of considering alternative plans, and thinking about what the opponents can do to damage your chances in each case.

♠ A J 10 2
 ♥ 10 9 5 4
 ♦ K 3 2
 ♣ A 2

♠ 6 5
 ♥ K Q 8 7
 ♦ A Q 5 4
 ♣ 6 5 4

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♦
1♠	dbl*	pass	2♥
3♣	4♥	dbl	all pass

You are playing against strong opponents. How do you plan the play on the lead of the ♠K to dummy's ace?

If trumps are 5-0 it is hopeless, so you give East ♥AJxx and perhaps a club honor. The problem is that West is savvy enough to duck when you lead a spade toward dummy (he did in fact), so you can't count on taking three spade tricks — which is the normal plan you would make with this layout. Try instead the 'ruff losers in dummy' plan. Assuming West is 6=1=1=5 for his bidding, your best move is to lead a low club from dummy.

Pietro Bernasconi, the brilliant creator of the World Par Contest problems, was in love with this theme: *forcing the opponents to commit to how they want to defend*. If you play ace and another club, West can win, cash the ♠Q on which East pitches his last club, then give his partner an overruff in clubs. However, if you lead the low club from dummy instead, it won't help West to cash the ♠Q since East will still have a club left.

In any event, you duck a club. West wins and returns the ♦J to the king. You cash the ♣A and play a heart to the king. Next you ruff the club loser, play off the ♦A and ♦Q, and ruff the diamond loser. Now lead the ♥10 (running it if East ducks). You then exit with a spade and take a trump trick at the end. You take 1+3+3+1 plus 2 dummy ruffs = 10 tricks.

This is the full deal:

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

6. CHECK OUT A MINOR OPTION BEFORE TAKING THE MAIN LINE

Taking advantage of a minor option, something that gives you a (possibly slight) extra chance, can range from something fairly trivial, such as leading towards ♥KQJ874 from ♥53 to cater to stiff ace onside, to a complex idea such as catering to squeeze chances in a crossruff hand.

Many players went wrong on this deal from the 2000 Olympiad, missing an opportunity:

♠ A
 ♥ KJ92
 ♦ 8
 ♣ KQJ10732
 ♠ KQJ53
 ♥ AQ10
 ♦ J972
 ♣ A
 ♠ 92
 ♥ 7653
 ♦ AKQ54
 ♣ 64
 ♠ 108764
 ♥ 84
 ♦ 1063
 ♣ 985

Dealer North
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Rauscheid</i>	<i>Modlin</i>	<i>Nehmert</i>	<i>Mansell</i>
	1♣	1♦	pass
1♠	3♣	pass	pass
dbl	pass	3♥	pass
5♦	all pass		

Declarer won the club lead with dummy's ace and played two rounds of trumps, North discarding a club. Now she ruffed a club and only then played the ♠K, envisaging the possibility that the ace might be singleton. That ended play North, who had to lead into the heart tenace or concede a ruff and discard. If declarer makes the mistake of drawing a third round of trumps, the contract will fail unless she subsequently takes an exceptional view in the spade suit.

On this deal from the 2003 Vanderbilt final, the difficult decision came at the first trick:

♠ Q6
 ♥ 9654
 ♦ J
 ♣ K109752
 ♠ AKJ87
 ♥ J83
 ♦ 1064
 ♣ Q8
 ♠ —
 ♥ AKQ
 ♦ AK9873
 ♣ A643
 ♠ 1095432
 ♥ 1072
 ♦ Q52
 ♣ J

Dealer East
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Kamil</i>	<i>Nickell</i>	<i>Fleisher</i>	<i>Freeman</i>
		1♦	pass
1♠	pass	3♣	pass
3♦	pass	3♥	pass
3♠	pass	4♣	pass
5♦	pass	6♦	all pass

South led a low spade and declarer was already at the crossroads. He elected to play the ♠J, hoping to get rid of all his losing clubs, but when North produced the queen the 3-1 trump break doomed the contract.

In fact, if declarer had played dummy's spades from the top, North's queen would have fallen. Then declarer would have faced another decision. He might well decide to play the ♠J, hoping North will have to ruff in from a two- or three-card holding in trumps. That line fails, but declarer can succeed by drawing one round of trumps and then playing a trump towards dummy's ♦106.

However, the real gain with cashing the ♠AK is that even if the ♠Q does not fall, declarer is not completely finished. He can ruff a third spade to hand and then play his top trumps. If they are not 2-2 he cashes his heart tricks and then exits with a trump, hoping to force a defender to lead away from ♣K.

In the next example, you can explore the minor option before committing to the main line:

♠ 2
 ♥ A K Q 10 9 8
 ♦ 7 5 4 3
 ♣ 8 2

 ♠ A Q J 3
 ♥ 5 4 3
 ♦ A 10 8
 ♣ K 4 3

Dealer South			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	4♦*	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads a trump and you draw three rounds, East pitching the ♣Q and a discouraging spade. You play a spade to the ace, then the ♠Q, ruffing when West plays the ♠K. Now what?

You have 2+6+1=9 tricks. You can try a club to the king, but if the ace is offside you lose four tricks if the defense continues clubs. Better is to work on diamonds, mainly hoping for a 3-3 break. If East puts up a diamond honor, you will win and cash your spade, taking a club pitch. So you lead a diamond and East plays the ♦9. Now what?

You have a 'free' play of the ♦10, since West can't attack clubs profitably. If he returns a spade, you discard a club then play the ♦A, dropping East's ♦Q as the cards lie, and lead a diamond, setting up the ♦7 in dummy. An asset survey, noting you are missing KQJ9xx in diamonds, helps you to see this possibility.

East could make things interesting by playing the ♦Q, danger hand high, rather than the ♦9 on the first lead from dummy. Then, after winning the ♦A you have to decide whether to play for a second diamond trick or the ♣A onside. The trump lead suggests the ♣A might be offside so your best shot is to cash your spade for a club pitch, then continue with the ♦10, as the Martellian squash of queen-nine doubleton (or West's doubleton nine) is your only chance for an extra diamond trick besides a 3-3 break.

The full deal:

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

7. LOOK FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF A DUMMY REVERSAL

For some reason, it is quite easy to miss the possibility of a dummy reversal. Perhaps it is because the idea of taking ruffs in the long trump hand is usually something to be avoided. Dummy reversals can be quite tricky, and it is easy to get the timing wrong if you don't see the possibility right from the start of play. It may sometimes be essential to avoid playing even one round of trumps, especially if one hand is short of entries as on this deal from the 1970 European Junior Championships:

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

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Generali</i>	<i>Morris</i>	<i>Franco</i>	<i>Smith</i>
			1♣
1♦	2♦*	pass	2♠
pass	3♣	pass	4♣
pass	4♦*	pass	5♣
pass	6♣	all pass	

West offered declarer a lifeline by leading the ♦Q rather than a heart, but he didn't accept it. After winning with dummy's ace, discarding a heart, he cashed the ♣K. Now the 4-0 trump split combined with the 5-2 break in spades meant the contract was doomed. All declarer has to do is ruff a diamond in hand at Trick 2. He then crosses to dummy with a trump and ruffs another diamond. Now, using the ♠A as an entry to dummy, he can draw trumps and throw two of dummy's losers on spades.

Larry Cohen observed that it is also possible to make the same sort of play in a 5-3 fit, as on this deal, based on one from the 2009 U.S. Team Trials:

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

Dealer South			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1♥
pass	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	2♦*	pass	3♦
pass	3♥	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	4NT*
pass	5♥*	pass	6♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠A and continues with the four, which you ruff. The obvious chance for a twelfth trick appears to lie in the club suit. However, before you consider such possibilities as one defender holding only two clubs and two trumps (when you can ruff a club in dummy), you should cash the ♥K at Trick 3 and then cross to dummy with a trump.

If someone shows out you will have to draw trumps and rely on the clubs, but when both opponents follow you can ruff a spade, cross to dummy in a minor suit, ruff the last spade then go back to dummy to draw the last trump. You score six trump tricks and three more in each minor.

It's worth pointing out a general principle: 4-3-3-3 dummies with three-card support are strong candidates for a dummy reversal (assuming the other conditions can be met, such as entries and good enough three-card support).

Perhaps the most famous example of declarer missing a dummy reversal is this deal from the 1976 Olympiad:

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

Arturo Franco (partnering Benito Garozzo) was in 6♦ after an unopposed auction. When West led the ♣J declarer ducked, won the next club and drew trumps. He cashed dummy's top hearts, ruffed a heart and then played his remaining trump, hoping that spades would be 3-3 or that there would be a major-suit squeeze. When neither materialized, he was one down.

With a 4-3-3-3 fitting dummy, perhaps declarer should have been on the lookout for a dummy reversal, and indeed there is one. After winning the second club, he can ruff a club, cash the ♦A and then take dummy's top hearts. After ruffing a heart, declarer goes back to dummy with a trump. The last heart is ruffed with the ♦Q and declarer can get back to dummy with the ♠A to draw the last trump.

Here is a deal where declarer might manufacture *seven* trump tricks from a 5-3 fit via a dummy reversal:

♠ A K Q

♥ 3

♦ A 5 4 3

♣ A K J 5 2

♠ J 9 7 4

♥ J 8

♦ Q J 10 2

♣ 10 8 7

♠ 2

♥ Q 10 6 5 2

♦ K 9 7 6

♣ Q 4 3

♠ 10 8 6 5 3

♥ A K 9 7 4

♦ 8

♣ 9 6

Dealer South

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♣	1♥	pass
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	6♣	all pass	

When West leads the ♥J, declarer wins in hand and could be forgiven for hoping for favorable positions in both black suits. However, there is a way to make twelve tricks by reversing the dummy. Declarer plays a diamond to the ace and ruffs a diamond, then crosses to dummy with a trump and ruffs another diamond. A club to the ace is followed by another diamond ruff. Now declarer cashes the top heart and continues with a club to dummy and a club ruff. He has ten tricks stacked in front of him and dummy still holds the ♠AK.

8. USE THE DEFOGGING QUESTIONS WHEN YOUR ANALYSIS GETS BOGGED DOWN

If your search for a 100% line, or something approaching it, isn't going well, then it's time go back to basics: Read, Map, Go over the basic options, and Analyze. At this stage, the defogging questions I listed in Chapter 4 are very important, and you should memorize them. When you don't seem to be able to come up with an answer, run through them in turn, and get your analysis back on track. I'm not going to give examples of them all again — but I will remind you always to think about why declarer or a defender has not followed a particular line of play. That question would have helped South on this deal from the 2009 Venice Cup final:

♠ J 8 7 2

♥ 9 8 6 3

♦ 10 8 5

♣ A 3

♠ K 5 4

♥ 10 7 4

♦ A

♣ Q108542

♠ A Q 10 6

♥ Q 2

♦ K Q 6 4 3

♣ J 7

♠ 9 3

♥ A K J 5

♦ J 9 7 2

♣ K 9 6

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Sun	Levitina	Wang	Sanborn
	pass	1NT ¹	pass
3NT	all pass		

1. 14-16.

South led the ♥K, looking for an attitude signal, and collected the four, six and two. Unable to read the position, she switched to the ♦7, which went to the ace, five and four. Declarer played a spade to the queen, crossed to the ♠K, then played a spade to the ten and cashed the ♠A. South discarded the ♣9 on the third spade but then fatally parted with a diamond on the fourth round, enabling declarer to cash four more tricks in the suit.

At the point where she had to make her second discard, South knew that North held four spades, but was clearly unsure as to her remaining distribution. However, there was another clue available — declarer's failure to play on clubs, which she would very likely have done holding ♣Ax. Of course, with

♠ A Q 10 x ♥ Q x ♦ Q 10 8 6 4 ♣ A x

it would be pretty spiffy for declarer to take the same line of play and get South to make two discards from ♣Kxx!

Another important defogging question is, ‘Do I have to do this now?’ This deal comes from the 2008 World Seniors International Cup.

♠ K 10

♥ 10 9 8 2

♦ J 3 2

♣ Q 9 6 3

♠ Q 8 5 3 2

♥ J 7

♦ 9 7 4

♣ A 10 2

♠ J 9

♥ A K Q 6 3

♦ K 10 5

♣ K J 8

♠ A 7 6 4

♥ 5 4

♦ A Q 8 6

♣ 7 5 4

Dealer East

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Granovetter</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Ekeblad</i>	<i>Simpson</i>
		1♣ ¹	pass
1♦*	pass	1NT	pass
2♥*	pass	2♠	pass
3NT	all pass		

1. Strong.

South avoided a diamond lead, which would have left declarer needing to find the ♣Q to get his total up to nine. Instead, he chose the ♣5, which meant declarer needed one trick from the pointed suits.

Declarer won in hand and played the ♠J to North’s king. If South’s diamond holding were ♦AQ10x, then North would need to switch to the ♦J now, but had he done so here declarer would have been likely to get home. South would surely return the suit after taking the king with the ace, playing North for the ♦10. The odds were that South didn’t have any specific holding that would make an immediate diamond shift essential, so North adopted a passive defense, simply switching to the ♥9. Declarer won that in hand and decided to run the ♠9. Having taken another trick, North was happy to switch to the ♦J now and South cashed out for one down.

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9. MAKE SURE YOU ARE AWARE WHEN THE PLAY FOLLOWS A TIGHTROPE

There will be some deals where you can narrow your analysis down to an exact sequence of forced plays. Then, like a chess player, you can work out the correct order in which everything has to happen. On this deal from the 2008 World Bridge Games, declarer spotted the dummy reversal but failed to notice the tightrope.

♠ A 8 5

♥ J

♦ J 9 6 4

♣ A 7 5 4 2

♠ Q J 10 4

♥ Q 10 5 3

♦ 10

♣ K Q 9 3

♠ 9 2

♥ A 9 7 6 2

♦ 8 7 5

♣ J 8 6

♠ K 7 6 3

♥ K 8 4

♦ A K Q 3 2

♣ 10

Dealer North

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Martens	Hamman	Jassem	Compton
	pass	pass	1♦
dbl	2NT*	pass	3♠
pass	4♣*	pass	4NT*
pass	5♥*	dbl	6♦
all pass			

West led a heart in response to his partner’s lead-directing double, and East took the ace and returned a trump. Declarer realized his best chance was to score eight trump tricks in addition to two spades, one heart and a club, but he failed to consider the trump position carefully enough. He played low from hand at Trick 2, the ♦10 forced dummy’s jack and declarer could not avoid promoting a trump trick for East.

The winning line is to win the trump switch in hand. When the ten comes up, declarer can play to ruff two clubs in hand, whilst ditching a spade from dummy on the ♥K, cashing the top spades and ruffing a heart in dummy. Then the last four tricks can be scored on a high crossruff. Even if the ♦10 doesn’t appear, saving the ♦J9 in dummy is right as it protects you when West has 10x of trumps.

10. KEEP UP WITH THE FACTS AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE AND RESTOCK REGULARLY

It's been said that no battle plan ever survives first contact with the enemy. Similarly, as new information comes to your attention, you have to re-evaluate your picture of the deal. This deal, from the final of the 1986 World Pairs Championship, shows how declarer must continually reassess the situation:

<p>♠ A J 8 5 ♥ A 10 3 ♦ J 8 7 6 ♣ 10 3</p>		<p>♠ Q ♥ Q J 9 7 6 ♦ Q 10 4 ♣ A 8 6 2</p>	
<p>♠ 9 7 4 3 ♥ K 8 5 4 ♦ K 9 2 ♣ K J</p>	<div></div>		
<p>♠ K 10 6 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A 5 3 ♣ Q 9 7 5 4</p>			

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Meckstroth	Weinstein	Rodwell	Stewart
		1♥	dbl
2NT*	3♠	4♥	pass
pass	dbl	all pass	

South led the ♠2 to North's ace and they continued the suit. I ruffed and played the ♥J, which held. The carding made it clear spades were 4-4 so the obvious plan was to hope to score an extra trick in each minor. For that to have any chance I needed South to hold the ♣Q, so I played a club to the jack. When that held, I cashed the ♣K and played a trump: North took the ace, South discarding a club. That made it clear that South must have started with five clubs, as he would hardly risk handing me the contract on a plate by allowing me to score four club tricks. North played another spade now, so I ruffed and drew the last trump, South discarding the ♠K. I knew South held the ♦A, but where was the jack?

I cashed the ♣A, on which North discarded a diamond. It was tempting to place South with the ♦J for his takeout double, but North was known to have started with four diamonds, making him a favorite to hold the jack. In fact, since South is marked with the ♦A as one of his three cards in the suit, the odds are 4:2 that North has the ♦J. There is also the practical point that if I play a diamond to the nine and it loses to the jack, North can force out my last trump with a spade and South will score the last two tricks with a diamond and a club leaving me two down. So I played a diamond to the king and finessed on the way back to land the doubled game.

When the play does not develop as you anticipated, it is vital to stop and recalculate. Even the very best can go wrong, as illustrated by this deal from the final of the 2007 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Groetheim	Zia	Tundal	Rosenberg
			1♠
pass	2♥	pass	2NT
pass	3♣	pass	4♣
all pass			

West led the ♥9. Declarer, thinking that this might well be a singleton, put up dummy's ace and ran the ♠J. West won with the queen and continued with the ♥3. Declarer won in dummy, discarding a diamond, and played a spade to the ace. If both players had followed he could have crossed to dummy with a club and taken a discard on the master heart, but when West discarded there was no way back. Declarer crossed to dummy and played the ♥J but East could ruff that with the ♠6.

Once West played a second heart, declarer should have realized that he had clearly been hoping to give his partner a ruff. On that basis declarer could put in the ♥6 on this trick (East had followed with the ♥7 on the first round) and then pick up the spades, emerging with twelve tricks.

11. MAKE SURE YOU REGISTER INFORMATION AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE

Once a player fails to register a piece of information, it is almost inevitable that he will be unable to take it into account later. One common form this takes is paying insufficient attention to the small spot cards partner plays. This can frequently lead to some form of embarrassment, as in this example that came up at the Andrew Robson Bridge Club in London:

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

Dealer North
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
	2♣	pass	2♥
pass	3♦	pass	6NT
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

When West led the ♣4, declarer had gained a temporary reprieve. He won with dummy's ace and cashed eight rounds of diamonds. This was the position when the last of those hit the table:

♠ Q 10 8
 ♥ —
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 5
 ♠ 6
 ♥ 7
 ♦ —
 ♣ J 10 6
 ♠ K
 ♥ K
 ♦ —
 ♣ K Q 8
 ♠ A 9
 ♥ A Q 9
 ♦ —
 ♣ —

East was under no pressure yet. South discarded the ♠K, and now West (who would have hung on to another club if he had seen what was coming) had to discard from a major. He parted with a heart and now declarer cashed his top clubs and cunningly threw West in with a club. East was down to his two aces and had to work out which one to keep.

As you will have guessed by now, East had not been paying much attention to his partner's cards and at this point in the play desperately tried to remember how many cards West had thrown in each major.

Eventually he discarded the ♠A and West's enforced spade exit gave declarer his twelfth trick.

12. BE ALERT TO THE NEED FOR A CHANGE OF TACK

It's important to realize when a complete change of direction (to suit establishment from a crossruff, for example) is required on the basis of an unexpected development. Of course, it is possible in theory to anticipate anything, but if something totally unexpected happens, then at least you need to be able to spot a chance for recovery if one exists.

On this deal, declarer is able to recover from a nasty trump break.

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

Dealer North			
EW Vul.			
West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	3♥
pass	4♣*	pass	4♦*
pass	4♣*	pass	7♥
all pass			

When West leads the ♣10, declarer can see that if both major suits break reasonably thirteen tricks will be easy. He will simply draw trumps, cash the spades for a club discard and eventually ruff a club.

However, it costs nothing to ruff a diamond in hand at Trick 2. When declarer next cashes the ♥A and sees East discard, he continues with the ♥Q and then plays a heart to dummy's ten. Now he ruffs a second diamond and returns to the ♠K in dummy. He expects to be able to run the spades, but in fact East is squeezed when the last heart is played. To take full advantage declarer should risk cashing the other top club before leading the last trump so he knows what to pitch on it.

Declarer was forced to change tack on this deal from the 2009 U.S. Team Trials:

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

Dealer West
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Granovetter</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Rubin</i>
pass	pass	1♥	dbl
2♦ ¹	3♣	pass	3♥*
pass	4♣	pass	4NT*
pass	5♣*	pass	5♦*
pass	5♥*	pass	5NT*
pass	6♦	all pass	

1. Decent heart raise.

I led the ♥5; Jeff won and switched to the ♠6. Declarer won this and drew two rounds of trumps. The 4-1 break meant it was no longer feasible to try to set up the clubs, so declarer ruffed a spade, unblocked the ♦J and came to hand with a club. This was now the position:

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

When declarer played the ♦Q I could not part with a black card, so I discarded the ♥9. Now he cashed the ♥K, and when the queen fell he could continue with the jack, squeezing me once more. Not missing many high cards, he guessed the heart position based on my bidding. (He would have needed to finesse in hearts if Jeff had started with the ♥AQ.) Granovetter made a remarkable decision to introduce diamonds on a four-card suit at the six-level, but he guessed his partner's hand type well. Our bidding made it very tough to get to 6♦ (our teammates got there in an uncontested auction but a heart wasn't led and declarer failed to find the winning line).

On this deal from the final of the 2001 Bermuda Bowl, declarer has to change tacks from suit establishment to a crossruff:

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

Dealer East
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♠
pass	2♥	pass	3♦
pass	3♠	pass	4♣*
pass	4♦*	pass	4NT*
pass	5♥*	pass	6♣
all pass			

West leads the ♣4 and East takes the ace and returns the suit, declarer ruffing. Planning to set up the diamonds, declarer crosses to the ♦K and comes to hand with a spade, revealing the 4-0 break. Now he cashes the ♦A and ruffs a diamond. When the queen does not appear, he needs to change his plan. A club ruff is followed by a heart finesse, then he cashes the ♥A to discard a losing diamond and finishes with a crossruff.

The defenders may also have to adjust their thinking in mid-play, as on this deal from the final of the 1982 World Pairs Championship:

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

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Martel</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Stansby</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
		pass	1♦ ¹
1♥	dbl*	2♥	2♠
3♦	4♣	dbl	all pass

1. Precision, 2+ diamonds, 11-15.

West led the ♣5. East took the king and continued with the ace, West discarding the ♥10. It looks obvious to play another club since West can ruff in. East, however, realized that if he gave his partner a ruff it would be from a doubleton trump, and if that holding was ♠Kx, declarer would surely drop the king. He therefore switched to a heart, setting up a fourth trick to go with West's ♠K.

13. TRUST THE OPPONENTS' CARDING

There is a general misconception that expert opponents are constantly falsecarding. On the contrary, the defenders' carding is often quite reliable, since they don't know your depth of understanding of what is going on. This is the idea of *transfer analysis* — where a player tries to view the hand from the opponent's perspective.

This deal from the 2010 Camrose Trophy saw declarer make an instructive (and calamitous) error by refusing to believe what he saw:

♠ 9 3

♥ J 8

♦ K Q 10 9 2

♣ 8 6 3 2

♠ A K Q 6

♥ Q 10 7 4

♦ A 8 6 4

♣ A

♠ J 10 8 2

♥ 5 3

♦ 7 5

♣ K J 10 9 4

♠ 7 5 4

♥ A K 9 6 2

♦ J 3

♣ Q 7 5

Dealer North

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Anderson	Short	Greenwood	Walker
	pass	1♥	pass
2NT*	pass	3NT*	pass
4♣*	pass	4♥	pass
4NT*	pass	5♥*	pass
6♥	all pass		

South led the ♠J and declarer won in dummy as North played the ♠3, upside-down count. Declarer cashed the ♣A, North playing the two and South the jack. Now declarer played a heart to the ace and ruffed a club. A low diamond saw North win with the queen as South followed with the five. When North continued with the ♦K, South produced the seven as declarer won with dummy's ace. Now declarer played a diamond, and clearly believing that South was falsecarding, incautiously ruffed with the ♥2!

Aside from that disastrous decision, declarer did not appear to take into account the possibility that trumps might break 2-2, or that a 3-3 spade break or a black-suit squeeze was an alternative approach. I am certainly not suggesting that the opponents would not sometimes falsecard here, but don't assume that they always would.

14. NOTICE AND TAKE CORRECT INFERENCES FROM SURPRISING ACTIONS BY AN OPPONENT

When an opponent does something you don't expect, take the opportunity to rethink the situation. This idea was summed up nicely by Canadian expert Michael Schoenborn, who advised in a magazine article, 'Never play on the basis that your expert opponent has mispulled'. For example, if a defender switches to a trump when dummy has a menacing trick source, this may indicate that he thinks that it can be neutralized, the obvious conclusion being that the suit breaks badly.

When you have anticipated a particular play by a defender and he does something else, there may be a good reason, as on this deal from the 2003 Grand National Teams playoff:

♠ 5 3 2

♥ A 10 8 6

♦ K 9 8 4

♣ J 5

♠ —

♥ J 9 7 5 2

♦ Q 5

♣ AK8764

♠ Q J 6

♥ K Q 4 3

♦ J 10 2

♣ Q 10 3

♠ A K 10 9 8 7 4

♥ —

♦ A 7 6 3

♣ 9 2

Dealer East

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Stansby</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Martel</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>
		pass	1♠
2♣*	3♣	4♥	4♠
all pass			

West, who thought about bidding over 4♠, cashed his top clubs (East discouraging) and switched to a heart. Declarer won in dummy and played a spade to the ten.

Why did Jeff make that decision? He knew West had some shape, and he was expecting him to switch to a singleton diamond if he had one. When he played a heart instead, declarer drew the inference that West was void in trumps.

15. LOOK FOR WAYS TO CREATE A FALSE IMPRESSION IN THE MIND OF AN OPPONENT

Declarer has a huge advantage over the defenders in that he has no partner to mislead, and this affords him many opportunities to draw a false picture and induce an error. The additional fact that declarer's cards are hidden from the defenders allows him to execute various deceptions — like this one from the Seniors Cup in the 2008 World Bridge Games:

♠ 10 6 5

♥ K 8 7 6

♦ K 10 3 2

♣ 5 2

♠ A 9 8

♥ 9 4 3

♦ Q 4

♣ Q J 9 8 7

♠ Q J 4

♥ Q J 2

♦ J 7 6 5

♣ 6 4 3

♠ K 7 3 2

♥ A 10 5

♦ A 9 8

♣ A K 10

Dealer North

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Kanetkar</i>	<i>Wattar</i>	<i>Brown</i>	<i>Kamel</i>
	pass	pass	1♣
pass	1♥	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West led the ♣Q. Declarer won with the ace, played a diamond to the king and a second diamond back to his nine and West's queen. Wanting to get a club lead through declarer, West looked for an entry to his partner's hand and switched to the ♠9. There was no particular reason for East to put up an honor, and when he played low, so did declarer! West was totally fooled and when he continued with ace and another spade, declarer was up to eight tricks. Now he could increase his total to nine by ducking a heart.

When a contract appears to be hopeless declarer can throw caution to the wind, as on this deal from a tournament in Mallorca in 1967:

♠ 9

♥ 9 4 3 2

♦ 7 5

♣ Q 10 9 8 7 6

♠ 7 4

♥ 10 8 7 5

♦ J 9 8 6 4 2

♣ A

♠ K Q 10 5

♥ A J 6

♦ K Q

♣ 5 4 3 2

♠ A J 8 6 3 2

♥ K Q

♦ A 10 3

♣ K J

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Avarelli</i>	<i>Lawrence</i>	<i>Belladonna</i>	<i>Baird</i>
pass	pass	dbl	1♠
3♦	pass	3NT	all pass

South led the ♠6 and declarer won this with the king, rather than the ten. He played the ♦K next, and when that held he continued with the queen, which was also ducked. Now he tried the ♥J and South took the queen. With partner ‘marked’ with the ♠10, South exited with a low spade — when dummy’s ♠7 held, declarer could knock out the ♦A and ended up with an overtrick.

A defender can frequently set declarer a problem by pretending to have a missing high card. Take a look at this deal from the 2003 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ A Q 6 4

♥ 8 7 3 2

♦ 9 6

♣ A Q 2

♠ 10 8

♥ A Q 10 5

♦ 8 5 4

♣ K J 8 3

♠ K J

♥ J 9 4

♦ AKQ 10 7 3

♣ 7 6

♠ 9 7 5 3 2

♥ K 6

♦ J 2

♣ 10 9 5 4

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Karaivanov</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Trendafilov</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>
pass	1♥	1NT	pass
3NT	all pass		pass

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South led the ♠2; North took the ace and returned the ♠4. Declarer won with the king and reeled off six rounds of diamonds. North discarded an encouraging ♣2 and then an encouraging ♥3. That persuaded declarer that North had both the ♣A and the ♥K, so after cashing the diamonds he tried for an endplay, playing a heart to the ace and another heart. North, by now out of hearts, discarded the ♠Q and South claimed the rest.

On the following deal, reported by Terence Reese, declarer was seeking to postpone a choice between two possible lines of play, but fell into a brilliantly prepared trap:

♠ A K 9 4

♥ J 7

♦ A 9 6

♣ K J 9 6

♠ Q 5 3 2

♥ Q 9 8 3

♦ 5 4

♣ 5 3 2

♠ 8 7

♥ K 10 5 4 2

♦ Q 3 2

♣ Q 10 7

♠ J 10 6

♥ A 6

♦ K J 10 8 7

♣ A 8 4

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♠	pass	1♦
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West led the ♥3 and declarer tried dummy's jack. When East covered with the king, declarer could see that he needed to locate the ♦Q or find the ♠Q onside.

One plan would be to cash the ♦AK, planning to fall back on the spade finesse if the queen does not appear. Another idea would be to try the ♠J at Trick 2. If West does not cover then declarer can win in dummy, cash the other top spade to cater for a doubleton queen, and then tackle diamonds by cashing the ace and running the nine. On pure percentages, it is correct to cash the top diamonds and then play on spades if the ♦Q has not appeared.

In fact, as the cards lie, either line works, but declarer was reluctant to make a decision yet, and opted to see whether anything good was happening in clubs first. Having won the first trick with the ♥A, he played a club to the king, then a club back to the ace. He would now have been in the happy position of having to choose between two winning lines, except that on the second round of clubs East dropped the queen! Now declarer thought he could see his way home without risk, simply playing a club to the nine. To his considerable discomfort, East produced the ♣10 and the defenders cashed their heart tricks for one down.

16. PREPARE YOUR FALSECARDS

Falsecards can be used equally well by either side, but whereas declarer can happily fool dummy to his heart's content, a defender has to consider the possible effect on partner. In any case, if you are going to falsecard it is essential to do it smoothly. Honors can be very useful falsecards when you are trying to lead your opponent(s) astray. Look at this next deal:

		♠ 6																										
		♥ A K 10 4																										
		♦ A 9 4 2																										
		♣ 10 9 7 5																										
♠ A 9 5 2	<div></div>	♠ Q J 10	<div>Dealer South Both Vul.</div>																									
♥ J 9 8 5 3		♥ 7 6 2																										
♦ 5		♦ Q J 10 8 7 3																										
♣ 8 4 3		♣ J																										
		♠ K 8 7 4 3	<table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1♠</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>1NT*</td><td>pass</td><td>2♣</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>3♣</td><td>pass</td><td>4♦*</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>4♥*</td><td>pass</td><td>6♣</td></tr><tr><td>all pass</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		West	North	East	South				1♠	pass	1NT*	pass	2♣	pass	3♣	pass	4♦*	pass	4♥*	pass	6♣	all pass			
West	North	East	South																									
			1♠																									
pass	1NT*	pass	2♣																									
pass	3♣	pass	4♦*																									
pass	4♥*	pass	6♣																									
all pass																												
		♥ Q																										
		♦ K 6																										
		♣ A K Q 6 2																										

When West leads the ♦5, the natural line for declarer is to win in dummy and play a spade. He needs to cover East's card, or else a diamond ruff will be next, so West wins with the ace and (say) returns a trump. Declarer wins in hand, ruffs a spade, comes to hand with a trump, cashes the ♥Q and ruffs a second spade. Now he cashes dummy's top hearts to dispose of his remaining spades.

To give declarer a problem, West must be ready to play the jack on the third round of hearts, leaving declarer to guess how to get back to hand to draw trumps. Declarer can avoid this potential trap by returning to hand with the ♥Q after the first spade ruff, but since 2-2 trumps would enable him to claim a second trump is not an unreasonable play.

I was a victim of this type of situation in the final of the 2004 U.S. Team Trials:

		♠ K 9 6																		
		♥ A 10 7 6 3																		
		♦ K J 5 2																		
		♣ A																		
♠ J 8 7	<div></div>	♠ 3	<div>Dealer West Both Vul.</div>																	
♥ K Q 8 4		♥ J 2																		
♦ A 6		♦ Q 10 8 3																		
♣ 10 9 3 2		♣ K Q 8 7 6 5																		
		♠ A Q 10 5 4 2	<table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td>Rosenberg</td><td>Meckstroth</td><td>Zia</td><td>Rodwell</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>1♥</td><td>pass</td><td>2♠</td></tr><tr><td>pass</td><td>4♣</td><td>all pass</td><td></td></tr></table>		West	North	East	South	Rosenberg	Meckstroth	Zia	Rodwell	pass	1♥	pass	2♠	pass	4♣	all pass	
West	North	East	South																	
Rosenberg	Meckstroth	Zia	Rodwell																	
pass	1♥	pass	2♠																	
pass	4♣	all pass																		
		♥ 9 5																		
		♦ 9 7 4																		
		♣ J 4																		

West led the ♣10. I won in dummy, came to hand with a trump, ruffed my remaining club and cashed the ♠K. Now I played off the ♥A and exited with another heart, West winning with the king and concealing the ♥Q. He cashed the ♦A and played a diamond to dummy's king, on which East played the ten. This was now the position:

	♠ —	
	♥ 10 7 6	
	♦ J 5	
	♣ —	
♠ J		♠ —
♥ Q 8		♥ —
♦ —		♦ Q 8
♣ 9 3		♣ K Q 7
	♠ Q 10 5 4	
	♥ —	
	♦ 9	
	♣ —	

At this point I had to decide how to return to hand to draw the outstanding trump. When I played a diamond, East won and played his last diamond, promoting West's ♠J into the setting trick. That was nice defense. If West had started with

♠J x x ♥K x ♦A Q x x ♣10 9 x x

his adopted line of defense is as likely as any to succeed, so I don't think I could tell.

17. LEAD TOWARD HIGH CARDS TO PREVENT THEM BEING RUFFED OUT

On certain deals it may be necessary to take precautions in order to prevent your winners being ruffed. This is a typical scenario:

♠ K 9 6 3
♠ A 8 4

Say West leads the ♠Q. If anyone has a singleton it is likely to be East, so if you are not in a position to draw trumps you should win this trick with dummy's king.

In that situation the possibility of a singleton was immediately apparent, but that will not always be the case, as on this deal recorded by Terence Reese:

	♠ A 6	
	♥ A K Q 5	
	♦ K Q 8 4	
	♣ K 9 3	
♠ J 10 9 4	<div></div>	♠ Q 7 3
♥ J 10 9 7		♥ 2
♦ 2		♦ J 10 9 6 5
♣ 6 5 4 2		♣ Q J 10 8
	♠ K 8 5 2	
	♥ 8 6 4 3	
	♦ A 7 3	
	♣ A 7	

North dealt and opened 2NT, and the auction proceeded uninterrupted to a contract of 6♥ by South. West led the ♠J; declarer won with dummy's ace and took two rounds of trumps. When East discarded the ♣8 on the second round declarer turned his attention to the minor suits, cashing dummy's ♦K and playing a diamond to the ace. However, when West ruffed and returned a trump declarer was left with one loser too many.

Declarer was unlucky to find West with a singleton diamond, but a little care would have made a big difference. Once the trump situation comes to light declarer should come to hand with the ♦A and lead a second round toward dummy. It does not help West to ruff, so he discards. Now declarer can cash the ♠K, play three rounds of clubs ruffing in hand, and then play his last diamond. West ruffs, but declarer has the rest.

18. CASH YOUR TRICKS BEFORE THE OPPONENT(S) CAN DISCARD IN A SUIT AND SUBSEQUENTLY RUFF YOUR WINNERS

It is usually clear from the auction when the defenders are going to have to cash their winners quickly. In these situations, selecting an opening lead that will hold the trick and let you check out the dummy can pay a huge dividend, as on this deal from the 1999 Cap Gemini:

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

Dealer South
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Helgemo	Weigkricht	Helness	Fischer
pass	4♣	dbl	3♠ all pass

As North's trumps are known to be relatively modest, it is probable that raise is based on the possession of a powerful side suit. That influenced Helgemo to lead a club, which meant the defenders took all the tricks they were entitled to. At all the other tables, the West players, who included such luminaries as Alfredo Versace, Peter Fredin, Justin Hackett and Zia, led the ♥J, allowing declarer to discard a club on a heart. However, if you think about it, the best lead must be the ♠A. This allows you to see dummy, after which it is impossible to go wrong.

19. ROUTINELY UNBLOCK SPOTCARDS

It is surprising how often a player comes to grief by handling the spot cards in a suit badly. It should become routine to retain low cards that may come in handy later in unforeseen ways. Suppose you are going to lead a heart against a notrump contract and the suit is distributed like this:

♥ K Q 6 5 4 3 ♥ 10 7
 ♥ A J ♥ 9 8 2

It would be quite easy to block this suit, partner carelessly playing the two when you lead an honor.

Here's a more subtle example. Let's say you get to 3♥ on these cards:

♠ Q
 ♥ 7 5 3 2
 ♦ 9 8 5 4
 ♣ A K 5 4

 ♠ A J 9 4 2
 ♥ K 9 8 6
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ 10 3

Dealer South			
NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	1NT	pass	2♥
pass	3♥	all pass	

West leads the ♣2 (third and fifth) and you win with dummy's ace. You can't really hope to ruff all your spades in dummy so you run the ♠Q, which holds the trick. Next you try a diamond to the king, losing to the ace. West returns the ♣Q to dummy's king and East plays the ♣J, so you conclude that West started with five clubs. You continue with a third club, East pitching a diamond while you ruff in hand.

You now play the ♠A, pitching a diamond from dummy as West plays the ♠10. On the next spade, West ruffs in with the ♥10 and you dump another diamond. West underleads his ♦Q to East's jack, and he leads a fourth spade, which West ruffs with the ♥Q. West now leads the ♦Q in this ending:

♠ —
 ♥ 7 5 3 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ —

 ♠ J
 ♥ K 9 8
 ♦ —
 ♣ —

What do you know about the hand? West was 2=♥=4=5, so he had the ♥Q10 doubleton. You would like to pick up East's ♥AJ4 for one loser. You ruff in dummy but East (me) pitches the ♠K. You are in dummy but can't retain the lead in dummy to finesse twice against the ♥J.

See what a difference it makes if you make the 'routine' unblocking play of ruffing the third club with the eight or nine instead of the six? Now, in the diagram above, you have ♥K96 left in hand. You lead the ♥7 from dummy and I can get only one trump trick.

Here is an example from the 2009 Bobby Nail Life Master Pairs:

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

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♦	4♣	all pass	1♣

West led the ♦K. Declarer won and saw that his only hope was to establish a second spade winner to dispose of one of his red-suit losers. He played the ♣2 to dummy's king, then led the ♠Q. East got that right, covering with the king, so declarer won with the ace and ruffed a spade low. Now he played the ♣6 off the dummy.

If East had played low, declarer would have put in the seven, ruffed a spade to bring down the jack, then crossed to the ♣A and cashed the ♠10 for ten tricks. However, East was up to the task and put in the ♣9. Declarer could win the ace and ruff out the ♠J but now he had no entry to hand to cash the established spade winner, having no club in dummy lower than his seven.

East did well to recognize the necessity for the blocking play, but declarer should have been successful — do you see his error? If declarer had taken the first spade ruff with the ♣8 instead of the ♣4, dummy would have retained two club spots that were lower than the seven. Now the blocking play does not work because declarer can lead to his seven on the third round of trumps.

This deal is from the final of the 1997 Brighton Teams Championship:

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

Dealer West
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	2NT	pass	3♥
pass	4♣	all pass	

West leads a club to East's ace and the defenders continue the suit, forcing declarer to ruff the third round. The key is for declarer to ruff with anything except the ♠2,

draw two rounds of trumps and play on diamonds. East can ruff the fourth round and play a heart, but declarer goes up with the ace and can reach dummy with the ♠5, discarding the last heart on the fifth diamond — a line of play found by Pat Davies, and fatally missed at the other table.

Here’s another example where retaining a low spot card for a later endplay gives declarer extra chances:

♠ 2

♥ K 7 3

♦ K Q J 7

♣ 7 6 4 3 2

♠ 6 4

♥ Q 10 8

♦ 10 9

♣ AKQ1095

♠ 10 9 5

♥ A 9 5

♦ 8 6 5 4 3 2

♣ 8

♠ A K Q J 8 7 3

♥ J 6 4 2

♦ A

♣ J

Dealer South

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
2♣	dbl*	pass	1♠
all pass			4♠

West starts with two rounds of clubs. Declarer ruffs, draws trumps, unblocks the ♦A and tries a heart to the king. When East proves to have the ace, declarer has to go one down. Can you see the winning line?

If declarer ruffs the second club with the ♠7, cashes the ♦A and two top trumps, then exits with the ♠3, East scores an unexpected trick — but must then lead a red suit to dummy. Even if West wins the third spade, there is still the chance that the ♥A is onside (you were +1L).

Let me end this section on a cautionary note. While unblocking is usually a good idea, there are times when you need to preserve those intermediates, as on this deal from the 2010 NEC Festival in Yokohama:

♠ K 5 4

♥ Q 9

♦ Q 9 8 7 6

♣ A 4 2

♠ 10 8 3

♥ K J

♦ K J 5

♣ Q J 10 9 5

♠ A J 9 7 6

♥ A 8 5 4

♦ 10 3

♣ K 6

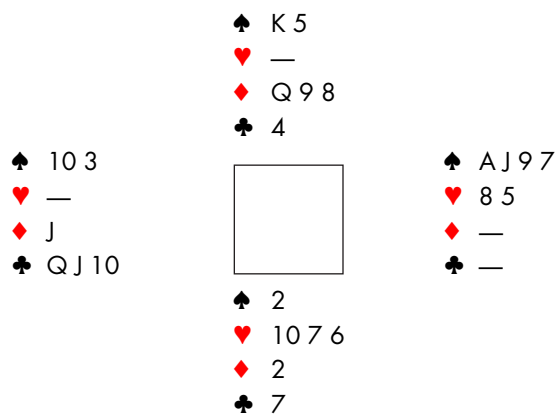
♠ Q 2

♥ 10 7 6 3 2

♦ A 4 2

♣ 8 7 3

West found himself in 4♠ after a transfer response to his opening bid of 1♣. North led a diamond and South won and continued the suit. Declarer took the king and ran the ♠8 — a fatal mistake. South won with the queen and led a heart to the jack, queen and ace. North ducked the first club and won the second to play another heart. This was now the position, with West on play:



Declarer could no longer play trumps ending in hand to cash the clubs. If he had retained the ♠8, he could have run the ♠10, then if necessary played winning clubs through North. As it was, declarer finessed in trumps and tried to ruff a heart to hand, but North could overruff.

20. BE ALERT FOR SITUATIONS WHERE ONE OF THE OPPONENTS CAN BE CUT OFF

On some deals it is possible to organize the play so that declarer can take on one opponent alone, as here, where the auction should help declarer to take a winning view:

♠ J 8 6 5 3

♥ 7 4 2

♦ 4

♣ Q 7 4 2

♠ K

♥ 9 5

♦ A 8 6 5 3

♣ K 10 8 6 5

♠ A Q 9 7 2

♥ K J 10 8 3

♦ 10 2

♣ 9

♠ 10 4

♥ A Q 6

♦ K Q J 9 7

♣ A J 3

Dealer East

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
		1♠	dbl
redbl	pass	pass	2♦
dbl	redbl*	2♥	2NT
dbl	all pass		

After an auction of which the less said, the better, South has to try and take eight tricks on the lead of the ♥9. The auction and lead mark East with at least nine and probably ten major-suit cards, the ♥KJ and two top spades. West is known to have at most one spade, the missing minor-suit honors and one honor in spades. It should be easy to see that the key to the play is to shut out East by winning the first heart and playing a spade. Now declarer can take on West by himself, and aided by the fall of the ♦10 has no difficulty arriving at eight tricks (in the endgame, West gets endplayed in clubs to lead away from the ♦8).

Cezary Balicki took advantage of this principle, as our teammate, during the 2011 Gatlinburg Regional.

♠ K 10 9 4 3

♥ 10 7 5 4

♦ —

♣ K 6 5 4

♠ 2

♥ A K Q 3

♦ Q 9 8 7 6

♣ A Q 3

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

West led the ♦A, which declarer ruffed in dummy. He continued with a club to the ace, a diamond ruff, a club to the queen, and a third diamond ruffed in dummy and overruffed. East now switched to a trump, so declarer drew trumps (which were now splitting 2-2). He had four trump tricks, three clubs and two diamond ruffs in the bank so he tried for a club split, but West pitched a diamond. He then ruffed a club back to hand, leaving these cards:

♠ K 10 9 4

♥ —

♦ —

♣ —

♠ 2

♥ Q

♦ Q 9

♣ —

Now he led a spade, and when West played the queen, he read him for QJx and ducked. This ‘passed the freeze’ to West. He could not afford to lead a diamond, so he led another spade. East played the ace on dummy’s nine, and as declarer was still +1L and West’s diamond winners were isolated, he discarded. Now East had to lead a spade to dummy’s good king for the game-going trick.

The full deal was:

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

At our table I led the ♣10 to declarer's ace. He played a spade to the king and ace, and Jeff returned the ♣J to declarer's queen. Now declarer ruffed two diamonds and two spades, but when the third diamond got overruffed, I got a club ruff, exited with a trump and waited for two diamond tricks, for down two.

21. BE ALERT FOR UNUSUAL TYPES OF HOLDUP PLAY

We have seen many reasons why a holdup may be required: to retain control either in trumps or a side suit, to prevent the establishment of a long suit, to keep a dangerous opponent off lead, to guard against an overruff, to aid the establishment of a long suit, and so on. While the basic positions are well-known, it pays to watch for other situations where a holdup can help, although it may not be quite so obvious.

This is a good example of an unusual holdup play:

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

Dealer South			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♣	2♦	3♣	3♠
pass	4♣*	pass	4♦*
pass	4♠	all pass	

When West leads the ♣K, declarer does best to duck! He can subsequently discard a diamond on the ♣A and establish two long cards by ruffing the third round of diamonds. Then he can draw trumps ending in dummy to enjoy the established diamonds. I have termed this play the *shortduck* — ducking one or more sure winner(s) and giving up a trick (or tricks) that don't have to be lost in the ducking suit itself. This is from the +L family of plays.

Here are some more examples of unusual ducking plays designed to cut down communications between the defenders:

♥ Q J 5

♥ A 4 2

If East has overcalled in this suit then declarer can afford to duck in both hands when West leads the suit.

♣ A 6 4

♣ Q 8 3

Suppose West leads this suit and East plays the jack. If declarer is confident that East (having made the fine play of the jack from a suit headed by the king-jack) has the king, he can afford to duck.

♦ 8 6 4

♦ K Q 7

When West leads this suit and East plays the jack, declarer might duck if a key finesse must be taken into East's hand.

Take a look at this deal from the 2005 European Open Championships:

♠ Q

♥ A K 9 3

♦ Q 5 4

♣ J 10 7 4 3

♠ A K 9 4

♥ 8 4

♦ A J 9 7 6

♣ A 5

Dealer West			
Both Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Auken	Robson	Kampmann	Zia
pass	1♣	1♠	2♦
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
dbl	redbl	pass	4NT*
pass	5♣*	dbl	redbl
pass	5♥	pass	6♦
all pass			

West leads the ♣8. Plan the play.

You need to find East with ♦Kx. You might be tempted to win the first club, cross to dummy with a spade, play a diamond to the jack and cash the ♦A. When the king falls you play a club, but East wins and plays a third club to ensure West scores a trick with the ♦10.

Zia saw this in a flash and found the only counter. He simply ducked the club lead! Now he could win the club continuation, cross to the ♠Q, finesse in diamonds, cash the ace dropping the king, draw the last trump and play a club. That way he has just enough entries to establish the fifth club as a parking place for his losing spade.

He was playing for this kind of layout:

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

Finally, be alert for holdups by the opponents. Assuming a finesse will work again, simply because it worked the first time, is a very common declarer error. The following deal came up in the 2009 Bermuda Bowl semifinal against China.

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

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
Nickell	Dai	Katz	Yang
1♥	dbl*	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. Strong.

Declarer got a heart lead, which he won in dummy to run the ♠J, and Nick Nickell played low in tempo. If declarer had restocked at this point (2+2+5+0=9), he would have played another heart now and come to a fairly easy nine tricks. However, he repeated the spade finesse, and this time West won the king and played a third spade. Now when declarer played a heart, West won and played a club to East's ace, and the defense had two spades to cash.

22. BE ALERT FOR (PERHAPS UNUSUAL) DUCKING PLAYS

Again, I've discussed many of the common situations where it's right to make a ducking play, but it pays to be imaginative and watch for less common positions. One way to do this is to consider your potential losers in a +L context, where L equals the number of available losers, so you know when you can afford to duck one or more tricks without exposing your contract to immediate defeat.

On this deal from the 2003 Bermuda Bowl, declarer overlooked a simple opportunity:

♠ Q J 8

♥ 5 2

♦ J 9 7 4 3 2

♣ 7 2

♠ 10

♥ A Q 10 4

♦ A K Q 8 6 5

♣ J 4

♠ A 9 6 4 2

♥ K J 9 7

♦ —

♣ Q 10 6 5

♠ K 7 5 3

♥ 8 6 3

♦ 10

♣ A K 9 8 3

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>D. Wolpert</i>	<i>Wu</i>	<i>Czyzowicz</i>	<i>Yen</i>
	pass	1♠	2♣
2♦	pass	2♥	pass
3♣*	pass	3NT	pass
4♥	all pass		

When South started with three rounds of clubs, declarer ruffed the third club high in dummy, North pitching a spade. Now declarer cashed the ♦A and ruffed a diamond with the ♥7. South overruffed and played another club, and declarer was a trick short.

The simplest line is for declarer to discard a diamond from dummy at Trick 3 rather than ruffing. Now he need only ruff one diamond (high) in hand, as the other disappears on the ♣Q. That also caters for North having started with four trumps. This play suggests itself if declarer realizes he has a surplus loser (i.e. he is +1L).

However, sometimes the only way to make a contract is to make a duck that risks the defenders cashing out, as on this famous deal from the 1997 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer East
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Helgemo</i>
		1♥	pass
3♣*	pass	3NT	pass
4♣	pass	5♣	all pass

North led the ♦4 (third and fifth), and declarer found himself looking at three losers in 5♣, instead of nine winners in 3NT. When he described this deal in his book *Win the Bermuda Bowl with Me*, Jeff noted that if you think for an age at Trick 1 in this kind of position, the defenders will figure it out. Realizing the situation called for desperate measures, Jeff quickly and calmly put in the ♦10. South won with the queen and, unable to read the opening lead, continued with a diamond. Now declarer could discard a heart on dummy's ♦A and play a heart. North took the king and switched to a spade, but declarer went up with dummy's ace and took a ruffing finesse in hearts to dispose of his losing spade.

A variation on this theme was successful on this deal from the 2010 NEC Cup:

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

Dealer East
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	<i>Nunn</i>		<i>Hans</i>
		pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	4♣
all pass			

When West led the ♣4, declarer could see that there were four top losers. So, instead of putting up an honor, he tried the gambit of playing low from dummy. East, placing his partner with a singleton, naturally went up with the ace and returned a club. Now declarer was able to ditch his hearts on the top clubs and then play on diamonds, losing only a club and two diamonds.

Declarer found an imaginative way to make a loser vanish on this deal from the 1998 European Youth Championships:

♠ K 10 7 4

♥ A K Q 8

♦ 7 4 3

♣ 9 5

♠ Q 9 8 6

♥ J 4 3

♦ J 10 6

♣ A Q 4

♠ J 2

♥ 10 7

♦ Q 8 5

♣ K J 8 6 3 2

♠ A 5 3

♥ 9 6 5 2

♦ A K 9 2

♣ 10 7

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
	<i>Kielichowski</i>		<i>Grzejdziak</i>
pass	1♣ ¹	pass	1♥
pass	2♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

1. Polish Club.

When West led the ♠8, the trick was completed by the four, two and three! When West continued with the ♠6, declarer won East’s jack with the ace, drew trumps and was later able to finesse in spades in order to dispose of a club loser.

23. TRY TO NEUTRALIZE THE OPPONENTS’ WINNERS

Look for the possibility that one (or more) of the opponents’ winners can be neutralized. This can be done by, for example, letting partner or the dummy ruff, or by a holdup. In this horror story from the 1961 Bermuda Bowl, a simple defense was missed:

♠ A 8 6

♥ K Q 7 5

♦ 8 7

♣ A 8 5 2

♠ K 9 5 4 3

♥ 10 4 2

♦ J 9 5 2

♣ 9

♠ Q J

♥ A 6

♦ A K Q 10 6

♣ Q 6 4 3

♠ 10 7 2

♥ J 9 8 3

♦ 4 3

♣ K J 10 7

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>d’Alelio</i>	<i>Hodge</i>	<i>Chiaradia</i>	<i>Gerber</i>
	1♥	dbl	2♥
2♣	pass	3♦	pass
3♣	pass	4♠	all pass

North led the ♣2; South won with the ten and switched to a heart. Declarer won with dummy’s ace and played the ♠Q. Surprisingly, North won this trick and

played another club. Declarer could ruff this, draw trumps and claim ten tricks: four spades, five diamonds and the ♥A.

The simplest defense is for North to duck the first spade. Then he can win the next trump and the defenders score two heart tricks. Winning the first spade also works if he taps the dummy with a heart, as that promotes South's ♠10, a card that he is more or less marked with given declarer's line of play.

24. ALWAYS CONSIDER PARTNER'S PROBLEMS ON DEFENSE

It is so easy to fall asleep when defending. You have to be alive to what is going on right from the start of the play. You also have to think about partner's problems or potential problems, and take appropriate action when necessary.

Here is a straightforward example from the 1997 Bermuda Bowl final:

♠ A 9 2

♥ 9

♦ Q J 9 8 6

♣ K 9 5 2

♠ K J 7 3

♥ Q J 10 4

♦ K 7

♣ Q 8 6

♠ 10 8 6 4

♥ A K 7 3

♦ 4

♣ J 7 4 3

♠ Q 5

♥ 8 6 5 2

♦ A 10 5 3 2

♣ A 10

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Rodwell	Levy	Meckstroth	Mari
	pass	pass	1♦
dbl	3♣*	3♦*	pass
3♥	4♦	4♥	5♦
dbl	all pass		

I led the ♥J, and as is so often the case this was already the critical moment for the defense: East had to overtake and switch to a spade. Jeff was up to the task, but see what happens if, for example, he decides to switch to a trump at Trick 2, which was the defense at the other table. Declarer goes up with the ♦A, ruffs a heart, crosses to hand with a club, ruffs a heart, cashes the ♣K and ruffs a club. Then he ruffs the last heart and ruffs a club. I can overruff, but now will be forced to lead away from the ♠K. That's how Bob Hamman made eleven tricks at the other table.

As you can see from this last example, one of the most difficult situations arises when a defender has to foresee that his partner may come under pressure in the ending. I was planning to include this next deal from the 1999 Bermuda Bowl final as an illustration of some excellent declarer play when I noticed that the defenders had missed an opportunity:

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

Dealer West
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Soloway</i>	<i>Chagas</i>	<i>Hamman</i>	<i>Branco</i>
pass	pass	1NT	pass
3NT	all pass		

South led the ♥K and switched to the ♠7. Declarer went up with dummy's ace, played a club to the king and continued with a second club. North won with the ace and played a heart, ducked to South's jack. Declarer took the spade switch in dummy and cashed his club winners, discarding the ♠J from his hand. South could spare a diamond, but on the last club he had to pitch his remaining spade in order to keep both red suits guarded. Now declarer played three rounds of diamonds, putting South on play and forcing a return into the ♥A10.

Well done by Hamman, but North missed a difficult chance. At the point where he took the ♣A it was not impossible to infer that declarer's distribution was 3=5=3=2 and that he held both top diamonds in addition to the ♥A. If that is how the cards lie, it is clear to switch to a diamond. Declarer can win but if he plays a spade to dummy and cashes his clubs, South is under no pressure, and if instead he tries a low heart, South wins and plays back the ♦Q.

This is one of the most complex deals in the book, with a lot of tightropes depending on how the play starts. For example, to beat the contract double-dummy, South must lead a spade. More realistically, when the ♥K is led, declarer must win the first heart to stop the attack on the spade entries. If he ducks the heart and South switches to a spade (another tightrope), declarer wins the ace. Now when a club is led, North must duck exactly once (ducking twice squeezes partner in three suits). As before, North has to switch to a diamond after he wins the club, then when a heart is ducked to South, a spade back doesn't work: South must keep both his hearts so he has to pitch a spade and a diamond, and Hamman's ending does him in. The counterintuitive return of the ♦Q, allowing declarer to set up dummy's ten, works because it isolates the ♥A: if declarer cashes the ♥A, the defenders have five tricks; if he doesn't, dummy gets endplayed and 2+0+3+3 = only 8 tricks. This ♦Q return deserves a name, so I propose the *trick trashing isolator*. The ♦Q trashes a diamond trick, but by isolating the ♥A and breaking up communications South gets two tricks back.

Bob Hamman had to be wide awake on this deal from the 2009 Bermuda Bowl final:

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

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Hamman	Nunes	Zia	Fantoni
1♠	dbl*	pass	1♣
pass	4♥	all pass	3♥

West started with the ♠A and then played a second spade. Declarer won, drew trumps ending in dummy and took a club finesse. West won and did not fall into the trap of exiting with a 'safe' club. If he does so, declarer will win, cash a spade, discard a diamond on the master club and then play a diamond to the queen. If East wins that he is endplayed, but even a smooth duck will not work: declarer, knowing that West started with only two diamonds, can happily play a diamond back to the king, not caring if it loses to a doubleton ace as West will then have to concede a ruff and discard.

However, Hamman saw all this coming: after winning with the ♣K he played a diamond through, avoiding any risk of East being endplayed.

Here is another example of a defender missing his way:

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

Dealer North
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Soloway	Shenkin	Hamman	Molson
pass	2♦	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

West led a heart. When East was able to cover dummy's queen, declarer took the ace and returned a heart. East won and switched to a diamond, declarer winning in dummy as West followed with the five. A trump went to the nine and West's queen

and he returned the $\heartsuit 9$ for East to ruff. At this point a club from East will get him another diamond ruff, but East thought South's hand might be

\spadesuit A J 9 5 4 3 \heartsuit A 3 \diamondsuit 3 2 \clubsuit A Q 4

in which case the only winning defense is to play a spade. When East did just that, declarer put up the ace and claimed.

East was unlucky that his partner's diamond spots did not make it clear that he wanted a club return, but if West's hand had been

\spadesuit K Q \heartsuit 9 5 4 2 \diamondsuit K 10 9 5 4 \clubsuit 10 9

then he might have led a club rather than a heart, or returned the $\diamondsuit 10$ rather than the $\diamondsuit 9$ for his partner to ruff. Another point: if West can visualize the difficulty of reading his diamond spot, he might cash the $\clubsuit A$ before giving his partner a ruff (giving up on the second undertrick). There's some risk in this, but not much: if declarer were 6=3=4=0 he would probably try to ruff a heart and then play ace and another spade.

25. VIEW THE PLAY FROM THE 'DANGER HAND' PERSPECTIVE

It is important to know which is the *danger hand*, especially when defending, since you can make abnormal plays like second hand high if you realize that you are dangerous. Likewise, if you are the safe opponent you can make plays to try and become the dangerous one.

I spotted this example in one of Terence Reese's books:

\spadesuit 6 3
 \heartsuit K Q 8 7
 \diamondsuit 7 3 2
 \clubsuit K 10 5 2

\spadesuit Q J 10 7
 \heartsuit 6
 \diamondsuit A J 10 4
 \clubsuit Q 9 8 7

\spadesuit K 9 5 2
 \heartsuit 5 3 2
 \diamondsuit Q 9 8 6
 \clubsuit 6 4

\spadesuit A 8 4
 \heartsuit A J 10 9 4
 \diamondsuit K 5
 \clubsuit A J 3

Dealer South
Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1 \heartsuit
pass	3 \heartsuit	pass	4 \heartsuit
	all pass		

When West led the $\spadesuit Q$ declarer won, drew trumps and (anxious to keep East off lead) played a club to the jack. However, West won with the queen and could put

East in with the ♠K to lead a killing diamond. As Reese points out, declarer should duck the ♠Q, breaking communications between the defenders.

However, that is not the whole story. If East realizes that he is the dangerous opponent he can try the effect of playing the ♠K at Trick 1. If declarer ducks, a diamond switch will force him to guess the clubs, and if declarer wins and takes a losing club finesse then West can underlead his spade honors to get East in with the nine to play a diamond.

I've discussed various aspects of second hand play in more detail elsewhere in this book, but meanwhile here is another example of a defender needing to be on his toes:

♠ J 10 7 3
♥ J 9 4
♦ A 8 3
♣ A K 10

♠ 6 4
♥ K Q 7 6 5
♦ Q 9 6
♣ Q 8 5

♠ K Q 5 2
♥ A 10 2
♦ K 7 5 2
♣ 7 2

♠ A 9 8
♥ 8 3
♦ J 10 4
♣ J 9 6 4 3

Dealer West

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	2♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

When West leads a top heart, declarer must duck to have any chance — otherwise East will score a heart ruff — and now West switches to a trump. East wins and returns a heart, forcing declarer to go up with the ace. If declarer now plays a diamond, West must put in the nine to ensure the trick cannot be ducked to East, who cannot play another heart.

26. TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHY AN OPPONENT IS PLAYING A HAND IN A CERTAIN WAY

You should always assume that your opponent has a plan in mind and a reason for the play he is making. This might include ducking to rectify the count for a squeeze, setting up a strip and endplay or simply trying to slip something past you.

Here is a classic example of the second of these plays, based on an idea by Terence Reese:

♠ A K J
 ♥ 10 7 5 2
 ♦ Q 5
 ♣ A 8 6 3
 ♠ 8 4
 ♥ K 9
 ♦ AK108742
 ♣ J 10
 ♠ 5 3
 ♥ Q J 6 4
 ♦ 9 6
 ♣ Q 9 7 5 2
 ♠ Q 10 9 7 6 2
 ♥ A 8 3
 ♦ J 3
 ♣ K 4

Dealer North
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♠
2♦	pass	pass	3♠
pass	4♣	all pass	

West cashes two rounds of diamonds and then switches to the ♣J. Declarer wins in hand with the king and lays down the ♥A. That is a very odd play, but it would catch a lot of Wests napping. If West plays low declarer can draw trumps, cash the ♣A and exit with a heart to endplay West. A more subtle approach for declarer is to cross to the ♠K at Trick 4, then return to hand with the ♥A, like a man who is about to take a spade finesse.

Notice that if West does not switch to a club at Trick 3 declarer can get home by simply drawing trumps and then ducking a heart, after which East will not be able to withstand the pressure exerted by the run of the trump suit.

27. BE PREPARED FOR A PLAY

Defenders are particularly prone to being caught by surprise, frequently giving the game away with a telltale (and fatal) pause, something akin to a poker player's 'tell'. Once you get caught in this position, the best solution may be to stop and analyze — maybe there will be some way to give declarer a problem. It can also happen to a declarer, who may react badly to an unexpected play by a defender and go down, playing by instinct instead of stopping to think.

Here is an example, reported by Terence Reese:

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

Dealer North
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1♥	pass	2♣
pass	3♠	pass	4♣*
pass	4♦*	pass	4♥*
pass	5♥*	pass	7♠
all pass			

West led a trump. There are many possible lines for declarer, and multiple squeeze chances. He decided to draw one more round of trumps before playing the top diamonds and ruffing a third one in dummy. Opting to give up some of his legitimate chances in exchange for psychological pressure, declarer now played the ♣Q from dummy. East, who had been expecting declarer to play a heart, was caught by surprise. Instead of playing low in tempo, he hesitated for a moment; that was not lost on declarer, who let the queen ride when East decided not to cover.

It should be noted that if declarer is determined to run the ♣Q, he can always make the hand, since East’s covering with the king transfers the club stopper to West’s jack and now a club-heart squeeze operates. The only chance is to realize that declarer probably wouldn’t run the ♣Q if you played low in tempo and would instead prefer to depend on hearts.

28. WATCH FOR SITUATIONS WHERE COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS EXIST, OR COULD BE MADE TO EXIST

When dummy or declarer has a long suit, a defender may be able to cause problems either by attacking the possible entries to the suit, or by some type of ducking play. We have also seen the Days of Thunder play, where attacking a solid suit will sometimes pay dividends by screwing up entries.

Here’s a deal from the final of the 2000 Vanderbilt in which the defenders were able to prevent declarer from getting to all his winners.

♠ A J 9 3

♥ J 9 4

♦ 6 4 2

♣ A K 8

♠ Q 7 5 4

♥ 7

♦ A 10 8 5 3

♣ Q 6 3

♠ 8 6 2

♥ K Q 10 6 3

♦ Q 9

♣ 9 7 5

♠ K 10

♥ A 8 5 2

♦ K J 7

♣ J 10 4 2

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
Freeman	Levin	Nickell	Weinstein
	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	2♦*
pass	2♥	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West led the ♦5. Declarer took East’s queen with the king (at the other table, Jeff Meckstroth ducked and subsequently played West for the black queens) and ran the ♣J. Next he crossed to dummy with a club and played a spade to the ten. West won with the queen and switched to a heart. Declarer couldn’t afford to let East in for a diamond through, so he was forced to win with the the ♥A, and now his entries were hopelessly entangled. Declarer could have done better, of course, but once he had mistimed things, the defense took full advantage.

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29. ALWAYS CONSIDER THE MERITS OF PASSIVE PLAY

It's incredibly tempting to try to do something active at the bridge table, but there are many deals where the best course is to do nothing, giving declarer or the defenders the opportunity to make a mistake. Getting active usually involves some risk, so adopting a passive approach avoids that. There are other advantages too, as apart from inducing an error you may be able to get a better count on a hand, or set up an endplay.

Here's an example from the 2008 World Seniors International Cup:

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Sacul</i>	<i>Yamada</i>	<i>Sawiruddin</i>	<i>Ohno</i>
1♦	pass	2♦*	pass
3♥	3♣	5♦	2♠
			all pass

North led the ♠2, South winning with the ace. At this point South needs to stay passive, since it's essentially impossible for declarer to find the winning play in clubs (running the ♣10 and later, if necessary, finessing the ♣8). However, South went for the busy defense of cashing the ♣A, handing declarer the contract on a plate.

I faced the 'active or passive?' choice more than once on this deal from the final of the 2007 U.S. Team Trials:

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

Dealer South
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Ekeblad</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Rubin</i>
pass	2♣	pass	1♦ ¹
pass	3♣*	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	3♦*

1. Limited, can be short.

I led the ♥8; declarer won in dummy and played a club to Jeff's two, his queen and my ace. It was certainly possible to continue passively with another heart, but with my ♣J under the gun I decided to go active and switched to the ♠2. There was no reason for declarer to put up dummy's ten, so the nine forced the king. Declarer played a club to the jack and queen and then ran the ♠8 to my jack. Now I went back to passive, exiting with a heart. Declarer won in dummy and played a spade to the king, then a club to the ten. There was no good news for declarer in either black suit, and when he cashed the ♥A and then exited with a spade he finished two down.

If declarer draws the difficult inference that my defense suggests I do not have the ♦A, he can get home in a variety of ways. For example, after winning the spade switch he can cross to dummy with a club and play a diamond, say to the jack and king. Now declarer can cash his winners and play a diamond to dummy's ten, eventually scoring a trick with the ♦9.

One of the areas of defense that is currently under discussion among experts is when you should make a passive opening lead against a notrump contract. Obviously, when the opponents appear to have reserves of strength an attacking lead is called for, but when they seem to be limited, or you suspect you hold most of your side's defensive assets, there is a case for going passive.

This deal is from the 2009 World Seniors Bowl:

♠ 10 9 2

♥ 10 9 4 3

♦ 9 8 6

♣ 9 6 4

♠ 8 6 5 4

♥ Q 8 5

♦ K 3

♣ A Q 8 3

♠ A Q J

♥ 7 6 2

♦ Q 10 7 5

♣ K 10 2

♠ K 7 3

♥ A K J

♦ A J 4 2

♣ J 7 5

Dealer North
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Russyan</i>	<i>Fisher</i>	<i>Lasocki</i>	<i>Hamilton</i>
	pass	1NT	pass
2♣*	pass	2NT	pass
3NT	all pass		

At the other table, South led a traditional diamond, and declarer simply played on clubs to record nine tricks. Here, however, Fred Hamilton led the ♥7. Declarer won in hand and played on clubs, South winning the third round and exiting with another heart. Declarer won this in dummy and cashed the long club, discarding a spade from his hand. If North discards a red card and South a spade (as he did), then declarer might well go down by playing a spade to the king. South will win, cash a spade and exit again with a heart.

30. BE PREPARED TO MAKE AN ATTACKING SHIFT IF THE SITUATION DEMANDS IT

This is the flip side of the previous ‘Do’ — there are times when it is clear that it is time to attack rather than stay passive. Sometimes, too, you can lead a dangerous-looking suit (say, away from an ace), knowing that this is very unlikely to cost the contract even if it is unsuccessful.

This is a typical scenario:

♠ K 8 4

♥ 10 9 3

♦ 7 5

♣ K 9 8 6 4

♠ J 10

♥ A 8 4

♦ AKQ 10 4

♣ 7 5 3

Dealer South

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1NT
dbl	all pass		

You lead the ♦K (asking for count) and partner plays the two, upside down, so you place declarer with ♦Jxxx. Since clubs could be running for five tricks, you need to switch to a low heart! This will defeat the contract if partner has the ♥K or a black ace. If partner has

♠ Q 9 6 5 ♥ Q J 5 ♦ 9 8 3 2 ♣ 10 2

too bad (you needed to continue diamonds).

Here’s another deal where passive defense will get you nowhere:

♠ J 9 6 5

♥ K 10 5

♦ 6 5 2

♣ A 10 8

♠ Q 7 4 3

♥ 9 7 6

♦ 7

♣ K J 7 6 5

♠ 10 2

♥ 2

♦ AKJ 10 9 3

♣ 9 4 3 2

♠ A K 8

♥ A Q J 8 4 3

♦ Q 8 4

♣ Q

Dealer East

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
		2♦	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

West leads the ♦7 and ruffs the third round of the suit. The obvious move now is to exit with a trump, but declarer wins and after drawing the outstanding trump he cashes the top spades. When the queen does not fall he simply plays his

remaining trumps, the last of which sees West, who is down to ♠Q and ♣KJ, facing an impossible discard in front of dummy's ♠J and ♣A10. Do you see the answer?

It shouldn't be hard to see the black-suit squeeze coming, and West must exit with the ♣K at Trick 4, killing the late entry to the dummy. If declarer has the ♠AK and ♣Qx, you are dead anyway (the bidding marks him with six hearts and the ♠AK).

A defender may be able to work out that rather than adopt a passive defense the only chance is to give declarer a guess at a critical point, as on this deal from the 2002 U.S. Team Trials:

♠ A K J 10 5

♥ J 8 7 6

♦ Q 9

♣ 8 4

♠ 7 2

♥ Q 5

♦ K 8 6 3 2

♣ J 9 6 5

♠ 9 8 3

♥ 4 3 2

♦ J 7 5 4

♣ Q 10 3

♠ Q 6 4

♥ A K 10 9

♦ A 10

♣ A K 7 2

Dealer East

EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Zia</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Rosenberg</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
		pass	2NT
pass	3♥*	pass	3♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♣*
pass	4NT*	pass	5♣*
pass	6♣	all pass	

West led a trump. I won this, cashed a top heart, drew trumps and played a heart to the ten. West took this trick and knew that I was 3-4 in the majors. If I was 3-3 in the minors then West could afford to exit safely with a club, but what if I held the more likely 2-4 distribution? In that case West should be able to calculate that he will come under pressure in the ending. Say he returns a club: I win and cash two hearts ending in dummy, to reach this position:

♠ —

♥ —

♦ K 8

♣ J 9 6

♠ K J

♥ —

♦ Q 9

♣ 4

♠ —

♥ —

♦ J 7 5

♣ 10 3

♠ —

♥ —

♦ A 10

♣ K 7 2

When I cash a trump discarding the ♦10, West is in serious trouble. A club allows me to set up a long club by ruffing, while a diamond will force me to drop the king. That is what happened at the table, and West pitched a club in the ending, allowing me to ruff out the suit. However, perhaps West should have anticipated this and exited with a diamond when he was in with the ♥Q, hoping (as was the case) that I would have a guess in the suit.

That is a tough play to find, but I never said this game was easy.

THE DON'Ts OF CARDPLAY

Now we come to the negatives — the mental errors that are so easy to make, and that can destroy all the good work you may have put into the play already. The ability to maintain a high level of concentration is a key element, and lapses in concentration can contribute significantly to making errors of the type I am now going to discuss.

1. DON'T TAKE SPECULATION AS FACT

Let me quote Sherlock Holmes again: 'It is a capital mistake to theorize without data'. Bridge is a game of incomplete information, however, and we don't always have the luxury of being able to follow his advice. At least, though, we can look to *facts* first, and remember that speculation is only that. Take a look at this deal:

	♠ A K 9 4 3	
	♥ —	
	♦ A Q 3	
	♣ K Q J 10 7	
♠ 6 5 2		♠ 10 8
♥ AK10652		♥ Q 9 7 3
♦ 5		♦ 10 9 8 4
♣ A 5 4		♣ 9 8 2
	♠ Q J 7	
	♥ J 8 4	
	♦ K J 7 6 2	
	♣ 6 3	

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♥	dbl	2♥	3♦
3♥	6♦	all pass	

North's jump to slam strongly suggested possession of a heart void, so West ignored his hearts and led a spade. Declarer won in hand and ruffed a heart. He cashed the ♦A, then overtook the queen with his king. If trumps had been 3-2 he would have drawn the last trump, discarded his two remaining hearts on dummy's spades and given up a trick to the ♣A. As it was, the 4-1 trump break meant the hand collapsed and he finished three down.

Declarer was worried that West's spade was a singleton, but that was a *speculation*. The major *fact* available was that West had opened the bidding at the one-level and was therefore a huge favorite to hold the ♣A. At Trick 2 declarer

should lead a high club from dummy. West will duck, or else the hand is over, and East is certain to give count. Now declarer can play a second club, which West has to win. Declarer ruffs the heart return, cashes two top trumps, then ruffs a club to hand, draws trumps and claims.

2. DON'T MIRE YOUR THOUGHT PROCESSES IN SPECULATION ONCE FACTS ARE AVAILABLE

Even when you have facts to work with, it's easy to get distracted. Take a look at this deal from the 2005 Bermuda Bowl:

♠ J 10 9 3

♥ K Q 7

♦ J 8 7 5 3

♣ Q

♠ 7 6 4 2

♥ 10 8 4 3

♦ A 2

♣ 8 7 6

♠ A K Q

♥ J 5

♦ K 9 6

♣ A K J 9 4

♠ 8 5

♥ A 9 6 2

♦ Q 10 4

♣ 10 5 3 2

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Gitelman</i>	<i>Ju.Hackett</i>	<i>Moss</i>	<i>Ja.Hackett</i>
	pass	2♣*	pass
2♦*	pass	2NT	pass
3♣*	pass	3♦*	pass
3NT	all pass		

South led the ♠8 (denying honor third or ♠98x) and declarer took the trick as North followed with the three. When the ♣Q fell under the ace, declarer had to consider the possibility that if he gave up a club trick he might lose four heart tricks. However, that requires a very specific layout in the heart suit and surrendering a trick in clubs is surely the indicated line.

Declarer marked time by cashing the ♣K and the ♣J, North discarding a couple of diamonds. Despite the evidence of the opening lead, declarer finally elected to play for spades to be 3-3 and he cashed his top spades. Now, when South won the fourth round of clubs, the defenders could cash three hearts and a spade.

3. DON'T MAKE A PLAY IN A CRUCIAL SUIT BEFORE ALL POSSIBLE INFORMATION IS OBTAINED

When a contract is under no immediate pressure, declarer can afford to investigate the lie of the cards before taking a critical decision. This deal is from the 2005 World Transnational Open Teams:

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

Dealer South
EW Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Shugart</i>	<i>Martel</i>	<i>Robson</i>	<i>Feldman</i>
pass	1♥	pass	1♦
pass	3♣*	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	3♥

West led the ♥4 and declarer played low from dummy, taking East's eight with the king. Now declarer decided to run the ♣9 (not in itself a fatal play); East won with the ten and switched to a diamond. Declarer won this in hand and played the ♣K. East took that and switched to a low spade. Declarer ducked the jack and ducked again when West played another spade. East won and could exit with a red card to leave declarer a trick short.

Declarer's sequence of plays was unfortunate, but there was no rush to play on clubs. At Trick 2, the natural play is a spade. If East gets in and switches to a diamond, declarer can win and play a second spade. Even if East holds all the spade honors there is still be time to take advantage of a favorable position in the club suit.

On this deal from the 2009 Vanderbilt, I was able to postpone the play of the critical suit:

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

Jeff Meckstroth opened 1NT with the East hand as dealer, and after a complex but uninterrupted auction, I became declarer in 6♦. North led the ♣J; South won with

the king and switched to the ♥J. My chances for a twelfth trick clearly rested in the spade suit, but there was no rush. I won in dummy, drew trumps, unblocked the ♣Q, played a heart to dummy and cashed the ♣A, discarding a spade. South's spade discard on this trick made him a favorite to hold the ♠Q, so instead of relying on the spade finesse I ruffed a heart and cashed my last trump, discarding dummy's ♠J. That squeezed South in the majors; when he discarded a spade, the ♠9 became my twelfth trick.

On this deal from the final of the 2001 Venice Cup, declarer was able to gather a great deal of information before committing herself:

♠ 8 4

♥ K 8 6

♦ 7 6 3 2

♣ A 6 3 2

♠ Q J 9 5 3

♥ Q 4 3

♦ K J 10 9

♣ 4

♠ K 7 6

♥ 10 5

♦ Q 5 4

♣ K Q 10 8 7

♠ A 10 2

♥ A J 9 7 2

♦ A 8

♣ J 9 5

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
<i>Bessis</i>	<i>Auken</i>	<i>d'Ovidio</i>	<i>Von Arnim</i>
pass	pass	pass	1♥
1♠	dbl*	2♣	dbl
pass	2NT*	pass	3♥
all pass			

West led the ♣4, and suspecting that was a singleton, declarer went up with dummy's ace. In order to arrive at nine tricks, declarer needed to ruff a spade in dummy, negotiate the heart suit — and keep East off lead.

She played a spade at Trick 2, putting in the ten when East followed with the six. West won and switched to the ♦J — and once again declarer ducked. She won the next diamond and was now at the crossroads. Assuming West's club was indeed a singleton, her likely shape was 5=3=4=1. East appeared to have the ♣KQ and obviously held an honor in both spades and diamonds. With the ♥Q in addition, East might well have opened the bidding on the first round. Following her judgment, declarer ran the ♥J. When it held she could take a spade ruff, unblock the ♥K, come to hand with a diamond ruff and draw the outstanding trump.

On this deal from the 2003 European Open Pairs, Jeff Meckstroth had a tough decision to make, and he postponed it until he had more information:

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

Dealer North
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
	<i>Rodwell</i>		<i>Meckstroth</i>
	2♣*	pass	2♦*
pass	2♣ ¹	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. No major.

West led the ♠7 and Jeff won with dummy's ten and cashed the ♣A. When the jack appeared, he took three rounds of diamonds before playing any more clubs. West's singleton diamond, allied to the restricted choice implications of the ♣J, now persuaded him to play a club to the ten.

4. DON'T STRIP OUT YOUR SIDE'S SUIT AS A DEFENDER

One of declarer's strongest weapons is the use of an elimination play. In general terms a defender should be wary of helping declarer to eliminate a suit when a less-helpful, passive defense is available.

This is a straightforward example:

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

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
2♣	dbl	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♦Q; when that holds, he continues the suit, declarer ruffing the third round. Now, however, after playing three rounds of spades, ruffing in dummy, declarer plays a trump. West has to win and either open up the clubs or give

declarer a ruff and discard. A singleton ace of trumps should always sound an alarm bell, and West should cash it at Trick 2. After that, it is quite safe to continue with diamonds.

There is another reason why persevering with a suit may turn out badly, as on this type of deal:

♠ K J 10

♥ 7 6 5

♦ A 7 5 3 2

♣ 10 2

♠ 8

♥ AK1094

♦ 10 6

♣ A J 9 8 5

♠ 9 7

♥ J 8 3 2

♦ Q J 9

♣ Q 7 4 3

♠ A Q 6 5 4 3 2

♥ Q

♦ K 8 4

♣ K 6

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	2♥	2♠
3♣	3♠	4♥	4♠
all pass			

If West starts with his top hearts, declarer can simply discard a diamond on the second round, after which it is easy to set up and enjoy the diamond suit. Better then to continue with the ♥9 to East’s jack at Trick 2, when declarer must ruff since he can’t afford to let East in. Later, if declarer plays a heart from dummy, intending again to discard a diamond, East must play danger hand high with the ♥8. This defense defeats the shortshake.

5. DON'T FORGET TO USE TRICK PACKAGES IN YOUR ANALYSIS

If you don't make use of trick packages, you can find yourself with too many losers, too few winners, or even too many winners (i.e. you could have afforded some kind of safety play). You need to understand whether you are in a +L position, and what the options and dangers are.

We have discussed the need for fast tricks in the context of the establishment race (often in notrump). In a suit contract it is easy to have a blind spot if you have plenty of trump control. This deal is from a recent Regional:

♠ A
 ♥ K 10 3
 ♦ A Q 10 5 4
 ♣ J 10 9 7

 ♠ 8 6 5 4
 ♥ A Q J 8 5 4
 ♦ 2
 ♣ A 4

Dealer South
 Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
			1♥
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	3♣*	pass	4♣ ¹
pass	4NT*	pass	5♣ ²
pass	6♥*	all pass	

1. Keycard in hearts.
2. King ask.

Nice auction, but it tips West off to the best lead of a trump. East follows and you win with the eight. What is your plan?

You have nine top tricks so you need three more winners. You can ruff two spades in dummy for eleven tricks. If you go merrily along, trying to ruff diamonds to set up the suit while ruffing spades in dummy, you might succeed but are unlikely to enjoy the fifth diamond because dummy lacks a side entry and there are trumps out. So you need a trick package that nets three more winners (and at most one loser). This will be some combination of spade ruffs and diamond tricks.

Being +1L, you have two shots by taking an immediate diamond finesse. If it wins, then as long as the ♦A lives you can ruff two spades in dummy (2+1=3). If the diamond hook loses and a trump comes back (West following), that kills one spade ruff, but if ace and a diamond ruff brings down ♦Jxx (or ♦KJx), you have two extra diamond tricks in dummy to get to twelve tricks (1+2=3).

You have slim chances also if East wins the ♦K but has no trump to lead back, if he has ♦KJ or ♦KJx (2+1=3). If East returns a trump and West discards, it is almost hopeless. You'll succeed only if you find West with ♣KQ alone — cash the ♣A seeing an honor, then a spade to the ace, cash the ♦A discarding a club, ruff a club, ruff a spade, and you have two good clubs to cash while East follows suit helplessly (1+0+2 for the two extra club tricks).

The club suit is tempting also, but even if running the ♣J sets up another club trick another trump is likely to come back and you must fall back on the diamond finesse (1+1+1=3).

So, the simple line of going for fast tricks is your best shot (and was rewarded on the actual layout): take the diamond finesse.

On this deal, from the final of the 2009 U.S. Team Trials, declarer would surely have made his unusual contract had he adopted the ‘package’ approach:

<p> ♠ 8 6 3 ♥ 9 5 ♦ K 7 3 2 ♣ A K J 6 </p>		<p> Dealer North Both Vul. </p>																													
<p> ♠ 9 4 ♥ 8 6 ♦ A 9 8 6 5 4 ♣ Q 9 4 </p>	<div></div>	<p> ♠ J 10 5 2 ♥ Q 7 4 ♦ 10 ♣ 10 8 7 5 3 </p>	<table> <tr> <th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr> <tr> <td><i>Robinson</i></td><td><i>Weichsel</i></td><td><i>Boyd</i></td><td><i>Ekeblad</i></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>pass</td><td>pass</td><td>1♣*</td></tr> <tr> <td>pass</td><td>1♥*</td><td>pass</td><td>2♦*</td></tr> <tr> <td>pass</td><td>2♥*</td><td>pass</td><td>3♦*</td></tr> <tr> <td>pass</td><td>3♥*</td><td>pass</td><td>4♦*</td></tr> <tr> <td>dbl</td><td>redbl</td><td>all pass</td><td></td></tr> </table>	West	North	East	South	<i>Robinson</i>	<i>Weichsel</i>	<i>Boyd</i>	<i>Ekeblad</i>		pass	pass	1♣*	pass	1♥*	pass	2♦*	pass	2♥*	pass	3♦*	pass	3♥*	pass	4♦*	dbl	redbl	all pass	
West	North	East	South																												
<i>Robinson</i>	<i>Weichsel</i>	<i>Boyd</i>	<i>Ekeblad</i>																												
	pass	pass	1♣*																												
pass	1♥*	pass	2♦*																												
pass	2♥*	pass	3♦*																												
pass	3♥*	pass	4♦*																												
dbl	redbl	all pass																													
<p> ♠ A K Q 7 ♥ A K J 10 3 2 ♦ Q J ♣ 2 </p>																															

After a bidding misunderstanding, South became declarer in 4♦ redoubled. West led the ♦A and continued with the four.

Declarer is sure to take two trump tricks (and may well score a third thanks to the fall of East’s ten and the presence of dummy’s seven). If he can take three spades, two hearts and two clubs the contract will be secure, as an eventual major-suit lead from South will ensure a trick for the ♦7. So the best way to approach the hand is to start with three rounds of spades. Here, West ruffs the third round and plays the ♦9.

Now it is clear declarer will need to score three club tricks. He wins in dummy, returns to hand with a heart and takes the club finesse. After cashing two more clubs he comes to hand with a heart and leads a major to score the ♦7 *en passant*.

Instead, unnerved by the sight of dummy, declarer played on hearts, enabling West to throw a spade. In the end he was -1000: expensive when 6♥ failed at the other table.

6. DON'T LOSE YOUR TRAIN OF THOUGHT

Every player has to be wary of a loss of concentration. I could write another book on the circumstances in which this can come about, but when it does happen you must find a way to move on to the next deal. Applying the ideas of the *Dos and Don'ts* in this section will serve you well.

On this deal from the 2005 Venice Cup, at two tables the declarer lost the plot completely:

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

Dealer East NS Vul.			
West	North	East	South
pass	4♠	pass	2♠
		all pass	

West led the ♦4; East won with the king and switched to the ♣10. Declarer won in hand and, ignoring the threat, played a top trump. West won and played a club for East to ruff — one down. Declarer should have cashed dummy's top hearts in order to dispose of her second club and only then tackled the trump suit.

Still, that was a minor aberration compared to the situation which arose on the same deal at another table after this auction:

West	North	East	South
3♥	6♣	2♥*	2♠
dbl	all pass	pass	pass

Any Lightner implications in West's double were lost on East, who led a diamond (in passing, a trump lead holds declarer to ten tricks). Declarer put up dummy's queen; when that held, she had only to ruff two hearts in dummy to bring home her slam. Inexplicably, she ruffed only one before drawing trumps, and finished one down.

On this deal from the final of the 1968 Gold Cup, one of the best players in the world made more than one unforced error:

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

Dealer West
NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	pass	dbl
2♦	3♣	pass	3NT
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

West led the ♥5, and declarer took East's jack with the queen. He cashed the ♠A and played another spade, unnecessarily unblocking dummy's queen under the king. West switched to a diamond and declarer won in hand with the jack and played a club. West took the ♣A and exited with a diamond. Declarer won with dummy's king and took the spade finesse. That worked, but now declarer realized he had forgotten to cash the ♣K.

It is not unusual for a chess player to resign a game only to discover that he has missed a move that would have turned the tables, but it is virtually unheard of for a bridge expert to concede one down when a winning play was available. Nevertheless that is what happened here! This was the position:

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

If South cashes the ♠J, West has to discard a diamond. Now declarer exits with a low heart and West has to allow East to win and present declarer with the game-going trick.

7. DON'T SUCCUMB TO EMOTIONAL PREJUDICE

I'm referring here to the situation where a player decides to favor a play based on emotion, such as a desire to look brilliant, or preferring a squeeze over a finesse. Fred Gitelman expressed this very well in a magazine article some years ago: 'Don't play to get into the *Daily Bulletin* instead of counting to thirteen'. There's no harm in looking brilliant if you really have a 50-50 guess, but that is rarely the case.

Here's the example Fred cited. It involved a world-class player in the 1993 Life Masters Pairs, but the names and other details will be withheld to protect the guilty.

♠ K 4 3

♥ 10 6 4

♦ A K 6

♣ Q J 10 9

♠ A Q 7

♥ K Q J 9 2

♦ Q J 7 2

♣ A

Dealer North

Neither Vul.

West	North	East	South
	1NT ¹	dbl	pass ²
pass	redbl	pass	pass
2♣	dbl	2♥	2♠
all pass			

1. 12-14.

2. Forcing a redouble.

West led the ♥3, and East's nine forced the ace. Declarer cashed the top diamonds, discarding a heart from hand. Now he ruffed dummy's third diamond and ran the ♠J to East's queen. East, seeing the chance for brilliancy, cashed the ♣A and led a low heart for partner to ruff. A club ruff, one more heart and the ♠A would bring the defense total to six tricks.

Unfortunately, this was the full layout:

♠ 8

♥ 3

♦ 10 9 8 4 3

♣ 8 7 6 5 3 2

♠ K 4 3

♥ 10 6 4

♦ A K 6

♣ Q J 10 9

♠ J 10 9 6 5 2

♥ A 8 7 5

♦ 5

♣ K 4

♠ A Q 7

♥ K Q J 9 2

♦ Q J 7 2

♣ A

Partner had no more trumps, so declarer lost only a heart, a club and two spades, making the contract with an overtrick.

Yet this was easily avoidable. East knew from the auction and play to that point that his partner was either 1=1=5=6 or 2=1=5=5, the former being more likely. If he was 1=1=5=6, the underlead would be disastrous. Even if he was 2=1=5=5, though, it was unnecessary — East could lead a high heart, and leave it to partner to count the hand, ruff the heart winner, and return a club. Fred’s final advice: ‘Let partner get into the *Daily Bulletin*’.

This next dramatic deal comes from the final of the 2010 Dutch Team Championships:

♠ K J 2

♥ Q 8 4 2

♦ 6 5

♣ K J 8 6

♠ 10 3

♥ A K 6 5 3

♦ Q 9 8

♣ Q 4 2

♠ Q 8 7 5 4

♥ —

♦ J 7 4 2

♣ 10 9 5 3

♠ A 9 6

♥ J 10 9 7

♦ A K 10 3

♣ A 7

Dealer East

NS Vul.

West	North	East	South
Brink	Paulissen	Drijver	Jansma
		2♣*	2NT
pass	3♣*	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	pass	pass
dbl	pass	pass	redbl
all pass			

With his team leading by 41 IMPs late in the match, West elected to double 4♥, and South was happy to send this back. West started off with three rounds of hearts, East discarding the ♠7 and a couple of diamonds. Declarer now played three rounds of diamonds, came to hand with the ♠A, and played the master diamond. West ruffed in and exited with the ♠10. Declarer came to hand with the ♣A, to which East followed with a deceptive ten. Now the last trump was drawn, to leave everyone with two cards.

At this point, if East started with both black queens, a squeeze has operated and the winning play is a club to the king. The other option is a finesse against the ♣Q. There is not much in it — you are weighing up which is more likely, that West would double 4♥ without both minor-suit queens, or that East would open on just a queen and a jack. The Dutch style would certainly encompass the latter, and given that, surely West is likely to have a better hand than ♥AKxxx and the ♦Q for his double. There is also the matter of East having started with four clubs and West three, but that is less important than the inference from the auction. So it seems that the finesse is the indicated play. However, perhaps reflecting that a squeeze is more elegant than a finesse, declarer tried to drop the queen — down one and the lead was up to an insurmountable 55 IMPs.

8. DON'T GET LOCKED INTO A PATTERN

Pattern-locking occurs when declarer is unable to perceive alternate ways of using a particular holding (typically for a suit combination).

For example,

♠ A Q 5
[]
♠ 7 3

is a finessing suit, but is also a possible throw-in threat suit, or a fast entry, etc.

♦ A K J 8 4
[]
♦ 6 2

could be a ducking suit as well as a finessing suit.

Would it occur to you that with a combined holding of

♣ A Q
[]
♣ 9 8 3

you might still take two tricks even if the finesse is wrong? You need a doubleton ♣J10 to turn the nine into a trick.

On this deal from the 2009 European Universities Championships, declarer rejected the finesse in favor of using the position to engineer an endplay:

♠ J 9 7
♥ 5 2
♦ A 10 9 3
♣ A K 10 8

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

♠ A 8 5
♥ K J
♦ Q J 2
♣ J 9 7 3 2

Dealer West
Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
Michalak	Jankova	Jarosz	Hoderova
pass	1♣ ¹	3♥	3NT
all pass			

1. Polish.

Against 3NT West led the ♥6 (low from a doubleton). East wanted to maintain contact with his partner, so he played the ♥3, allowing declarer to win with the

jack. That turned out to be a very tiny mistake, but Pavel Hoderova seized the opportunity offered him.

He ran the ♣9, and when that held he played four more rounds of the suit. East was feeling the pinch and he parted with both his spades followed by the ♥Q. Now declarer cashed the ♠A and East discarded the ♥4. He was now down to ♥A1097 ♦K5. When declarer exited with the ♥K, East could cash four hearts but then had give declarer a second diamond trick. East needed to pitch a diamond early to give declarer a problem in the endgame: as a general rule, don't keep too many cards in declarer's endgame suit.

9. DON'T GET CAUGHT IN A 'THEMATIC FREEZE'

A player will sometimes decide too quickly that he can see the point of the hand and act accordingly, without checking to see if that is all there is to it, or whether the particular theme is really applicable.

On this deal, from the 1997 World Championships, declarer overlooked a small point — and paid the price:

♠ 9 5 3

♥ 10 8 7

♦ J 10 2

♣ A Q J 3

♠ J 8 7 2

♥ J 9 6 5 2

♦ A 6

♣ 6 2

♠ A Q 6

♥ A K

♦ 9 7 5 4 3

♣ 9 8 4

♠ K 10 4

♥ Q 4 3

♦ K Q 8

♣ K 10 7 5

Dealer West

Both Vul.

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♣	pass
1♥	pass	1NT	pass
2♥	all pass		

North led the ♦J. Declarer played three rounds of the suit, discarding a club, and then played a trump. South won and cashed a second trump, on which declarer thought it would be a good idea to unblock the queen. Now South played a club and North took the ace and switched to a spade; after taking two tricks in spades South played a diamond, promoting his partner's ♥10.

This deal might equally well have appeared in my final category, which is...

10. DON'T CONCEDE TO ANALYTICAL FATIGUE

Analytical fatigue occurs when a player gives up on working out the right line in (potential) tightrope situations where an exact sequence of plays is required. Typical examples are crossruffs, squeezes, and endplays.

Take a look at this deal from the 2009 Bermuda Bowl:

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

Dealer West			
Neither Vul.			
West	North	East	South
Austberg	Hamman	Sælensminde	Zia
1♦	pass	2♣	pass
2♥	pass	3♣	pass
4♣	pass	4♠*	pass
4NT*	pass	5♣*	pass
5♦*	pass	7♣	all pass

Rejecting the traditional (and overrated) lead of a trump against a grand slam, Zia led a very testing ♥6, which removed a vital entry. Declarer had good reason to enter the think tank. Knowing Zia was more than capable of underleading the ♥K, and unable to see anything markedly better, he eventually decided to finesse at Trick 1, which led to a fast one down. At the other table, faced with an identical lead, my partner Jeff Meckstroth went up with dummy's ace.

Assuming the diamond finesse is right, after rising with the ♥A declarer can cross to the ♠A and ruff a spade. Now it costs nothing and offers a miniscule extra chance to cash the ♦A. The plan is to run the trumps, taking the diamond finesse in due course, making the contract when the suit behaves or when South, in addition to the assumed ♦Q, has one or more of the major-suit kings, when he will be squeezed. When the ♦Q appears you simply run your trumps, squeezing South in the pointed suits.



GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

This glossary is not intended to provide exact definitions, but to remind you of the basic ideas expressed by terms you may have forgotten. Terms indicated with an asterisk (*) are standard — the remainder are Rodwellian creations.

007 Play — License to Kill	Playing a suit even though it establishes a winner for the opponents, knowing that you can keep leading the suit and let partner ruff the winner with a worthless trump.
Alternative Threat*	An additional menace that affords declarer the option of playing for a different squeeze.
Analytical Fatigue	Giving up on figuring out the exact line of play, especially in (potential) tightrope situations.
Asset Survey	Studying the position to see which cards in a suit are held and which are missing.
Automatic Squeeze*	A squeeze that works against either defender.
Avoidance*	Trying to keep a particular defender off play.
Bait-and-Switch	Switching to a suit to secure one or more tricks before cashing long cards in another.
Basic Options Analysis	Checking offensive and defensive prospects suit by suit.
Block Ducking	A ducking play in a suit that blocks the suit, but is necessary for re-entry and control purposes.
Cash Catering	Cashing winners, in case an important card drops, before finessing.
Cash and Thrash	Leaving one or more trumps out and running side-suit winners.
Chinese Danger Count	A Chinese Finesse with a middle card, which can help avoid a guess in the suit.
Chinese Finesse*	Leading a high card for a ‘finesse’ that cannot gain if the defender covers.
Chinese High Card Promotion	Leading high from honor third while establishing a suit, to avoid entry problems.

Control/Alt/Delete	'Rebooting' — going back to basics if you get stuck in your analysis.
Control Unit	A side-suit stopper — a high card or the ability to trump.
Crossover Stopper	A card that does not stop the run of a suit on power but requires the defenders to lead it twice from a specific side.
Count-Induced Drop	A situation where count of distribution and/or high card points makes it clear that the only chance is to play for the drop of a missing high card.
Danger Hand High	Playing second hand high when declarer can't afford to let you hold the trick.
Days of Thunder	Leading declarer's solid suit to create entry problems.
Defensive Finesse	A defensive lead through declarer or dummy's holding in a suit.
Defogging	The process of finding a solution to an analytical problem if no sure-trick line is available.
Delayed Cover Protection	Covering the second of missing honors as declarer to prevent the defense from running a suit.
Deschappelles Coup*	The sacrifice of a high card to create an entry to partner's hand.
Double Squeeze*	A type of ending in which both opponents are squeezed.
Drop Mirage	A mistaken attempt to play for the drop of a missing card when it is an inferior play or cannot gain.
Duck-preventing Honor	An honor that prevents the opponents from ducking in that suit by providing an entry.
Ducking*	Deliberately losing an early trick in a suit.
Dummy Reversal*	Taking ruffs in the long trump hand and eventually drawing trumps from the shorter holding.
Empty Hand	A deal where declarer has no prospect of developing the tricks he needs barring a defensive error — passive defense is indicated.
Empty Signal	A signal to suggest a worthless holding in a suit in the context of the deal.

Endplay*	An ending where a player, usually a defender, is put on lead at a point where his play must surrender one or more tricks
Endplay Prevention Cover	Covering an early honor (from touching honors) when it is led, to avoid a later endplay.
Entry Fly (K.O. Fly)	Going up with a high card to secure an entry if they duck the trick.
Entry Overtake	An overtaking play to create an entry.
Exposing Overtake	An unblock (usually in the trump suit) to create a finesse position.
Extended Menace*	A suit in which a defender will give up more than one trick if he unguards it.
Finesse Creation Falsecard	A falsecard creating the option of a losing finesse for declarer.
Finessing Against Dummy*	Playing a middle card to partner's lead, retaining a high card to beat a high card in dummy.
Finessing Against Partner*	Withholding a high card on partner's lead, on the assumption he holds a specific card.
Fourth Suit Forcing	(in this book) Using the fact that the distribution of cards in a single suit or in a single hand must add to thirteen.
Free Suit*	The non-threat suit in a squeeze ending.
Freeze-Passing Endplay	Playing a frozen suit at a point where the opponent who wins the trick will be endplayed.
Frozen Suit*	A suit no one can lead without helping the other side.
Full Hand	A layout where declarer will get his tricks given time — active defense is indicated.
Goldman Trump Finesse	An attempt to slip a round of trumps past a defensive honor holding.
Gouging	Playing a card that pins declarer in the wrong hand.
Guessing Suit	A suit that can be picked up if you know the location of the cards.
Half-Frozen Suit	A suit that can be led safely by one player but not by his partner.
Hand Losers	Unavoidable losers in particular suit(s).

Honor Protection Lead	The lead of a high card, rather than a low one, to protect partner's honor in the suit.
Imputed Trump Ace	A way for partner to determine whether you have a singleton or doubleton in a suit you want to ruff
Intrafinesse*	A technique that involves successive finesses against both opponents, typically trying to pick up two or three significant cards.
Intrapop	Going up with a high card from doubleton honor in an attempt to thwart an intrafinesse.
Intrasquash	A type of intrafinesse safety play coping with a specific singleton.
K.O. Fly	See Entry Fly .
Lair Play	A falsecard suggesting shortage in a suit.
Left Jab	Playing an unsupported honor to disrupt the timing of the opponents' attempt to set up their suit.
Link card*	A small card providing access to the other hand.
Lobbing*	Leading toward your high cards.
Lobbing Finesse	A finesse where you lead toward high cards.
Lock Strip	A strip and endplay in which success can be 100% guaranteed.
Lunar Menace Access Squeeze	A squeeze in which there is no entry to one threat card.
Map	A summary of your position, taking into account winners, hand losers and control units.
Martellian Squash	A play that depends on pinning significant small cards in an opponent's hand.
Merrimac Coup*	The sacrifice of a high card to destroy an entry.
Merrimac Cover	Covering an honor, even at the cost of a trick, to knock out an entry.
Middling	Leading the middle card of a three-card holding, usually by a defender, in order to be able to run the suit without blockage or requiring extra entries.
Morton's Fork*	A lead through a defender toward a high card. The defender ducks, after which declarer's loser in the suit is discarded, or goes up and has his winner 'beat air'.

Morton's Fork Concession	A play in which a defender concedes an opponent's winner before it can be used as a Morton's Fork threat.
Nagy Play	A middle card insertion that may cause declarer to misread the position.
Notrump Fork	A variation of Morton's Fork.
ODP	The results of Basic Options Analysis : Offensive Potential, Defensive Threats, Passive Strategy.
Partial Elimination*	A strip and endplay where one side suit is not completely eliminated.
Passell's Gambit	See Trick Trashing Middle Falsecard .
Passing the Freeze	Going up with a high card to force an opponent to win when the suit is frozen.
Pattern-Locking	Failure to perceive alternative ways of using a particular holding.
Percentage Play*	The play that works most often from two or more alternatives.
Positional Squeeze*	A squeeze that only works against one specific defender.
Principle of Restricted Choice*	An opponent is assumed to have been forced to play a significant card rather than to have chosen to play it from equals.
Promotion Smother Play	Preventing a trump promotion by retaining a high trump.
Pusher*	A high card, led for a finesse, that may sometimes hold the trick.
Pusher Finesse	A finesse to which a high card is led.
Re-entry Unblock	Unblocking a sequence of high cards to preserve an entry.
Reese Play	A tactic related to Middling but where the lead is from a four-card holding.
Rodwellian Intrafinesse	A method of finessing where several high cards are missing.
Running Suit Eradication Endplay	An endplay that severs communications to a long suit.
Safety Play*	A play designed to cater for unfavorable layouts of the opponents' cards in a suit, often at the cost of a trick.

Scissors Coup*	A loser-on-loser play that severs defensive communications.
Short-Short	A position where one player is short in both trumps and the opponents' long suit.
Shortduck	Ducking one or more winners in a suit to set up a safe way to establish it later.
Shortshake	Discarding a non-loser so as to take a ruff in that suit later.
Simple Squeeze*	An ending in which one opponent is squeezed.
Sky Marshal Finesse	Leading a high card to a finesse to deal with certain distributions of the missing cards.
Speed of Lightning Play	An unexpected lead away from an honor combination toward the closed hand. The opponent will typically play low 'at the speed of lightning'.
Squeeze Card*	The card that forces an opponent to make a discard giving up one or more tricks.
Squeeze Losers	Number of cards left minus the number of top tricks.
Squeeze Stoppers	Defensive guards in declarer's threat suits.
Stopper*	A card that prevents the opponents from running a suit.
Strip Squeeze*	A squeeze that removes a defender's exit cards or winners, often followed by a throw-in.
Suit Combination*	A suit layout where the correct play is non-trivial.
Suit Suffocation Play	Leading into a long semi-solid suit hoping to find declarer with a singleton and kill the suit.
Super Duck	An unusual duck where you have strength in a suit.
Surplus Winner Squeeze*	Squeezing a defender out of winners so he can safely be put on lead.
Surrounding Play*	The lead of a middle card as an unblocking play to pick up a suit combination.
Tapping the Dummy*	Reducing dummy's trump holding by forcing it to ruff.
Tenace-Creating Trick Trash	The deliberate sacrifice of a trick to create a tenace.
Thematic Freeze	Deciding too quickly that you can see the point of the hand.

Threat*	A card that will become a winner if the defensive guard is relinquished.
Threat Suits*	Suits containing threat cards in a squeeze ending.
Tightrope	A situation where play is forced up to a certain point.
Transfer Analysis	Viewing the hand from an opponent's perspective.
Trick Packages	Groups of tricks from one or more suits that allow you to achieve the desired result.
Trick Trashing	A play that gives up a trick, often to unblock a suit or avoid an endplay.
Trick Trashing Entry Fly	An Entry Fly that gives up a trick.
Trick Trashing Isolator	A play that gives up a trick, but isolates one or more of declarer's winners.
Trick Trashing Middle Falsecard	A falsecard of a middle card that costs a trick, the purpose of which is to conceal the presence of a higher card in the player's hand.
Trigger	An abnormal play that should lead to reconsideration of the position.
Triple Squeeze*	An ending where a defender has to guard three suits.
Trump Control*	The ability to draw the opponents' trumps and enjoy winners in the side suits.
Trump Promotion Prevention Duck	Withholding an honor in order to be able to overruff later.
Two Masters	A position where an opponent has winners in both threat suits (and normally a squeeze fails).
Unblock*	Sacrificing an awkwardly placed high card to avoid blocking a suit or an endplay.
Unblocking for a Pusher	Playing an intermediate card to unblock so partner can later lead his pusher with effect.
Vacant Spaces*	The number of unknown cards in either defender's hand.
Vienna Coup*	In a squeeze ending, cashing a high card that establishes an opponent's winner, before he is squeezed out of it.
Visualization*	The ability to reconstruct the unseen hands or assume where vital cards need to be located.
Zia Play	A specific type of falsecard that creates a losing option for declarer.

APPENDIX

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Blackwood on Opening Leads

My Favorite 52

Bridge with the Blue Team

Killing Defence

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Encyclopedia of Cardplay Techniques

Bridge Squeezes Complete, 2nd Ed.

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THIS BOOK WILL CHANGE THE WAY YOU PLAY BRIDGE

In this ground-breaking book, multiple world champion Eric Rodwell describes his unique approach to cardplay. First, he explains his process for deciding on a line of play — using concepts such as +L positions, tightropes, trick packages and Control Units. Then he moves on to a host of innovative ideas, stratagems that can be used as declarer or defender — the Speed of Lightning Play, the Left Jab, the Super Duck, Days of Thunder, Bait and Switch, Gouging, and many, many more. The next two sections explore defense, especially situations that require counter-intuitive strategies. Finally, he talks about the mental aspects of the game, areas that mark the key differences between an average player and a successful one. Throughout, the ideas are illustrated with examples from high-level play, many of them involving the author.

The first draft of this book has been in existence for more than twenty years, but it is only now that Rodwell has decided to allow his 'secrets' to become public knowledge.

I'd been looking for a regular partner, and when I met Eric in 1974, I mentally clapped my hands together and said to myself, "That's the guy." Read this book, and you'll begin to see why.

Jeff Meckstroth, multiple World Champion.

As a young player I was fortunate enough to be among the few to see the original 'Rodwell Files'. They taught me more about the game than anything else I studied. Eric is already well-known for his many contributions to bidding theory. Thanks to this book he will soon be known as a great theorist of cardplay as well.

Fred Gitelman, World Champion.

ERIC RODWELL (Clearwater, FL) has won seven World Championships and fifty National titles (so far); his partnership with Jeff Meckstroth is acknowledged to be the world's best. This is his first advanced-level book.

MARK HORTON (Bath, UK) is editor of *BRIDGE* magazine and a regular *Daily Bulletin* team member at World and European Championships.



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