YES, NO or MAYBE

A NEW WAY TO LEARN BRIDGE

INTRODUCTION AND CARD PLAY BASICS

DAVID GLANDORF

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Master Point Press
214 Merton St. Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4S 1A6
(647) 956-4933

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The *Yes, No or Maybe* series is dedicated to my father

Oscar Glandorf

an elementary school teacher
from whom I must have inherited my love of teaching.

Other books in the *Yes, No or Maybe* series

Introduction and Card Play Basics Workbook
Bidding Basics
Bidding Basics Workbook
More Bidding Basics
More Bidding Basics Workbook

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Yes, No or Maybe is designed to teach beginning players the fundamental concepts of contract bridge. While it can be used as a self-study resource by a student with some understanding of the game of bridge, the intent is that it be used in a classroom format with an experienced teacher.

CONTENT

Yes, No or Maybe is a series of three textbooks, each with an associated workbook. Each textbook has 13 chapters plus an Index of Terms. Each chapter is designed for one three-hour lesson. ***Yes, No or Maybe*** therefore provides a resource for approximately a one-year series of classes meeting weekly with some time off for holidays, short breaks or personal (teacher) scheduling factors.

Each workbook also has 13 chapters with several exercises for the associated textbook chapter and most chapters include practice deals. The exercises can be done in the classroom, assigned as homework or divided between these two activities.

Each textbook/workbook can be used for a single 13-week course or divided approximately equally between two courses.

Introduction and Card Play Basics covers the mechanics of the game, a little bridge history, scoring, hand valuation and preferred contracts, along with the basics of declarer play and defense. No bidding is included here but MiniBridge or a variant is used for sample and practice deals. The Yes, No, Maybe bidding concepts are introduced for the determination of preferred contracts even though no real bidding is involved. The associated workbook includes a set of supplemental scoring exercises for both duplicate and rubber bridge.

Bidding Basics introduces the student to bidding including opening bids at the one level with responses and rebids, overcalls and takeout doubles with advances and rebids, the use of cuebids by responder and advancer and the practical application of the Law of Total Tricks. This textbook also includes an appendix containing some of the basic bridge information provided in ***Introduction and Card Play Basics***.

In ***More Bidding Basics*** the student learns about balancing, several conventions (Stayman, Jacoby transfers, negative doubles, fourth suit forcing, new minor forcing), strong opening bids, preemptive opening bids and overcalls, game tries, slam bidding (direct, Blackwood, Gerber, control bidding) and opening the bidding in third or fourth chair.

The basic material presented in these volumes is not new; in fact, books on fundamental card play and bidding in contract bridge have been around for about

a century. What is new is the organization and methodology. To the best of my knowledge the ***Yes, No or Maybe*** approach to bidding decisions presented herein is unique in the world of teaching bridge. Finally, while MiniBridge has been around for some time, I don't know that it has previously been worked into a complete framework for teaching beginners of all ages.

Be forewarned that there is a tremendous amount of information in the two bidding books. While some of the content may be considered to be more intermediate-level material, every bridge player needs to have at least a rudimentary understanding of all the basic elements of bridge. In the classroom it is possible to play in a controlled environment using deals that are set up to illustrate the topic of the day. When playing in the real world you will frequently encounter situations that were not considered in practice deals. The details included herein should provide a handy reference for many, but by no means all, of these puzzling scenarios.

Several different bidding systems, each with several variations plus optional partnership agreements, exist in today's bridge world. One of the most common systems in current use is Standard American – 5-card majors, which is used in the ***Yes, No or Maybe*** series. The method of presenting this system differs significantly from that used in other textbooks because of its emphasis on logic rather than memorization. Nonetheless, you will be compatible with anyone who plays this system even if your partner is unfamiliar with this way of thinking.

BACKGROUND

After several years of teaching beginner and intermediate bridge using the ACBL Bridge Series, I realized that students with limited past experience struggled significantly with the task of simultaneously learning the intricacies of bidding, playing the cards as declarer, and reasonably defending a deal. In particular, I observed that the demands of learning the fundamentals of bidding often adversely impacted their ability to study and comprehend the fundamentals of declarer play and defense.

I concluded that part of the problem was that the students were trying to learn how to bid using a memorization process rather than a logical sequential thought process. This realization came from the multitude of questions in the form "How many points do I need to make that bid?" or "How many points does that bid show?"

Many years ago as I worked with new players in a social environment, the idea of teaching the card play aspects of bridge before addressing bidding germinated in the back of my mind. Then a few years ago I was introduced to the concept of MiniBridge and found out that I was not the only person who was aware of the challenges of learning bidding and card play simultaneously and that someone else had actually done something about it.

About the same time, I began to present the basic bidding topics from the ACBL series in a somewhat different manner from the traditional approach. My

method consists of (1) formulating a few basic questions, the answers to which are always "**Yes", "No"** or **"Maybe"** and (2) using the answers, along with some other guidelines and rules, to make bidding decisions. This required my students to make mental adjustments/conversions as they studied their student textbooks. I received much positive feedback from my students, perhaps best summarized by a comment from one of my students who had been with me for about two years: "***Yes, No or Maybe*** will take you a long way." At the same time, I found myself apologizing to them for having to convert from the textbook approach to my approach. Eventually many of them suggested that I just write my own book.

I initially just rolled my eyes at their suggestion but in 2009 I decided to take their advice. The result was the first draft of my ***Yes, No or Maybe*** bidding books. This bidding book maintained the overall approach of starting new students with bidding concepts but referred them to the ACBL series bidding book for introductory play and defense topics. In the fall of 2011 I wrote the first draft of ***Introduction and Card Play Basics*** and in January of 2012 began using it for my introductory course for new students. Eventually the bidding book expanded and split into ***Bidding Basics*** and ***More Bidding Basics***.

NOTATIONAL ISSUES

I realize that the modern style of writing is one of gender neutrality. While I understand the social implications of this style, I personally feel it makes for very awkward reading at times. I have found a way around this for much of this series. Opener and intervener (overcaller or takeout doubler) are assigned the masculine gender while responder and advancer (partner of the intervener) are assigned the feminine gender. When reference is made to a player outside of any of these roles the traditional masculine style is used.

Here are a few notational issues:

- I sometimes use M to represent either major suit, e.g., 4M for a contract of either 4♥ or 4♠.
- I sometimes use m to represent either minor suit, e.g., 3m for a contract of either 3♣ or 3♦.
- I sometimes use N and sometimes use NT to denote a notrump contract, e.g., 3N and 3NT both denote a contract of three notrump.
- The result of a contract that is made is written as LSD+N where L is the level of the contract, S is the strain of the contract, D is the declarer compass position and N is the number of tricks above **book** that were taken, e.g., 3SS+4 is written for a contract of 3♠ by South for which 10 tricks were taken.
- The result of a contract that is defeated is written as LSD-N where L, S and D are the same as above and N is the number of tricks the **contract** was defeated, e.g., 2NW-1 is written for a contract of 2NT by West that was defeated by 1 trick.

- Bold italics are used to identify the first introduction of a bridge term and that term is included in the Index of Terms.
- Bold is used for major emphasis.
- A player's position relative to another is often denoted by LHO (left-hand opponent) or RHO (right-hand opponent) .
- Distribution of the four suits in a hand without regard to specific suits is written in the form "i-j-k-l" where each letter represents a number 0-13 with $i \geq j \geq k \geq l$, e.g., 5-3-3-2 represents a hand with 5 cards in one suit, 3 cards in each of two suits, and 2 cards in one suit with specific suits unspecified. Equals signs (=) replace the dashes when the distribution of the cards with regard to specific suits is desired, with the corresponding suits identified in decreasing rank from left to right, e.g., 3=5=1=4 designates a hand with 3 spades, 5 hearts, 1 diamond and 4 clubs.
- Sections and topics: A major division of a chapter is referred to as a section while a major division of a section is referred to as a topic. Sections are identified by large, bold, all caps, centered titles. Topics are identified by medium, bold, left-justified titles with first letters of significant words capitalized.

I truly hope that you will find these books helpful in your journey into the wonderful world of bridge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My greatest debt of gratitude must go to my students. I could not have written this book without their encouragement and cooperation in putting up with the experimentation of my approach to teaching them this game we all love.

Second, many thanks go to Audrey Grant and Betty Starzec who wrote and updated the ACBL Bridge Series which made it easy to start teaching bridge and provided the background for much of the content of this Series. In addition I owe so much to the other great players and authors whose works were such valuable resources for this endeavor. They are listed in the next section.

Third, I must thank two of my students who are also editors, Diane Cuttler and Leah Marchand, for the numerous hours they put into proofreading and editing the text along with their many suggestions for improving its readability. In this regard thanks are also due to Ray Lee of Master Point Press for his helpful suggestions regarding layout and formatting. Thanks also go to Sally Sparrow of Master Point Press for getting my copy ready for press and Ebook distribution.

Finally, special thanks go to my wife, Becky, who is not a bridge player but knows enough about the game to listen to my bridge stories and is willing to provide help with my class preparation and writing when I need it.

RESOURCES AND PERMISSIONS

Several books were invaluable resources for writing the ***Yes, No or Maybe*** series, and this author is deeply indebted to those authors for their contributions to bridge education. Of particular importance were the following five books in the ACBL Bridge Series originally written by Audrey Grant and later revised by Betty Starzec:

1. *Bidding in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1990, Updated 2006
2. *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1988, 2002, Revised April 2007
3. *Defense in the 21st Century*, 2nd Edition, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 1988, 2002, Revised October 2007
4. *Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 2001, Revised 2008
5. *More Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century*, Baron Barclay, Louisville, KY, © 2001, Revised January 2008

I used these books for several years when I first started teaching and was heavily influenced by them while writing the ***Yes, No or Maybe*** series. Most of the chapters in the ***Yes, No or Maybe*** workbooks include many sample deals for practice in the classroom or at home. All of these deals have been extracted from the above five books and are used with the permission of the American Contract Bridge League (www.acbl.org). Special "EZ-Deal" decks of cards for these deals are available from Baron Barclay Bridge Supply (www.baronbarclay.com).

Commentary in *Bidding Basics*, Chapter 9 – "Overcalls and Advances - Part 1" relating to the Law of Total Tricks was drawn from Larry Cohen's book:

6. *To Bid or Not to Bid – The Law of Total Tricks*, Natco Press, Boca Raton, FL © 1992

The following book by Max Hardy was influential in my presentation of the opening bid of 2♣ and responses thereto in *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 6 – "Strong Opening Bids:"

7. *Two Over One Game Force*, Devyn Press Inc., Louisville, KY, © 1989

My treatment of weak two-bids and other preemptive bids, as well as their use in third and fourth seat in *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 7 – "Preemptive Opening Bids and Overcalls," Chapter 12 – "Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth Chair - Part 1" and Chapter 13 – "Opening the Bidding in Third or Fourth Chair - Part 2" was drawn primarily from the following book by Ron Anderson and Sabine Zenkel:

8. *Preempts from A to Z*, Magnus Books, Stamford, CN, © 1996

While the ACBL Series includes a chapter on negative doubles, that material was supplemented by information gleaned from the following book by Marty Bergen devoted to this single topic for *More Bidding Basics*, Chapter 11 – "Negative Doubles."

9. Points Schmoints Series, *Negative Doubles*, Magnus Books, Stamford, CN, © 2000

Most of the content on balancing in Chapter 1 – "Balancing," Chapter 2 – "Advances after a Balancing Double or Bid" and "Chapter 3 – "Rebids after a Balancing Double or Bid" of *More Bidding Basics* was based on the following book by Mike Lawrence:

10. *The Complete Book on Balancing in Contract Bridge – Revised Edition*, Baron Barclay Bridge Supply, Louisville, KY, © 2012

Many of the sample hands were extracted from this book and used with the permission of Mike Lawrence and Baron Barclay Bridge Supply.

The above five books are highly recommended for further reading once you become comfortable with the material presented in ***Yes, No or Maybe***.

The bridge history presented in *Introduction and Card Play Basics*, Chapter 1 – "Getting Started" and the Bridge Essentials portion of the Appendix of *Bidding Basics* was derived almost entirely from the following book written by Charles Goren and the editors of Sports Illustrated:

11. *The Sports Illustrated Book of Bridge*, Chancellor Hall Ltd., NY, NY, © 1961

Additional information included in the bridge history material came from private communication with Julian Laderman who so graciously read that portion of a draft of the book and provided a few corrections and enhancements.


CHAPTER 1

– Getting Started

Introductory Concepts

The Shuffle and Deal

The Play

The Auction

Start of Play

Bridge History

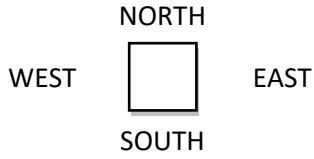
Learning the Game of Bridge

Summary


INTRODUCTORY CONCEPTS

This book addresses the play of the cards in the game of ***contract bridge*** or, in a shortened form, simply ***bridge***. The two most popular forms of bridge are ***rubber bridge*** and ***duplicate bridge***. The main differences between these two forms are the environment, certain aspects of the play and the scoring. These differences are further described later in this chapter and the following chapter.

Bridge is a game of cards for four players. For convenience the players are assigned compass points (independent of the physical polar directions): North, East, South and West as shown below.



Players sitting across from each other are ***partners*** and form a ***partnership***. Partnerships may be arranged ahead of time or a foursome may draw for partners. When drawing for partners the cards are randomly spread face down on the table. Each player draws a card and turns it face up. Typically the players with the two highest cards form one partnership and those with the two lowest cards form the other partnership. Of course upon mutual agreement some other system might be used (such as the player with the highest card partnering with the player with the lowest card; the two with the middle cards forming the other partnership).

Your partner is your friend and accomplice in the game. You both have the same goals – to have fun and score more points than your opponents. Learn to appreciate your partner and respect his decisions, even if you don't always agree. Even experts sometimes have differing opinions.

> *There is no reason to expect that you and your partner will always agree on everything.*
>
> *Learn to compromise.*

Bridge is played with a deck of 52 cards divided into four suits: clubs (♣), diamonds (♦), hearts (♥) and spades (♠). The cards in each suit are ranked from the lowest to the highest as follows: 2, 3, …, 10, J (jack), Q (queen), K (king), A (ace). The top 5 cards (10 – A) are called honor cards or simply ***honors***. The king, queen and jack are called ***face cards*** because of the faces on the cards; the lowest 9 cards (2 – 10) are called ***spot cards*** because of the numerous spots or ***pips*** indicating the suit and rank of the card. The 2 is sometimes referred to as the ***deuce*** and the 3 as the ***trey***. The side of the card showing the suit and rank is called the ***face*** of the card; the opposite side is the ***back*** of the card.

A session of bridge consists of a series of deals each of which entails four stages:

- The ***shuffle*** *and* ***deal***
- The ***auction***
- The ***play***
- The ***scoring***

The number of deals in a session may be (1) predetermined (typical for duplicate bridge), (2) based on a time limit (typical for a group social environment) or (3) based on scoring criteria (typical for a single table home rubber bridge session).

There are two goals to the game of bridge. The first is to have fun. If you don't enjoy playing this game, give it up and take up some other activity. The second is to score more points than your opponents. Most bridge players find they usually have more fun when they score more points than their opponents.

THE SHUFFLE AND DEAL

A deal begins when one of the players shuffles and deals the cards. The first player to deal may be the one who drew the highest card to determine partners or a separate draw may be done. Dealers for subsequent deals proceed clockwise around the table.

Shuffling is usually done by first dividing the deck into two approximately equal groups. Each group is held in one hand between the thumb on one longitudinal end of the stack and the middle and ring fingers on the opposite end. The cards are bent slightly by pressing down on the middle of the stack with the index finger. The middle and ring fingers are placed on the table with the thumbs slightly elevated and fairly close together. The two stacks are rotated slightly so the thumbs are closer to the body than the middle and ring fingers. The cards are then slowly released from both thumbs in a fanning manner so that the cards from both groups interlace (zipper) at the corners as they drop to the table. The two groups are then pushed together and the process repeated. Studies have been done to determine that the cards should be shuffled at least SEVEN times in this manner to ensure a random deal. When repeating the shuffle it is often helpful to alternate holding the cards face up one time and face down the next to prevent the cards from becoming deformed. Of course the last shuffle should always be face down so that the dealer cannot see the cards.

After the shuffle has been completed it is considered a common practice and good etiquette to offer the player to the dealer's right an opportunity to cut the cards. Dealer then distributes the cards one at a time beginning with the player to his left and continuing in a clockwise manner until the deck has been exhausted.

After all of the cards have been dealt each player picks up his 13 cards (called his ***hand***) and fans them so that he can see them but they are hidden from the other players. Although not necessary, most players find it helpful to sort

their cards into suits with the highest card in each suit to the left. It is also common practice to alternate colors when arranging the suits.

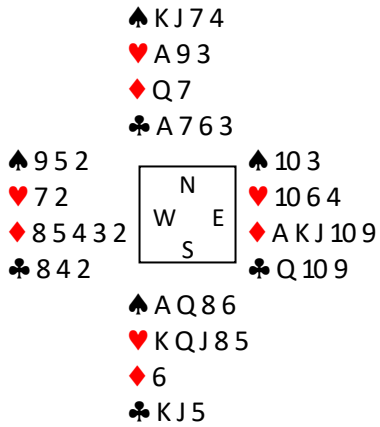
♠ K J 10 6
♥ Q 4 3
♦ A 8 7 3
♣ 9 6

When a bridge hand is displayed in a book, magazine or newspaper it usually appears in a symbolic manner as shown here. Sometimes the symbols for hearts and diamonds are printed in red instead of black – especially in a commercial textbook.

S K J 10 6
H Q 4 3
D A 8 7 3
C 9 6

When presenting a hand in a classroom environment or discussion with another player, the suit symbols are usually replaced with the first letters of the suit name. The above hand might appear like this.

A complete deal is usually presented like this:



THE PLAY

A ***trick*** consists of 4 cards – 1 from each player. One player ***leads*** to a trick by selecting a card from his hand and laying it face up on the table in front of him. Each of the other players, in turn clockwise, selects a card from his hand and lays it face up on the table in front of him. BUT each of the other players MUST whenever possible play a card in the same suit that was led. This is called ***following suit***. If he has no cards in the suit that was led he may select any card from his hand. **NOTE: It is not only considered poor etiquette to select the card you are going to play before it is your turn, but such action may actually provide an unauthorized insight to another player regarding cards you may or may not hold. Just make a practice of not even touching the card you are going to play until it is your turn. Then remove that card from your hand and place it on the table.**

Normally the player who plays the highest card in the suit that is led will ***win*** (***take***) the trick.

During the auction one of the suits may have been designated as a ***trump suit***. If so, cards in the trump suit act as "wild cards." They outrank all of the cards in any other suit. If a trump suit has been designated the deal is said to be played in the name of that suit. If no trump suit was specified the deal is said to be played in ***notrump***. When there is a trump suit the other three suits are called ***plain suits*** or ***side suits***.

If you cannot follow suit at your turn to play and you play a card in the trump suit, you are said to ***trump*** or ***ruff*** (slang) the trick. If you play a card in some other suit, you are said to ***discard*** or ***sluff*** (slang) that card. A trump card can be led at any time by the player who has the lead.

If one or more trump cards are played on a trick, the player who played the highest trump card wins the trick.

There are two common variations in the mechanics of playing a card to a trick.

In a rubber bridge game all of the cards played to the trick are often placed in the middle of the table and then picked up by one of the partners of the side that won the trick – stacking them face down in overlapping piles in front of him as play continues.

In a duplicate bridge game each player must retain all of the cards he started with for the deal. After a trick has been completed he turns the card face down and places it near the edge of the table a slight distance from the left of center – maybe half way to the left end. If he or his partner won the trick, he turns the card vertically so that it "points" toward his partner's side of the table. If an opponent won the trick he turns it horizontally so it "points" to the opponents' sides of the table. Subsequent tricks are placed in a similar manner – slightly overlapping previous tricks and strung out from left to right in front of him so he can always see which side won each trick. Rubber bridge players, especially beginners, may also find it convenient to record their tricks in this manner so they can review and discuss the deal after the play is complete. Such a discussion is called the ***post mortem***.

The player who wins a trick leads to the next trick. Play continues until the players have played all of their cards to a total of 13 tricks.

Beginner players often wonder what card they should play to a trick when it is their turn and they have a choice of two or more cards. This is not an easy question to answer and is the focus of the remainder of this book. We will consider this question both from an offensive viewpoint and a defensive viewpoint. But there are two principles to keep in mind:

- One of the objects of any deal is to win tricks.
- While the player who won a trick leads to the next trick, from a scoring viewpoint it matters not whether you or your partner wins a trick.

Tricks are won with high cards, low cards in long suits and trumps.

The last point is significant in many cases. For example, if your partner has already played the king of a suit that was led and you have the ace and a small card or two, you do not need to play the ace for your side to win the trick. On the other hand, there are some situations in which there is a tactical advantage to ***overtaking*** a trick which would otherwise have been won by your partner.

THE AUCTION

If the players could each look at their partner's hands, they might be able to come to an agreement on whether they would like a deal to be played with a particular suit as a trump suit or in notrump. Of course this is not allowed, but, before the play of a deal begins, an auction is conducted. During the auction the players are allowed to exchange information regarding their hands through a restricted language consisting of certain allowable ***calls***.

A Player's Call

After the cards have been dealt and the players have looked at their hands, the **dealer** starts the auction by making the first call. A call is one of the following:

- ***Pass*** – Indicates the player has nothing to say regarding the auction at this time but retains the right to say something later if any subsequent player makes any call other than pass
- A ***bid*** – A tentative ***contract*** for the partnership to take some number of tricks with the deal being played in a specified suit (the trump suit) or notrump (there will not be a trump suit). A bid must always be higher than the preceding bid. The final bid in the auction becomes the contract. A bid is of the form LS where L is the ***level*** of the contract (a number from 1 to 7) and S is the ***strain*** in which the deal is to be played (one of the four suits or notrump). It only stands to reason that if a partnership is to win the auction, it must contract to take at least half the tricks. So the first 6 tricks are called ***book*** and do not count toward the contract. For example, a bid of 1♠ is a tentative contract to take 7 tricks with spades as the trump suit.
- ***Double*** – Generally a statement of intent of defeating the contract for the most recent bid provided it was made by an opponent. (You are not allowed to say double if the most recent bid was by your partner.) If no subsequent bids are made the points scored for the deal are greater than if the double had not been made. If a subsequent bid is made by any player the double is no longer in effect. The double is often used for other purposes to pass certain information to your partner.
- ***Redouble*** – Generally a statement that you think your side can make a contract for which a double is in effect. This call can be made only if an opponent doubled a bid made by you or your partner and that double is

still in effect. The redouble further increases the points scored for the deal if no subsequent bids are made. If another player makes a bid after a redouble, the redouble is no longer in effect. The redouble is sometimes used for other purposes.

The first player to make a **bid** is called the ***opening bidder*** or the ***opener***. Opener's partner is called the ***responder***. If an opponent of the opening bidder enters the auction with a bid or a double, the first one to do so is called the ***intervener*** and his partner is called the ***advancer***. For ease of writing in this book the opener and intervener are assigned the male gender and their partners the female gender.

The Complete Auction

The auction proceeds clockwise around the table with each player making his call in turn. This continues until either all four players have passed at their first opportunity or until three successive players pass after a bid (or double or redouble) was made. If all four players pass at their first opportunity, the deal is completed except for the scoring. Otherwise the final bid becomes the contract and the play commences. Note that if you pass at your turn you may not get another chance to bid.

For the purpose of bidding the four suits have rank. Their rank from bottom up is particularly easy to remember because they are in alphabetical order: **c**lubs, **d**iamonds, **h**earts and **s**pades. Notrump sits on top of all the suits so at any particular level there are five available bids. If you wish to make a bid in a strain that is higher ranking than the strain of the most recent bid, you may bid at the same level. But if your strain is lower ranking you must increase the level of the bid. For example, suppose you wanted to make a bid in hearts as cheaply as possible. If the most recent bid was 1♣ you could bid 1♥; but if the most recent bid was 1♠ you would have to bid 2♥. The two lower-ranking suits, clubs and diamonds, are called the ***minor suits*** (***minors***). The two higher-ranking suits are called the ***Major Suits*** (***Majors***). The Majors are more important than the minors not only because they outrank the minors, but, as you will see in the next chapter, you will score more points in a Major than a minor for the same number of tricks.

A complete auction usually appears in print as successive lines of calls for each of the four players, identified by their compass positions, and starting with West as illustrated below.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

For this deal North was the dealer and passed initially, but then bid at his second opportunity. The following three players passed, ending the auction.

This was a fairly mundane auction. It was ***uncontested*** meaning that East-West did nothing but pass and let North-South have their way. The final bid was 2♠ by North meaning that to fulfill their contract North-South had to take 8 tricks (the book of 6 plus the contract level of 2) and spades would be the trump suit. Since North-South won the auction they will be on offense during the play attempting to make their contract. East-West will be on defense trying to prevent them from fulfilling their contract or to ***set*** them.

Bids are usually spoken in a rubber bridge game. The modern method of communicating bids in a duplicate bridge game is through the use of ***bidding boxes***. Bidding boxes are special small boxes that sit on the table to the right of each player. Each box has two partitions, each containing special cards for a subset of the calls that can be made. One partition contains one card for each bid that can be made from 1♣ up to 7N. The cards are notched, of different lengths, and labeled so that each of the 35 different bids is clearly visible. The other partition contains several colored cards labeled Pass (green), a few labeled D or X (red) for Double and a couple labeled RD or XX (blue) for Redouble. These are used for the other calls that can be made during the auction. These bidding cards are placed in front of you on the table to display your call at your turn and remain there until the auction is complete. Once the auction has been completed, the bidding cards are returned to the boxes. There is no requirement that bidding boxes be used in a duplicate game, but most duplicate players prefer them and most duplicate bridge venues use them. These boxes may be used in a rubber bridge game.

START OF PLAY

The first partner to bid the strain of the contract is called the ***declarer***. One of the more interesting features of bridge is that the defenders get to attack first. The lead to the first trick (***opening lead***) is made by the player sitting to the left of the declarer. As with the start of any trick, the ***opening leader*** may choose any card from his hand for the opening lead. But there are two differences for the opening lead, as described in the following topic.

The Inquiry

Before choosing the opening lead, that player may ask for a review of the auction and also ask the opponents to explain any bids they had made, especially if they seemed unusual. When doing so it is proper for such questions to be asked of and answered by the **partner** of the player who made the bid.

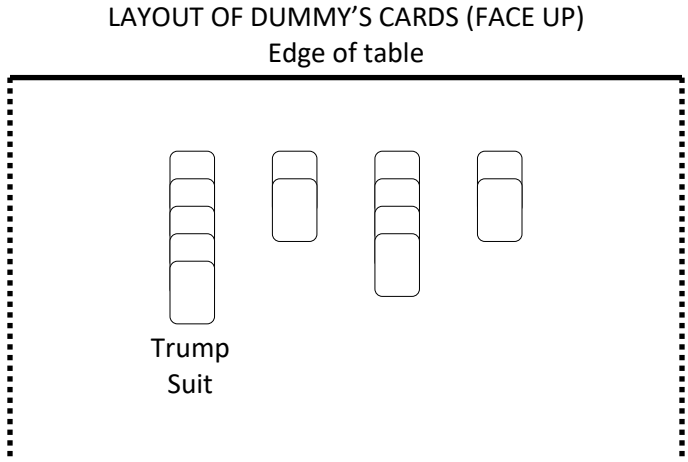
At the end of this Q&A period, if any, the opening leader chooses his lead and places it **face down** on the table. He then asks his partner if he has any questions. At this point the opening leader's partner has the same Q&A opportunity as had the opening leader. The card chosen for the opening lead is kept face down to avoid any influence on questions asked by the opening leader's partner.

On rare occasion the wrong defender may attempt to make the opening lead. If this is the case that player should be directed to return the card to his hand and

the proper defender makes the opening lead in the normal manner. Due to the opening lead initially placed face down, the player who erred has not relayed any unauthorized information to his partner.

After the Opening Lead

Most of the time there are no questions asked. But regardless once the Q&A is complete the opening leader turns his card face up. At this point something unusual happens. Declarer's partner, referred to as the ***dummy*** (as in puppet), lays all of his cards on the table face up. He arranges them in four columns, one for each suit, pointing toward declarer. If there is a trump suit, those cards are positioned in the right-most column (to declarer's left). It is common practice to alternate the colors of the suits. The highest card in each suit is nearest dummy's table edge but with space reserved for recording the tricks. The remaining cards are arranged in descending rank and partially overlapped so that each card is clearly identifiable.



Declarer determines which card to play from dummy on each trick and directs dummy to play those cards at dummy's turn. If necessary, declarer may physically play the cards from dummy.

Play then continues as discussed earlier.

Suit Pairings

It is sometimes advantageous to divide the four suits into two pairs. There are three ways this can be done:

- By rank – Major Suits (Hearts & Spades) or minor suits (Clubs & Diamonds)
- By color – ***Black suits*** (Clubs and Spades) or ***red suits*** (Diamonds and Hearts)

- By shape – ***Pointed suits*** (Diamonds and Spades) or ***rounded suits*** (Clubs and Hearts). If you look at a deck of cards, the pointed and rounded features will be obvious.

These divisions allow us to refer to any two specific suits in a "shorthand" manner.

Player Identification

While we can always refer to a specific player by his compass point, sometimes it is more convenient to use a relative notation. This is done by referring to your left-hand opponent (***LHO***) or your right-hand opponent (***RHO***).

BRIDGE HISTORY

The history of bridge is part factual and part speculative. Europeans were playing triumph, a game similar to bridge, back in the 16th century. Whist evolved from triumph sometime during the next 100 years. By the end of the 17th century whist was common throughout England and played there for three centuries. In 1742 Edmond Hoyle published the internationally renowned, *A Short Treatise on the Game of Whist*. A later version of the book brought about the phrase "according to Hoyle" which is still heard today. This book became the second most widely circulated book in the 18th century, the Bible being first. Whist was so popular it eventually became the subject of hundreds of books. There was even a game called "Duplicate Whist" the forerunner of today's duplicate bridge format.

But when, where and how did whist evolve into bridge? The Russians, Turks, British and French all lay claims to the beginning of bridge, and to this day no one knows for sure who is right. We do know that its documented arrival in England occurred in 1894 by Lord Brougham at the staid Portland Club, the traditional headquarters of whist. He had just returned from the South of France where he had been introduced to the game.

It was not long before bridge overcame whist in popularity at the Portland Club. Understand that this establishment was not just a neighborhood pub but a gathering place for the aristocrats of London society. As might be expected this new game was not accepted by many who considered whist to be "the game" to be played.

Bridge had been introduced in the United States a little earlier. In the fall of 1892 Henry Barbey brought the game to the New York Whist Club after having learned it in Paris.

This early game of bridge is now called "***bridge whist***" and was much simpler than the game we play today.

In the mid 1800's the idea of "dummy" and "bidding with levels" arose in India when a foursome became a threesome because one player failed to arrive. This idea also spread quickly. Throughout the remainder of the first quarter of

the 20th century, there were several other attempts to make changes to the game, but none of them came to fruition.

Then came 1925… the year of bridge as we know it today! Harold S. "Mike" Vanderbilt was on a long cruise from San Francisco to Havana on the liner *Finland*. Vanderbilt and his three companions, just enough for a game of ***auction bridge*** as it had become known, tired of the relatively simple game. Vanderbilt devised a new scoring system adding the idea that you had to bid to the game or slam level to receive the associated bonus and the concept of ***vulnerability***. The contract concept was part of auction bridge and adapted from the French game of ***plafond*** which had been well established 10 years earlier. The term ***vulnerable*** was suggested by a young female observer as Vanderbilt was explaining his system of scoring.

Vanderbilt had no intention of revolutionizing the game of bridge as it was currently being played. He was simply looking for a change in the daily entertainment of his cruise partners. But, once they returned home and introduced the idea to their bridge-playing friends, the idea took off like wild fire, quickly spreading throughout the United States and overseas. There were several early changes to scoring associated with notrump contracts, but that soon settled down to the present system. Otherwise, except for two minor changes to the scoring system (adopted by the World Bridge Federation in 1987 for duplicate bridge and in 1993 for rubber bridge[1]), the contract bridge game we play today is essentially the same one Vanderbilt introduced.

In the early days of contract bridge many different bidding systems developed in the United States. Much of the impetus for this was the prospect of writing and selling books on your 'system,' thus gaining fame and fortune. This made it very difficult for a group of strangers to join in a game, none being familiar with the system played by the others. Communication was very difficult if not impossible, almost like everyone speaking a different language. The British, on the other hand, did not believe in trying to pass information to partner through an artificial bidding process.

Enter Ely Culbertson, a flamboyant personality, expert player and writer who had devised his own system. The year was 1930. Culbertson came across a challenge in a bridge book written by Lt. Col. Walter Buller, the bridge editor of the London *Daily Telegraph*. In essence, Buller stated that he believed any good British foursome could beat any American foursome 'sky-high' regardless of what fancy 'system' they used and would lay heavy money on the line. Of all the American bridge experts who must have been aware of this challenge, Culbertson was the only one to formally accept it through a column in his own magazine, *Bridge World*. Culbertson won the match and soon thereafter launched a new book espousing his 'system' which he naturally claimed was the reason his team won the match. Thus was born the Culbertson System which was used by many

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridge_scoring#Recent_scoring_changes

players for several years. By the way, Ely's partner in marriage and bridge was Josephine, who many experts today believe was a better player than Ely.

A new era, a new expert player and writer, a new system. It is the 1940s and 1950s. Enter Charles Goren and the point-count system which was based on earlier ideas from Milton Work. In fact, the system is sometimes referred to as the Work point-count system. Charles Goren was "Mr. Bridge" during his prime, winning many major events and the undisputed leader in tournament competition, playing most often with his favorite partner Helen Sobel, although he remained a bachelor. Goren's bidding system was easier to learn than Culbertson's and had many advantages, so eventually it overtook the Culbertson system in popularity. Although several changes have been made over the years, Goren's system is essentially the one that is the basis for bidding in this series.

Goren could not have had his success without an outstanding partner in her own right, and there is an interesting anecdote involving Ms. Sobel. She was once asked what it felt like playing with a great expert. Her reply: "Ask Charlie!"

While not as prolific as in the early days of contract bridge, other bidding systems do exist in today's bridge world. Nonetheless, the one presented in this series is known by almost all players in the United States and many other countries. So, once you learn it, you should be able to join in a game almost anywhere you might be.

There are almost 40 million bridge players in North America playing home style rubber bridge or tournament style duplicate bridge, both forms of contract bridge. Most duplicate bridge is played under the auspices of the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL – www.acbl.org). There are more than 3200 ACBL bridge clubs, and hundreds of tournaments are held each year across the United States, Canada and Mexico. The American Bridge Associaton (ABA – http://ababridge.org/) is another sponsor of duplicate bridge in North America.

LEARNING THE GAME OF BRIDGE

As you continue your bridge adventure it might be helpful if you compare learning this game with working a giant jigsaw puzzle. We can't fill in all the pieces at once but start with a framework and then build on that to fill in more pieces. Just like many jigsaw puzzles have certain features you might concentrate on, so does bridge. Here is a partial outline:

- Bidding
  - Opening Bids
  - Responses
  - Rebids
  - Competitive Bids
  - Slam Bidding
- Declarer Play
  - Notrump Contracts
  - Suit Contracts
- Defense
  - Opening Leads
  - Third Hand Play
  - Second Hand Play
  - Defensive Strategies
  - Signaling
- Scoring
  - Duplicate Bridge
  - Rubber bridge
- Rules – What should be done when someone
  - Bids out of turn
  - Makes an insufficient bid
  - Makes an opening lead out of turn
  - Plays to a trick out of turn
- Proprieties
  - Proper etiquette at the table
  - Kibitzing (watching others play as a spectator)
  - Ethics

The Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth?

Not quite. As described above, learning this game is like working a jigsaw puzzle. You have to start someplace and build on it. Most of the time it is best to focus on a particular area for a while and not get distracted with how all the different areas hook together. That often requires the presentation material to omit various exceptions to the "rules." It is quite appropriate to use this material as "gospel" with your peers, but be cautious when discussing what you learn here with advanced players who may tell you something different. It is all right to respond with the retort "Well, the book says … ," but be willing to listen to their comments and see if they are reasonable when looking at the big picture.

SUMMARY

Introductory Concepts

The two most popular forms of contract bridge are rubber bridge and duplicate bridge. Bridge is a card game for four players, two partners sitting across from each other with positions denoted by the primary compass points, independent of the actual polar directions. A standard deck of 52 cards is used with cards in each suit ranked from top down, ace through deuce.

A "deal" consists of four stages in sequential order: the shuffle and deal, the auction, the play, the scoring.

The Shuffle and Deal

After the cards have been shuffled, the dealer distributes the cards face down and one at a time starting with the player on his left and continuing clockwise until each player has 13 cards. At that point the cards are picked up by the players and usually sorted into suits.

The Auction

The dealer starts an auction wherein each player in turn clockwise makes a call. A call is one of four statements: Pass, a bid, Double or Redouble. A bid consists of a level (a number 1 through 7) and a strain – one of the four suits (clubs, diamonds, hearts or spades) or notrump. A bid is a tentative contract to take the stated level plus 6 (book) tricks. After the first bid, any subsequent bid must be higher than the previous bid. In this regard the suits have rank in the order listed above, which happens to be alphabetical, with notrump outranking all of the suits; therefore, a bid can be of the same level as the previous bid in a higher rank or in any rank at a higher level. The auction ends if all four players pass at their first opportunity or after three consecutive passes following a bid, double or redouble. If at least one player bids, the last bid is the actual contract. The pair whose player made the last bid is on offense and their opponents are the defenders. The offensive player who first mentioned the strain of the final contract is the declarer. The first player to make a bid is the opening bidder or opener while his partner is the responder. The first opponent to enter the auction with a bid or double is the intervener and his partner is the advancer.

The Play

The player to the left of declarer starts the play by first, if he so chooses, asking for a review of the auction and an explanation of any calls he did not understand. He then makes the opening lead by choosing a card from his hand and laying it first face down on the table. He then asks partner if he has any questions regarding the auction. At the end of this inquiry the opening leader turns his card face up. Declarer's partner, the dummy, spreads his hand face up arranged by suit in four parallel columns aligned towards declarer in decreasing rank. If there is a trump suit it is placed on dummy's right.

Each player in turn clockwise selects a card to play from his hand and lays it face up on the table. However, declarer either plays the cards from dummy's hand or directs dummy to do so. The trick is won by the player who plays the highest card in the suit led or the player who plays the highest trump card if there are one or more trump cards played. Whoever wins one trick leads to the next trick and play continues this way until all 13 tricks have been played. During the play declarer attempts to take enough tricks to fulfill his contract while the defenders try to prevent him from doing so – thereby setting him.

Bridge History

Bridge evolved from whist. The current version of the game, contract bridge, is the result of a modification of its predecessor, auction bridge, by Harold S. Vanderbilt in 1925, primarily through a change in the scoring system. Charles Goren was the father of the modern bidding system through his work in the 1940s and 1950s.

Learning the Game of Bridge

Learning the game of bridge is not an easy task. Areas that require significant study are bidding, declarer play, defense, scoring, rules and proprieties. Because there are so many threads that may be followed in any area, not all details of a particular topic can be covered at once. Consequently there are exceptions to many guidelines which are not explained during the initial presentation of most topics.


CHAPTER 2

– Scoring

Recording the Result

Trick Points

Duplicate Bridge and Rubber Bridge

Vulnerability

Bonus Points and Defensive Points

Other Forms of Scoring

Bidding Strategies

Summary


You will have great difficulty accomplishing the second goal of bridge (score more points than your opponents) if you do not understand scoring. In addition you will have a hard time understanding many aspects of the bidding if you don't see how they relate to scoring.

> ***Understanding scoring is the most important factor in learning to play bridge.***

After a deal has been played points are awarded to the offensive side if the contract was made and to the defensive side if the contract was defeated. ***Offensive points*** are divided into two categories: ***trick points*** and ***bonus points***.

RECORDING THE RESULT

The result of a deal is written in the form LSDR where

L is the level of the contract – a numeral from 1 through 7.
S is the strain – C, D, H, S or N or the symbol equivalents for the suits.
D is the declarer compass point – N, E, S or W.
R is the result – either a plus sign followed by the number of ***tricks made*** (tricks taken over book) or a minus sign followed by the number of ***undertricks*** (tricks short of the contract).

Here are a few examples:

- 2DS+2: South was declarer in a contract of 2 diamonds and took 8 tricks exactly making his contract. In this example we would say that declarer made 2 diamonds.
- 3SN+4: North was declarer in a contract of 3 spades and made 4 spades. If declarer takes more tricks than required by his contract those extra tricks are referred to as ***overtricks***. So in this example North made his contract with 1 overtrick.
- 3NW+3: West exactly made his contract of 3 notrump.
- 6NE-1: East was declarer in a contract of 6 notrump and took only 11 tricks thereby defeated (set) by 1 trick.

TRICK POINTS

Whenever declarer makes his contract his partnership is awarded points based on the strain of the contract and the number of tricks made. If the strain is a minor suit (clubs or diamonds) each trick made is worth 20 points. Each trick made is worth 30 points for a Major Suit (hearts or spades) contract. Technically if the strain is notrump the first trick is worth 40 points and subsequent tricks are each worth 30 points. But an alternate way of thinking of the trick points for a

notrump contract is that you receive 30 points per trick (the same as for a Major Suit contract) plus a supplement of 10 points. This makes it easy to calculate the trick points for contracts that are made by simply multiplying the number of tricks made by the points per trick for the strain of the contract, and then adding 10 if the strain is notrump. For the first three examples of the previous section this results in the following:

- 2DS+2: 2 x 20 = 40
- 3SN+4: 4 x 30 = 120
- 3NW+3: 3 x 30 + 10 = 100

Partscore, Game and Slam Contracts

All contracts are categorized by their trick score and/or the level of the contract. Any contract worth at least 100 trick points is called a ***game contract***. From the trick points allocated to the different strains it is easy to determine the cheapest game contracts for each strain:

- 5C or 5D (5 of a minor): 5 x 20 = 100
- 4H or 4S (4 of a Major): 4 x 30 = 120
- 3N (3 notrump): 3 x 30 + 10 = 100

Any contract for which the trick score is less than 100 points is called a ***partscore contract***.

Any 6-level contract is called a ***small slam*** or sometimes a ***baby slam***. Any 7-level contract is called a ***grand slam***. Clearly, regardless of the strain, any slam contract is also a game contract.

DUPLICATE BRIDGE AND RUBBER BRIDGE

Duplicate bridge and rubber bridge are both forms of contract bridge, the subject of ***Yes, No or Maybe***. There are many similarities between the two games. For example, they both have the same four stages to a deal. But there are also differences. Duplicate bridge is always a game where there are at least two tables of four players involved while rubber bridge is often played by only four players at a single table.

In a duplicate bridge game after a deal has been bid, played and scored, the cards are returned to a tray with four slots – one for each compass direction. Each player must retain his cards during the play so that he can return them to the proper slot in the tray at the end of the deal. The cards for each deal are shuffled and dealt only once at the beginning of the session. The trays are numbered consecutively from 1 to 36, the maximum number that would ever be in play in a given session. Each tray/deal is referred to as a ***board***. At the beginning of a session the boards are distributed to the tables (numbered consecutively starting at 1) in groups of two to usually no more than five, the same number of boards being given to each table. Generally speaking, the fewer tables in play the more

boards given to each table. All players are given an allotted amount of time to bid, play and score those boards (about seven minutes per board on average). More time is allotted for games restricted to less experienced players. These deals constitute a ***round***. At the end of a round the cards and at least half of the players move to another table keeping the same partner throughout the session. By the end of the session everyone has played most if not all of the boards and against about half of the other partnerships. If the number of tables is small each partnership may play against all or nearly all of the other partnerships.

The format of rubber bridge is usually much simpler. The cards are simply reshuffled after each deal and reused for a subsequent deal. The cards played to each trick are often placed in the middle of the table and collected by one of the partners of the side that won the trick. There are forms of rubber bridge, often referred to as ***party bridge,*** where several tables may be in play with players moving from one table to another and perhaps even changing partners after some set number of deals.

Perhaps the greatest difference between duplicate bridge and rubber bridge is in the scoring methodology. In duplicate bridge the score received for a deal is independent of the scores received for any previous or subsequent deals. In rubber bridge scoring there is a cumulative effect. These differences are further described in the remainder of this chapter.

VULNERABILITY

For every deal each side is either vulnerable or ***nonvulnerable***. Vulnerability affects the scoring. The term arises because when you are vulnerable your opponents will score more points if you fail to make your contract than when you are nonvulnerable.

Vulnerability for duplicate bridge is independent of any previous deals. Displayed on the top of each board is the board number, an indicator of the dealer and the vulnerabilities of the partners. This information is also shown on the standard score sheets used for duplicate games. There are four possible combinations of vulnerability for the two partnerships:

- None
- N-S only
- E-W only
- Both

These vulnerabilities are assigned to duplicate boards 1 through 4 with the corresponding dealers N, E, S and W. The next three groups of four boards repeat the dealer cycle and also the vulnerability cycle but shift it one position so that at the end of 16 boards every compass position has been the dealer four times – once for each of the four vulnerability combinations. Boards 17 – 32 repeat the entire cycle of the first 16 boards. Boards 33 – 36 are the same as the first four boards.

Vulnerability for rubber bridge is more complicated because it depends on the results of previous deals. To understand this we need to consider a Rubber Bridge Score Sheet.

BLANK RUBBER BRIDGE SCORE SHEET

WE	THEY

← The Line

The score sheet is divided into two columns headed WE (left) and THEY (right). One player is designated the scorekeeper and enters the scores for his partnership on the WE side and the scores for the opponents on the THEY side. Underneath the column headers the scoring area is divided into upper and lower regions by a horizontal line commonly referred to simply as "***The Line***." Trick points up to the level of the contract for contracts that are made are entered below The Line. This includes the supplemental 10 points for a notrump contract. Trick points for overtricks, bonuses and ***defensive points*** (points scored by the defenders) are entered above The Line. Points entered below The Line accumulate for both sides until one side has reached 100 points or more. Then another horizontal line is drawn below those scores. As an example, consider the following three results where North is keeping score: (1) 2HN+4, (2) 2CE+3, (3) 2NS+3. The resulting score sheet with annotations for these three results is shown below.

RUBBER BRIDGE SCORE SHEET AFTER ONE SIDE REACHES A GAME BELOW THE LINE

WE	THEY
(3) 30 (1) 60	(2) 20
(1) 60 (3) 70	(2) 40

← The Line

Note that points above The Line are entered "**from bottom up**" in the upper area while points below The Line are entered "**from top down**" in the lower region.

Once one side reaches a game total below The Line they become vulnerable. Play then continues as each side again strives to accumulate 100 points below The Line. But the last horizontal line that was drawn wipes the slate clean for

both sides with regard to this quest. There is no carry-over of points in excess of 100 for the side that reached the game level or partial game points for their opponents. This procedure continues until one side accumulates two separate game totals. That ends the current rubber (except for some scoring bonuses discussed in the next section) and another rubber is started on a new blank score sheet, or if space is available, the same score sheet can be used. In the latter case a second horizontal line is drawn to indicate the end of the current rubber.

BONUS POINTS AND DEFENSIVE POINTS

Now that we have introduced the concepts of different types of contracts, duplicate bridge and rubber bridge scoring methodology and vulnerability, we are finally ready to discuss bonus points and defensive points. Bonus points, if any, are awarded only to the side that makes a contract. Defensive points apply only when a contract is defeated and are given to the side that set the contract.

Whenever you make your contract in duplicate bridge you immediately receive some bonus points in addition to your trick points:

- Partscore contract..... 50 points
- Nonvulnerable game contract ..... 300 points
- Vulnerable game contract ..... 500 points
- Nonvulnerable small slam contract..... 500 points
- Vulnerable small slam contract..... 750 points
- Nonvulnerable grand slam contract ..... 1000 points
- Vulnerable grand slam contract ..... 1500 points

You receive either the partscore or the game bonus – not both. To receive the game bonus you must bid to the game level. For example, if you bid 2 notrump and make 3, you will receive only the partscore bonus, but if you bid 3 notrump and make at least 3 you will receive the appropriate game bonus. **Slam bonuses are IN ADDITION TO the game bonuses.** Just as for the game bonuses, you must bid to the slam level and make your contract to receive the bonus.

There are no immediate partscore or game bonuses in rubber bridge. Instead there is a bonus for "winning the rubber." You win the rubber if your side accumulates two game scores below The Line. If your opponents have not yet accumulated a game score below The Line, you are awarded a bonus of 700 points. If the opponents have accumulated a game score below The Line, your bonus is only 500 points. These bonus points are entered above The Line. Rubber bridge players receive the same slam bonuses as in duplicate bridge.

Rubber bridge players are eligible for a special bonus not available to duplicate players. These "***honor points***" are awarded strictly on the "luck of the draw."

- 100 points if you hold 4 of the 5 honor cards in the **trump suit**

- 150 points if you hold all 5 honor cards in the **trump suit**
- 150 points if you hold all 4 aces in a **notrump** contract

These honor bonuses are awarded if they are claimed (declared) before the start of the next deal by **any** of the four players who was dealt all of the required cards **in his hand**. These bonus points are entered above The Line.

You are awarded defensive points whenever your side defeats your opponents' contract. The normal value for each undertrick is

- 50 points per trick if the opponents are not vulnerable
- 100 points per trick if the opponents are vulnerable

In rubber bridge these points are entered above The Line.

Doubled or Redoubled Contracts

Contrary to your probable expectation, the score received for a doubled or redoubled contract is not simply 2 or 4 times the score received for a standard contract.

For a doubled or redoubled contract, the trick points must be divided into those received for tricks up to the contract level and overtricks. The score for the former is simply 2 (doubled) or 4 (redoubled) times the standard value. Overtricks for a doubled contract are each worth 100 points if nonvulnerable and 200 points if vulnerable. Redoubled overtricks are worth twice as much as doubled overtricks.

You receive an **extra** 50 bonus points for making a doubled contract or 100 points for a redoubled contract. These extra bonus points are often called "***insult points***." The partscore, game, and slam bonuses are unaffected by a double or redouble. These points are recorded above The Line in rubber bridge.

These offensive points for doubled or redoubled contracts are summarized in the following table:

	Up to the contract level	Value of each overtrick		Insult
	Multiply normal value by	Nonvulnerable	Vulnerable	Points
Doubled:	2	100	200	50
Redoubled:	4	200	400	100

Failure to make your contract when doubled or redoubled can be quite expensive because of the nonlinear scale used for defensive points. If you are doubled and not vulnerable the opponents are awarded 100 points for the first undertrick, 200 points for each of the next two undertricks and 300 points for each subsequent undertrick. Counting by 100 this translates to 1, 3, 5, 8, 11 …. as the score received for the number of tricks set. If you are vulnerable they receive 200 points for the first undertrick and 300 points for each subsequent undertrick, or analogous to a nonvulnerable contract: 2, 5, 8, 11 …. Defensive points received for redoubled contracts that are defeated are twice those for doubled contracts. These defensive points are summarized in the following table:

Number of tricks set	1	2	3	4	5	More
Doubled Contracts						
Nonvulnerable	100	300	500	800	1100	@300
Vulnerable	200	500	800	1100	1400	@300
Redoubled Contracts						
Nonvulnerable	200	600	1000	1600	2200	@600
Vulnerable	400	1000	1600	2200	2800	@600

End-of-Rubber Scoring

In rubber bridge a ***rubber*** usually ends when one side scores two games, but sometimes because of time limits or mutual agreement of the players the rubber may be terminated prematurely. This is referred to as an ***unfinished rubber***. In such cases a bonus of 100 points is given to a partnership if only they have a partscore below The Line. Similarly, if only one side is vulnerable, they receive a 300 point bonus.

When the rubber has ended the scores are totaled for both sides. Whichever side has the higher total is declared the winner of the match. If additional rubbers are to be played, the difference in scores is rounded to the nearest 100 and carried forward to the next rubber. The example started earlier is continued below.

COMPLETED RUBBER SCORE SHEET

WE	THEY
(6) 500 (5) 750 (3) 30 (1) 60	 (4) 100 (2) 20
(1) 60 (3) 70	(2) 40
	(4) 120
(5) 120	
(7) 1590 (8) -280 (9) 1310	(7) 280

WE = North – South, THEY = East – West

(1) 2HN+4
(2) 2CE+3
(3) 2NS+3
(4) $2H^{X}W+3$
← The Line
(5) 6DN+6
(6) Rubber bonus
(7) Totals
(8) Transfer from "THEY" side
(9) Net match win for WE. Carry forward 1300 to the next match.

OTHER FORMS OF SCORING

Matchpoint Scoring

A common form of duplicate play is called ***matchpoints***. This is the type of game played most often at bridge clubs and is almost always an option at tournaments. In matchpoint play your raw score on each deal is rather insignificant. What is important is your score compared to the other pairs that held the same

cards as you and your partner. You receive 1 matchpoint for every other pair that received a lower score than yours and ½ matchpoint for every other pair that received the same score you did. In matchpoint play your true opponents are not the pair sitting in the opposite direction at your table but all of the pairs at the other tables sitting in your same direction.

These matchpoints are used to determine the winner of the event as well as those who "place" in the event. In an ACBL sanctioned duplicate game ***masterpoints*** are awarded to the top 40% of the pairs. So if there are 20 pairs participating in the event the top 8 pairs will "place" and receive masterpoints. The number of masterpoints awarded to each pair depends on the ranking of the event, the number of tables in play and their place in the matchpoint totals.

IMP and Victory Point Scoring for Team Games

This topic is included primarily for informational purposes. However the inferences as they affect bidding decisions will be referred to occasionally.

Another form of duplicate play is a team game. Players get together to form teams of four players each. Two teams are pitted against each other at two tables. The North-South players from one team sit at one table playing against the East-West players from the opposing team, and similarly at the other table. Each table is given some number of boards to play. When both tables have finished those boards the players remain stationary and the boards are interchanged. Each board is scored just as in a duplicate game. This competition between the two teams is called a ***match*** or a round. After all boards have been played at both tables, the East-West pairs return to their ***home tables*** where their partners are seated.

During the scoring of each board the results of a deal were recorded as positive if their partnership scored points and negative if their opponents scored points. After the East-West pairs return to their home tables, they compare scores with their partners. The results for each board are added together and the net result is converted to ***International Matchpoints*** (***IMPs***) using the following table:

INTERNATIONAL MATCHPOINT SCALE

Diff. in Pts.	IMPs	Diff. in Pts.	IMPs	Diff. in Pts.	IMPs	Diff. in Pts.	IMPs
20 - 40	1	270 - 310	7	750 - 890	13	2000 - 2240	19
50 - 80	2	320 - 360	8	900 - 1090	14	2250 - 2490	20
90 - 120	3	370 - 420	9	1100 - 1290	15	2500 - 2990	21
130 - 160	4	430 - 490	10	1300 - 1490	16	3000 - 3490	22
170 - 210	5	500 - 590	11	1500 - 1740	17	3500 - 3990	23
220 - 260	6	600 - 740	12	1750 - 1990	18	4000^{+}	24

There are a couple of significant features of the IMPs translation table. You will note that the raw score point-difference ranges for each additional IMP increases significantly from the low end to the high end of the scale. That means a single

large score difference on one board is not as significant as an equivalent sum of differences on several boards. This puts an emphasis on consistency over brilliancy or luck on a single deal, but probably the most significant feature is that a score difference of 10 points is a draw. No IMPs are awarded. This may not appear significant to the beginning player but can be illustrated by a simple example.

Suppose that at one table N-S were not vulnerable and the result for the board was 3NS+4 = 430 and at the other table it was 4SN+4 = 420. The 430 score is only 10 points greater than the 420 score but If this were a matchpoint game the size of the difference is irrelevant. As long as it is positive, N-S would have received one matchpoint when compared to the N-S pair at the other table. But in the IMP scale those extra 10 points are immaterial. So when playing in a game where IMP scoring is used, notrump and Major Suit games that take the same number of tricks effectively produce identical results.

The resulting IMPs are recorded for each board with the same algebraic sign as the net result for that board. The IMPs for all of the boards are totaled. If the result is positive the team won the match. If it is negative the team lost the match.

There are two primary types of team games: Knockout (KO) and Swiss Teams. Knockout games are 4-session events usually restricted to tournament play. They are typically played over a 2-day period with two sessions each day, although other formats are sometimes used. A single match of 24 boards is usually played between two teams in one session. At the end of the match the winning team advances and the losing team is "knocked out" or eliminated from the event. Those players are then free to enter some other event as a team or split up and go their separate ways.

At a large tournament the teams are bracketed into groups of 16. Half the teams are eliminated each round, so for the fourth round there are only 2 teams remaining. This format is virtually identical to the "sweet sixteen" of the annual NCAA basketball tournament. Adjustments are made to the format if the number of entries is not an even multiple of 16.

Swiss Team events are usually completed in a single session. Each match consists of about seven boards. No team is eliminated after any round. All teams remain in the event until it is completed, but after each round the net IMPs difference is used to allocate ***Victory Points*** (***VPs***) to each team. There are several versions of VP tables but a typical one is shown below.

TYPICAL VICTORY POINT SCALE

IMPs	VPs	IMPs	VPs	IMPs	VPs
0	15 - 15	5 - 6	22 - 8	17 - 19	27 - 3
1	18 - 12	7 - 8	23 - 7	20 - 23	28 - 2
2	19 - 11	9 - 10	24 - 6	24 - 27	29 - 1
3	20 - 10	11 - 13	25 - 5	28^{+}	30 - 0
4	21 - 9	14 - 16	26 - 6		

There are two numbers in each VPs column. The winner of the match is awarded the first number, the loser the second. The scale shown here is a 30-point scale meaning a total of 30 points are allocated to the winner and loser. There are also 20-point scales and different versions of each dependent on the number of boards played in a match.

After each round, team pairings for matches for the following round are assigned based on team VP totals. Teams with comparable totals are matched against each other. The assumption is that the "cream" will rise to the top. At the end of the event teams are ranked by their VP totals.

In both KO and Swiss Team events masterpoints are awarded in a manner similar to that used for matchpoint events.

A team can actually have up to 6 players. Of course only 4 play at a time and there are requirements on the minimum number of boards that each player must play during a match.

Chicago Bridge

Chicago Bridge is a popular alternative to rubber bridge for home play. It is sometimes referred to as 4-deal bridge because a "match" is over after 4 deals. At the end of the match the players change partners and a new match is played. This game is especially appropriate for 4 to 6 players, with 1 or 2 players sitting out for each match if there are more than 4, but then entering the game after the match is over. This game is very popular among duplicate players because the scoring system is very similar to that used for duplicate bridge. There are a few variations of this game. It is suggested that you search the Internet if you are interested in more details.

BIDDING STRATEGIES

When your side has most of the strength (high cards and long suits) the deal "belongs" to your side. You should be able to take more tricks than the opponents. In this case you want to maximize your score by bidding and making partscore, game or slam contracts. Your usual objective is to get to a game contract so that you can get the game bonus in duplicate bridge or increase your chance of winning a rubber in rubber bridge. However, on a grander scale you can score even

more points if you can bid up to the slam level and get those bonuses too. Bidding to achieve these goals can be considered ***offensive bidding***.

On the other hand, when your opponents have the majority of the strength and the deal "belongs" to them, you would like to minimize their score. Sometimes this means bidding more than you think you can make if the defensive points your opponents get for setting you are fewer than they would have received for bidding and making their contract. Clearly, knowing the cost for going set is just as important as knowing the reward you will receive if you make your contract. Bidding to achieve these goals can be considered ***defensive bidding***. This is one concept that adds excitement to the game as each pair battles for a contract that they think will give them the best result.

Sometimes the hand strengths of the two sides are nearly equal and it is hard to tell during the auction which side is stronger. In these cases both partnerships are usually competing for the contract, not sure if the hand really belongs to them or their opponents.

Beginning bridge players often lose sight of the true object of this game which is to

> *Score more points than your opponents.*

To accomplish this you want to

> - *Maximize your score.*
> - *Minimize the opponents' score.*

In rubber bridge and the duplicate team games discussed above, you are ultimately concerned only with your raw score, that which you record at the end of a deal. When that is the case, your bidding decision is often based on how much you have to gain or lose by making certain bids. When you have a close decision to make regarding a game or slam contract, you usually tend to be aggressive/optimistic and make the bid that will give you the most points because that is important. Taking the risk of getting an extra 300 or 500 points (duplicate scoring) or winning a rubber (or at least reaching the vulnerable state) versus giving the opponents 50 or 100 points if you fail to make your contract is very worthwhile. When you are playing in a partscore contract and you have a choice of two options you are more likely to take the safest route, the one that is most likely to make. For example, if you have a choice of playing in 3♦ or 2N and you can determine that 3♦ is safer than 2N, you would choose the 3♦ bid even though that would be worth only 60 trick points while the 2N bid would give you 70 trick points. It is much better to take your "sure" 60 points than try for an extra 10 points at the risk of being set and giving the opponents 50 or 100 points (depending on your vulnerability).

In matchpoint play your raw score is rather insignificant. What is important is your score compared to the other pairs that held the same cards as you and your partner. Now your bidding decisions are based on the **frequency of success** rather than how much you have to gain or lose on a raw score basis. When you have a close decision to make regarding a game contract versus a partscore you might well settle for the partscore if you think the game contract will be set more than half the time. Similarly, with respect to the partscore decision in the previous paragraph, you might well decide on the 2N contract if you think it will make more than half the time. How do you decide on the percentages? This skill comes mostly through experience, so get out and play as much as you can.

The primary reason for presenting this information is that this aspect of making a bidding decision will crop up throughout the remainder of this book and the sequels.

SUMMARY

Understanding scoring is the most important factor in learning to play bridge.

Recording the Result

The result of a deal is written in the form LSDR (e.g. 3SN+4) where

L is the level of the contract – a numeral from 1 through 7
S is the strain – C, D, H, S or N or the symbol equivalents for the suits
D is the declarer compass point – N, E, S or W
R is the result – either a plus sign followed by the number of tricks made (the number of tricks taken over book) or a minus sign followed by the number of undertricks (the number of tricks short of the contract).

Trick Points

If declarer made his contract his side receives a score consisting entirely or partly of trick points based on the number of tricks taken above book. The trick points depend on the strain of the contract with minor suits (clubs and diamonds) worth 20 points per trick, Major Suits and notrump worth 30 points per trick and 10 supplemental points awarded for a notrump contract.

Contracts are categorized partly by the number of trick points associated with the level of contract, not the number of tricks actually taken. Any contract for which the trick point value is 100 or greater is a game contract. A contract for which the trick point value is less than 100 is a partscore contract.

A 6-level contract is called a small slam or baby slam and a 7-level contract is called a grand slam.

Duplicate Bridge and Rubber Bridge

Duplicate bridge and rubber bridge are the most common forms of contract bridge. Each form consists of the same four stages. The primary difference is the format.

Duplicate bridge requires at least two tables of players. Pairs or teams of four players compete against each other on identical deals. In duplicate bridge scoring is based on individual deals. The result for any deal is independent of previous deals. Your success in this format depends much more on how well you bid and play rather than on the cards you hold in any deal.

Rubber bridge is often played by a group of only four players, but there can be multiple tables of players. There is some cumulative effect on scoring; the total result after some number of deals may depend on the scores of previous individual deals. Your success in this format is dependent to some degree on how well you bid and play but can also be significantly impacted by the cards you hold on the deals.

Vulnerability

In any bridge deal each side is either vulnerable or nonvulnerable. Vulnerability in duplicate bridge is solely dependent on the board number.

In rubber bridge vulnerability is dependent on your scores for some previous deals. At the start of a rubber neither side is vulnerable. Each pair tries to score at least 100 trick points (cumulative) "below The Line." Once a pair achieves this goal they become vulnerable and each pair starts over on their quest for another 100 points below The Line. When one pair reaches the 100 point goal the second time the "rubber" is over. Neither side is now vulnerable and the process is repeated.

Bonus Points and Defensive Points

Significant bonus points are given for game contracts of 3N, 4♠, 4♥, 5♦ and 5♣. Greater additional bonus points are awarded for small slam (6 of any strain) or grand slam (7 of any strain) contracts. The values of these bonus points are dependent upon the vulnerability. Scoring details are dependent on the type of contract bridge being played, rubber bridge or duplicate bridge. Within the duplicate bridge arena there are matchpoint games and team games each with their own additional scoring considerations.

If declarer fails to make his contract, the defenders receive points. The basic score is 50 points per undertrick if declarer was not vulnerable and 100 points per undertrick if declarer was vulnerable.

The final contract may have been doubled by an opponent and even redoubled by one of the offensive players. If so, the trick points are increased slightly (overtricks more so) but the penalty for being set is significantly increased, especially if set by more than one trick.

Other Forms of Scoring

There are other forms of scoring both for duplicate bridge and rubber bridge.

The most common form of duplicate scoring involves matchpoints. While the basic scoring is the duplicate method, the ultimate scores are matchpoints where you receive 1 matchpoint for every pair you do better than and ½ matchpoint for every pair you tie. These are on a board-by-board basis and totaled for the complete event.

Other forms of duplicate scoring relate to team games where International Match Points (IMPs) are used and sometimes converted to Victory Points.

Chicago Bridge is a method of scoring that simulates duplicate scoring in a rubber bridge environment.

Bidding Strategies

The beginning player MUST always keep in mind the objective of the game, to score more points than his opponents. The best way to do this is to maximize your score when the deal belongs to your side and to minimize the opponents' score when the deal belongs to them.

As you embark on your journey to learn this wonderful game, remember that there are many pieces to the puzzle and it will take some time to put many of them together. Have patience and work at it a little at a time. Eventually you will be able to see the entire picture or at least enough so that you can recognize it. There will always be some pieces remaining to be filled in.

CHAPTER 3

– Contract Determination

The Golden Rules

Hand Valuation

Modus Operandi

Summary

THE GOLDEN RULES[2]

The Golden Games

In Chapter 2 – "Scoring" you learned that you can receive a substantial bonus if you bid to a game level and make the contract. But you also learned that you have to take more tricks in the minor suits than the Majors or notrump. More specifically,

- In a minor suit game contract you must bid to the 5 level committing to 11 tricks and allowing your opponents only 2.
- In a Major Suit game contract you must bid to the 4 level committing to 10 tricks and allowing your opponents 3.
- In a notrump contract you must bid to the 3 level committing to only 9 tricks and allowing your opponents 4.

This could lead you to believe that your choice of strain is always prioritized as notrump, Major Suit, minor suit. While that is logical it is not quite true. A little later in this chapter we will learn why it is actually Major Suit, notrump, minor suit. For now we can be content to conclude that minor suit game contracts are the least desirable because they are the most difficult to make. Certainly 3N is preferred to 5 of either minor. We can then state that most of the time our game bonuses will come from the

Golden Games
3N, 4♥, 4♠

The Golden Fit

The combined number of cards in a suit for a partnership is often referred to as a ***fit***. For example, if you hold 6 cards and your partner holds 3 cards you are said to have a 9-card fit. The same term is also used to refer to the distribution of those cards between the two players. For the example you have a 6-3 fit.

When should you consider playing in a trump suit as opposed to a notrump contract? Suppose that you could determine that between your hand and partner's you had seven cards in a suit. Would that possibly be a good trump fit? It depends partly on how those 7 cards were split between you and partner. If they were split 7-0, it would probably work out all right. Even a 5-2 division might not be too bad. But, what if they were split 4-3? The opponents have 6 cards and they will usually not split 3-3. So, one of them will likely have at least 4 trumps. If you play your 4 trumps to extract all of theirs, provided they split 4-2, you will be out of trumps and play the remainder of the hand in notrump. These contracts

[2] While the concepts associated with the Golden Rules have long been a staple of bidding, the "Golden" terminology was introduced by Audrey Grant in Resource 1.

do sometimes work out well. In fact they were a favorite of an expert of years gone by, Alphonse Moyse, and are known as ***Moysian fits***. Nonetheless, for the beginning player you will find it much more comfortable playing in a suit contract when you have a

> ***Golden Fit***
> *A partnership holding of 8 or more cards in a suit*

With fewer cards in a suit you will usually want to play in a notrump contract.

Which Golden Game?

From the previous two topics we know that we prefer to play in 3N if we decide we want to be in a game contract and do not have a Golden Fit in a Major Suit. But how do we decide on the contract if both 3N and 4♥ or 4♠ are options? It might seem that 3N should be the choice because that requires fewer tricks. That argument certainly has merit and is often the preference of some experts. However there is another school of thought. Remember that when you are bidding at the game level you are bidding from an offensive viewpoint and want to maximize your score. So another point that has been demonstrated by others needs to be considered.

> *If you have a Golden Fit you can usually take 1 more trick with that suit as trumps than you can in a notrump contract.*

This postulate says that if you can make 3N (100 trick points) you can also make four of a Major (120 trick points). So you get 20 more points in the Major Suit contract than the notrump contract. These 20 points are not much to quibble over in a rubber bridge game or a duplicate team game. But in a duplicate matchpoint game it can make a significant difference. If you are in the notrump game just making it, and everyone else with your cards is making the Major Suit game, you just got a big fat ZERO for your matchpoints on that board. On the other hand, if you were making the Major Suit game and all of the other pairs are just making the notrump game you got an absolute top on that board.

It is true that there are times when you will not get the extra trick in the suit contract. Then either 3N makes while 4M goes down, or 4M makes and 3N makes with an overtrick giving those players a score of 430 against your 420. Regardless, you lose. There are experts who are very good at deciding which course of action is best in these situations. When you get to be that good you can write your own bridge book. Until then go with the conventional wisdom and take the Major Suit contract.

If you have a 4-4 fit in one Major Suit and a 5-3 fit in the other Major Suit you can often take one more trick if the trump suit is the one in which you have the 4-4 fit, but you may be able to handle an adverse trump break better if the suit

with the 5-3 fit is the trump suit. This dichotomy might suggest playing in the 4-4 fit if you are playing in a matchpoint game but in the 5-3 fit if playing in a rubber bridge game.

Partscore Contracts

The arguments presented in the previous topic for choosing a Golden Game in a Major Suit over notrump also apply to partscore contracts.

The advantages of a Major Suit contract over a minor suit contract are also obvious from the higher trick score value of a Major Suit over a minor suit.

Comparison of a minor suit contract to a notrump contract is not quite so obvious and depends on the contract level. Working on the assumption that you can take one more trick in a suit contract than in notrump when you have a Golden Fit leads to a draw if you compare a 1N+1 (40 trick points) contract to a 2♣+2 or 2♦+2 (40 trick points) contract. Here you might well decide to play in the minor suit if you think it is a safer contract.

For higher-level contracts notrump is always a winner. For example 2N+2 (70 trick points) versus 3♣+3 (60 trick points). Obviously 3N+3 is significantly better than 4♣+4 since you will receive the game bonus for the notrump contract but not the minor suit contract.

While you will usually prefer a notrump contract to a minor suit, the exception is on hands where you decide 2 of a minor is safer than 1N.

HAND VALUATION

As previously suggested the strength of a hand is partially determined by its high cards and long suits. It was also pointed out that if there is a trump suit and you do not have any cards in a plain suit that was led, you may be able to win the trick by ruffing it with one of your trump cards. So a short suit can also be an asset.

In the previous chapter you also learned that when your side has most of the strength you would like to bid as high as possible up to a game or even a slam contract level if you think either may be makeable. Then you can be rewarded with those bonus points. When the hand belongs to the opponents, you would like to be competitive and maybe push them to a higher level where they can be defeated or you may even take a sacrifice by overbidding and letting them set you if that will give them fewer points than making their own contract. Of course you can't bid willy-nilly because the opponents may double you and you could be severely punished on the score sheet for such irrational behavior.

The assignment of numerical values to the three strength indicators (high cards, long suits and short suits) is called ***hand valuation*** and allows the conversion of these subjective qualitative features to objective quantitative features. The system used by most players today is very similar to that espoused by Charles Goren.

High-Card Points

Points given to the top four honor cards in each suit are called ***high-card points (HCP)***. These are assigned on a 4-3-2-1 basis as follows:

High-Card Points			
A – 4	*K – 3*	*Q – 2*	*J – 1*

If you add up all of the HCP in a suit you find there are 10 HCP in each suit. Since there are four suits, there is a total of 40 HCP in the entire deck.

You will be spending a lot of time adding up the HCP in your hand. Some players find it helpful to realize they have 10 HCP whenever they see one of each of the top four cards in their hand; they do not all have to be in the same suit. So, for example, an ace and jack in one suit plus a king and queen in another suit add up to 10 HCP. With a little practice you may find it helpful to recognize other combinations such as: A + J = 5, K + Q = 5, Q + Q = 4, K + J = 4. The suit or suits containing the specific cards is immaterial.

High cards are valuable regardless of whether you are the declarer, the dummy or a defender. You must

Always count high-card points.

Length (Long-Suit) Points

Long suits (five or more cards) are usually assets to your hand. If your partner has some cards in the same suit in his hand, you can usually play that suit a few times (two or three) and exhaust the cards in that suit from the opponents. Then, your remaining cards in that suit will all provide extra tricks. This idea is usually valid for a notrump contract, suit contracts when that suit is trump or when that suit is played as a side suit once you draw the opponents' trump cards. In other words, just about always.

Length points are allocated as follows:

Length Points
Add 1 point for each card in excess of 4 in each suit.

Even though long suits are almost always assets, there are some restrictions on their use. You will learn more about these restrictions when you learn more about bidding. For the purposes of this book:

Count length points when:

- *You know or think you will be declarer in a suit contract*
- *You know you will be dummy in a notrump contract*

Dummy (Short-Suit) Points

If you have no cards in a suit you are ***void*** in that suit. You have a ***singleton*** or ***stiff*** (slang) if you have only one card in a suit. If you have two cards in a suit you have a ***doubleton***. These short suits may be an asset or a liability depending on the strain of the contract. Their greatest asset is when you are the dummy in a suit contract. Consequently, they are called ***dummy points*** and assigned the following values:

Dummy Points

Void – 5 Singleton – 3 Doubleton – 1

Short suits are always a liability rather than an asset in a notrump contract. If you are short in a suit, there are more cards for the opponents to hold in that suit, suggesting an asset for them. Their asset is your liability. So, never give yourself any extra points for a short suit when you think or know you will (or might) be playing in a notrump contract.

Short suits have their greatest significance when you are going to be the **dummy** in a **suit contract** and have at least 3-card trump support for your partner. Then your partner (declarer) may be able to use your trumps to ruff some of his losers in that suit. You will learn more about counting dummy points when you learn more about bidding.

Count dummy points when:

- *You are dummy in a suit contract and*
- *You have at least 3-card trump support*

If you have a little bridge background the valuation for short suits may seem a little strange. You may have learned it as 3-2-1 instead of 5-3-1. For the purpose of opening the bidding, Goren did use the 3-2-1 values but he did not count for long suit points. However, as dummy, even Goren used 5-3-1. You may just never have become aware of that.

Adjustments

You have just been given a method for evaluating the strength of your hand. The points assigned for various features are not an exact science but approximations. Sometimes it is appropriate to make actual numerical adjustments to the values given previously, and other times you should simply make a judgment decision.

Quite often you will be on the borderline between making an aggressive bid or a conservative bid. Do you just guess and hope you are right? Do you always take the aggressive move because you have so much to gain? Or is there a better way to make your decision?

You know the basic HCP system for evaluating the strength of your hand. But, did you know that not all HCP are created equal? For example, an ace is worth 4 points but so are four jacks. The ace should always take a trick. The four jacks could be worthless. In general, an ace is a little undervalued, a king is about right (a little light), a queen is a little overvalued and a jack is even more overvalued. We won't go into specific fractional numerical adjustments since it is too much math, although some players do. Besides, a desire for integer arithmetic was what led Charles Goren to develop this system. Just remember that aces and kings are great but ***quacks*** (bridge slang for QUeens and jACKS) tend to be kind of yucky unless they are in the trump suit or a side suit your partner has bid.

Honors together in the same suit are better than if they are divided. Compare the following 10-point hands which decrease in true value from left to right.

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

With the first hand you are almost guaranteed of taking 4 tricks with your high cards. With the second hand you can take only 3. With the third hand you are only relatively certain of 2 tricks but do have a chance for a third. With the fourth hand you should take a trick with your ace. You have about a 50% chance of taking a trick with the king and about a 75% chance of winning a trick with the queen (or jack). With the last hand your ace should be good for 1 trick, the king might win a trick, and the quacks are about useless unless partner has some honors in those suits.

Honors in long suits are better than honors in short suits.

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

You should have a reasonable expectation of taking 5 tricks with the first hand. With a reasonable distribution of the outstanding spades in the second hand you could take 3 spade tricks and the ace. But if the suit split poorly your spades could produce only 1 or 2 tricks.

High intermediate cards are not given any points but can certainly improve the quality of your hand.

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

Don't you like the first hand much more than the second? If not today you will learn to as you progress. The ♠1098 significantly increase the solidity of the suit.

♠A 8 6 4 3
♥A 8 7 5 2
♦Q
♣J 6

When supporting your partner's Major Suit be careful about counting both HCP and short suit points for singleton or doubleton quacks. Counting 5 points in diamonds and 2 points in clubs really overvalues your hand in support of either Major Suit of partner. Maybe 3 points in diamonds and 1 point in clubs is about right. If partner holds some high cards in diamonds the value of your ♦Q improves. The same is true for your ♣J.

In summary of the above illustrations:

Judgment Factors

Pluses
- *Honors in the same suit*
- *Honors in long suits*
- *High intermediate cards*
- *Quacks in a suit where partner has high cards*

Minuses
- *Divided honors*
- *Quacks without higher honors in the same suit*
- *Quacks in short suits*

You have been introduced to the value of long suits and shorts suits. The points assigned for either are often collectively referred to as ***distribution points***. Those introductory topics were considered separately. Whenever you have a long suit you will also have a short suit, although the converse is not necessarily true. You could have 4 cards in 3 suits and a singleton in the fourth suit, or you could even have 4 cards in each of two suits with the remaining 5 cards divided 3-2 in the other two suits. When you do have a long suit, you usually overvalue your hand if you count for both long and short suits.

Never count both length points and dummy points.

An approximate measure of the value of your hand is given by your ***total points***, the sum of your HCP and distribution points.

Shape

How your 13 cards are divided among the four suits is an important consideration in determining your desired contract. Three words seem to be used synonymously in the bridge literature for this division: ***shape***, ***pattern*** and ***distribution***. They usually refer to the division without regard to specific suits, yet many times it is desirable to identify the number of cards held in each suit. There is actually an established method of differentiating the two types of divisions[3]. If dashes are used to separate the numbers specific suits are unspecified and the larger numbers appear first. If equals signs separate the numbers the corresponding suits are identified in decreasing rank. So, if a shape is given as 5-4-2-2 the suits are unspecified; whereas, if it is given as 5=1=3=4, there are 5 spades, 1 heart, 3 diamonds and 4 clubs.

As an aside, if you ever ask a more experienced player for his opinion on a hand you held, be prepared to give him your holding in the same order as the specific suit patterns used here. That is the way bridge players think.

A ***flat hand*** is one for which the suits are divided as evenly as possible – 4-3-3-3. A flat hand is also known as a ***square hand***.

A ***balanced hand*** is a flat hand or one that is no more than one card removed from being flat. If you take one card from a suit with only 3 cards in a flat hand and move it to one of the other suits with 3 cards you have a 4-4-3-2 shape. If instead you move it to the suit with 4 cards your shape is 5-3-3-2. If you take a card from the suit that has 4 cards and move it to any other suit, you still have a 4-3-3-3 shape.

Any hand that is not balanced is ***unbalanced***.

Other authors may have slightly different definitions and it is even popular to define semi-balanced hands. But for our purposes the definitions presented here are adequate.

For the most part, a flat hand does not play an important role in the material presented here. It has been included primarily because you might hear another player use the term in a conversation. A flat hand is the least desirable shape to hold. You have no long suit or short suit for additional values.

Hand Shapes

Flat hand: 4-3-3-3

Balanced hands: 5-3-3-2, 4-4-3-2, 4-3-3-3

Unbalanced hand: Any hand that is not balanced

The 5-3-3-2 pattern in this summary is intentionally displayed in a larger font. For some reason beginning bridge players have a tendency to not recognize this as a balanced hand, especially if the doubleton consists of two low cards.

[3] http://www.bridgeworld.com/indexphp.php?page=/pages/readingroom/bws/bwscompletesystem.html

Unbalanced hands can be further categorized as

- ***One-Suited Hands***: Those hands which have at least 6 cards in one suit and no more than 3 cards in any other suit. Typical shapes are 6-3-2-2, 6-3-3-1, 7-3-3-0, 7-3-2-1 and 7-2-2-2. Of course hands with 8 or more cards in one suit are also included in this category.
- ***Two-Suited Hands***: Those hands which contain at least 5 cards in one suit, 4 or more cards in a second suit and no more than 3 cards in any other suit. Typical shapes are 5-4-3-1, 5-5-3-0, 5-5-2-1, 6-4-3-0, 6-4-2-1.
- ***Three-Suited Hands***: Those hands which contain at least 4 cards in each of three suits. The only possible patterns are 5-4-4-0 and 4-4-4-1.

Impact on Desired Contract Determination

What do hand valuation and shape categorization have to do with the determination of the desired contract for a partnership? Everything – they form the very foundation of the bidding system and are the basis for determining a desired contract level and strain.

Charles Goren spent years developing his system deciding in particular how many points were required to have a reasonable play for game contracts. His conclusion was 26 and was accepted well into the 21st century. More recently a computer study by Matthew L. Ginsberg[4] produced the following results for notrump contracts with relatively balanced hands for both partners.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TRICKS VERSUS PARTNERSHIP HCP

HCP	20	21	22	23	24	25	**26**	27	28	29	30
Tricks	6.1	6.7	7.2	7.6	8.2	8.7	**9.1**	9.7	10.1	10.6	11.1

This table substantiates Goren's conclusion that 26 points will produce 9 tricks on average. But note that 25 points are more likely to provide 9 or more tricks than 8 or fewer tricks, since the average is 8.7. This is the figure used by many players today and will also be used here. It is especially appropriate for rubber bridge or duplicate team games where you have so much to gain if you can get the extra points for the game bids. In duplicate matchpoint play you might want to be a little more conservative.

You might wonder why 20 HCP produce only slightly over 6 tricks. You perhaps think that the number should be closer to 6.5 since the points are equally divided. The answer lies in the fact that the defenders have the advantage of the opening lead and these results are based on best defense and best offense, disregarding the fact that declarer has the advantage of being able to see both hands for his side, while each opponent sees only his hand and dummy.

The high end of the table goes up to 11 tricks or a 5-level bid. What about the slam levels of 6 or 7? When you are considering the stratosphere for your

[4] I originally found this on a web site, but it is no longer available.

contract, it is more important how many points the opponents have than how many you have. You certainly don't want the opponents to hold an ace if you are thinking about a grand slam. So you would like to be sure they have fewer than 4 HCP. That means you must have at least 37. Similarly, for a small slam you don't want to risk them holding two aces, so you must have at least 33. It is true they might have an ace and king in the same suit and if they took them "off the top" you would be set before you ever obtained the lead. But for that to happen they would probably both have to be in the hand of the opening leader, and that is unlikely. If it does happen, just blame it on a bad day.

With this analysis we can construct the following table showing how high you should be willing to bid from an offensive viewpoint based on the combined points between your hand and partner's.

OFFENSIVE BIDDING LEVEL VERSUS PARTNERSHIP POINTS

Points[1]	21 - 22	23 - 24	**25 - 26**	27 - 28	29 - 32	**33 - 36**	**37+**
Notrump	1	2	**3**	4	5	**6**	**7**
Suit	2	3	**4**	4	5	**6**	**7**

[1]For notrump contracts count HCP from both hands plus long suit points from dummy. For suit contracts count HCP from both hands plus long suit points from declarer plus dummy points from dummy.

There is a slight anomaly in the suit row of this table that occurs from working from both ends to the middle. You normally count on taking one more trick in a suit contract than in a notrump contract, but this does not apply to high-level contracts. Obviously if you can take 13 tricks in notrump it is impossible to take one more in a suit contract! You do not want to be at the 5 level unless you are quite confident you have a reasonable chance of making it. So, the generally accepted standard is that beginning at the 4 notrump level, the number of tricks available in a suit contract is the same as in a notrump contract.

The bold columns indicate the Golden Game and slam contracts, your targets for achieving significant bonus points.

During the auction all of the players try to determine how high they are willing to compete and whether their best contract is in notrump or a suit. They do this by making calls which, at least to some degree, indicate their strength and their shape.

MODUS OPERANDI

Note: Much of the material in this section applies only to a classroom setting for covering the topics considered in this book, although this introductory discussion has broader application.

How does a partnership go about determining their final contract? The modern trend espoused in bridge books, especially for beginners, is to seek answers to two questions:

- What strain? (Should we play the contract in some suit or notrump?)
- What level? (How high should we bid?)

I am going to use a little different approach. I'm going to replace the strain question with the following:

- Do we have a Golden Fit in a Major Suit?
  Golden Fit Major Suit? (GFMS?)
- Do we have a Golden Fit in a minor suit?
  Golden Fit minor suit? (GFms?)

Throughout the remainder of this book there will be times when we want an answer to the general question: Do we have a Golden Fit in any suit? We will then often use the abbreviated form "***GF?***"

Similar to the strain question, the level question is replaced with:

- Do we want to be in a game contract? ***Game? (G?)***
- Do we want to be in a small slam contract? ***Small Slam? (SS?)***
- Do we want to be in a grand slam contract? ***Grand Slam? (GS?)***

On occasion the slam questions may be replaced with a single composite question:

- Do we want to be in a slam contract? ***Slam? (S?)***

Recall that for duplicate scoring if you cannot reach the game level there is no reason to bid any higher than that required to win the auction. You will get the same score. In rubber bridge scoring there is a slight advantage to bidding up to the maximum level that you can make because you will not have to bid so high the next time to reach game for the combined deals. However, in a good rubber bridge game the opponents are unlikely to sell out cheaply and will force you to bid higher on the subsequent deal anyway. So there is not a great advantage to bidding more than you need to win the auction in rubber bridge either.

In a real auction the advantage of this approach is that all of these questions can be answered with one of three choices: "**Yes**," "**No**" or "**Maybe**." This seemingly trite formulation also provides a powerful framework for bidding. In this book we will not be doing any bidding; instead, we will be looking at the actual cards so will be able to answer the questions with "Yes" or "No."

Determination of the Offensive and Defensive Players

In this book we will determine the offensive and defensive players through a pseudo auction. Each player will evaluate the strength of his hand by adding up high-card points and length points. Starting with the dealer, each player will announce his strength. The partnership with the most points will be on offense with the other pair on defense. If there is a tie, the dealer's side will be on offense.

Determination of the Contract Strain

After the offensive side has been selected both offensive players will lay their cards on the table face up. We will then answer the questions regarding Golden Fits, ultimately choosing a strain for the contract, preferring a Major Suit, notrump and a minor suit respectively.

Determination of Declarer

If the strain is notrump the offensive player with the most points will be declarer. In case of a tie, the first offensive bidder will be declarer.

If the strain is a suit the offensive player with the most trumps will be declarer. In case of a tie, the offensive player with the most points will be declarer. If there is still a tie, the first offensive player to bid will be declarer.

For practice deals that have been predefined the declarer will be specified to reflect actual bidding.

Determination of the Contract Level

If a trump suit has been chosen, dummy's strength will be revalued in terms of dummy points.

A level for the contract will then be chosen using the table presented at the end of the previous section, except that we will not go past the game level unless a slam is indicated.

For practice deals that have been predefined the contract level will be specified to reflect actual bidding.

The Opening Lead

The opening lead will sometimes be directed by the instructor. Otherwise, the opening leader will have to rely on guidelines presented in this book.

The Play

We will then discuss the way declarer should play the cards, looking at the cards in the hands of both declarer and dummy. Declarer will then pick up his cards and the play will continue in the normal manner.

The Scoring

After the deal has been played, it will be scored in the normal manner. For the first few chapters we will be using only duplicate scoring. Then we will shift to rubber bridge scoring. Ultimately we will score each deal both ways.

The Post Mortem

After the scoring has been completed all players will turn their cards face up and arrange them as if they were the dummy. We will then discuss the opening lead and any follow-up required for the play by both declarer and the defenders.

SUMMARY

The Golden Rules

If your partnership has sufficient strength, play in one of the Golden Games (in order of priority):

Golden Games
- *4♥ or 4♠*
- *3N*

Consider playing in a suit contract only if you have a

Golden Fit
A partnership holding of 8 or more cards in a suit

Preference for the strain of your contract is:

Strain Preference
- *Major Suit*
- *Notrump*
- *Minor suit*

Hand Valuation

Give value to your hand for

High Card Points
A = 4 K = 3 Q = 2 J = 1

and distribution points, **either**:

Length Points
1 point for each card in excess of 4.
Used when
- *You know or think you will be declarer in a suit contract*
- *You know you will be dummy in a notrump contract*

or

Dummy Points

Void = 5 Singleton = 3 Doubleton = 1

Used when

- *You know you will be dummy in a suit contract*
- *You have at least 3-card trump support*

Hand shapes are classified by the number of cards in each suit.

Hand Shapes

Flat: 4-3-3-3

Balanced: 5-3-3-2, 4-4-3-2, 4-3-3-3

Unbalanced: Not balanced

The following table provides a guideline for the level to which you can safely bid in notrump or a suit based on the combined points in the partnership hands. COUNT ONLY HCP FOR NOTRUMP CONTRACTS.

BIDDING LEVEL VERSUS COMBINED POINTS

Points	21 - 22	23 - 24	**25 - 26**	27 - 28	29 - 32	**33 - 36**	**37^{+}**
Notrump	1	2	**3**	4	5	**6**	**7**
Suit	2	3	**4**	4	5	**6**	**7**

Modus Operandi

Contract determination centers on your answers to three key questions:

Key Questions

G? GFMS? GFms?

Answers to Key Questions

Yes Yes Yes

No No No

For the purpose of playing practice deals the offensive and defensive players are determined by a pseudo auction based on the HCP and length points of the players. The declarer is determined from the relative strengths of the players for a notrump contract or their trump lengths for a suit contract. The contract level is based on the above table after hand strengths have been revalued. The opening lead is chosen from a set of guidelines. Suggestions for play of the deal are given with both offensive hands visible. Declarer then picks up his cards and actual play continues. After the deal has been played it is scored using either duplicate bridge or rubber bridge methods. A post mortem may follow.

CHAPTER 4

– Guidelines for Play

Guidelines for Declarer Play

Guidelines for Defensive Play

Summary

GUIDELINES FOR DECLARER PLAY

After the opening lead has been made and dummy's cards have been exposed, declarer faces the task of playing the cards from dummy and his hand in a manner that will fulfill his contract. The difficulty of this task will range from quite simple to very challenging or even impossible for some deals.

Regardless of the contract, declarer should begin by making some sort of plan. It will be helpful to take different approaches to the plan development depending on whether the contract strain is notrump or a suit.

Developing a Plan for Notrump Contracts

When developing a plan for a notrump contract it is best if you focus on ***winners***.

> ***Winners***
> *Cards that can take a trick without first having to give the opponents the lead in that suit*

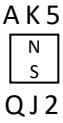
Winners can be cards in either the dummy or declarer's hand. Clearly if you do not hold the ace in a suit you do not have any winners in that suit because the opponents could win the trick the first time you led the suit. When counting winners you consider each suit individually and add up the number of winners in each suit.

Here are a few examples (dummy's cards are on the top line, declarer's on the bottom – this simplified format is used frequently throughout the remainder of this book):

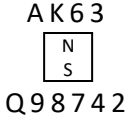
A 5 — 1 winner.
N S
10 7 2

A 5 — 2 winners.
N S
K 7 2

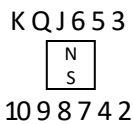
A K 5 — 3 winners.
N S
Q 7 2



3 winners – even though you have the top 4 cards, you hold only 3 cards in each hand so can take only 3 tricks. You will have to play 2 of your winners on the same trick.



6 winners – You have only the top 3 cards, but you have a total of 10 cards so the opponents have only 3 cards. After you play your AKQ on separate tricks, the opponents will have no more cards in this suit so all of your remaining cards will be winners.



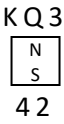
No winners – you have 12 cards in this suit but are missing the ace. Suppose that all of the cards in the other suits are the smallest cards in those suits. You have no way to ever gain the lead so you can never take any tricks.

If you can count enough winners to fulfill your contract, it is often a good idea to follow the old adage to "Take your tricks and run."

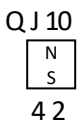
If you do not have enough tricks to fulfill your contract it is rarely a good idea to take all of your winners and then hope something good happens. You will be extremely lucky if it does. Instead look for a way to develop some extra winners. The three most common methods of doing this are through ***promotion***, ***length*** and the ***finesse***. We consider the first two methods here but defer the discussion of the finesse to the next chapter.

Developing Tricks through Promotion

When you are missing the ace in a suit but have other touching high cards, you may be able to promote winners by playing one or more of your high cards to force an opponent to play a higher card or concede the trick to you. If an opponent plays a card higher than the one you play, your other high card(s) may be promoted into winners. Sometimes you will have to regain the lead and continue leading the suit to establish the promotion.



You can lead the king (or queen) to promote the other honor into a winner if an opponent wins the trick with the ace. If an opponent does not play the ace, the card you led wins the trick. If any of the small cards were the jack, you could promote 2 winners.



Here you must lead twice, playing 2 of the top 3 cards to promote the other into a winner.

AJ1098

N
S

42

With this suit you have 1 winner but can promote 2 additional winners by using the jack and ten to force the king and queen, thereby promoting the 9 and 8 into additional winners.

Developing Tricks through Length

When you develop tricks through promotion you give up some tricks to the opponents, but eventually you establish some of your cards as winners while the opponents still hold at least one card. A similar technique is to simply keep playing a suit until both opponents run out of cards. Then any remaining cards you hold become winners. This is called developing tricks through length.

Knowing how the outstanding cards in a suit are likely to be split between the opponents is helpful when applying this technique. When the opponents hold an odd number of cards they are most likely split as evenly as possible. For example, if they hold 5 cards, one opponent is most likely to hold 3 and the other 2. If they hold an even number of cards they are probably split slightly unevenly. For example, if they hold 6 cards they are probably split 4 for one and 2 for the other.

- *An odd number of outstanding cards are most likely to be distributed as evenly as possible.*
- *An even number of outstanding cards are most likely to be distributed slightly unevenly.*

A653

N
S

K842

Here it may appear that you can take only 2 tricks. But you have 8 cards and the opponents have only 5. If they are split as expected, after you play your ace and king one of the defenders will not have any cards remaining and the other will have just one. If you play the suit once more you will still have one card left in each hand and the higher one will be a winner.

Developing tricks through length is strictly a numbers game. To determine how many total winners you have figure out how many tricks will be lost (assuming the likely division) and subtract from the maximum number of cards you hold in either hand.

AK8753

N
S

42

Here, again, you have 8 (get used to that number – it will come up frequently) cards between the two hands and expect to lose only 1 trick. You have a 6-card suit so hope to take 5 tricks.

A K 8 7 5

N
S

4 2

Look at the difference one card makes. This combination is identical to the previous one except that we removed one card from dummy, so the combined total is only 7 and the longest suit is only 5 cards. The opponents now hold 6 cards, expected to be split 4-2, so we will probably lose 2 tricks. This reduces our expected number of winners to only 3.

Capitalizing on Your Winners

When you have some winners in dummy and others in your hand it may be important to take them in a certain order.

A Q 5 3

N
S

K J 4 2

Considering this suit by itself, the order in which the two winners are played from each hand is immaterial as long as you don't play one from each hand on the same trick. This is always the case when you have the same number of cards in each hand. But what if the cards are distributed unevenly between the two hands as follows?

J 4

N
S

A K Q 5 3 2

Suppose you first play one of the top 3 cards from your hand and play the 4 from dummy. Then lead the 2, winning the trick with the jack in dummy. Unless you have a winner in your hand in some other suit and a smaller card in dummy in that same suit, you have no way to get the lead back to your hand to play the remaining winners in this suit. It is much better to play the 2 and jack on the first trick. Then lead the 4 from dummy, winning the second trick with one of your top cards. You can then play the other winners from your hand. Note that unless the 5 outstanding cards are split 5-0 you can take 6 tricks in this suit.

When the cards in a suit are unevenly divided between declarer and dummy, the hand with more cards is called the ***long side*** and the hand with fewer cards is called the ***short side***. Under these conditions if you have more winners than the number of cards on the short side, it is **usually** best to

*Play the **winners** from the **short side** first.*

It makes no difference which hand you lead from as long as you play a winner from the short side and a small card from the long side.

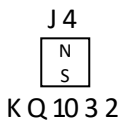
A 5 3

N
S

K 2

In this example you have only 2 winners and it makes no difference which one you play first. But if the 5 were the queen you would want to play the king first and then lead the 2 back to dummy to take the other 2 winners.

This same principle applies when establishing tricks through promotion. Consider the following combination.

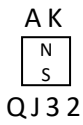


Here you want to play the jack and 2 on the first trick. If the opponents do not take their ace, you can lead the 4 toward your king so that if the opponents still do not take their ace you will have the lead in your hand and can continue leading the suit. A generalization of the above is

> *Play the **high cards** from the **short side** first.*

Entries

As declarer you will often find that you have the lead in one hand and would like to lead from the opposite hand. For example, consider the following suit combination for a notrump contract.



You have 4 winners in this suit but after you play the AK from dummy and the 32 from your hand on the first 2 tricks of this suit, you will have the lead in dummy. You then have 2 more winners in your hand but no way to make use of them unless you can somehow get the lead back to your hand. You will need an ***entry*** to your hand in some other suit.

> ***Entry***
> *A card in one hand that allows you to transfer the lead from partner's hand to that hand.*

In essence an entry is a winner in one hand provided there is a smaller card in the same suit in partner's hand.

Sure Entries

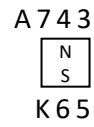
A sure entry is a card that allows you to immediately transfer the lead into one hand if you so choose. The following table shows several sure entries. The x's represent lower-ranking cards that are not winners.

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
Dummy	A	K x	A K	K Q x	Q x x	Q x	Q J x x
Declarer	x	A x	x x	A x x	A K x	A K x	A K x x

(a) 1 entry to dummy. If you did not have the small card in declarer's hand you would still have a winner in dummy but it would not be an entry.
(b) 1 entry to dummy and 1 entry to declarer. If you did not have the small card in declarer's hand the king in dummy would still be a winner but it would not be an entry. You would need an entry in another suit to be able to take a trick with the king. If you did not have the small card in dummy you would still have an entry to declarer's hand, but you would have to overtake the king with the ace. While this would cost you a trick such a play might be necessary to make your contract.
(c) 2 entries to dummy
(d) 2 entries to dummy and 1 entry to declarer
(e) 1 entry to dummy and 2 entries to declarer
(f) 1 entry to dummy and 2 entries to declarer (overtaking the queen with the ace or king, sacrificing a winner)
(g) 2 entries to dummy and 2 entries to declarer

Saving an Entry

Sometimes you have the possibility of creating winners through length but must be careful to save an entry in that suit.



If the suit splits 3-2 you can develop 2 extra winners in the suit. It is clear that you must lose one trick in the suit. If you first play the ace and king and then another card, you will lose the third trick and have no cards left in your hand in this suit. If you do not have an entry to dummy in another suit you will never be able to take those 2 extra winners there. Since you must lose a trick see how much better it is to lose that trick early. Suppose that the first time you play this suit you play the 2 and the 5, leading from either hand. This is called ***ducking*** the trick. If you regain the lead in either hand you can play the king followed by the ace thereby exhausting the opponents' remaining cards (assuming a 3-2 break) so that you can also take the 7 and 4 as winners.

Developing a Plan for Suit Contracts

When developing a plan for a suit contract it is often best if you focus on ***losers***. Losers are a little more difficult to identify than winners. When considering losers we consider tricks rather than specific cards. Just as with winners we consider each suit separately and then add up the number of losers in all of the suits.

Losers

*The number of losers in a suit is the number of **tricks** the opponents **might** be able to win before declarer runs out of cards in that suit.*

There are two assumptions in this definition:

- Declarer tries to win a trick if he can.
- The opponents will not voluntarily play their winners or high cards. You will have to sacrifice one of your high cards to force them to play one of their winners.

It should be obvious that declarer can have no more than 13 losers. So however his 13 cards are divided among the four suits he cannot count more losers than he has cards in each suit; otherwise his total number of losers could add up to more than the number of cards he holds.

Here are a few simple examples.

8 5
N
S
A K

No losers.

Q 7 5
N
S
A K 2

No losers. Declarer's 2 can be played on dummy's good queen.

8 7 5
N
S
A K 2

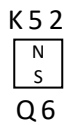
1 loser. After declarer plays his ace and king, he has 1 card left and the opponents will have a higher card than the 8 remaining in dummy.

8 7
N
S
A K 2

1 loser. This is really no different from the previous example with regard to counting losers.

A K 2
N
S
8 7

No losers. This is the same combination of cards as in the previous example but they have been switched between dummy and declarer. Since declarer will run out of cards after he plays his 8 and 7 on the ace and king in dummy, he has no losers.



2 losers. A defender might capture your king or queen with his ace. This will promote the other honor into a winner. But you will still have a small card left in your hand so the opponents can win 1 more trick.

When you are in a suit contract you should first determine how many tricks you can afford to lose. For example, if your contract is 4♠ you need to take 10 tricks so can afford only 3 losers. If you do not have more losers than you can afford, you should have a straightforward line of play to make your contract. If you have too many losers look for some method of eliminating as many as you need to reduce the number to the level you can afford. We will consider ways to do this in later chapters.

Drawing Trumps

When you are playing in a suit contract it is usually (but not always) to your advantage to play the trump suit as soon as possible to eliminate all of the trumps from the opponents. The bridge adage is

Get the kiddies off the street.

This prevents the defenders from trumping your high cards in your side suits. This topic will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 7 – "Managing the Trump Suit."

There is one little trick you can use when keeping track of how many trumps are still outstanding. There is no need to count to 13, the total number of trumps. As soon as you see the dummy you can add the number of trumps there to the number in your hand. This will usually be at least 8. Subtract that number from 13 to give you the number held by the opponents. Now, as you play the trump suit, just keep track of how many trumps your opponents play and you will know when they don't have any remaining. At first this technique will require some discipline, but after it becomes a habit you will appreciate the process.

Choosing between Equal Cards from Your Hand

There will be many times when you can win or attempt to win a trick with a card you play from your hand but have a choice of playing one of two or more equal (touching – including cards in dummy) cards. It is usually best if you play the **highest** of those cards. In general, this will conceal part of your holding from at least one of the opponents. Here are a few examples:

Your RHO leads the 8 and you hold the AK62 with the 753 in dummy. If you decide to win the trick play the ace. If you play the king, you may as well show your RHO the ace because it is not in dummy and if your LHO had it he would have played it.

Your LHO leads the 5 from the K765 and you hold the AQJ4. You play the 9 from 983 in dummy and your RHO plays the ten. You probably want to win this trick and should do so with the queen. You will learn later in this chapter that your RHO plays high, but only as high as necessary (lowest of equal cards). If you play the jack your LHO will know you have the queen. If you play the queen, your LHO will not know who has the jack.

You have the AKQ652 with the 873 in dummy and the lead in your hand. If you decide to play this suit, start by leading the ace. If the lead is in dummy, lead the 3 and play the ace from your hand. If you lead the king or queen, both opponents will be fairly certain you also have the higher cards(s). If you lead from the dummy and play the king or queen, your RHO will know you also have the higher card(s).

GUIDELINES FOR DEFENSIVE PLAY

Opening Leads against Notrump Contracts

When defending against a notrump contract you usually want to attack the suit in which your partnership has the most cards. Once declarer runs out of cards in your suit in his hand and dummy, your remaining cards will be winners if you are able to regain the lead. This is analogous to establishing winners through length by declarer. If your partner has bid **you generally want to lead his suit**. Since we are not doing any actual bidding in this book, this will not be a consideration here. The only information you have to guide you is the cards you hold in your hand, so

*Lead a card from your **longest** suit against a **notrump** contract.*
Choose the strongest suit if equal length.

There are two primary guidelines for selecting the card (listed in order of priority):

Card to Lead against a Notrump Contract

1. *Top of a sequence of **3** or more cards headed by an honor*
2. *Fourth down*

A ***sequence*** is a group of cards that are "touching" in rank. If you have any previous bridge experience, you are probably familiar with the second guideline – but that is the second priority – not the first.

A K Q 6 4	lead the A	**A K 6 4**	lead the 4
K Q J 9 7	lead the K	**K J 9 7**	lead the 7
Q J 10 6 4 2	lead the Q	**Q J 6 4 2**	lead the 4

If you hold only 2 cards in sequence plus the card 2 steps down from your second card in sequence, you are said have a ***near sequence*** or a ***broken sequence***: AKJ32, KQ1065 or QJ974. For the purpose of choosing an opening lead against a notrump contract treat these holdings as if they were headed by a sequence of 3 cards.

If you hold an honor, are missing 1 or more cards below it, but then have a sequence of 2 or more cards, you are said to have an ***interior sequence***: AQJ83, AJ1062, A109543 KJ1075 or Q10963. For the purpose of choosing an opening lead against a notrump contract you treat the second-highest card as the start of a 3-card sequence.

Opening Leads against Suit Contracts

When defending against a suit contract, establishment of a long suit does not usually work out very well. Even if you do drive out all of declarer's higher cards, he will run out of cards in his hand or dummy and be able to ruff your winners. Instead you usually try to take tricks quickly before declarer can find a way to eliminate his losers. Now the strength of your suit becomes more important than length. For the purpose of this book you have only those cards in your hand to guide you, so

*Lead a card from your **strongest** suit against a **suit** contract.*

Just as for leading against a notrump contract there are two primary guidelines, but the first is slightly different:

Card to Lead against a Suit Contract

1. *Top of a sequence of **2** or more cards headed by an honor*
2. *Fourth down*

Note that now you need only a 2-card sequence headed by an honor for your first choice and the length of the suit is not particularly significant.

AK4 lead the A **KQ62** lead the K **K862** lead the 2

These are the two primary first choices. The lead of the Q from something like QJ73 often does not work out very well. Add the ten to the sequence (QJ103) and the lead of the Q is reasonable.

There is one significant exception to the lead of the fourth down card.

Do NOT underlead an ace against a suit contract.

This means that if you hold something like A965 you would not lead the 5. If you absolutely must lead a card in this suit, lead the ace. **In the long run it is much better to choose some other suit.**

If you hold a few trumps and a singleton in a side suit with some expectation that your partner might win a trick before declarer has a chance to draw all of your trumps, consider leading the singleton. You hope that your partner is able to gain the lead while you still have a trump remaining so that he can lead the suit back to you and you can win the trick by ruffing it.

Consider the lead of a singleton in a side suit against a suit contract.

Third-Hand Play

Third-hand play applies primarily to the partner of the opening leader at his first turn. If you have a better chance to win the trick than partner, you should apply the following axiom and its corollary.

Third Hand High – But Only as High as Necessary

This means that third hand should make a maximum effort to win the trick but play the lowest of equal cards. That is, if he has two or more cards that have equal chances of winning the trick, he should play the lowest one.

For example, suppose the opening lead is a 4, dummy plays the 8 from 852, and third hand holds the KQJ6. The KQJ all have an equal chance of winning the trick, so the jack should be played. Similarly, if the queen was also in dummy instead of third hand but the 8 was played, then the king and jack are equal cards so the jack should be played. However, if the queen was not visible to third hand, it could be in either partner's hand or declarer's hand, so third hand should play the king to maximize his chance of winning the trick.

If third hand need not or cannot attempt to win the trick, he should give an ***attitude signal*** indicating his desire for partner to lead the suit again if he has the opportunity. He does this by playing a high card (generally a card higher than the 6) if he would like the suit led again; and a low card (generally a card lower than the 6) if he does not want the suit led again. The 6 is a somewhat arbitrary demarcation between an encouraging and discouraging signal. Third hand must play one of the cards he holds and they may all be either higher or lower than the 6. So the opening leader must pay attention to all of the cards he can see in his hand and dummy plus the cards played to the trick by partner and declarer before making a firm interpretation of partner's signal. Even then there may be some ambiguity. But most often a reasonable conclusion can be drawn. In general both partners must **always** pay attention to **every** card they play and those played by their partner.

Failure to give or read an attitude signal is one of the most common defensive errors of beginning bridge players.

These principles have other applications for the defenders.

Suppose for example that the opening lead was the ace of a suit and third hand gave a discouraging signal. The opening leader now switches to another suit. Third hand treats this lead just like the first with respect to the ideas presented above. There are of course other considerations after the opening lead since the dummy can be seen by both defenders and cards played from all of the concealed hands may influence further play by both defenders.

When the partner of the opening leader gains the lead the opening leader may now be able to apply these ideas. Of course he can see the cards in dummy and make an informed decision on which card to play. But he should still follow the "only as high as necessary" or "attitude signal" concepts if appropriate.

Second-Hand Play

Second-hand play refers to the play by either **defender** at any point during the play after declarer has led a card either from his hand or from dummy and the defender is the next player in turn. The general rule for second-hand play is just the opposite of third-hand play.

Second hand low

Most of the time second hand should simply play a low card from his hand. Partner will be the last player to play a card to the trick and may be able to win it quite cheaply. If the lead came from dummy, declarer will have to guess who has the high cards if second hand plays low.

Of course there are exceptions to this rule. One is to

Cover an honor with an honor.

If an honor card is led and you have a higher honor card, play one of those cards – especially if the lead was from declarer and there is another honor in dummy greater than yours. You hope to promote a card in partner's hand or your own hand.

Another exception is to

Split your honors.

This is demonstrated by a simple example. Suppose you hold KQ3 in a suit and AJ doubleton is in dummy. Declarer leads a small card from his hand and you are the next to play. If you play "second hand low" and put in the 3, declarer may well play the jack giving him an extra trick. Instead play the queen (only as high as necessary) to force the ace and promote your king into a winner.

Fourth-Hand Play

Being the last player to play to a trick is the easiest position. You can see all of the other cards that have been played and usually want to try to win the trick as cheaply as possible if your partner has not already won it.

SUMMARY

Guidelines for Declarer Play

Play of the hand in **notrump** contracts:

> ***Winners***
> *Cards that can take a trick without first having to give the opponents the lead in that suit*

If you do not have a sufficient number of winners you can sometimes

> *Develop extra tricks through*
> - *Promotion*
> - *Length*
> - *Finesse*

When one hand has fewer cards in a suit than the other, it is often best to

> *Play the winners or high cards from the short side first.*

Entries:

> ***Entry***
> *A card in one hand that allows you to transfer the lead from partner's hand to that hand*

A sure entry is a winner in one hand when you have a smaller card in the opposite hand. Sometimes you have to keep an entry to a long suit by ducking a trick.

Play of the hand in **suit** contracts:

> ***Losers***
> *The number of losers in a suit is the number of tricks the opponents might be able to win before declarer runs out of cards in that suit.*

It is usually best to draw the opponents' trumps as soon as possible.

> *Get the kiddies off the street.*

Guidelines for Defender Play

Opening leads against notrump contracts:

Lead from Your Longest Suit against a Notrump Contract
Choose the strongest suit if equal length

1. *Top of a sequence of **3** or more cards headed by an honor*
2. *Fourth down*

Opening leads against suit contracts:

Lead from Your Strongest Suit against a Suit Contract

1. *Top of a sequence of **2** or more cards headed by an honor*
2. *Fourth down*

Do NOT under lead an ace against a suit contract.

Consider the lead of a singleton in a side suit against a suit contract.

General rules for defenders' play:

If declarer might be able to win the trick play

Third Hand High – But Only as High as Necessary

Otherwise give partner an attitude signal

High (> 6) = Encouraging, Low (< 6) = Discouraging

Pay attention to the cards you and your partner play, especially when an attitude signal is a possibility!

Second Hand Low

Cover an Honor with an Honor.

Split Your Honors.


CHAPTER 5

– The Finesse

Basic Finesses

Repeated Finesses

Finessing Against Two Cards

Leading a High Card

Creating Entries

Summary


BASIC FINESSES

A common card play technique in bridge is the finesse.

> *A finesse is an **attempt** to win a trick with a specific card when an opponent holds a higher card.*

From this definition you should correctly surmise that a finesse does not guarantee a trick will be won with the specific card. In fact, barring any secondary information, a finesse will be successful only half the time. The success of the finesse depends on the placement of the higher card held by the opponents.

There are two common ways of referring to a finesse. We can say that we are finessing a card if we are attempting to win a trick with that card. We can also say that we are finessing against a card if that is the higher card held by an opponent.

Finessing a King – Finessing Against the Ace

While there are many card combinations that provide an opportunity for a finesse, the idea can be demonstrated by a simple example. Suppose that you are the declarer (South) and at the start of play the following four cards in some suit are held by you and dummy with the remaining cards held by the opponents.

You need 1 more trick to make the contract and this suit is your only option – so you hope to win a trick with the king. If East holds the ace it is very unlikely that you will be able to do that. But suppose that West holds the ace. If you lead one of the cards from your hand, West must play before you choose which card to play from dummy. West is between a rock and a hard place. If he plays the ace you will play the 4 from dummy and later win a trick with the king. If he plays a small card you will play the king and win the trick now. There is nothing West can do to prevent you from winning a trick with the king. Of course you do not know which player holds the ace. But you take a chance and lead a small card from your hand. If West plays the ace you will play the 4 from dummy and later win a trick with the king. If West plays a low card you will play the king from dummy. If East then plays the ace you will not win the trick. But half the time West will have held the ace and half the time East will have held the ace. So you had a 50% chance of winning a trick with the king. This is the basic idea of a finesse. You have no guarantee that it will work, but if it is your only chance to get the extra trick you

may as well take it. A 50% chance of winning a trick is much better than no chance whatsoever.

In general we will refer to the card with which you would like to win a trick as the ***key card***. To implement the finesse you always **assume/hope** that the higher card is in the hand of the player sitting to the right of the hand holding the key card. You then lead a small card in that suit from the **opposite** hand **toward** the key card forcing the **opponent you hope has the higher card** to play from his hand before you play from the ***key hand*** (the one holding the key card). If the opponent plays the higher card you play a smaller card and later take a trick with your key card. If the opponent plays a smaller card you play your key card. Naturally the finesse works only if that player actually holds the higher card. If it is held by the other opponent he will capture your key card after you play it. How do you know who has the higher card? **You don't**! You just **hope** the card is favorably placed. If it is unfavorably placed you lose the trick. At least you made a valiant effort to win the trick.

Finessing a Queen – Finessing Against the King

Consider the following suit combinations:

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Dummy	A Q	Q 6 5	3 2	A 2
Declarer	3 2	A 2	A Q	Q 6 5

(a) Here you lead a small card from declarer's hand toward dummy, playing the queen if West plays low and the ace if West plays the king. Don't expect West to play the king if he has it. That would be rather foolish, giving you an obvious play. Remember that West should follow the guideline of second hand low. For all he knows you might play the ace even if he plays low.

(b) Some beginner players would start by leading the queen from dummy hoping to capture the king from East. But that play does not gain any tricks. It is much better to start by leading the 2 from declarer's hand. Now if West has the king and plays "second hand low" you win the trick when you play the queen. If you are in a suit contract you have eliminated a loser. Note that if you had cashed the ace before leading the 2 West might play the king, suspecting you might have had a doubleton and thought he should take his king while he could. You would not have eliminated a loser but might still be able to make use of the good queen in dummy. If you are in a notrump contract it is still best to start with the

2 so that you maintain control in the suit with the ace in case the finesse loses.

(c) This is the same as (a) with the hands reversed. The main difference here is that East cannot see the AQ in your hand when you lead from dummy.

(d) This is the same as (b) with the hands reversed. This time it might be a good idea to start by leading the ace from dummy if you are in a suit contract. If you lead the 2 and East has the king he will probably play it, suspecting what you are up to. Of course if you first play the ace East will still most likely play the king when you do continue with the 2. So what have you gained by starting with the ace? You get an extra trick whenever either defender started with a singleton king. Not very likely – but some day it will happen.

Finessing a Jack – Finessing Against the Queen

There are several card combinations where you can finesse against the queen. In all of these cases you must have the ace, king and jack between your two hands. Consider the following:

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Dummy	A K J	K J 3	J 4 2	J 4
Declarer	3 2	A 2	A K 5 3	A K 5 3

(a) Here your play is to lead from your hand and play the jack from dummy unless West plays the queen. If convenient you might cash the ace or king before leading toward the jack. On a really lucky day East will play his singleton queen and you won't have to finesse. Your overall plan for playing the deal might dictate that you cannot afford to do that if you have the lead in your hand.

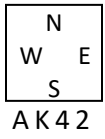
(b) This is similar to (a) and you might choose to play the ace before leading the 2.

(c) Avoid the temptation to lead the jack from dummy in an attempt to capture the queen from East. That will not gain a trick when East "covers an honor with an honor." Instead follow the finesse principle of leading toward the jack. You might cash the ace or king first but that would entice West to play the queen if he has it. If you immediately lead a small card West is likely to play "second hand low" hoping his partner has the ace or king.

(d) Here you cannot afford to play the ace or king first leaving a singleton jack in dummy. If you did West would play the queen when you led a small card.

Sure Finesses

While a finesse is usually a 50-50 proposition, sometimes it is a sure thing. Consider the following:



If the opponents' cards are split 3-2, you have 4 tricks. So you start out by cashing the AK. But on the second round East discards after having played a small card on the first trick. Now you know that West started with 4 cards including the jack. So you simply lead a small card from your hand and play the ten if West plays small, or the queen if West plays the jack. Either way you still win 4 tricks. A play such as this, when you know which defender holds the higher card, is called a ***marked finesse***.

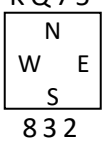
Note that an experienced player would have anticipated this possibility when he saw the Q10 in dummy, and started out by playing the AK. On the other hand, a player with less experience might have played the queen on the first or second round, ultimately losing a trick to the jack.

REPEATED FINESSES

The previous discussion has focused on finessing once in a suit in the hope of winning 1 extra trick. Sometimes you can double your fun by trying to get 2 extra tricks in the same suit.

Repeating a Finesse against the Ace

Suppose you hold the following:



You can always use promotion to create 1 winner. But you may be able to get 2 winners if you lead from your hand toward dummy twice. If West plays the ace, play low from dummy; otherwise, play one of the honors. You will need an entry back to your hand in another suit to repeat the finesse if West plays low.

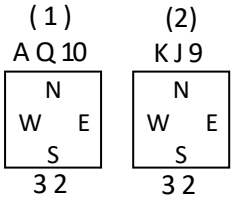
Repeating a Finesse against the King

Here is a typical combination for repeating a finesse against the king.

Start by leading toward the dummy and finessing the queen or jack if West plays low. Of course you would play the ace if West played the king. Since everyone can see the cards in dummy it makes no difference whether you play the queen or jack. But if the cards were reversed so that the opponents could not see those high cards in your hand, it would be better to play the queen to conceal as much information as possible from the opponents. If you played the jack East would be fairly confident you also held the queen or West would have most likely won the trick.

FINESSING AGAINST TWO CARDS

A ***tenace*** is a holding of 2 honors in a suit with at least 1 missing in rank between them, e.g., AQ, KJ, AJ. When the structure continues such as AQ10 or KJ9 you have the possibility of multiple finesses. Let's look at these two cases:



We'll discuss case (1) in terms of the missing higher cards – the KJ. A similar argument holds for case (2) in terms of the missing cards Q10. There are four critical combinations of the locations of the king and jack between East and West:

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
West	K J x	K x x	J x x	x x x
East	x x x	J x x	K x x	K J x

where the x's represent insignificant small cards. Not all 13 cards in the suit are accounted for but the locations of the missing cards are immaterial.

Clearly our plan is to lead toward dummy twice. But what card should we finesse from dummy the first time if West plays a small card?

Let's see how many tricks we can win if we start with the ten or the queen for each of these combinations.

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Finesse the ten first	3	2	2	1
Finesse the queen first	2	2	2	1

Consider only this suit and the number of tricks won. We see that the only way we can ever win 3 tricks is if West has both the king and jack, and we finesse the jack the first time. For all other card positions it makes no difference which card we finesse first; we win the same number of tricks. If we need only two tricks in

the suit to make our contract, there is a slight advantage of finessing the queen first. Then we lose a trick only for cases (c) and (d). Finessing the ten first results in a lost trick for all cases except (a).

Let's look at a slightly different combination with two high cards missing:

If we play the ace first we will always lose two tricks unless the king or queen is a singleton. Instead of playing the ace first, let's see what happens if we finesse twice. Play the jack or ten the first time if West does not play an honor and then finesse again later if East wins the first trick. Again we have four critical distributions of the missing high cards, shown in the following table along with the number of tricks won.

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
West	K Q x	K x x	Q x x	x x x
East	x x x	Q x x	K x x	K Q x
Winners	2	2	2	1

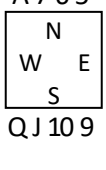
Clearly it is to our advantage to finesse twice.

LEADING A HIGH CARD

So far all of the finessing situations we have considered have required us to lead a low card toward a high card in an attempt to win an extra trick or two. Are there any card combinations where it is advantageous to lead a high card? Absolutely:

Lead a high card when you would be delighted if the next player played a higher card.

Here is a simple example:



You would be quite pleased if West played the king when you led one of the cards from your hand, so by all means lead a card from your hand. Don't necessarily expect West to cooperate, although he might "cover an honor with an honor" if you led the queen, but he might play "second hand low" if you led the 9. If West plays a small card you should also play a small card from dummy. If you play the ace you are almost certain to lose a trick to the king regardless of which player has it. If your

lead holds the trick just keep leading the suit until West plays the king and then capture it with the ace.
Note that capturing the king is not your objective here. Your objective is to win four tricks. Suppose that West happens to have all 5 outstanding cards in this suit and never covers the leads from your hand. You will still satisfy your objective of winning four tricks without capturing his king.

CREATING ENTRIES

Sometimes we can create an entry using the same techniques used to create winners. Let's look at a few examples.

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Dummy	A Q	K x	K Q x	K 6 5 2
Declarer	x x	x x	x x x	A 8 4 3

(a) There is 1 sure entry with the ace but the queen may be an entry via a finesse against the king.
(b) There is no sure entry but the king may be an entry via a finesse against the ace.
(c) You can create 1 entry through promotion but may be able to create a second entry by finessing twice against the ace provided you have an entry back to your hand to take the second finesse.
(d) The ace and king are sure entries to either hand. You can create a second entry to either hand through length if the suit divides 3-2. To create an extra entry to dummy, play the suit three times, preserving the 6 in dummy and 4 in declarer's hand. Follow the same procedure if you want the third entry to be in declarer's hand, but preserve the 8 in that hand. Note: In the latter case you could even preserve the 2 in dummy and 3 in declarer's hand and then the 3 would be an entry back to declarer's hand.

SUMMARY

Basic Finesses

*A finesse is an **attempt** to win a trick with a specific card when an opponent holds a higher card.*

You usually lead a small card from one hand toward a high card in the other.

Normal finesses are against a single high honor (ace, king or queen) in an attempt to win an extra trick. They are successful only half of the time.

Sometimes you know the high card is in the proper location and you can take a marked finesse, guaranteeing success.

Repeated Finesses

There are card combinations such as AQJ or KQx where you can repeat a finesse to attempt to win tricks with multiple cards.

Finessing against Two Cards

When you hold a tenace such as AQ10 or KJ9 in a suit you have a chance of winning two tricks by finessing twice. Play the lower card the first time unless the first defender forces you to play a higher card.

Holding AJ10 in a suit you have an excellent chance of winning 2 tricks if you finesse twice.

Leading a High Card

You lead a high card when you would be pleased if the next player played a higher card.

Creating Entries

Sometimes you have to create an entry through promotion, length or a finesse.

CHAPTER 6

– Utilizing Dummy's Assets

Ruffing Losers in Dummy

The Crossruff

Dummy Points

Discarding Losers in Dummy

Summary

When playing in a suit contract it is usually best to focus on losers. Remember that losers are considered independently for each suit. The number of losers in a suit is the number of tricks the opponents **might** take in that suit before you run out of cards in your hand. You always consider the worst possible lie of the missing cards.

Before the opening lead is made you should have considered your contract and determined how many losers you can afford. For example, in a contract of 2♠ you need to take 8 tricks so can afford only 5 losers. After the opening lead is made and dummy appears, count your losers before even thinking about what to play from dummy or your hand on the first trick. If you have more losers than you can afford you need to find a way to eliminate some. Even if you don't have too many losers it is a good idea to see if there is any way to eliminate some so that you can make overtricks to increase your score.

The finesse discussed in Chapter 5 – "The Finesse" is one method you might use to eliminate losers. In this chapter we consider two other methods to eliminate losers – ruff them in dummy or discard them on winners in dummy. These methods apply only to losers in plain suits. They cannot be used for losers in the trump suit.

RUFFING LOSERS IN DUMMY

♠ 8 5 4 3 2
♥ A K 8 5
♦ 8 7 5
♣ A

N
S

♠ A K Q 7 6
♥ Q J 6 2
♦ A
♣ 8 7 4

Suppose you are declarer in a contract of 7♠ with an opening lead of the ♦K. You have no losers in spades, hearts or diamonds, but you have 2 club losers. How can you eliminate those 2 losers? After you draw trumps and cash the ♣A you can ruff those losers in dummy by using the two high hearts as transportation back to your hand. Alternately you could ruff the diamonds from dummy in your hand for transportation, but we will leave that approach for a later consideration in this chapter. Note that ruffing those small diamonds from dummy in your hand does not eliminate any losers because you never had any diamond losers. This idea of ruffing losers in dummy is developed in more detail in this section.

Requirements

Four conditions must exist before you can ruff a loser in dummy.

- Declarer must have a loser in a plain suit.
- Dummy must be void in that suit.
- Dummy must have a trump card.
- The lead must be in declarer's hand.

Whenever these conditions are satisfied declarer can simply lead a small card in the suit where he has a loser and play one of the trump cards in dummy. Certain pitfalls associated with this technique will be discussed later in this chapter. For

now consider the following illustration where the contract is 4♠ and the opening lead is the ♦K.

♠ K J 9 8 5
♥ K Q 5
♦ 8 7 5 3 2
♣ –

N
S

♠ A Q 10 7 6
♥ A 6 2
♦ A 6 4
♣ 8 7

You have 2 club losers and 2 diamond losers, 1 more than you can afford. If you win the opening lead with the ♦A, all four of the requirements for ruffing a loser in dummy are satisfied. You can immediately lead a club and ruff it in dummy eliminating one of your club losers.

You can actually also eliminate the other club loser, but the conditions are not right to do that immediately at trick three. Unfortunately after you ruff one of the clubs in dummy you no longer have the lead in your hand. But it is a simple matter to lead a trump from dummy and win it in your hand. Now the conditions are right to eliminate the other club loser. Simply lead it and ruff it in dummy. You are left with only the two diamond losers so you will make your contract with an overtrick. Don't forget to draw the opponents' outstanding trumps before taking your heart tricks.

It is very rare that the cards dealt to declarer and dummy in combination with the opening *lead provide an opportunity to eliminate a loser by ruffing in dummy. More often declarer* will have to plan his play to create this opportunity.

There is one requirement that must be met for the possibility of eliminating a loser by ruffing in dummy.

> *The possibility of ruffing a loser in dummy exists only if dummy has fewer cards in that suit than declarer.*

Let's examine a few suit combinations to see if they satisfy this requirement. As usual, dummy's cards are on the top line and declarer's are on the bottom line.

6 5 4 3

N
S

A K 7 4

When you have the same number of cards in dummy as in your hand you do not have the possibility to ruff in dummy.

6 5

N
S

A K Q

You have more cards in your hand than dummy but no losers so you do not have the possibility to ruff losers in dummy.

9 6 5

N
S

4

You have 1 loser but more cards in dummy than your hand so you will not be able to ruff that loser in dummy.

9 6
N
S
A K 7

Just what we were looking for – fewer cards in dummy than your hand with a loser in your hand. You will be able to ruff that loser in dummy if the other criteria are satisfied.

Planning Your Play

Let's look at some simple examples of planning your play so that you can ruff a loser in dummy.

♠ K J 9 8 5
♥ 8 5 2
♦ A 7 5 3 2
♣ –

N
S

♠ A Q 10 7 6
♥ A K 6
♦ 8 6 4
♣ 8 7

This example is very similar to the previous one but the ♦A has been moved to dummy, the ♥K has been moved to declarer, the ♥Q has been replaced with the ♥8 and there are now 5 losers – 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs. You are in the same 4♠ contract with the ♦K opening lead. You have 2 too many losers so you must ruff both club losers in dummy to make the contract. Win the first trick in dummy with the ♦A. Lead a small trump to your hand and then ruff a club in dummy. Lead another small trump to your hand and ruff the other club in dummy. Draw the remaining trump if necessary. Cash your remaining winners and concede a heart loser and 2 diamond losers.

For simplicity the following examples consider only the trump suit (spades) and one side suit (clubs).

♠ K J 9 8 5
♣ 3

N
S

♠ A Q 10 7 6
♣ A 7

Draw trumps (3 rounds if necessary) ending in either hand. Then play clubs winning the trick with the ♣A. Lead the ♣7 and ruff in dummy.

♠ K J 9 8 5
♣ A

N
S

♠ A Q 10 7 6
♣ 7 3

Draw trumps (3 rounds if necessary) **preserving** the ♠5 in dummy and ending in either hand. Play the club suit winning the ace in dummy perforce. Lead the ♠5 to your hand and then ruff the remaining club in dummy.

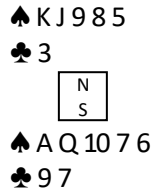
♠ K J 9 8 5
♣ K 5

N
S

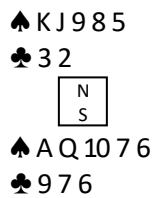
♠ A Q 10 7 6
♣ A 7 3

Draw trumps (3 rounds if necessary) ending in either hand. Lead clubs playing the ♣K and ♣3 – winner from the short side first! Lead the ♣5 to your ♣A and then ruff the remaining club in dummy.

In the above examples you did not have to lose a trick in the suit you wanted to ruff. That is not always the case.

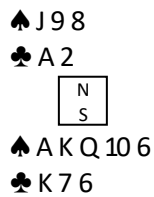


Draw trumps and lead a club from either hand. Hopefully you have an entry back to your hand in a red suit when you regain the lead. Then ruff the remaining club from your hand in dummy.



This is similar to the previous example but now you must give up the lead in clubs twice before you are able to ruff the third club in dummy.

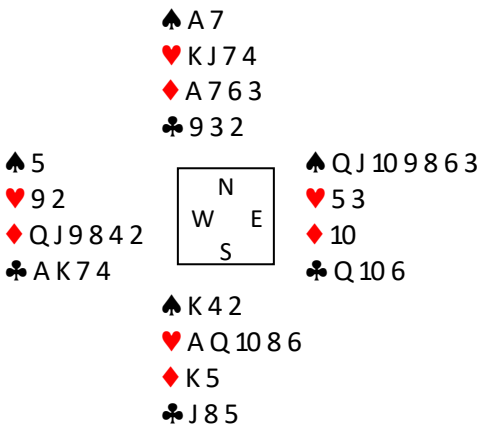
Sometimes you must delay drawing trumps to ensure that you have a trump left in dummy to ruff your loser.



You expect (hope) the 5 outstanding trumps split 3-2. But if you play 3 rounds of trumps to eliminate those from the opponents, you will not have 1 remaining in dummy to ruff your club loser. So draw only 2 rounds of trumps. Then play the club suit twice winning the first trick with the ace in dummy and the second with the king in your hand (remembering to preserve that entry). Now ruff the remaining club from your hand in dummy. Use an entry in one of the red suits to return to your hand so you can draw the last trump. If you don't have an entry in a red suit (you may have had one but played it on the opening lead) you can start by drawing only 1 round of trumps. Then after you play 3 rounds of clubs, ruffing the third one in dummy, you can lead the remaining trump in dummy overtaking in your hand so you can then lead another trump to draw the final one held by the opponents.

Avoiding Pitfalls

There are many dangers to consider when planning to ruff losers in dummy. Every deal presents its unique challenges. In this section we will consider a few common themes looking at complete deals.



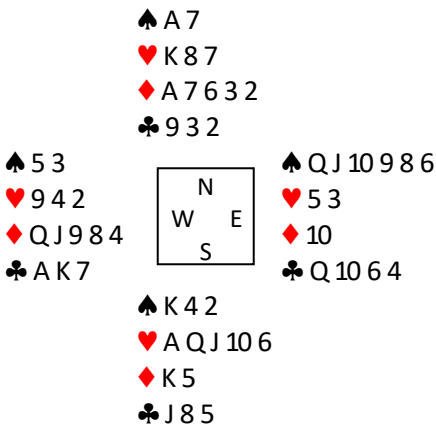
You have a Golden Fit in hearts. South has 14 points as declarer and North has 13 points as dummy so you are in a Golden Game contract of 4♥. You can afford only 3 losers. West leads the ♣A and you get to see dummy. You count 3 club losers and 1 spade loser. It looks like the opponents will take their 3 club tricks before you ever get the lead so you plan to eliminate the spade loser by ruffing in dummy.

Indeed East plays the encouraging ♣10 on the first trick so West continues with the ♣K and then the ♣4 won by East with the ♣Q. East then plays the ♦10, perhaps hoping West has the ♥A so that he can win the first round of trumps and lead back a diamond for him to ruff. You play the ♦5 from your hand (often good to conceal high cards in your hand from the opponents – neither one will know if they are held by you or their partner) and win the ♦A in dummy. Excited and eager to put into practice your new method of eliminating losers, you cash the ♠A from dummy and then lead the ♠7 to your ♠K, intending to next lead the ♠4 and ruff it in dummy. Unfortunately West spoils your plan by ruffing your ♠K with his ♥2! To add insult to injury, West returns the ♦Q which is ruffed by East with his ♥3 while you play your ♦K. You manage to take the rest of the tricks but end up down 2 in a contract you should have made.

What went wrong? You forgot to draw the opponents' trumps before you tried to eliminate your spade loser and were stung by an unusual and unexpected distribution of the cards in the diamond and spade suits.

Unless the opponents find a way to take 4 tricks before you gain the lead (not possible with the distribution in this example), you can always make the contract provided the outstanding hearts split no worse than 3-1. After you win the ♦A simply start by playing the trump suit up to 3 times if necessary to extract the hearts held by the defenders. You will still have at least 1 trump left in dummy to ruff your spade loser.

On the very next deal you get a very similar layout for you and dummy with a few changes for the defenders.



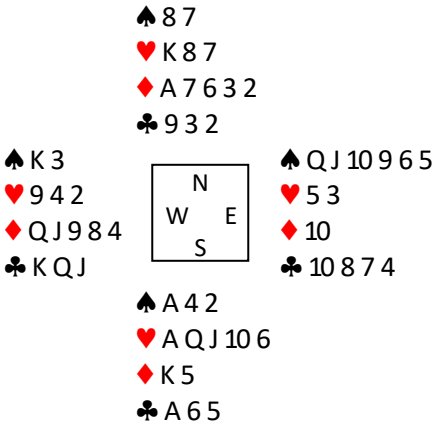
You again find yourself in a 4♥ contract with the opponents taking the first 3 club tricks and East continuing with the ♦10 won by the ♦A in dummy. Having learned your lesson from the previous hand you set out to draw the defenders' trumps and after 3 rounds complete that task. You now play spades winning the first trick with the ♠A in dummy and the second with the ♠K in your hand. Just as you are about to lead the third spade from your hand to ruff it in dummy you realize that there are no hearts left in dummy. You are down 1 in another contract you should have made.

You are playing with friends in a single-table home rubber bridge game and realize what you should have done, so ask if you could replay the deal just to see if you could have made it. Your opponents agree so the first several tricks are played the same way. After you win the ♦A in dummy, you lead the ♥7 to your ♥A and then the ♥6 back to dummy's ♥K. Now you continue with the ♠A and then the ♠7 to your ♠K. You then lead the ♠4 intending to ruff with the ♥7 in dummy. But West spoils your plan again by playing the ♥9 to win the trick. Down 1 again!

What went wrong this time? Since you could not afford to draw all of the defenders' trumps, you needed to keep a higher trump in dummy than the largest trump held by the defenders. In this example you could tell by looking at the hearts in your hand and dummy that the highest trump held by one of the defenders was the ♥9, so you needed to keep the ♥K in dummy. After winning the ♥A in your hand you should cash the ♥Q and then lead the ♠2 to the ♠A, followed by the ♠7 back to your ♠K. Now you can ruff the ♠4 with dummy's ♥K. But you are not home safe yet because West still holds the ♥9. Lead a small diamond to your ♦K and then lead one more high heart. All you have left are hearts and the defenders have no more so you make your contract.

In the previous chapter we discussed the topic of entries. This last example is a good illustration of the use of entries to declarer's hand both to ruff the spade loser and to draw the last trump.

In the examples considered thus far, declarer did not have to give up the lead in the suit he wanted to ruff in dummy before he could make dummy void. Quite often this is not the case. Consider the following example.



Once again you are in a 4♥ contract. After the lead of the ♣K you pause to make a plan before playing from dummy. You count 4 losers – 2 spades and 2 clubs. You decide you can't do anything about the 2 club losers but think you can eliminate 1 of your spade losers by ruffing in dummy. You also recognize that you cannot draw all of the defenders trumps right away because you would not have a trump left in dummy for your spade loser. You also recognize that you must keep the ♥K in dummy to ruff the spade loser because the opponents hold the ♥9.

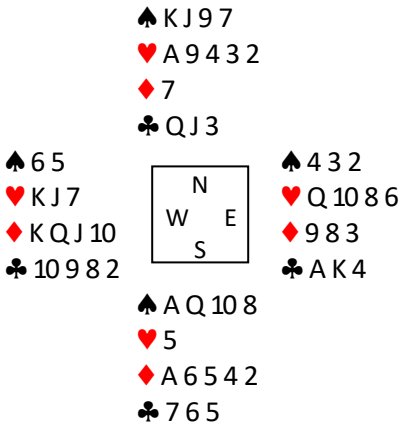
Now that you have made your plan, you play the ♣2 from dummy and win the trick in your hand with the ♣A, noting the discouraging play of the ♣4 by East. You draw 2 rounds of trumps by playing the top 2 hearts from your hand and the 2 low hearts from dummy. You next play the ♠A and another spade making dummy void in spades and feeling pretty smug about the way you are playing this deal. You are all set up to ruff your last spade as soon as you regain the lead. However, you are devastated when West wins the ♠K, cashes his 2 club winners and then leads … his last heart, removing your ♥K from dummy so you are no longer able to ruff your spade loser.

Who is this West player anyway? He always seems to set your contracts. He is a player who has been around the block a few times. He knows how to recognize declarer's plan and interfere with it whenever possible. He could see what you were up to and knew that his ♥9 was going to be a useless card unless he did something with it now. From the way you were playing the deal he was sure you were going to ruff a spade in dummy. Why else did you not lead a third trump to extract his ♥9? So, he decided he would help you draw trumps by leading them, costing him nothing but preventing you from completing your plan.

Could you have played differently and made your contract? Absolutely! Let's have a "do over." After you win the ♣A draw only 1 round of trumps and then lead a small spade from your hand. West can win the ♠K and cash his 2 club winners, but now what can he do to defeat you? Nothing! Whatever he leads next you will win the trick in your hand, draw one more round of trumps keeping the ♥K in dummy (not necessary if he leads a heart which you would win in your hand), cash the ♠A, ruff your third spade in dummy, lead a small diamond from dummy to your ♦K, draw the last trump, lead your ♦5 to dummy's ♦A and claim the rest of the tricks with the remaining trumps in your hand. Your only losers were 2 clubs and 1 spade. Contract made!

THE CROSSRUFF

There are times when you need all of the trumps in dummy to ruff losers in your hand and the only way to return to your hand after each ruff in dummy is to ruff a card from dummy in your hand. In such cases you may never draw trumps by leading them from either hand. This type of play is called a ***crossruff*** and is illustrated below.



South has 11 points as declarer and North has 14 points as dummy, just enough for a Golden Game of 4♠ in their Golden Fit. West leads the ♦K and South counts 7 losers – 4 diamonds and 3 clubs. He sees a possibility of holding the club losers to 2 if the top club honors are split or both in the West hand. But he also sees that if he does not ever lead trumps, he can ruff all of his diamond losers in dummy. Of course to do that he needs 4 entries to his hand in addition to his first entry, winning the first trick with the ♦A. He can get those by ruffing hearts in his hand after first cashing the ♥A. Since he has all 8 of the top trumps, this line of play is a sure thing as long as neither defender is void in hearts or diamonds so that he wins a trick with each red suit ace.

He puts his plan into action by winning the first trick with the ♦A and then leading his singleton heart to the ♥A in dummy. He then continues by repeating the following 2 steps 4 times:

1. Lead a heart from dummy and ruff it in his hand.
2. Lead a diamond from his hand and ruff it in dummy.

When he is done with this he has led diamonds 5 times and hearts 5 times winning all 10 tricks and making his contract leaving him with only the 3 clubs in each hand. Each defender will have to play all of their red suit cards, keeping 3 cards in the black suits. East will probably keep the 2 top clubs and 1 trump while West will most likely keep his 2 trumps and 1 club, so the defenders will take the last 3 tricks.

DUMMY POINTS

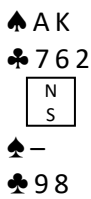
Note in the last example that declarer did not gain any extra tricks by ruffing in his hand. He always had counted on winning 4 trump tricks after he saw the other top spades in dummy. He simply used the heart ruffs as entries to his hand so that he could lead diamonds and score 4 extra tricks with the trumps in dummy.

If he had ever led spades from either hand he could not have won those extra tricks with dummy's trumps, and he would have been short the required entries to his hand.

This is exactly why we give points for short suits to dummy but not declarer and refer to them as dummy points. It is not that short suits have no value for declarer. They can be used to keep the opponents from winning tricks in that suit because declarer can ruff them in his hand, but they do not provide any extra tricks. Declarer counted on those tricks anyway. On the other hand, a short suit in dummy might produce extra tricks when dummy has trump support for declarer. Declarer may be able to ruff losers in that suit in dummy.

DISCARDING LOSERS IN DUMMY

Here is a simple example of discarding losers in dummy.



Suppose you are in a heart contract with these cards in the black suits. You have 2 club losers but 2 high spades in the dummy and no spades in your hand. If you have the lead in dummy you can play those 2 high spades and discard the 2 club losers from your hand.

Requirements

Four conditions must exist before you can discard a loser in dummy.

- Dummy must have a winner in the plain suit.
- Declarer must be void in a plain suit.
- The lead must be in dummy.
- Declarer must have a loser in a different plain suit.

Whenever these conditions are satisfied declarer can simply lead a winner from dummy in the suit in which he is void and discard a loser in another suit. Certain pitfalls associated with this technique will be discussed later in this chapter. For now consider the following illustration where the contract is 4♠ and the opening lead is the ♥K.

♠ 4 3 2
♥ A 6 3
♦ 8 5 3
♣ A 6 5 2

N
S

♠ A K Q 10 8 7 5
♥ 8 7 2
♦ A 7 6
♣ –

You have 2 diamond losers and 2 heart losers, one more than you can afford. If you win the opening lead with the ♥A, all four of the requirements for discarding a loser in dummy are satisfied. You can immediately lead the ♣A and discard a small diamond or heart, thereby eliminating one of your losers.

You have nothing to gain by not making this play immediately. In fact if you do not make it at trick two you will not get another chance and will be defeated by one trick.

It is very rare that the cards dealt to declarer and dummy in combination with the opening lead provide an opportunity to eliminate a loser by discarding in dummy. More often declarer will have to plan his play to create this opportunity.

There is one requirement that must be met for the possibility of eliminating a loser by discarding in dummy.

> *The possibility of discarding a loser in dummy can exist only if there are more winners in a suit than the number of cards in that suit in declarer's hand.*

A corollary to this statement is

> *The possibility of discarding a loser in dummy can exist only if dummy holds more cards in a suit than declarer.*

Let's examine a few suit combinations to see if they satisfy these requirements.

6 5 4 3

N
S

A K 7 2

When you have the same number of cards in dummy as in your hand you cannot have the possibility of discarding a loser in dummy.

A K 6

N
S

Q 5 4

You have more cards in your hand than in dummy so you cannot have the possibility of discarding a loser in dummy.

A 6 4

N
S

K 5

You have more cards in dummy than in your hand but the same number of winners as cards in your hand so there is no possibility of discarding a loser in dummy.

A K 9
N
S
Q 7

Here is what we were looking for. More cards in dummy than your hand with more winners in the suit than cards in declarer's hand. You will be able to discard a loser in dummy if the other criteria are satisfied.

Planning Your Play

Let's look at some simple examples of planning your play so that you can discard a loser in dummy. We start with the same holding as the first example in the previous section, but now the opening lead is the ♦K instead of the ♥K.

♠ 4 3 2
♥ A 6 3
♦ 8 5 3
♣ A 6 5 2
N
S
♠ A K Q 10 8 7 5
♥ 8 7 2
♦ A 7 6
♣ –

You have 2 diamond losers and 2 heart losers, 1 more than you can afford. If you win the opening lead with the ♦A you have the lead in your hand so you cannot immediately lead the ♣A and discard a small diamond or heart to eliminate one of your losers. While you could now lead a small heart to the ♥A in dummy and then take your discard, it is slightly safer to first draw trumps playing the spade suit as many times as necessary to extract the 3 trumps held by the defenders. That eliminates the small probability that one of the opponents is void in hearts and would ruff your heart lead – not only winning that trick but perhaps even capturing your ♥A and destroying your entry to dummy.

For simplicity the following examples consider only the side suit on which you would like to take a discard.

A K 9
N
S
Q 7

Taking a discard on this suit is easy provided you remember to play the winner from the short side first. Whichever hand has the lead, you lead this suit playing the 9 from dummy and the queen from declarer's hand. Then lead the 7 back to dummy winning the trick with either the ace or king. The other high card can then be led for a discard from your hand.

A K 9
N
S
–

If you have the lead in dummy you can take 2 discards from your hand simply by leading the ace and king. If you have the lead in your hand you will have to find an entry to dummy in some other suit before you can take your discards.

Sometimes you do not have the winners in dummy but need to create them using promotion, length or a finesse.

K J 3
N
S
Q 7

You do not have any winners in this suit but can promote 2 winners. Start by playing the queen and 3 on the first trick. If the defenders take their ace you will have 2 winners in dummy and only the 7 in your hand so you will be able to take one discard. If they do not take their ace you will continue with the 7 and jack. If they now take their ace you have

promoted the king for a discard in dummy but will need an entry to dummy in another suit before you can take your discard. If they still do not take their ace you will not be able to discard on dummy's king. But, now you no longer have a loser in this suit so you have still eliminated a loser – just not in some other plain suit.

A Q
N
S
7

You have only 1 winner in this suit but might create a second winner by finessing your LHO for the king. Lead the 7 and if LHO plays small play the queen from dummy. If it wins the trick you can discard a loser on the ace. If RHO produces the king when you play the queen you have lost a trick you did not have to lose, but might be able to "get it back" by discarding a loser on the ace later in the play.

A K 8 5 3
N
S
6 4 2

Here you have only 2 winners in the suit and 3 cards in your hand, but you have 8 cards in the combined hands so the defenders have only 5. If they are split 3-2 you have to lose only one trick in this suit. So suppose you simply duck a trick playing the 2 and 3 to give the position below.

A K 8 5
N
S
6 4

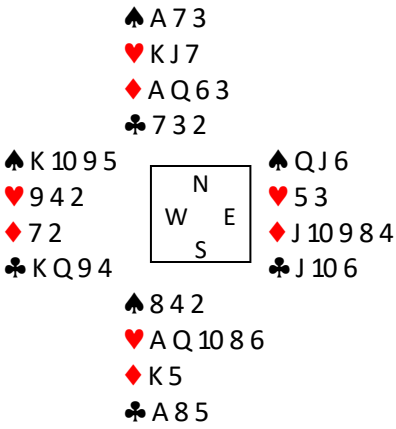
Now one defender is left with 2 cards and the other only 1 so you have 4 winners in dummy and only 2 cards in your hand. You can discard two losers on the 8 and 5 in dummy after you first play the ace and king once you regain the lead.

Avoiding Pitfalls

In the previous section we considered several pitfalls to avoid when eliminating losers by ruffing in dummy. There are two main pitfalls to avoid when eliminating losers by discarding in dummy.

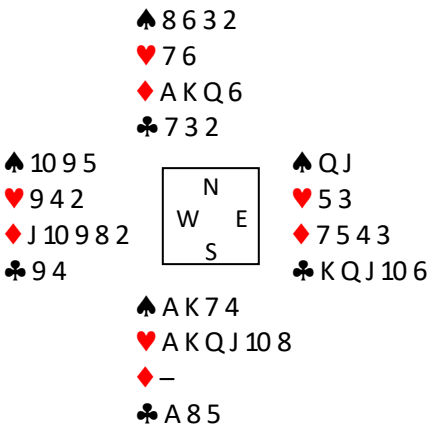
- Don't let the defender's ruff while you are taking your discards.
- Don't get trapped in your hand and unable to reach dummy to take your discards.

As done earlier in this chapter we will illustrate these pitfalls by examining a few complete deals.



With 14 points in both the North and South hands and a Golden Fit in hearts you find yourself in a 4♥ contract with an opening lead of the ♣K. Looking at both hands you see that you have 2 spade losers and 2 club losers. But you have 3 diamond winners and only 2 diamonds in your hand with more diamonds in dummy so realize you can discard a loser on one of dummy's diamond winners. You eagerly win the ♣A, cash the ♦K, lead the ♦5 to dummy's ♦A and play the ♦Q from dummy discarding the ♣5 from your hand – only to see West trump this trick with his ♥2. Now you still have your 2 spade losers and 1 club loser with no way to eliminate any of them so you are doomed to be set 1 trick.

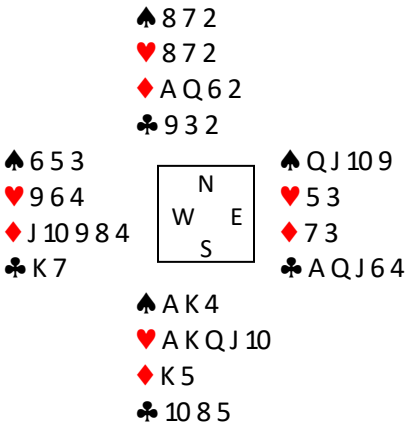
What went wrong? You forgot to draw the defenders trumps before you took your discard. There was no urgency to get rid of any of your losers. You should have played 3 rounds of hearts after winning the first trick. You could have then played the diamonds and discarded a loser.



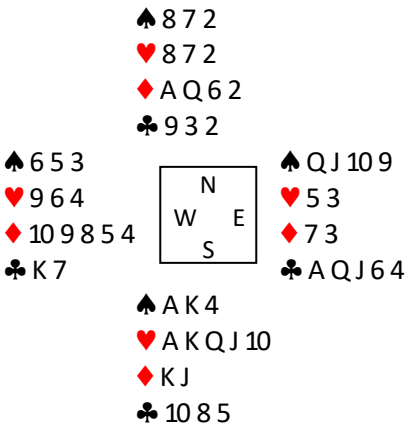
With 23 points in your hand and 9 in dummy you stretch a little bit and end up in a 6♥ contract. West decides to make a "safe" opening lead of the ♦J. You see 2 spade losers and 2 club losers, 3 of which can be discarded on the 3 top diamonds in dummy. But after winning the first trick in dummy and discarding one of your losers, you remember you should draw trumps first. So you play 3 rounds of trumps and then realize you have the lead in your hand with no way to get back to dummy to take 2 discards on the remaining top diamonds. You go down 2 tricks.

While drawing trumps first is usually a good idea, sometimes there are higher priorities. We will discuss this topic more in the next chapter. On this hand you should have recognized that you had no later entries to dummy so should have played the 3 top diamonds as the first 3 tricks, discarding 3 small cards in the black suits. If one of the defenders had only 2 diamonds and ruffed the third trick you would not have made your contract, but this is really the only choice you have. After making your 3 discards you could have then led hearts to draw the trumps and claimed your contract.

You were very fortunate to get the diamond lead on this hand. The lead of any other suit would have doomed your contract from the start. Sometimes you do get lucky in this game.



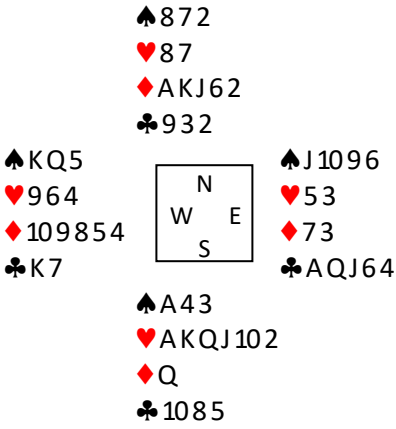
You are in another 4♥ contract. After the opening lead of the ♦J you count 3 club losers and 1 spade loser. With 3 diamond winners and more diamonds in dummy than your hand you see that you can discard one of your losers on a high diamond in dummy. You also see that you must preserve an entry to dummy in the diamond suit, so win the first trick in your hand with the ♦K. You then draw trumps, lead the ♦5 to the ♦A, cash the ♦Q discarding one of your losers and claim 10 tricks – giving the opponents your 3 remaining losers.



This deal is exactly the same as the previous deal except that the ♦J and ♦5 have been interchanged between the West and South hands and the opening lead is now the ♦10.

You now note that you have 4 diamond winners and only 2 diamonds in your hand so you can take 2 discards on dummy's diamonds and make an overtrick. After winning the ♦K and drawing trumps you cash the ♦J playing the ♦6 from dummy, having played the ♦2 on the first trick. Oops! How are you going to get back to dummy to play the other 2 diamonds? No way! Down one. Too bad you had the ♦J. You would not have been tempted to be so greedy. You should have overtaken the ♦J with the ♦A so you could have played the ♦Q for a discard and made your contract.

Let's look at one more deal with the same theme.



This is another 4♥ contract but now you have 5 losers, 2 spades and 3 clubs, with an opening lead of the ♠K. You have 4 diamond winners and only 1 diamond in your hand. After winning the opening lead and drawing trumps your inclination might be to lead the ♦Q and play the ♦2 from dummy. But if you do you have no way to enter dummy to play the 3 good diamonds there. The only way to make your contract is to overtake your ♦Q with the ♦K or ♦A and cash the remaining top 2 diamonds discarding 2 losers. This reduces the number of losers from 5 to 3. Sometimes you have to "waste" a good trick to make your contract.

SUMMARY

Ruffing Losers in Dummy

Dummy's trumps can sometimes be used to ruff losers that declarer has in a plain suit.

> *The possibility of ruffing a loser in dummy exists whenever dummy has fewer cards in that suit than declarer.*

The following conditions must exist before this method of eliminating a loser can actually be performed.

> ***Requirements for Ruffing a Loser in Dummy***
>
> - *Declarer must have a loser in a plain suit.*
> - *Dummy must be void in that suit.*
> - *Dummy must have a trump card.*
> - *The lead must be in declarer's hand.*

There are many factors to consider when planning to ruff losers in dummy. Quite often all of the requirements will not be met after the first trick. You then need to play your cards in a manner to satisfy the requirements.

There are many pitfalls that must be avoided to ensure the ability to ruff a loser in dummy when the possibility exists.

> ***Avoiding Pitfalls***
>
> - *Draw trumps first if possible.*
> - *Ruff your loser(s) before drawing trumps if drawing trumps would not leave you with sufficient trumps in dummy.*
> - *If possible, make sure the trumps you are going to use for ruffing are higher than any held by the defenders.*
> - *If you must give up the lead before you are able to ruff, make sure the defenders are not able to remove your trumps from dummy.*

The Crossruff

Crossruffing is a special form of eliminating losers whereby you never draw trumps, but ruff 2 suits in opposite hands, using your trumps as entries back to your hand.

Dummy Points

Ruffing in your hand does not generally produce any extra tricks. That is why we give extra points to dummy but not declarer for short suits and they are called dummy points.

Discarding Losers in Dummy

Long suits in dummy sometimes provide an opportunity to discard losers.

*The possibility of discarding a loser in dummy can exist **only if***

- *There are more winners in a suit than the number of cards in that suit in declarer's hand.*
- *Dummy holds more cards in that suit than declarer.*

The following conditions must exist before this method of eliminating a loser can actually be performed.

Requirements for Discarding a Loser in Dummy

- *Declarer must be void in a plain suit.*
- *Dummy must have a winner in the plain suit.*
- *The lead must be in dummy.*
- *Declarer must have a loser in a different plain suit.*

Planning your play when you want to discard losers in dummy is similar in principle to that process when you want to ruff losers in dummy. If the requirements for discarding a loser are not immediately satisfied you will have to play your cards in such a manner as to set up the requirements.

When the possibility exists to discard a loser in dummy there are two main pitfalls which must be avoided.

Avoiding Pitfalls

- *Don't let the defender's ruff while you are taking your discards.*
- *Do not get trapped with the lead in your hand and unable to reach dummy.*


CHAPTER 7

– Trump Suit Management

The Danger of Not Drawing Trumps

Developing the Trump Suit

Quick Losers and Slow Losers

The Danger of Drawing Trumps

When to Draw Trumps

Maintaining Suit Control

Summary

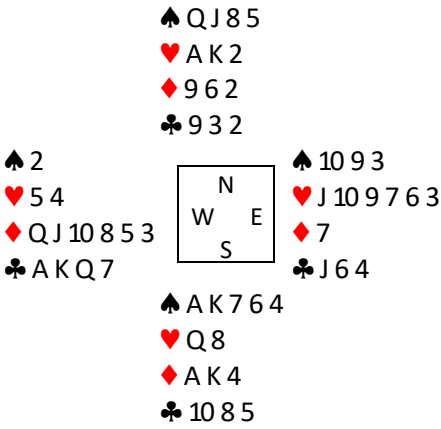

THE DANGER OF NOT DRAWING TRUMPS

There is a general rule for declarer as soon as you get the lead when playing in a suit contract.

> ***Draw Trumps First***
> *unless you have a **good** reason to do otherwise.*

"Draw trumps first" means that as soon as you get the lead you should play the trump suit as many times as necessary to extract all of the opponents' trumps from their hands. It is then usually best to turn your attention to other aspects of the play.

Let's take a look at a couple of full deals to see the danger of not following this rule.

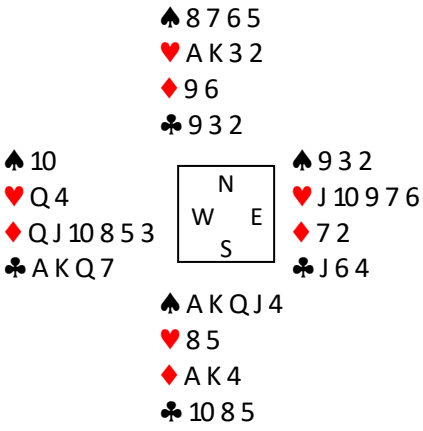


You are South declaring a contract of 4♠ with the lead of the ♣A by West. After you see the dummy you count 4 losers (3 clubs and 1 diamond), one more than you can afford. You also see that you can discard your diamond loser on an extra heart winner in dummy, so you have a way to make the contract.

West continues with the ♣K and ♣Q, and then switches to the ♦Q. You cannot afford to lose this trick so you win the ♦A. Somewhat nervous about that diamond loser, you lead the ♥Q playing the ♥2 from dummy and then lead the ♥8 to the ♥K. Next you lead the ♥A from dummy discarding the ♦4 from your hand, only to see West ruff your winner with his ♠2. To add insult to injury West now leads the ♦J which is ruffed by East with his ♠3. You were vulnerable playing in a duplicate game and just turned a score of 620 for your side into a score of 200 for the opponents. Trust me; you will not get many matchpoints, if any, for this result. It would also be a great disappointment in a rubber bridge game.

What went wrong? You panicked because of your diamond loser. You had plenty of time to get rid of that loser on the dummy's extra heart winner. You should have drawn the opponents' trumps first. After winning the fourth trick with the ♦A simply start playing spades, playing a high card from one hand and a low card from the opposite hand on each trick. Since you are missing only 4 spades, you watch what cards the opponents play. When West discards on the second round you know the missing spades are split 3-1 so you need to play 3

rounds to eliminate all of their trumps. After you have played the third round of trumps you can play your hearts to discard your diamond loser.



This deal is very similar to the previous one. Just a few cards have been changed. You are in the same 4♠ contract with identical losers. As before, West starts with 3 top clubs and switches to the ♦Q. This time you can eliminate your diamond loser by ruffing in dummy. But what will happen if you do not draw trumps first? If after winning the ♦Q with the ♦A you play the ♦K and then follow with the ♦4, ruffing with any card in dummy, East will ***overruff*** with the ♠9. So just play 3 rounds of trumps first and then take your diamond ruff.

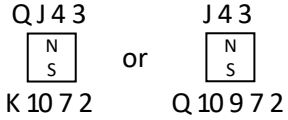
DEVELOPING THE TRUMP SUIT

Developing the trump suit (drawing trumps) is just like developing a suit in a notrump contract. If you have losers in the trump suit you cannot eliminate them using the techniques of ruffing or discarding that might be available for a side suit loser. Instead you must think in terms of creating winners through promotion, length and finesses that are appropriate in notrump contracts.

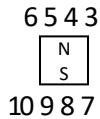
Here are a few examples.

Unless the suit splits 5-0 you simply play your top cards one at a time until the opponents run out of cards. You expect them to split 3-2 so you just watch to see if they follow suit to each trick. When one opponent discards you will know how many trumps the other defender still holds.

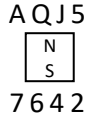
When your trumps are divided unevenly be sure to play the winner(s) from the short side first. Play the queen and 2 on the first trump trick. Then lead the 3 to your ace so that you have the lead in your hand and can continue leading the trump suit. Even though you may have entries to your hand in another suit, they are not needed here so conceal them from the defenders at this time. **Remember to use entries wisely.**



You will often be missing the top one or two cards in the trump suit. This alone should not discourage you from leading trumps. You will have to give up the lead but that may well be the best approach. When you regain the lead you will have promoted your remaining high trumps into winners so that you can then draw the remaining trumps.



Here all of the opponents' trumps are higher than yours so you cannot really promote any of your cards into winners. But by continuing to lead the suit at every opportunity you can drive out the defenders' trumps and establish your remaining trumps as winners through length. Note that unless all of the outstanding trumps are in one hand the defenders will have to play some of their winners on the same trick. In fact if they are split 2-2 they will get only 2 tricks out of their top 4 trumps!



In this combination you have the opportunity to possibly avoid a trump loser by finessing your LHO for the king. You will need two entries to your hand and the suit must split 3-2.

QUICK LOSERS AND SLOW LOSERS

In Chapter 4 – "Guidelines for Play," you learned that the number of losers in a suit is the number of tricks the opponents might be able to win before declarer runs out of cards in that suit. For the purpose of managing the trump suit it is really helpful to divide losers into two categories:

Quick Losers
Tricks the opponents might be able to take without first giving you the lead.
Slow Losers
Tricks the opponents might be able to take after first giving you the lead.

As always the number of quick and slow losers in any suit is limited by the number of cards declarer holds in that suit; count quick/slow losers on a suit-by-suit basis. There are two simple corollaries to the above definition of quick losers.

- *If you have the ace in a suit you do not have any quick losers.*
- *If you do not have the ace in a suit you have at least one quick loser unless declarer is void in that suit.*

Here are some examples:

8 7 4 3
N
S
6 5 2

You have 3 losers and they are all quick losers.

8 7 4 3
N
S
A 5 2

You have 2 losers and they are both slow losers.

8 7 2
N
S
K Q 4

You have 2 losers, 1 quick and 1 slow. Suppose your RHO gets the lead and leads the jack. You would play your king which might lose to the ace if your LHO holds it. Now you still have one loser, but your opponents cannot take that trick unless they first give you the lead in this suit.

One factor to keep in mind is that the number of quick/slow losers changes as the play progresses. For example, suppose you are in a contract of 4♠ with the following cards in dummy and your hand.

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

You have 3 quick diamond losers and 1 slow club loser, one more than you can afford. The opening lead is the ♣K. Clearly you must win this trick with the ♣A or the defenders may switch to the diamond suit and take their 3 diamond tricks. After you take the ♣A your club loser becomes a quick loser because if you immediately let the opponents gain the lead they can take their club trick.

THE DANGER OF DRAWING TRUMPS

At the beginning of this chapter we considered some dangers of not drawing trumps and suggested that the first thing you do as declarer when you get the lead is draw the opponents' trumps. But there was a caveat to that suggestion: do so only if you do not have a good reason not to. In this section we examine a couple of dangers of drawing trumps immediately and at the same time illustrate some good reasons not to draw trumps immediately.

Let's make a few minor changes to the example of the previous section. In dummy move the ♠2 and ♥J into the diamond suit. In declarer's hand move the ♦6 into the club suit. You are in the same contract of 4♠ and have the same opening lead of the ♣K.

You have 2 quick diamond losers and 2 slow club losers, one more than you can afford. There is no particular advantage to letting West win the first trick so you win the trick with your ♣A converting your 2 slow club losers into quick losers, although at this point you could ruff one of those losers in dummy. The opponents have 5 trumps so the best you can hope for is a 3-2 break. This means you must play at least 3 rounds of trumps to draw all of theirs. But that will not leave you with any trumps in dummy and you would be left with 4 losers and no way to eliminate any of them. The best way to play this hand is to cash the ♠A and then play a small club. When you regain the lead you can draw one more round of trumps (unless the opponents do it for you), ruff your remaining club, return to your hand with the ♥Q and finally draw the outstanding trumps. You have lost 1 club trick and still have 2 diamond losers but those are all the tricks you will lose.

Once again you are in a 4♠ contract with an opening lead of the ♣K. You have 2 quick spade losers, 1 slow diamond loser and after winning the ♣A, 2 quick club losers which you might be able to ruff in dummy. But if you try to draw trumps first you will not have enough trumps left in dummy to ruff both clubs. In fact the defenders might see their best defense is to prevent you from ruffing club losers in dummy and lead trumps for you, perhaps even playing the ace, king and another spade to prevent you from ruffing any clubs. It is better if you immediately ruff a club in dummy, return to your hand with the ♦A and ruff your last club in dummy. Then you can turn your attention to trumps, leading them at every opportunity until you have drawn all of them from the defenders.

Here is one more 4♠ contract with an opening lead of the ♣K. You have 1 quick spade loser, 1 quick diamond loser and after winning the ♣A, 2 quick club losers. If you try to draw trumps first you will probably lose the lead and the opponents may well take their 4 tricks immediately. Since you have an extra heart winner in dummy it is better to first play 3 rounds of hearts, discarding a club on the third round to eliminate one of your losers. Then you can attack the trump suit.

WHEN TO DRAW TRUMPS

By now you are probably utterly confused. When should you draw trumps and when should you delay? Do you have to really study each deal or are there some

simple guidelines to follow? Well, yes, you do have to study each deal. That is part of what makes this game so interesting. There are so many possibilities that it is impossible to lay down any hard and fast rules. On the other hand there are some guidelines to follow. Although they may not seem to be very simple, I'll try to make them as easy as I can. Here they are, in outline form:

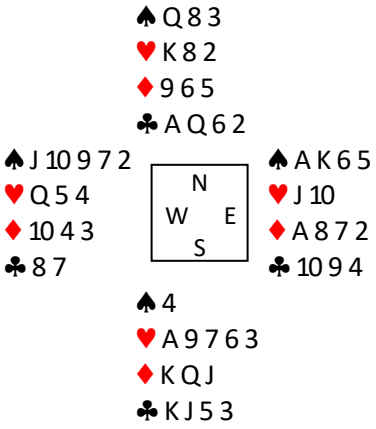
Do you need some of your trumps for another purpose (usually ruffing losers in dummy)?
- If yes, can you draw trumps and still have enough left for that purpose?
  - If yes, then draw trumps.
  - If no, then go about the other business first.
- If no, must you give up the lead when drawing trumps?
  - If no, then draw trumps.
  - If yes, do you have more quick losers than you can afford?
    - If no, then draw trumps.
    - If yes, find some way to eliminate quick losers before drawing trumps (often by discarding on a long suit in dummy.)

Examples of all of these possibilities have been presented in the previous sections of this chapter.

The key to answering the above questions regarding the issue of drawing trumps is to study your hand and dummy to determine where you have losers and whether they are quick or slow. Then develop a plan to eliminate some if necessary to make your contract or perhaps to give you a chance for overtricks – especially important in duplicate matchpoint play.

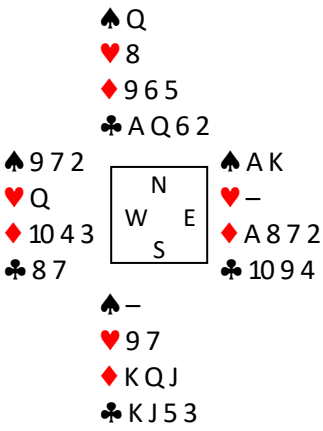
MAINTAINING SUIT CONTROL

One of the advantages of playing in a suit contract is that the trump suit allows you to maintain control of suits. As long as you have a trump remaining in your hand or in dummy the defenders will not be able to take many tricks in one of their long suits. Eventually you will become void and can use your trump to regain the lead. Of course if you run out of trumps you lose this control. That is why you usually stop playing the trump suit voluntarily after you draw all of the opponents' trumps. Sometimes you will have to leave one or more of their trumps outstanding just to maintain control of all of the suits. We have already seen some similar examples of this earlier in this chapter when we were missing one or two of the top trumps and had to delay drawing trumps to take care of eliminating some losers first. In this section we will look at a few more examples where we have at least one of the top trumps but still do not draw all of the outstanding trumps.

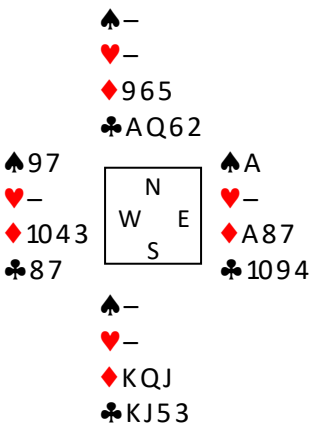


As South you find yourself in a 4♥ contract. This seems like a reasonable contract since you have a total of 26 points between you and dummy. The opening lead is the ♠J and you count 1 spade loser (quick), 1 heart loser (slow) and 1 diamond loser (quick). You really wish dummy's ♠Q were the ♥Q but you have to play the cards you were dealt.

Regardless of which card you play from dummy the opponents win the trick and lead another spade which you ruff in your hand. At this point you start to get a little nervous about the trump suit and hope they don't split 5-0. Anyway it looks like you should at least start to draw trumps so you cash the ♥K and ♥A ending in your hand and pleased to observe that the hearts split 3-2. At this point the deal is reduced to that shown in the next display.



You have lost only 1 trick, a spade. You seemingly have only 2 more losers, a diamond and a heart. But look what happens if you draw the last trump. West will return a spade which you will have to ruff leaving the following position:

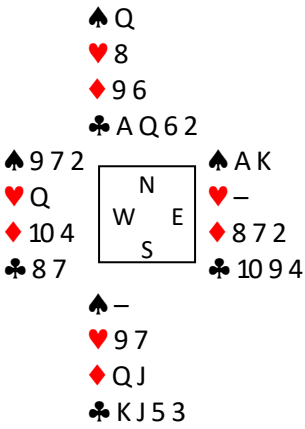


You have now lost 2 tricks, a spade and a heart. It looks like you have only 1 more loser, a diamond. But look what happens when East wins his ♦A. He plays his ♠A and there is nothing to prevent him from winning that trick. You have no more trumps left in your hand or dummy. He will then be forced to lead a minor suit card and you can take the rest of the tricks, but you have gone down 1 trick. In fact, if East were an expert player he might have jettisoned one of his top spades earlier and been left with a small spade which he could lead to West so that they could have won 2 spade tricks for a 2-trick set.

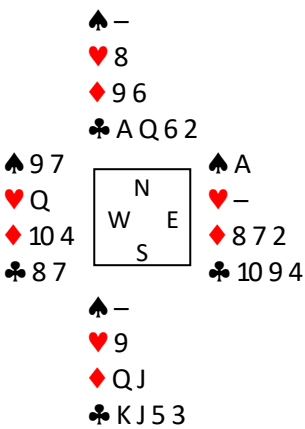
What happened here was that you lost control of the suits by drawing the defenders' last trump. There was no particular reason to lead that third round of trumps. West was always going to win that ♥Q. It would have been better to have led a diamond instead of the last trump. We'll assume East wins his ♦A.

If East does not take the trick with the ♦A you just continue with the ♦Q. If he still does not take his ♦A you switch to either the clubs or hearts. You will make your contract. If you don't see how, lay out the cards and experiment a little.

The position is now:



You have lost 2 tricks, a spade and a diamond, and still have a heart loser. Whatever East leads, you win the trick – either with a high card in one of the minor suits or by ruffing a spade lead. You then just continue playing the minor suits. Suppose for example that East returns a spade and you ruff giving this position:

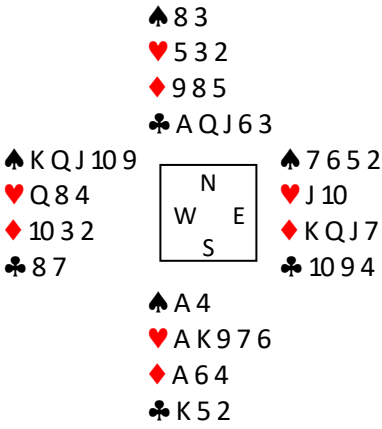


West can ruff in with his ♥Q whenever he wants, but you can win anything he returns and take the rest of the tricks. If West refuses to ruff any of the minor suit tricks, he simply takes the last trick with his ♥Q.

By leaving the master trump outstanding you have maintained control of the suits and made your contract.

As a side note, it can be pointed out that as a defender many beginning bridge players are reluctant to lead a suit that they know declarer can ruff in his **hand**. This deal illustrates that this can be a very effective defensive tactic. It can force declarer to lose control of some suit. Sometimes he can avoid that problem as shown here but other times he can't. Even if he can avoid the problem he may not recognize the problem or know how to play to counter the attack. What the defenders usually do not want to do is give declarer an opportunity to ruff losers in **dummy**.

Here is an example similar to the previous one but where declarer should draw the outstanding trump to maintain control even though it is a high trump.

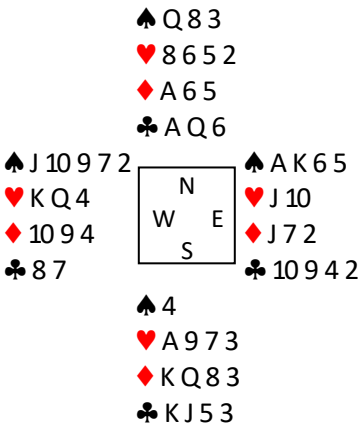


You are in another 4♥ contract with an opening lead of the ♠K. You count 1 spade loser (quick after you play your ace on the first trick), 1 heart loser (slow) and 2 diamond losers (slow). You see that you can discard your 2 diamond losers on the long clubs in dummy to make an overtrick, losing only 1 spade and 1 heart.

What happens if you decide to leave the ♥Q outstanding? West will ruff the third round of clubs and continue spades. Now you have no entry back to dummy to take your 2 diamond discards so eventually end up losing 1 spade, 1 heart and 2 diamonds.

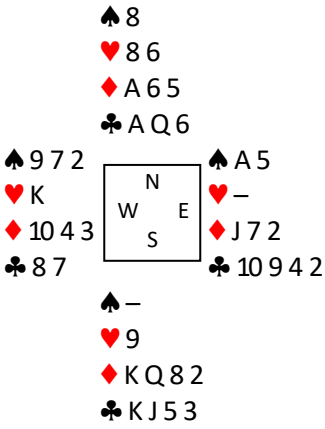
If you play 3 rounds of hearts after winning the first trick, West can take his heart trick and 1 spade trick. But whatever he leads next you can win the trick and run your clubs making your contract with the overtrick.

Now let's look at a slight variation of the first deal in this section.



The contract is again 4♥ with an opening lead of the ♠J. On the surface it looks like you have 1 spade loser, 2 heart losers (assuming a 3-2 split) and 1 diamond loser which you can ruff in dummy. So it appears you should be able to make your contract.

But look what happens if you ruff the second spade lead and then lead the ♥A and another heart.

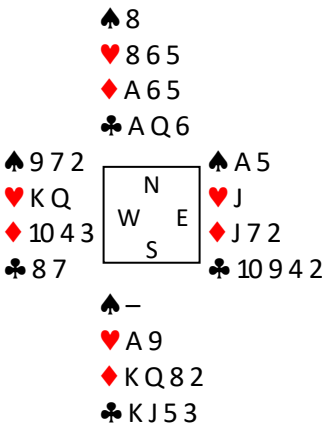


West now leads the ♥K to draw the last trump from your hand and then leads a spade won by East's ♠A. The defenders have now taken 2 spade tricks and 2 heart tricks for a one trick set. You lost control of the spade suit when you tried to draw trumps.

In Chapter 4 – "Guidelines for Play," we found that ducking a trick is sometimes a useful technique to maintain transportation between your hand and dummy. Maintaining control of suits can also sometimes be accomplished by ducking a trick. In the deal just considered see what happens if you duck a trump trick before playing your ♥A. For clarity, here are the cards played on the first three tricks:

Trick 1: ♠J364 (led by West)
Trick 2: ♠10QK, ♥3 (led by West)
Trick 3: ♥74210 (led by South)

This leaves the following cards for all players:



The defenders have taken 2 tricks and East is on lead. They will take 1 more trump trick but that is all. East has several options but they can all be countered by declarer:

- If East leads a spade declarer will ruff with the ♥9 and then play the ♥A – leaving the ♥K outstanding. Declarer will then just start taking his minor suit winners.
- If East leads the ♥J declarer wins the ♥A and again starts playing his minor suit winners.
- If East leads a minor suit declarer wins the trick and plays one round of trumps winning with the ♥A. He then starts taking the rest of his minor suit winners.

In all of these scenarios West can ruff with his ♥Q at his leisure, but that is the last trick the opponents take.

From the analysis of these deals we find that the ability to maintain control of the suits is another factor that must be considered in the decision to draw trumps. It really falls within the first question of the outline in the previous section – **needing trumps for another purpose**.

SUMMARY

The Danger of Not Drawing Trumps

The basic danger of not drawing the opponents' trumps is that one of them will win a trick they did not deserve with one of their trumps. Consequently we have the following general guideline when playing in a trump contract:

> ***Draw Trumps First***
> *unless you have a **good** reason to do otherwise.*

Developing the Trump Suit

Sometimes when you want to draw trumps you have top cards in the suit and can just continue playing the suit without having to give up the lead. Other times you will have to use the techniques of developing winners in a notrump contract – promotion, length and finesse.

Quick Losers and Slow Losers

When managing the trump suit it is important to categorize your losers as quick losers or slow losers.

> ***Quick Los**ers*
> *Tricks the opponents might be able to take without first giving you the lead*
> ***Slow Loser**s*
> *Tricks the opponents might be able to take after first giving you the lead*

The Danger of Drawing Trumps

There are two main dangers with drawing trumps immediately.

- If you need to ruff losers in dummy you may not have enough trumps left in dummy after drawing trumps.
- If you have to give up the lead when you draw trumps, the opponents may be able to take enough tricks to set you.

When to Draw Trumps

Managing the trump suit is not a particularly easy task. While it is often correct to draw the opponents' trumps as soon as possible, there are also many deals where it is best to delay drawing trumps or even leave a high trump outstanding. There are no hard and fast rules to follow, but here are some general guidelines:

Do you need some of your trumps for another purpose (usually ruffing losers in dummy)?

If yes, can you draw trumps and still have enough left for that purpose?

If yes, then draw trumps.

If no, then go about the other business first.

If no, must you give up the lead when drawing trumps?

If no, then draw trumps.

If yes, do you have more quick losers than you can afford?

If no, then draw trumps.

If yes, find some way to eliminate quick losers before drawing trumps (often by discarding on a long suit in dummy.)

Maintaining Suit Control

While the above guidelines are adequate for many deals some require a deeper analysis to resolve the question of drawing trumps. If you have to play all of your trumps to draw all of the opponents' trumps and then have to give up the lead, the opponents may have winners in other suits and be able to set you. In such cases you have lost control of those suits. When you see this as a possibility, it is probably best not to draw all of the defenders' trumps.

Another scenario in which it may be better not to draw all of the trumps is when there is only one trump outstanding and it is higher than all of your remaining trumps. The defenders will always win that trick, so it may be best to leave it outstanding while you play winners in your side suits.

While there is something to be gained by reading and studying various deals, you will gain much more skill in managing the trump suit by actually playing as much as you can. It will take time but your skill will improve the more you play.


CHAPTER 8

– Protecting Yourself

Declarer’s Hold-Up Play

Identifying the Dangerous Opponent

Avoiding the Dangerous Opponent

Defender’s Count Signal

Defender’s Hold-up Play

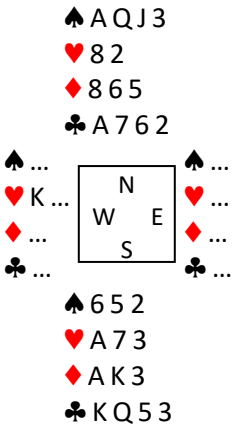
Summary


When playing a deal as declarer you are often busy trying to establish extra tricks in a notrump contract or eliminate losers in a suit contract. At the same time the defenders are busy trying to set up tricks of their own or interfere with your plan. They may play trumps before you want to or eliminate some of your entries. As declarer it is usually necessary to try to take steps to avoid certain threats from the defenders or minimize the effect of their attacks.

DECLARER'S HOLD-UP PLAY

Holding Up with Only One Stopper

Suppose you are declarer in a contract of 3NT and see the following cards after the opening lead of the ♥K.

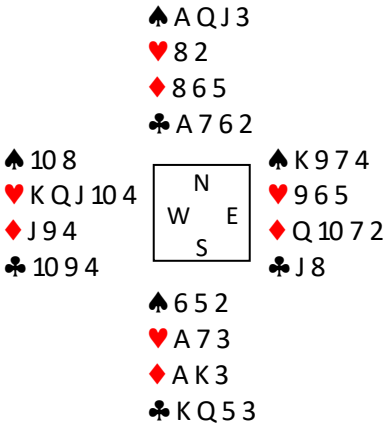


Before playing from dummy you count the following winners: 1 spade, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 4 clubs (assuming a 3-2 break) for a total of 8 winners. You see that you can promote 1 additional winner in spades to produce your 9th trick. If West happens to hold the ♠K you can finesse West twice and make an overtrick, winning tricks with both your ♠Q and ♠J.

But you also see a danger. You have only 5 hearts with a single stopper. The opponents have 8 hearts and the best they can be split is 4-4. That is against the odds and there is a good chance that West has 5 or maybe 6 leaving only 3 or 2 with East. West also has the ♥Q and either the ♥J or ♥10. If you take your ♥A on the first trick and then finesse West for the ♠K, East may actually hold that card and win the trick. He could then lead a heart back to West who would take at least 3 heart tricks and possibly 4 or 5. If he only took 3 tricks you would still make your contract but if he took more you would be set.

Is there something you can do to ensure your contract? Absolutely. Do not win the first trick with your ♥A. West will probably next lead the ♥Q. If East follows suit do not win this trick either. West will now likely lead a third heart which you must win with your ♥A. But now if East indeed started with only 3 hearts he has no more either. You can now safely take the spade finesse. If East wins the trick he must lead a club, diamond or spade, which you can win and take your remaining winners to make your contract.

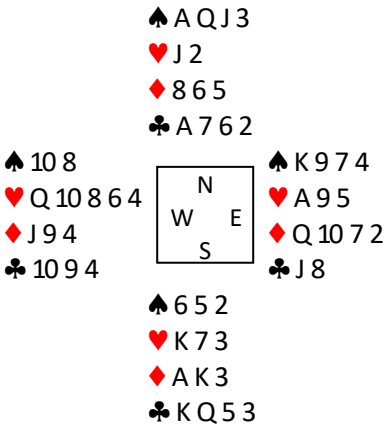
This may have been the complete deal:



When you defer taking a winner in a suit led by an opponent you make what is called a ***hold-up play*** because you have held up taking your trick.

The hold-up play is often an effective means of preventing the defenders from taking all of their winners in a long suit.

The above discussion involved holding up the ace. Sometimes you can hold up the king instead. Let's change the deal just a little by redistributing the cards in the heart suit.



This time the opening lead is the ♥6 won by East with the ♥A when you play the ♥J hoping West led from the ♥AQ… . East returns the ♥9 and if you play your ♥K now, when your spade finesse loses to East's king he returns his ♥5 to West who takes the next 3 tricks to set your contract one trick. If instead you play small either East or West can win that trick and lead a third round of hearts on which you must play your ♥K. But now East is out of hearts so when you take the spade finesse and he wins his ♠K he has no more hearts to lead back to West.

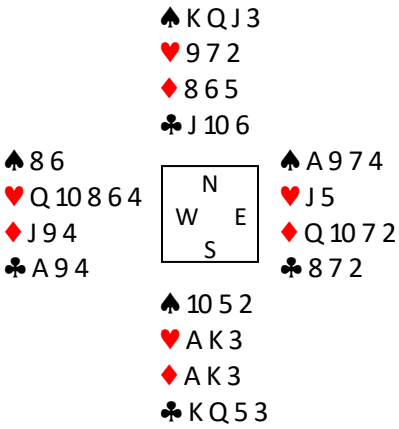
In the two examples just discussed West had 5 hearts and East 3. What if they had each held 4 hearts? Then your hold-up did not help but it did not hurt either. The defenders could take only 3 heart tricks and 1 spade trick and you would still make your contract.

In Chapter 4 – "Guidelines for Play," we discussed entries from the viewpoint of declarer and dummy. The defenders also have entry issues relating to transferring the lead from one defender to the other. In the examples shown in this chapter we have seen how the hold-up play has effectively removed an entry from the East hand to the West hand to prevent the defenders from taking all of their winners. They were stranded in the West hand. Removing entries from the opponents is often referred to as ***cutting their lines of communication***.

Holding Up with Two Stoppers

You might think that if you have two stoppers in a suit there is no reason to hold up winning a trick. That is essentially true if you might have to give up the lead

only once to establish the number of winners to make your contract. But sometimes you might have to give up the lead twice as in the following example.



South is in a 3NT contract and West makes his normal lead of the ♥6, East playing the ♥J. Declarer has only 4 winners, 2 in each of the red suits so must develop 5 more in the black suits. He has the potential to promote 3 winners in each black suit, so can make an overtrick if he can get them both set up before the defenders take too many tricks. In fact if the opening lead had been either black suit, life would have been easy for declarer and he could have made an overtrick. Unfortunately the heart lead presents some problems. The heart suit appears to be the main threat. If it divides 4-3 the opponents will probably not be able to take more than 2 heart tricks and their 2 black aces. But what if it divides 5-2 as shown in the actual layout? Now the defenders might get 3 heart tricks plus their 2 aces to set the contract.

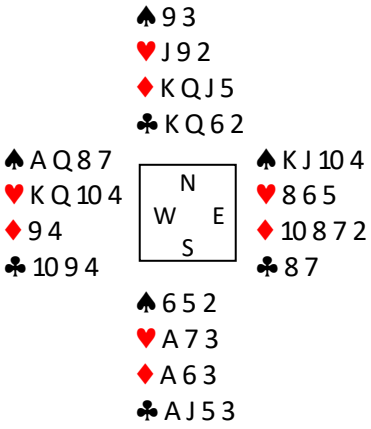
Suppose declarer wins the first trick and guesses correctly by first attacking the club suit. Now when West wins his ♣A and continues his attack on hearts, South can afford to win that trick and start playing the spade suit. When East wins the ♠A he has no hearts remaining, and declarer ends up with his overtrick.

But suppose instead that declarer wins the first trick and guesses wrongly by first attacking spades. Now East wins his ♠A and returns the ♥5. Even if South holds up West will win the trick and continue leading hearts, forcing declarer to play his ♥A. Now when West regains the lead with his ♣A he has 3 heart winners to play and set the contract.

South has the risk of defeat if he wins the first heart trick. Suppose instead he holds up on the first heart trick and wins the heart continuation by East. Now if he first plays on the spade suit, when East wins the ♠A he has no more hearts to lead. South can win any return from East, drive out the ♣A from West, then win any return from West and make his contract.

How Long to Hold Up

Is it always wise to hold up winning a trick? By now you should know that "always" and "never" rarely apply when discussing bridge. Let's look at another deal where the contract is 3NT by South and the opening lead is the ♥K.



Note that West had a choice of leading the ♥K or the ♠7 but the ♥10 persuaded him to lead the ♥K. On this trick East contributes the discouraging ♥5 and South has to decide whether to play his ♥A now or hold up. After the opening lead was made and dummy's cards were put on the table South paused to count winners – 4 clubs, 4 diamonds and 1 heart. He has the 9 tricks he needs to make his contract. He is "wide open" in the spade suit – he has no stoppers and only 5 cards. The opponents can take at least 4 spade tricks. If he doesn't take his ♥A now West might switch to spades (East discouraged hearts and the minors certainly do not look attractive). The opponents would take at least 5 tricks and set his contract. So South wisely decides not to hold up. He wins his ♥A and grabs his 8 winners in the minor suits to ensure his contract.

IDENTIFYING THE DANGEROUS OPPONENT

Quite often the safety of your contract will be threatened if one particular defender gains the lead. We have already seen this in the previous section where West was the ***dangerous opponent*** after declarer played his stopper(s) in West's long suit. Declarer used the hold-up play to prevent East from leading that long suit after winning a trick in another suit.

Another scenario is when you have a high card that might be captured by a lead of that suit by one of the defenders but not the other, leaving you unprotected in that suit. Your high card is usually a king but could be a lower card if several cards in the suit have already been played. Consider for example the following card combination:

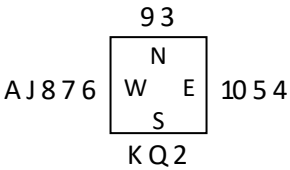
If West leads this suit your king is protected; it cannot be captured. If East plays anything but the ace you can win the trick with your king. If East plays the ace, you play the 3 and can win a trick later with the king. On the other hand, if East leads the suit (any card other than the ace) you run the risk of West having the ace and capturing your king if you play it. If you do not play the king, East may have played a sufficiently high card to win the trick and retain the lead, continuing with another card to threaten your king. You would much rather have West leading than East, so East is the dangerous opponent.

Here are several possible holdings for West and East that illustrate the possible danger if East gains the lead.

West	East
A 9 8 7 2	Q J 10
A Q 8 7 2	J 10 9
A J 8 7 2	Q 10 9
A Q J 10 2	9 8 7

Note that even in the last case East could lead the 9, and if you play small, West could play the 2 to leave East with the lead. East could continue with the 8 and if you play small, West could win cheaply with the ten and then play the ace to capture your king.

Here is a similar example:



West leads the 7, you play the 3 from dummy, East plays the ten and you win the trick with the king. If West gains the lead your queen is a second stopper. But if East gains the lead he can let West capture your queen by leading the suit, so East is the dangerous opponent.

There are other situations where one opponent can be identified as dangerous. In general,

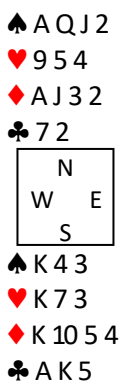
> *The **dangerous opponent** is the one who can or might be able to take several tricks or cause you to lose control of a suit if he gains the lead.*

In closing this section it might be noted that sometimes both opponents are dangerous. When that happens, play the best you can and move on to the next deal.

AVOIDING THE DANGEROUS OPPONENT

In this section we will look at some ways to avoid giving the dangerous opponent the lead.

Two-Way Finesses



The contract is 3NT with an opening lead of the ♣Q. You have 4 spade winners, 2 diamond winners and 2 club winners. You need one more trick. With both the ♦J and ♦10 in the two hands you can get your extra trick there but how should you play to guarantee your contract? Clearly East is the dangerous opponent. If East gets the lead he can attack your ♥K so you want to avoid letting East gain the lead. If you have the lead in your hand, lead the ♦4 and win the trick with the ♦A in dummy. Now lead the ♦2 from dummy and if East plays the ♦Q you play the ♦K; otherwise, put in the ♦10. If the ♦10 wins the trick you have the extra trick you need. If West plays

the ♦Q to win the trick your ♦J is promoted to your extra winner and your ♥K is safe from attack.

The diamond suit provided an opportunity for what is called a ***two-way finesse***. You could finesse either East or West for the ♦Q. You chose to finesse East so that if the finesse lost the dangerous opponent would not have the lead. Let's look at the same situation with the ♥K moved to the dummy.

♠ A Q J 2
♥ K 5 4
♦ A J 3 2
♣ 7 2

N
W E
S

♠ K 4 3
♥ 9 7 3
♦ K 10 5 4
♣ A K 5

Now West is the dangerous opponent so you would finesse the other way. Lead the ♦4 from your hand and play the ♦A only if East produces the ♦Q; otherwise, play the ♦J from dummy. If the finesse loses and East wins the trick your ♥K is again safe from attack and your ♦10 is promoted into an additional winner.

Choosing the Suit for a Finesse

♠ A K J 10
♥ 5 4
♦ A K 5 2
♣ 7 4 2

N
W E
S

♠ 8 4
♥ K 7 3
♦ Q J 7 6
♣ A K J 10

In the above examples you had the option of finessing either opponent in a single suit. Sometimes you have the option of finessing in two different suits as illustrated here where the complete hands are shown for declarer and dummy.

The opening lead is the ♠6 and you can count 8 tricks – 2 spades, 4 diamonds and 2 clubs. You can develop an extra trick in either spades or clubs, perhaps even 2 extra tricks in either or both suits by finessing West for the ♠Q or East for the ♣Q. From the opening lead you are fairly certain West has the ♠Q, so it should be "safe" to play the ♠J from dummy and "go for broke" planning to try for 12 tricks – 4 spades, 4 diamonds and 4 clubs. This might be the tack some adventurous players would make at a matchpoint duplicate game. But in a rubber bridge or duplicate team game why take the risk that East has the ♠Q? East is the dangerous opponent and could attack your ♥K if allowed on lead. Such an attack could send your contract down in flames.

You are guaranteed to make your contract if you win the first trick with the ♠K and then lead the ♣2 from dummy finessing East for the ♣Q. If the finesse loses to West's ♣Q your contract is safe because West cannot successfully attack the heart suit.

If at all possible

> *Plan your play to avoid letting the dangerous opponent gain the lead.*

DEFENDER'S COUNT SIGNAL

We have previously discussed the idea of a defender giving an attitude signal to partner when following suit to partner's lead and unable or unnecessary to try to win the trick or when discarding on any trick. Another signal that can be given in a different scenario is a ***count signal***.

A defender should give a count signal when following suit to a long suit being played by declarer if there is no chance of winning the trick.

A complete count signal consists of a defender's play to two tricks in the same suit. Playing a higher card first and a lower card second indicates a holding of an even number of cards. Playing a lower card and then a higher card indicates a holding of an odd number of cards. Quite often partner can get a good idea of the complete signal after the first card is played but sometimes that half of the signal will be ambiguous and partner will not know until the second card is played.

Giving a Count Signal

- *High – Low = Even*
- *Low – High = Odd*

Here are a few examples:

1) 92 – play the 9 and then the 2
2) 853 – play the 3 and then the 5
3) 10754 – play the ten and then the 4 (or perhaps the 7 and then the 5 to indicate a holding of 4 cards instead of a doubleton)
4) 108754 – play the 4 and then the 5

The count signal is most often used to distinguish between holdings of 2 or 3 cards in a suit. The usefulness of this signal is introduced in the following section.

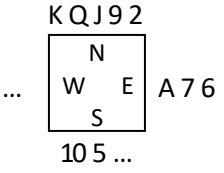
DEFENDER'S HOLD-UP PLAY

You are probably familiar with the adage "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." The bridge equivalent is "What's good for declarer is good for the defenders." At the beginning of this chapter we discussed declarer's hold-up play as a method of breaking the lines of communication between the defenders. In this section we'll see how the defenders can sometimes turn the table on declarer.

Defender's hold-up play applies mostly to a notrump contract but can sometimes be used after declarer has drawn trumps in a suit contract and is trying to

take several tricks in a long suit in dummy. For simplicity we consider only notrump contracts here. The extension to suit contracts is straightforward.

Consider the following partial distribution of cards in some suit.



There are no other entries to dummy and declarer leads the ten from his hand (playing the high card from the short side first), West plays a card and the 2 is played from dummy. What should East play? It is pretty clear that declarer is trying to set up the suit so he can take several tricks. If East takes his ace now declarer probably has another card in the suit and will be able to lead another card to dummy after he regains the lead and will be able to take the 4 remaining tricks. So East should probably hold up on the first trick in this suit. Now declarer leads the 5 and West follows suit again with the 9 played from dummy. East is now in a quandary. He counted 8 cards between his hand and dummy and the other 2 players have each played 2 cards so there is only 1 remaining. Who has it? If South has it East should hold up on this second trick to prevent declarer from getting back to dummy to take the remaining three winners. But if partner has the last card East should win this trick to limit declarer to a single trick in this suit.

Perhaps surprisingly, West is the critical defender on this deal. While West has no chance of taking any tricks in the suit he absolutely must not fall asleep on the play of this suit. He has to recognize the dilemma his partner may have and initiate a count signal when South leads the ten. If West has a doubleton he must play his highest card. If he holds 3 cards he should play his lowest card – note that he will likely make the correct play unknowingly in this case even if he is not paying attention. Then on the second round of the suit he should complete the count signal playing his lowest card if he started with a doubleton or either of his remaining cards (maybe the highest for emphasis and clarity) if he started with 3 cards.

While West is the critical defender East also has to stay awake and watch the signal West is sending. There is no communication unless a message is both sent and received. East's job should be a little easier because he should quickly recognize declarer's plan and know that he is the one that will have to make the decision on when to play his ace. So he should be on the lookout for partner's signal. Once he gets that signal he has an easy time deciding whether to play his ace on the second or third trick.

This problem is a little more difficult if we interchange the East and West hands. Then West has to make the decision whether to play the ace on the second trick before East has had a chance to complete his count signal. He will have to make his decision based solely on the card East played to the first trick.

SUMMARY

Declarer's Hold-Up Play

The hold-up play is often an effective means of preventing the opponents from taking all of their winners in a long suit.

The hold-up play usually comes up when declarer has only one stopper in a suit and must or might have to give up the lead once to make his contract. But it can also arise when declarer has two stoppers and must or might have to give up the lead twice.

Identifying the Dangerous Opponents

The dangerous opponent is the one who can or might be able to take several tricks or cause you to lose control of a suit if he gains the lead.

Avoiding the Dangerous Opponent

If at all possible you should

Plan your play to avoid letting the dangerous opponent gain the lead.

Defender's Count Signal

A new defensive tool presented in this chapter centers on the count signal.

A defender should give a count signal when following suit to a long suit being played by declarer if there is no chance of winning the trick.

Giving a Count Signal

- *High – Low = Even*
- *Low – High = Odd*

Defender's Hold-Up Play

A defender can sometimes prevent declarer from taking tricks in a long suit in dummy by not taking their winner in that suit until declarer has none left. That defender's partner must give a count signal to help the other defender determine when declarer has played his last card in that suit.


CHAPTER 9

– Applying Techniques

Finessing for the Queen

The Ruffing Finesse

Ruffing in Your Hand

Combining Promotion, Length & Finesse

Which Technique?

Orderly Play

Alternative Choices

Probabilities

Summary


When playing as declarer in a notrump contract you will often not have enough winners to make your contract. You will have to make use of the following techniques to develop additional winners:

- Promotion
- Length
- Finesse

Similarly when you are the declarer in a suit contract you will frequently have too many losers to fulfill your contract. You will then have to use the following techniques to eliminate some of your losers:

- Ruff in dummy
- Discard in dummy
- Finesse

In either type of contract if you choose the finesse you have no guarantee of creating more winners or eliminating losers but at least you give yourself a 50-50 chance of accomplishing your objective.

When playing in a suit contract you may use some of the notrump contract techniques when playing the trump suit, setting up a suit in dummy for discards or even establishing tricks in a second suit in your own hand.

In this chapter we will look at several applications of these techniques.

FINESSING FOR THE QUEEN

Quite often you will hold the ace, king and jack in a suit but be missing the queen. The object is to try to win a trick with the jack. In these situations you will be faced with the choice of just playing the ace and king, hoping that the queen will fall, or of finessing for the queen. Here are some typical examples.

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Dummy:	6 5 4	6 5 4 3	6 5 4 3	6 5 4 3 2
Declarer:	A K J 8	A K J 8	A K J 8 7	A K J 8 7

For case (a) you have only 7 cards between the two hands so the opponents hold 6. It should be rather obvious that it is very unlikely the queen is a doubleton or singleton, so your best chance of winning a trick with the jack is to hope that it is held by your RHO so you should finesse that player.

For case (d) you have 10 cards and the opponents have only 3. Here too it should be clear that it is quite unlikely that those 3 are all in one hand. Your best play is to simply lead the ace and king expecting the queen to fall. Actually when you play one of your top cards you will watch what the defenders play and know how the missing cards are dividing.

Cases (b) and (c) with 8 and 9 cards between the two hands are not quite so clear. Let's look at case (b) first.

When you hold 8 cards the opponents hold 5 and they are most likely split 3-2. Which hand is most likely to hold the queen? The one with the most cards. The player holding 3 cards has 3 chances of having the queen while the player holding 2 cards has only 2 chances of having the queen. This translates to the queen being in the hand with 3 cards 60% of the time and it being in the hand with 2 cards 40% of the time. Therefore, playing the ace and king hoping that the queen will fall will be successful only 40% of the time while the finesse will work 50% of the time. The conclusion is that when you have 8 cards you should finesse for the queen rather than play for the drop.

Now you come to the most difficult situation, case (c), where you have 9 cards and the opponents 4. You know that the most likely distribution of the 4 cards is 3-1. On the surface it would seem that you should finesse rather than play for the drop, but that is only part of the problem. It seems only logical that before you take the finesse, you should play the ace or king just in case the queen is a singleton. So suppose you play the ace. One of four things will happen:

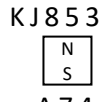
- RHO discards – the suit has split 4-0 and LHO holds the queen. There is no way you can win a trick with the jack.
- LHO discards – the suit has split 4-0 and RHO holds the queen. You will finesse RHO to guarantee winning a trick with the jack.
- Both opponents follow suit but one plays the queen – the suit has split 3-1 with the queen a singleton. Your jack is now a winner.
- Both opponents play a small card in this suit – the suit has split 2-2 or 3-1. There are only 2 cards outstanding and they are split either 2-0 or 1-1. Now what do you do? There is actually a slight quirk in the rule concerning the likely distribution of outstanding cards. When there are only 2 outstanding cards, there is a **52% probability that they are split 1-1** and a **48% probability that they are split 2-0**; therefore you should play the king hoping the queen falls.

This brief analysis leads to the following popular bridge axiom to guide your decision on **finessing for a missing queen**:

Eight Ever – Nine Never

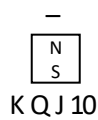
The interpretation of this axiom is that when holding the ace, king and jack in a suit, if you and your partner hold 8 or fewer cards you should finesse for the queen, but if you hold 9 or more cards you should play for the drop. Of course in the latter case you might change your mind after first cashing one of the top cards, depending on the cards played by the opponents.

As in most of bridge there are exceptions. Consider the following combination.

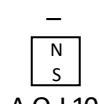


Suppose you are playing in a notrump contract and there are no other entries to dummy. If the queen does not fall when you play the ace and king you will have no way to get back to the dummy to take those winners after you play the suit a third time and the opponents win that trick. If you can afford to lose the lead, start by playing the ace and then finessing the jack on the second trick. If the finesse loses you still have the king as an entry to dummy to run the rest of the suit.

THE RUFFING FINESSE



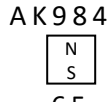
This is a side suit in a trump contract and you have at least one trump in dummy. You can avoid any losers in this suit if your LHO holds the ace. Simply start by leading the king. If your LHO plays the ace, ruff with one of dummy's trumps, promoting the remaining cards in your hand into winners. If your LHO plays a small card, simply discard an insignificant card from another side suit in dummy. If your RHO then plays a small card, continue leading this suit until your LHO covers with the ace and then ruff that trick in dummy. If it turns out your RHO holds the ace and wins the trick, you will not have eliminated your loser but at least you will have established the other cards as winners.



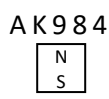
Here you can first cash your ace and then start leading from the top of the remaining sequence following the same ideas as for the previous hand.

RUFFING IN YOUR HAND

Ruffing cards from dummy in your hand does not in and of itself give you any extra winners or eliminate losers. But it is sometimes a way to set up extra winners in dummy on which you might subsequently discard some losers from your hand. In the following examples it is assumed you have enough trumps to draw the opponents' trumps and then ruff some of the cards from dummy in your hand. It is also assumed that you have sufficient entries to dummy.



Suppose this is a side suit in a suit contract and the 5 missing cards are split 3-2. After you cash the ace and king you can lead the suit one more time and ruff it in your hand. That sets up the 3 remaining small cards as winners which can be used to discard 3 losers from your hand.



This is the same as the previous hand with one fewer card in dummy. If the opponents' cards split 3-3 you can ruff once in your hand to set up 2 winners to be used as discards. If they split 4-2 as expected you might be able to ruff twice to set up 1 winner.

K Q 9 8 4 2

N
S

6 5

This is similar to the first hand but you have the queen instead of the ace in dummy. You will have to lose a trick to the ace while promoting your queen by playing your king. But then you can proceed in the same way to cash your queen and then ruff one card in your hand to set up 3 additional winners. Of course, if you have sufficient entries to your hand, you can try finessing your LHO for the ace. If the finesse is successful, you may not need to ruff any cards to set up the suit.

9 8 7 5 4 3 2

N
S

6

Don't give up hope when things look desperate. There are only 5 cards outstanding. If you give up 1 trick and ruff twice in your hand the opponents may not have any remaining and you will have 4 winners in dummy.

COMBINING PROMOTION, LENGTH AND FINESSE

Quite often you can combine more than one technique in the same suit. We'll look at a few examples of establishing extra winners in a notrump contract or eliminating losers in the trump suit.

Combining Promotion and Length

6 5 4 2

N
S

K Q J 7

Here you have a total of 8 cards and the opponents have 5. If their cards are split 3-2 neither will have any remaining after you lead the suit 3 times. You can lead the king to force out their ace promoting your queen and jack into winners which can be used to draw the remaining cards from your opponents, thereby establishing your 7 as a winner through length.

K J 4 2

N
S

Q 7 6 5

This is really the same combination as the previous example; the cards have just been redistributed between the two hands. It has been included to emphasize that the cards being promoted or established as winners need not all be in the same hand.

K 4 2

N
S

Q J 7 6 5

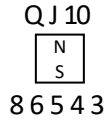
This is a slight variation of the previous combination created by moving the jack from dummy to declarer. Now after leading the suit 3 times to extract the defender's cards, you will have established 2 winners (queen and jack) by promotion and 2 more (7 and 6) through length. When playing this suit remember to start with the king and 5 on the first trick, playing the high card from the short side first. That will ensure that you have an entry back to your hand in this suit if the defenders lead a suit that you must win in dummy after they have taken their ace.

8 4 2

N
S

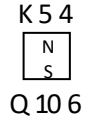
Q J 10 6 5

Now you have 9 cards and the opponents 4. Your queen and jack can be used to drive out the opponents' ace and king promoting your ten into a winner. Provided the suit divides no worse than 3-1, the 3 remaining small cards in your hand become established as winners through length.

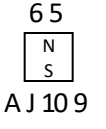


Even though you will be playing the high cards from the short side first, you will need an entry to your hand in another suit to capitalize on the 3 small winners established in your hand.

Combining Promotion and Finesse

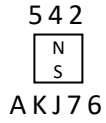


There are multiple ways to play this suit combination depending on whether you have the lead in your hand or in dummy and whether you have another entry to dummy. It should be clear that you can always use your top 2 honors to promote a winner with the other. For discussion purposes, let's assume you have the lead in your hand. Start by leading the 6. If your LHO plays the ace (not a good choice) you will play the 4 from dummy and now have 2 winners with your king and queen. Suppose instead that your LHO holds the ace but plays a small card (his best play). Now you play the king from dummy and it wins the trick. Next lead the 4 from dummy and if your RHO plays small play the ten from your hand finessing your RHO for the jack. Your LHO will most likely capture your ten with his ace but now you also win a trick with your queen. If your RHO had held the ace he would have won the first trick capturing your king. Your queen has been promoted to a winner, and you need an entry to dummy in another suit so that you can lead a small card and finesse your RHO for the jack, hoping to win a trick with the ten via the finesse. You might find it instructive to lay these cards out on a table and experiment with different ways of playing the cards if you have the lead in dummy instead of your hand. See what happens with different locations of the missing ace and jack.



For this combination we assume you have two entries to dummy. You hope the missing king and queen are either split between the opponents or both held by your RHO. Your intent is to win a trick with your jack or ten via the double finesse – leading from dummy twice and playing the ace only if your RHO plays the king or queen. But regardless of the location of the missing honors, your 9 will be promoted into a winner.

Combining Length and Finesse



You have only 2 winners in this suit – the ace and king. You hope to create 1 additional winner by finessing your RHO for the queen, turning your jack into a winner. Then you hope to establish 2 more winners (your 7 and 6) through length if the suit breaks 3-2.

5 4 2
N
S
A Q J 7 6

This combination is the same as the previous one except you are missing the king instead of the queen so you start with only 1 winner. If you have two entries to dummy you can finesse your RHO twice attempting to win tricks with both the queen and jack via finesses. Then if the suit breaks 3-2 your 7 and 6 are again established winners through length.

Combining Promotion, Length and Finesse

6 5 4 2
N
S
K Q 10 7

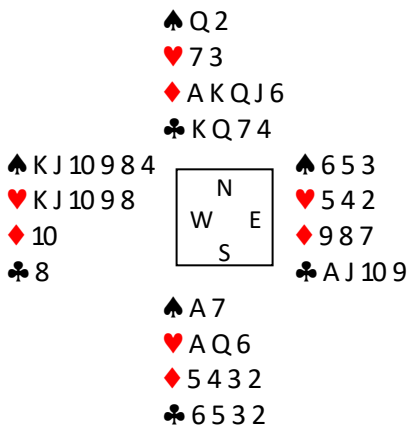
In this combination you get to use all three techniques. You can use your king or queen to force out the ace thereby promoting the other into a winner. Lead from dummy (you will need an entry in another suit) toward your ten finessing for the jack and set up your 7 as a third trick through length if the suit divides 3-2.

WHICH TECHNIQUE?

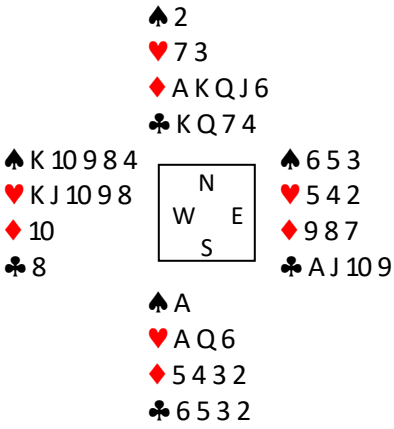
It may come as a surprise that playing in a manner to maximize the number of tricks you might take does not necessarily maximize your chance of making your contract. Understanding this idea is often the key to your success at the bridge table. We'll look at some examples of this concept in this section as we address the issue of deciding which technique should be used to develop extra winners or eliminate losers.

K Q 7 4
N
S
6 5 3 2

You have a chance to win 3 tricks in this suit. You need to find your LHO holding the ace, the suit to split 3-2 and 2 entries to your hand. You can then lead toward dummy twice, playing an honor from dummy if LHO plays the jack or lower, and the 4 if he plays the ace. If you need these 3 tricks to make your contract, then that is the only way you can play the suit. But suppose this is the entire deal:



As South you are declarer in a contract of 3NT. West leads the ♠J (top of an interior sequence). You can count 7 winners: 5 diamonds, 1 heart and 1 spade. You have a chance to win a trick with the ♠Q if you play it on the first trick. You can promote 1 club winner and could win another trick or 2 in clubs if you followed the line of play just presented. You play the ♠Q which holds the trick when East and you both play low. This gives the following position:



You now need only 1 more trick to ensure your contract and can safely establish that by simply leading the ♣K. Regardless of which defender has the ♣A and what they return (if they win the trick), you can win their return and take your winners to make your contract. But what if you try for extra club tricks? How are you going to get to your hand?

- You cannot use the ♠A because when you lead clubs the opponents can take the ♣A and 4 more spade tricks to defeat the contract.
- You could try finessing the ♥Q but it would lose to the ♥K. West would continue with spades knocking out your last stopper, and, when East subsequently won the ♣A, he would continue with spades and now you would be set by 2 tricks.
- You could lead to your ♥A but now when East wins the ♣A he could switch to hearts and West would take 4 heart tricks to defeat the contract.

There is too much risk involved to try for the extra club tricks. Just take the safe route of immediately promoting a club winner by leading the ♣K.

Here is another case where you might be able to win 3 tricks by finessing your LHO twice for the king, but you again need two entries to your hand assuming you currently have the lead in dummy. If you need only 2 tricks and can afford to give up the lead one time, it is safer to play the ace and then the queen promoting the jack into a winner.

This time you are in a suit contract and this is a side suit. You would normally want to lead from your hand toward the dummy hoping to win a trick with the king. Then give up a trick and eventually ruff the third card from your hand in the dummy. But if you have the lead in dummy, can afford 2 losers in this suit and might risk the contract by using an entry to your hand, just go ahead and lead the 4 from dummy. You expect to lose 2 tricks and then eventually ruff the last card but you might get lucky and find the ace singleton.

If you need 4 tricks in this suit, the 6 missing cards must split 3-3 and the queen must be held by your LHO. You would then first play the king and 2 followed by a lead of the 3 toward dummy playing the jack if LHO plays low, otherwise the ace. Next cash the ace and then the 7.

If the actual lie of the cards is unfavorable you will not be able to take 4 tricks. If you need only 3 tricks you can slightly increase your chances, especially if you can afford a loser before establishing your third trick. Start by playing the ace and 3, then the king and 2. Finally, lead the 5 to the jack. If your RHO started with the queen doubleton, it will fall on the second round and you will have set up the jack as a winner, whereas it would have lost to the queen if you had finessed at the second trick. If the queen has not appeared after the first 2 tricks, your jack will become a winner if your LHO plays the queen on the third trick. However, you will need an entry to dummy in another suit to use it. If the suit divides 3-3 and the queen is held by your RHO, he will capture your jack on the third trick but your 7 will become a winner. Again you will need an entry to use it. This type of play belongs to a general class called ***safety plays***.

ORDERLY PLAY

Sometimes you must be very careful to play suits in the proper order. This can happen even if you have all the winners you need to make your contract. We'll look at some examples here.

You are declarer in a contract of 3NT. A club is led and you stop to count your winners before playing from dummy: 2 spades, 3 hearts and 4 diamonds – 9 altogether. This is just what you need to make your contract if you can get the lead and take all the tricks. The opponents keep playing clubs and you are relieved to see them split 4-2. On the fourth round of clubs, you discard a small spade or a small heart from your hand. The defenders then switch to a spade which you win in your hand with the ♠A since you cannot afford to lose any more tricks. You observe that both red suits are ***blocked*** – you cannot take all of the winners in those suits without using another suit as an entry to the hand that has the most cards. You will have to ***unblock*** these suits by playing the winners from the short side first while maintaining transportation between the two hands. You first play the ♦KJ from your hand and the two small diamonds from dummy. Next you lead a small heart to dummy winning with the ♥K. Now that you are in the dummy you play the ♥Q and ♦AQ, discarding your last small spade and small heart on the two diamond winners. Finally you lead a spade back to your ♠K and then play your ♥A. If you do not play these suits as just described, you will not be able to take all of your tricks.

Once again you find yourself declaring a 3NT contract. After an opening spade lead you count only 5 winners – 2 spades, 1 diamond and 2 clubs. The 4 additional winners you need might come from setting up the club suit for 2 additional tricks if it splits 3-2 and finessing diamonds twice for the other 2 tricks. Your two entries to dummy for the repeated diamond finesses are the ♣A and ♣K. You must duck one club trick to establish your 2 extra winners there. Fearful that the opponents might switch to the heart suit, you win the ♠A and immediately lead a club playing small from dummy. The opponents will win this trick and probably continue leading spades (we'll discuss the play if they shift to hearts later). Now you win the ♠K and lead a club to dummy's ace observing that both opponents follow suit, confirming that the clubs split 3-2. Then you lead a diamond from dummy and play the ♦Q if the ♦K is not played by your RHO, breathing a sigh of relief when it holds the trick. Now you lead your last club to dummy and run the remaining clubs. Finally you repeat the diamond finesse. The odds of making this contract were only about 33%; you needed the clubs to split 3-2 and the diamond finesse to work. But, you gave yourself the only chance to make the contract and were well rewarded.

Now suppose that when you ducked the first club trick the defenders had shifted to a heart. Consider for a moment the following card combinations:

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Dummy	J x	Q x	J x x	Q x x
Declarer	Q x x	J x x	Q x	J x

If you lead this suit yourself you can create a winner only by leading at least once toward the hand containing 3 cards and both the ace and king are in front of that hand. For example, in case (a) you could lead once from your hand, playing the jack from dummy to force the ace or king, but would have to lead small from dummy toward your hand, hoping your RHO held the other top honor.

However, if the opponents lead the suit, you are always guaranteed a stopper (winner) if you play astutely. If they lead the ace or king you simply play small from both hands and then have both the jack and queen remaining along with a second card for one of them. Your remaining doubleton honor now becomes a stopper. The critical play is when they lead a small card. Now you just play small from the next hand. The partner of the leader must play the ace or king to win the trick or you will win with your honor in the fourth hand. But as soon as they play their ace or king, you play small from the fourth hand and you are back to the same position as if they had led that honor. **It is important for your success at the bridge table to be able to recognize these combinations when they arise and remember how to play so that you do not have to think about it at the time.** Additional small cards in either or both hands are just insignificant variations and do not influence the concept or your play.

So if the defenders had shifted to a heart after you ducked the first club trick, you were in no real danger and would have played as just outlined. When you eventually regained the lead you would have continued play as if they had led a spade. In fact, if they led hearts twice you would have made an overtrick.

You are playing in a knockout team event and misplayed the previous board giving you a poor result so know you need to do something to recover. You bid aggressively on this deal and find yourself in 7NT with a lead of the ♦Q. You can easily count 12 winners – 3 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 6 clubs. You need one more trick or the match is over for all intents and purposes. You have two choices: you can take the heart finesse (a 50% chance), or hope the spades split 3-3 so that the ♠2 provides the thirteenth trick (a 36% chance). So it appears you should take the finesse. But wait, do you have to choose one or the other? Why not try both? If you first take the heart finesse and it loses, you won't have a chance to try the spade suit. But if you play 3 rounds of spades first, you will know if they split 3-3. If they do, you can discard your ♥Q on the ♠2 and will not need to try the heart finesse. If the spades do not split equally, you can always follow up with the heart finesse.

You can even increase your chances a little more by running your club tricks first. The opponents will have to find several discards and they might discard some spades. When running your club winners be sure to play the winners from the short side first so that you can return to your hand with a club to take the last four club tricks. When taking your club tricks be sure to watch for spade discards from your opponents so you don't lose track of the number of outstanding cards in that suit. You really don't need to worry about red suit discards.

For the actual full deal (not shown) the spades did split 3-3 and your LHO held the ♥K so the finesse would have lost. Your careful play of combining your chances paid off very well and you ended up winning the match.

On this deal you are playing a 4♥ contract with an opening lead of the ♦K. You probably can't avoid 2 heart losers and you also have 2 diamond losers. At first glance it does not appear that you can eliminate your diamond losers. While we usually think of discarding losers in our hand on a long suit in dummy, sometimes we can discard losers in dummy on a long suit in our hand and then ruff the remaining losers in our hand in dummy. Win the first trick with the ♦A. Next cash your good ♠Q in dummy and lead a small club to your ♣A. Now play your ♠A and ♠K discarding the two little diamonds from dummy. You are now ready to draw trumps. If the defenders lead diamonds when they win their trump tricks you can ruff in dummy. They will probably lead something else but you can win their return, finish drawing trumps and cross-ruff your remaining minor suit

small cards. You end up losing only 2 trump tricks making your contract with an overtrick.

ALTERNATIVE CHOICES

Quite often you will have a choice of several options to develop the extra tricks needed to make your contract. When faced with these choices, try to choose the option which is most likely to succeed. We'll look at some examples in this section.

♦ Q 7
♣ K J 9 5 4
N
S
♦ A 8 6 5 4 2
♣ Q 10 6

You are in a notrump contract and need 4 tricks from these two minor suits in addition to the ♦A. You have plenty of entries between the two hands with cards in the Majors that are not shown. If the missing diamonds split 3-2 (68% chance) and the ♦K is held by your LHO (50% chance), you can win 4 tricks in that suit losing only to the ♦K. The probability of both conditions working is 34% (multiply the two individual probabilities). On the other hand, you have enough high cards in the club suit that all you have to do is drive out the ♣A to produce 4 winners (100% chance). This is an easy choice; you will play the clubs.

Not all decisions are so obvious.

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

The contract is 4♥. The opening lead is the ♦Q. You have 3 club losers and a potential loser to the ♥Q. You need to eliminate one loser. You could eliminate the club loser by ruffing in dummy or discarding on the extra spade in dummy if the spades split 3-3. You could even hope that your RHO held both the ♣A and ♣K, leading toward your hand from dummy twice hoping to set up your ♣Q as a winner. You also have the possibility of finessing your RHO for the ♥Q. So many choices – what to do? The likelihood of the spades splitting evenly is only 36% and you can't test that without drawing trumps, so you eliminate that option. The heart finesse is a 50% chance so that looks a little better. But what about ruffing the third club in dummy? To do that you will have to delay drawing trumps so that you make sure you still have a trump left in dummy after giving up 2 club tricks. The defenders will most likely see what you are up to and lead trumps when they win their club tricks, so you cannot draw even one round of trumps.

Win the first trick with the ♦A in dummy; there is no reason to let the opponents know you have the ♦K in your hand. Immediately lead a club from dummy. If your RHO wins the trick and leads a trump, resist the temptation to take the finesse. Play your ♥A and lead your other small club from your hand. If your RHO also wins this trick and leads another trump, play your ♥K. Then lead your ♣Q and ruff it in dummy with the ♥9. Now come back to your hand with

the ♠A to draw trumps and take the remainder of your tricks. Note that this line of play has another advantage. If your LHO wins one of the club tricks and decides to lead a trump, you get a "free" finesse and might well make an overtrick.

♠ Q 9 5
♥ K Q 4
♦ K 9 7 5 2
♣ K 4

N
S

♠ A K 2
♥ J 10 6 2
♦ Q J 10 3
♣ A 2

The opening lead is the ♣Q against your 3NT contract. You count 5 winners – 3 spades and 2 clubs. You can easily promote 3 winners in hearts or 4 winners in diamonds but will have to give up the lead in the process regardless of which suit you choose. When you do, the defenders will knock out your second club stopper. If you try the hearts you will still be short one trick and the opponents will take several club tricks when you subsequently try to set up the diamonds. It is much better to attack the diamonds immediately. When you regain the lead you will have the 9 winners you need.

♠ A J 10
♥ Q 10 5 4
♦ K Q 5 2
♣ 9 4

N
S

♠ Q 6 5
♥ K J 6
♦ A J 10 7 3
♣ A 2

You receive an opening lead of the ♣K against your 3NT contract. You count 7 winners – 1 spade, 5 diamonds and 1 club. You could promote 3 heart winners but would have to give up the lead in the process. When you do, the opponents will take several club tricks to defeat you. Your other choice is to finesse your LHO for the ♠K; you have only a 50% chance, but better than no chance, so go for it. You might run your 5 diamond tricks first just to make sure you get all of those. Remember to play the winners from the short side first because you have no entries back to your hand in another suit.

PROBABILITIES

You do not need to be an expert in probability theory to play bridge, but it is helpful to know the probabilities of certain distributions or events. Here are the main ones:

- The probability of winning a finesse is 50%
- The probability of 5 missing cards being split 3-2 is 68%
  An easy way to remember a good approximation to this is to reverse the order of the split and write it as a fraction 2/3 (67%).
- The probability of 6 missing cards being split 3-3 is 36%
  A good approximation can be easily remembered by writing the split without the dash and preceded by a decimal point: 0.33 = 33%. The leading "0" adds clarity.
- The probability of 6 missing cards being split 4-2 is 48%
  Do you want to remember this? The first digit is the same as the first of the split; the second is the product of the two numbers of the split.

As a matter of general interest the following tables give the probabilities of suit splits for various numbers of missing cards.

2 Cards		3 Cards		4 Cards		5 Cards		6 Cards		7 Cards	
1-1	52%	2-1	78%	2-2	40%	3-2	68%	3-3	36%	4-3	62%
2-0	48%	3-0	22%	3-1	50%	4-1	28%	4-2	48%	5-2	31%
				4-0	10%	5-0	4%	5-1	15%	6-1	7%
								6-0	1%	7-0	1%

It should be noted that these tables are only valid at the start of the play when all 52 cards are present. As play progresses and some cards have been played, even in other suits, these percentages change slightly. This point is rarely mentioned in discussions concerning these probabilities.

SUMMARY

Finessing for the Queen

If you hold the AKJ… in a suit and have to decide whether to finesse for the missing queen or play for it to drop by leading the ace and king use the following axiom relating to the number of cards you hold in your hand and dummy as a guideline.

Eight Ever – Nine Never

The Ruffing Finesse

When playing in a trump contract and you have a side suit that is missing only one high card with a void in the opposite hand, you may be able to avoid any losers and promote the remaining cards into winners by taking a ruffing finesse.

Ruffing in Your Hand

Sometimes you can set up a long suit in dummy without losing any tricks by ruffing some of the small cards in your hand.

Combining Promotion, Length and Finesse

Setting up extra winners in a suit can often be accomplished using some combination of promotion, length and finesses.

Which Technique?

The technique you should choose to develop the extra tricks that you need or to eliminate some losers depends, in part, on how many winners you need to establish or losers you need to eliminate.

Orderly Play

Choosing the order in which you play the suits is often critical to the success of making your contract.

Alternative Choices

Quite often you will have multiple options available for the development of extra winners or elimination of excessive losers. Each option must be analyzed to determine which should be selected to maximize your chance of success.

Probabilities

Knowing a little about probabilities can be helpful in choosing the line of play to be used for a deal.


CHAPTER 10

– Defense Fundamentals

Opening Leads

Third-Hand Play

Second-Hand Play

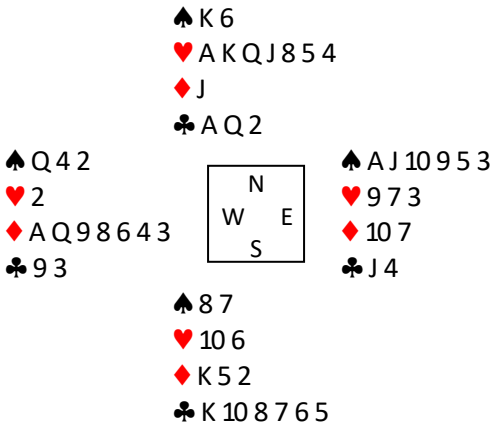
Attitude Discards

Summary


The previous seven chapters have focused primarily on declarer play. In the next three chapters we turn our attention to the defenders. In this chapter we will review and expand on some of the ideas introduced in Chapter 4 – "Guidelines for Play."

OPENING LEADS

The opening lead is often the crucial play in the entire deal. As an example consider the following deal.



This deal was played by four expert combatants at a high-level tournament[5]. South was in a 6NT contract. It is reported that West took a full 5 minutes to decide on his opening lead, his singleton heart. South promptly ran off 13 top tricks, 7 hearts and 6 clubs.

Had West led a spade the defenders could have taken the first 13 tricks – 6 spades and 7 diamonds. See if you can work out how they could have done that regardless of how declarer played.

So a swing of 26 tricks hinged on the opening lead! Now can you see why experts consider defense the most difficult part of this game?

In general there are several factors affecting your choice of the opening lead:

- The strain of the contract
- The cards you hold in each suit
- The bidding
- The level of the contract

For the moment we will ignore the influences of the bidding and the level of the contract. We will focus first on some general guidelines for choosing an opening lead against notrump contracts and then against suit contracts. We will then address the bidding and contract level factors.

Opening Leads against Notrump Contracts

When playing in a notrump contract each partnership is in a race to see who can set up winning tricks the fastest. Each side has the advantage that once they get a

[5] https://www.larryco.com/bridge-learning-center/detail/60. Thanks to Larry Cohen for letting me share this deal he played as declarer.

long suit established and obtain the lead they can take those tricks without danger. Therefore you usually want to lead the suit in which you or your partner has the most cards. If you have no idea how many cards your partner holds in a suit you will usually lead a card in your **longest** suit. Are there exceptions? Yes but rarely. Suppose for example that you hold the following hand.

♠ 7 6 5 4 3 2
♥ A K Q J 10
♦ 2
♣ 2

You are defending a 3NT contract. You have 6 spades and only 5 hearts. If you lead a spade it is very likely the opponents will take 9 or more tricks in spades, diamonds and clubs before you get a chance to take any heart tricks. On the other hand you can set the contract if you simply play your 5 hearts immediately.

Consider now the following hand.

♠ A 2
♥ A 2
♦ K Q J 10 9 8 7
♣ A 2

You are defending a 1NT contract and it turns out your partner has no HCP. This time if you play your 3 aces first and then lead a diamond, you may not get to take any more tricks. But if you start by leading diamonds and continuing until declarer takes his ace, no matter what suit he leads next you can win the trick and take the rest of your diamond winners. You end up with 9 tricks, 6 diamonds plus your 3 aces, for a 3-trick set.

You will usually be leading a card from your longest suit. But what if you have a tie? Choose the **stronger** of the two suits.

♠ 2
♥ 9 8 6 3 2
♦ K Q J 10 7
♣ 7 2

You are much more likely to establish some winners in diamonds than hearts so lead a diamond. There will not always be such obvious disparity between the strengths of the two suits. In those cases it is often best to lead a Major Suit rather than a minor. If the opponents had a Golden Fit in a Major Suit they would probably be playing there rather than in notrump.

♠ 9 8 4
♥ A Q 3 2
♦ K J 10 7
♣ 7 2

This is close but a heart lead will often turn out better than a diamond.

Once you have decided which suit you are going to lead you must choose the card. You have two rules to guide you.

1. Top of a sequence of **3** or more cards **headed by an honor**
2. Fourth highest

The first rule also applies to a near sequence where you have 2 cards in sequence, are missing the next card, but have the following one: **A**KJ…, **K**Q10…, **Q**J9…, etc. It also applies to the top of an interior sequence where you have one card,

are missing the next card or two, but have the 2 following cards: A**Q**J…, K**J**10…, Q**10**9…, A**J**10…, K**10**9…, etc.

Opening Leads against Suit Contracts

Leading a long suit against a suit contract is usually not very profitable. Even if you get some tricks established, declarer or dummy is likely to be void by that time and will have trumps left to ruff your winners. It is much better to lead a side suit in which you have strength. The general guideline here is to choose your **strongest** suit. At the same time you should strive not to make a lead that might cost you a trick.

When choosing the card to lead against a suit contract the guidelines are similar to those for leads against a notrump contract.

1. Top of a sequence of **2** or more cards headed by an honor
2. Fourth highest
3. Consider the lead of a singleton in a side suit

There is one special rule when **leading against a suit contract**.

> *Never underlead an ace **against a suit con-***

This means that if you have the ace but not the king and one or more smaller cards **do not lead one of the smaller cards**. Lead the ace if you must choose this suit. But most of the time it is really better to **choose some other suit**.

This rule is sometimes presented in a slightly different manner by saying that you should "Never lead away from an ace."

Sometimes leading a singleton in a side suit can work out well if you hold some small trumps and hope partner can get the lead so she can return the suit and you can play one of your trump cards to win the trick. However, the lead of a singleton should not be automatic. You have to have an indication from the bidding that your partner might have the ace in that suit and you need a trump holding where ruffing will not cost you a natural trump trick.

Here are a few examples where you are leading against a 4♠ contract.

♠ 9 4
♥ K Q 3 2
♦ K J 10 7 4
♣ 7 2

Leading the ♥K will promote the ♥Q into a winner. Leading the ♦J will not promote a winner and might well cost a trick if declarer holds the ace and queen between his hand and dummy.

♠ 9 4
♥ Q J 10 6
♦ K J 10 7 4
♣ 7 2

Even here the ♥Q rates to be a better lead than the ♦J.

♠9 4
♥A Q J 6
♦K Q 7 4
♣7 5 2

Here your hearts are stronger than your diamonds but the ♦K rates to be a better lead than any heart. The ♥Q would be a good lead against a notrump contract but against a suit contract if you decide for some reason that you absolutely must lead a heart then lead the ♥A.

♠9 7 4
♥K J 9 6
♦J 8 7 4 2
♣7

The opponents stopped at a game contract and did not pursue slam. You have only 5 HCP so partner rates to have around 5 - 10 HCP. The lead of a heart is not at all attractive and there does not appear to be much future in the diamond suit. This looks like a good time to lead the ♣7 (assuming clubs were not bid by the opponents). You hope partner has the ♣A so she can win the first trick and lead a small club back for you to ruff with one of your otherwise useless trumps.

♠K Q J
♥A Q 9 6
♦A 8 7 4 2
♣7

You have 16 HCP and yet the opponents reached a game contract. It appears they must have some distributional points to have reached their contract. At any rate, it does not seem that partner has any significant defense in her hand. Besides, you have 2 natural trump tricks so there is no advantage to leading your singleton club. It is probably best to lead a trump. You hope to get the lead back so you can play two more rounds of trumps to minimize declarer's ability to ruff any losers in dummy. You hope to get 2 spade tricks, 2 heart tricks and 1 diamond trick for a 2 trick set.

♠K Q 5
♥A Q 4 2
♦A 7 4
♣7 5 2

You have 15 HCP and the opponents are in a game contract so they should have 25 points between them, including length and dummy points. It does not appear that you will get much help from your partner defending this deal. You are looking at perhaps 5 tricks – 2 spades, 2 hearts, and 1 diamond if you don't give anything away. Leading a spade or a heart is likely to cost a trick. If you lead a diamond it should be the ace and that might very well set up some winners in dummy for declarer to discard some of his losers. So maybe you should lead a club, but which one?

Even the experts do not agree on which card should be led when you hold three small cards. There are three popular opinions:

1. Make a "normal" lead of the smallest card.
2. Lead the top card.
3. Lead the middle card

Option 1 – This is the most straightforward option. You don't need to remember anything special. The problem with this lead is twofold – your partner will think you have at least four cards in the suit and will also think you have something worthwhile at the top (at least an honor).

Option 2 – This has the advantage of probably not misleading your partner into thinking that you have strength in that suit. It has the disadvantage that he might think it is a lead from a doubleton. Such leads are sometimes used when you think you might be able to obtain an eventual ruff in that suit if your partner can get the lead.

Option 3 – This lead is part of a system called ***MUD*** (**M**iddle-**U**p-**D**own) to specifically identify a holding of 3 small cards. You lead the middle card, play the top card on the second trick and the bottom card on the third trick. This has the advantage of being very precise, but the disadvantage that it takes 3 tricks to send the complete message. By that time your partner may have already drawn other conclusions and made adverse decisions in his play. It is probably the most difficult option, especially for beginners, because it requires more memory work.

My personal preference is the second option. It is actually part of a style sometimes called ***BOSTON*** (**B**ottom **O**f **S**omething – **T**op **O**f **N**othing) that can be used even with more than 3 small cards. In its most simple form (if you do not have a top-of-a-sequence lead available) the lead of a small card promises an honor (jack or better) in the suit so you lead the top card when you do not have an honor. This is actually quite easy to remember and the inferences can be quite helpful.

Bidding Influences

There are two factors to consider when suits have been bid during the auction:

- Avoid leading a suit bid by the opponents
- Lead a suit introduced by your partner

The first factor is just common sense. If the opponents have bid a suit they usually have length and strength in that suit, especially if it is a Major Suit (minor suits are sometimes bid with weak 3-card holdings). Of course if you have very strong cards in a suit the opponents have bid, the lead of that suit may be your best option.

One of the reasons for bidding, especially in a competitive auction, is to suggest an opening lead to partner. It is rarely best to lead some other suit if partner has bid. Even if it turns out that would have been a better lead, partner will be quite understanding if you choose her suit instead. On the contrary, if you choose some other suit and it does not work out well, whereas a lead of partner's suit would have worked much better, you will have a considerable amount of explaining to do to your partner.

Use the following guidelines when leading a card in a suit partner introduced:

1. Top of a sequence of 2 or more honors
2. Top of a doubleton
3. Use BOSTON if neither of the above is appropriate, but

4. Do not underlead an ace against a suit contract – lead the ace instead

Contract Level Considerations

The level of the contract sometimes has a significant influence on the choice of your opening lead. Consider for example the following hand:

♠ 8 5
♥ A 9 6 4
♦ A 8 7 4 2
♣ 7 5

If you are defending against a 3NT contract you would lead the ♦4 hoping to establish some diamond tricks with some help from partner and then obtaining the lead with the ♦A or ♥A to take some winning tricks in the diamond suit. However, suppose you are defending a contract of 6NT – yes, the opponents might reach a small slam missing two aces (see the deal at the beginning of this chapter). Now you can set the contract by playing your two aces immediately. If you were to lead the ♦4 declarer might well be able to immediately take 12 or 13 tricks in the black suits and the ♦K.

THIRD-HAND PLAY

When Partner Leads a Small Card

If partner leads a small card he suggests that he has at least one high card (honor) but not a sequence of appropriate length. If at all possible you should make a **maximum** effort to win the trick. This gives rise to the bridge maxim

Third hand high

This is tempered somewhat when you have cards of equal value – they all have the same chance of winning the trick. So, we have the following corollary.

Only as high as necessary

This means you should play the **smallest** of **equal** cards. You not only play the lowest card in a sequence but also look at the dummy to see if an even lower card will do the job.

Dummy	You
J 9 7	
	K Q 10 8

Partner leads the 4 and declarer plays the 7 from dummy. Your 8 will either win the trick or force declarer to play the ace if he holds it. If declarer played the 9 from dummy you would play the ten. If declarer played the jack from dummy you would play the queen.

The Rule of 11

If you think partner has led the fourth down from his longest suit there is a special rule you can use to help decide which card to play. Subtract the number of

the card he led from 11. That is the number of cards higher than his card held by the remaining 3 players. You can see how many of those are in dummy and your hand so you can deduce how many are held by declarer. Sometimes this allows you to play a smaller card than if you had not taken advantage of this rule.

Why does the Rule of 11 work? Suppose he led the 2. There are 12 cards higher than the 2. So if we subtract 2 from 14 we get the number of higher cards. But he has 3 of those higher cards if he led his fourth highest. So if we subtract 2 from 11 (14 - 3) we get the number of higher cards held by the other three players. If he leads a card higher than the 2 the number of higher cards held by the remaining 3 players is correspondingly reduced and given by 11 minus the number of the card he led.

Dummy	You
Q 8 6	
	K 10 3

Partner leads the 7. There are only 4 higher cards held by dummy, you and declarer. Dummy and you each have 2 (Q8 and K10). That does not leave any for declarer. Partner must have the AJ97… . If the 6 is played from dummy play the 3. Partner's 7 will win the trick. If the 8 is played from dummy play the ten. Play the king only if the queen is played from dummy. If you play the king on either the 6 or 8 declarer will be able to establish the queen as a winner by leading toward it from his hand. If you follow the suggested play declarer will not be able to take any tricks in the suit.

When Partner Leads a High Card

When partner leads a high card you may not have to try to win the trick.

Dummy	You
K 9 7	
	A 8 5 2

Partner leads the queen and the 7 is played from dummy. Clearly you do not need to play your ace since partner's queen will win the trick. However don't fall asleep on defense. Remember to give an **attitude signal**. Play the 8 to encourage partner to continue leading the suit. If you play the 2 you are discouraging partner and he might well switch to some other suit.

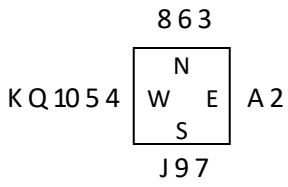
Unblocking

There are times when you should play a higher card even if partner's card will win the trick.

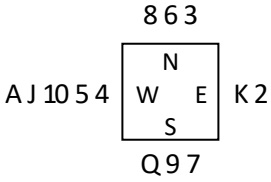
Partner	You
K Q 10 5 4	A 2

You are defending a notrump contract and partner correctly leads the king. There are 3 small cards in dummy. You know partner has at least 4 cards in this suit including the queen and either the jack or ten. If you play the 2 partner will read this as a discouraging signal and might switch to another suit. That could foil your best chance to defeat the contract. Even if he continues the suit you will win the trick and have no card in this suit to lead back to him. If he does not have an entry in some other suit his remaining winners in this suit will go to waste because they will be **blocked**. The solution is for you to overtake his king with your ace and

return the 2. This is called **unblocking**. It may seem very counterproductive but is actually the only way to take all of your winners. Here is the complete layout for this suit.



Let's change this deal just a little.



This time partner leads the jack, the top of an interior sequence. You must overtake with the king and return the suit if you want to guarantee your 5 tricks in the suit. This time you are unblocking the king instead of the ace.

Capturing Dummy's Honors

Let's consider the following situation.

Dummy	You
Q 5 4	
	A 10 3

Partner leads the 2 and the 4 is played from dummy. You conclude that partner has 4 cards leaving 3 for declarer. Which card should you play? Where are the king and jack? If declarer has both cards it makes no difference what you do. He is entitled to 2 tricks and you will get either 1 or 2 depending on the contract (notrump or suit) and whether partner has an entry to win his fourth card after you take your ace.

If declarer has the king and partner the jack you would have to play your ace to win this trick. But if this is the case then declarer gets 2 tricks for your 1. Both his king and queen are promoted into winners. If instead you play the ten, declarer can still win his king but you have dummy's queen trapped with your ace.

If declarer has the jack and partner has the king it doesn't make a lot of difference which card you play. The opponents will get 1 trick and you will get 2. The location of the intermediate 8 and 9 could make a difference here, but that is independent of which card you play.

Now suppose that partner has both the king and the jack. If you play your ace declarer can eventually win a trick with the queen by leading toward it from his hand. On the other hand if you play your ten it will win the trick and the opponents will not win any tricks in the suit.

There are many other card combinations where this type of situation occurs. The general idea is that as third hand you should often not play a card higher than one left in dummy if it could become a winner. You want to keep your higher card to capture the one in dummy.

SECOND-HAND PLAY

When declarer leads a card from his hand or dummy and you are the next player to contribute to the trick the general rule is

Second hand low

While this is an excellent general guideline there are always exceptions. Most of them are just common sense if you understand your objective to win tricks and make life difficult for declarer.

For example, suppose that in a suit contract declarer leads a small card toward a singleton king in the dummy and you hold the ace. Almost without exception you want to play your ace instead of a low card. (I could probably come up with some esoteric example where you wanted declarer to have to lead from dummy but that would distract from the argument.) Another case would be when you have the setting trick by playing high.

Splitting your honors to promote a trick for your side is another example.

You	Dummy
	A J
K Q 7	

Declarer leads the 5. If you blindly follow the rule of second hand low declarer may well play the jack from dummy and you may never take a trick in this suit if it is a side suit in a trump contract.

Covering an honor is another common reason for not playing low.

Dummy	You
Q 7 6	
	K J 10

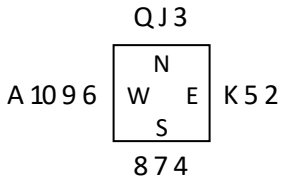
If declarer leads the queen from dummy you can promote your jack and ten into winners even if declarer captures your king with his ace. This is an excellent 2 for 1 trade.

Covering an honor with a higher honor is not always a good idea.

Dummy	You
Q J 10 9	
	K 8 7

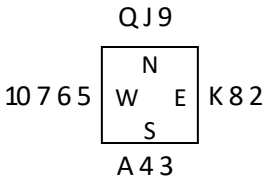
Declarer leads the queen from dummy. If you blindly follow the rule to cover an honor with an honor you lose all chance of winning a trick with your king when declarer has the ace. It would be especially embarrassing if partner had the singleton ace and played it on top of your king. If you play small and continue to play small if the suit is continued, you may find that declarer has fewer than 4 cards and eventually must play his ace establishing your king as a winner in notrump or at least preventing declarer from taking a discard in dummy in a suit contract.

Here is an entire suit distribution as another example.



If the queen is led from dummy and you cover with your king, declarer can eventually take a trick with the jack in this suit by leading toward the dummy. If instead you play low partner can win the trick with his ace and then you still have the king to capture the jack. This is similar to the capturing concept presented as the last topic in the previous section.

Here is another illustration of the same idea.



Suppose declarer needs 3 tricks in this suit and leads the queen from dummy. If you cover with the king he will win with the ace and then finesse West for the ten wrapping up his 3 tricks. Suppose instead you play low and declarer also plays low to give the following position.

If he now continues with the jack you cover with the king and declarer plays his ace but partner's ten prevents declarer from taking 3 tricks. If he continues with the 9 instead of the jack you play the 8 and either partner wins with his ten or declarer takes his ace promoting your king into a winner.

The general rule for covering an honor led from a sequence **in dummy** is to

Cover the last honor.

ATTITUDE DISCARDS

We have already discussed the idea of giving an attitude signal when following suit to your partner's lead. You can also give an attitude signal when **discarding** on a suit led by partner, declarer or dummy. Playing a high card means you would like partner to lead that suit if he gets the opportunity while playing a low card indicates you have no interest in partner leading that suit.

If your partner gives an attitude signal you need not be bound by it. If you have something else to lead that you are quite confident is a better idea, you are free to follow your own analysis. Just remember that if it does not work out well and partner's suggestion would have, there might be a cold (or heated) after-game discussion.

SUMMARY

Opening Leads

The choice of an opening lead can be the single most important factor in the defense and is influenced by the bidding, the level of the contract and the cards you hold.

Against a notrump contract you usually choose your longest suit leading the top of a sequence of 3 or more cards headed by an honor. You make a similar lead from a near sequence or an interior sequence. If you do not hold such a sequence you choose your fourth highest card. In case of a tie you choose the stronger suit.

Against a suit contract the strength of your suit is more important than its length. You like to lead a suit headed by two top honors such as the AK or KQ. Even the QJ10 is adequate. The idea is to develop winners before declarer can discard losers in that suit. If you don't have such a suit, a lead of the fourth highest is another choice. You try to avoid making a lead that might cost you a trick. It is almost unheard of to lead a smaller card when you have the ace but not the king of a suit. Lead the ace or even better choose another suit.

The lead of a singleton against a suit contract may let you subsequently ruff one or more of declarer's winners in that suit if your partner can obtain the lead. Try to estimate the likelihood of partner being able to obtain the lead from the bidding. You usually have nothing to gain by ruffing with natural trump tricks.

Sometimes you will decide to lead from a suit containing 3 small cards. You and your partner should discuss this situation and decide what you want to lead. The 3 choices are low, middle (MUD) and high (BOSTON). BOSTON can also be used with 4 or more small cards and is recommended here.

Generally you avoid leading a suit bid by the opponents unless you have very significant strength in that suit. You should almost always lead a suit partner introduced. When leading partner's suit use the following guidelines for the choice of card:

- Top of a sequence of 2 or more honors
- Top of a doubleton
- Use BOSTON if neither of the above is appropriate, but
- Do not underlead an ace against a suit contract – lead the ace instead

Always take into consideration the level of the contract when choosing your opening lead.

Third-Hand Play

Third-hand play can be encapsulated by several bridge maxims:

- Third hand high
- Only as high as necessary

- Use the rule of 11 and look at the cards in dummy
- Unblock an ace or king to preserve an entry back to partner
- Keep a high card to capture a high card left in dummy

Second-Hand Play

The general rule for second-hand play is to play a small card. One exception involves splitting honors when declarer leads toward dummy and you can see that you can thereby promote a winner. Another exception is to cover an honor with an honor. This applies whether the lead is from dummy or declarer's hand. However if an honor is led from a sequence in dummy it is usually best not to cover until the last honor is led.

Attitude Discards

You can give an attitude signal when discarding just as you do when following suit to partner's lead and not trying to win the trick.

You are not bound to follow partner's attitude signals but it is usually a good idea to do so. It helps to build partnership trust and confidence.


CHAPTER 11

– Getting What You Deserve

Taking Your Winners

Promoting Winners

Suit Establishment

Finessing

Ruffing

Suit Preference Signals

Summary


Declarer's primary job is to try to take enough tricks to make his contract. If he can do so safely he should try to make overtricks to increase his score. Declarer uses the following techniques to try to reach his goal:

- Take winners
- Promote winners
- Establish winners through length
- Finesse
- Ruff losers
- Discard losers

The defenders' primary job is to try to set the contract by at least 1 trick. If they can do so safely they should try to set it by more tricks. If they cannot set the contract they should at least try to prevent declarer from making overtricks. The defenders can use almost the same techniques as declarer:

- Take winners
- Promote winners
- Establish winners through length
- Finesse
- Ruff declarer's winners

The defenders' application of these techniques is more difficult than declarer's. Declarer can see his cards and those in dummy so can immediately form some sort of plan after the opening lead is made. The defenders are not able to see each other's cards so must rely on imagination and signals. In the remainder of this chapter we will take a closer look at how the defenders use these five techniques.

Throughout this chapter we will use the standard compass notation for the positions of the players so that West is the opening leader and East his partner.

TAKING WINNERS

This section applies primarily to **notrump contracts** because we are considering taking several tricks in one suit. In a suit contract this is seldom possible because either dummy or declarer will soon be void and able to ruff your remaining winners.

When declarer has a suit that is split unevenly between his hand and dummy, with winners in both hands, he knows to play the high card(s) from the short side first. Defenders should try to do the same.

Consider the following card combination:

A K 8 6 5 [W E] Q 7 2

If West were declarer he would start by leading the 5 to dummy's queen and then the 2 back to his hand so that he

could take 5 tricks if the outstanding cards split 3-2. The **defense** works almost the same for this combination. West should lead the 6 (fourth down) and East should play the queen (third hand high). East would then return the 7 and West would take the next 4 tricks if the suit split 3-2. Note that if there were 2 or 3 cards in dummy West would know approximately how the suit was dividing after the second trick. East's return of the 7 is significant. He is giving ***present count*** – a count signal indicating how many cards he **currently** holds (he has already played the queen so has a doubleton remaining). If West is paying attention to the cards that are played on the first two tricks he should see that the 2 is missing and therefore likely held by East. Now it is possible from West's viewpoint that East started with only the Q7 and that declarer deceptively retained the 2 in his hand on the first trick so that the 7 could have been a singleton when led at the second trick. The point here is that defenders really have to pay attention to cards played and not played. Significant inferences can be drawn. No experienced player ever suggested defense was easy. Nonetheless this should be relatively easy defensive play.

Let's look at a little more difficult combination:

K Q J 6 5 | W E | A 7 2

West leads the king. What should East play? The 7 – an encouraging attitude signal. Now West can continue with the 5 won by East with the ace. Then East returns the 2 and West takes the next 3 tricks. The play of the 2 by East on the first trick would have been a discouraging signal suggesting that West switch to some other suit.

There is a slight possibility that West was suckered by declarer on this play. Suppose this was the actual complete layout:

8 3

K Q J 6 5 | N / W E / S | 9 7

A 10 4 2

East does his best to discourage with the play of the 7 and declarer deceptively plays the 4. Now when West continues with the 5 declarer wins with the ten and still retains the ace as a second stopper. If this happens to you congratulate declarer on his fine play and move on to the next deal. Just don't become paranoid over this possibility. It takes just the right combination of cards and an experienced declarer.

Here is one more example.

K Q J 9 5 | W E | A 10

West again leads the king and as presented in the previous chapter East must unblock the suit by overtaking with the ace. Furthermore when East returns the ten West must be alert and overtake with the queen (or jack). The defense ends up with 5 tricks unless the suit divides 5-1 or 6-0. Of course if that is the case there will be extreme shortness or length in dummy and West will be aware of the situation on the play of the second trick.

PROMOTING WINNERS

As in the previous section this section applies primarily to **notrump contracts**.

K Q J 10 9 | W E | 5 4 3 2

Sometimes promoting winners is a simple process. West starts by leading the king and continues leading the suit until the ace is driven out. Unless the suit breaks 4-0 as evidenced or suggested by the number of cards appearing in dummy, whenever either defender gains the lead he can take the remaining tricks in this suit for a total of 4. East would play a discouraging 2 on the first trick. West would ignore that suggestion and keep leading his suit if declarer held up taking his ace on the first trick.

K Q 10 6 2 | W E | J 7 3

Quite often promotion by the defenders is more difficult. West leads the king and the ace does not appear in dummy. Suppose East plays the 3 and declarer does not play his ace. What should West do next? East gave a discouraging signal so it looks like declarer has the AJ… remaining in his hand. Continuing this suit could be useless (or at least cost a trick) and partner suggested West should shift to some other suit, so West should probably follow that suggestion. Such a shift might actually allow declarer to make his contract. What went wrong? East fell asleep at the table. He knows partner started with KQ10… so should have played the encouraging 7. Now West can continue with the 2 or even the queen depending on the number of cards in dummy. If he does continue with the queen East must play the jack to unblock the suit. Then if East wins a subsequent trick he can return the 3 to partner's ten and West can take his remaining winners.

4 3

K 8 7 6 5 | N / W E / S | J …

A …

Let's look at another situation. As West you lead the 6, the 3 is played from dummy, East plays the jack and South wins the ace. South then leads another suit and the card you play wins the trick. Now what do you do? Who has the queen? Don't you think declarer would have won the first trick with the queen instead of the ace if he had it? Did you make a mental note of that at trick one? If not, learn to pay attention to those cards that are played. It makes a significant difference between winning bridge and losing bridge. Here is the complete holding.

4 3

K 8 7 6 5 | N / W E / S | Q J 2

A 10 9

Lead the 5 over to partner's queen and he will return the 2 to your king so you can cash your 2 remaining winners.

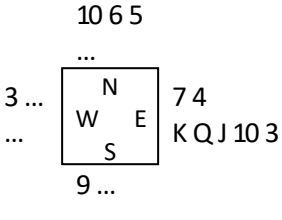
This deal illustrates the importance of playing third hand only as high as necessary. If East had played the queen, West would have had no inclination as to the location of the jack other than assuming it was held by South, because East should have played it instead of the queen if he had it.

SUIT ESTABLISHMENT

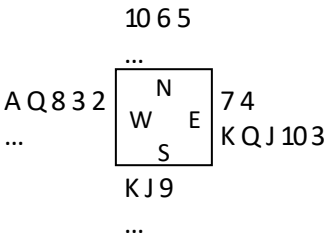
This section continues our discussion of techniques which apply primarily to notrump contracts.

Returning Partner's Suit

It is important that the defenders cooperate in their defensive endeavors. Sometimes this may be difficult because one player may think he has a better idea than his partner. Here is an example.



West leads the 3, the 5 is played from dummy, East (you) play the 7 and declarer wins the trick with the 9. Declarer now leads a third suit and you win that trick. What do you lead now? You might be tempted to lead the king of your second suit to try to set up winners there. And indeed that might be a reasonable play if you have another sure entry to your hand in one of the suits not shown. But what if you don't have that entry? Did you notice that the 2 was not played on the first trick? If declarer had that card he might have played the ten from dummy on the first trick to conceal the 9 in his hand. But possibly he wanted to lead from his hand and therefore played the way he did. Nonetheless it is possible partner has that card. If that is the case partner has a 5-card suit. With 3 cards in dummy and 2 in your hand, declarer started with only 3 cards. You should have worked out this possibility at trick one and made a mental note. Is it not possible that partner started with AQ832? If so a return of the 4 in partner's suit will allow him to take the next 4 tricks. If you are defending a 3NT contract that will be enough to set declarer with the one trick you just won. Here is the entire distribution of partner's suit.



The bottom line is that when partner has made the opening lead and you subsequently obtain the lead, unless you have a clear reason to do otherwise.

Return partner's lead (suit).

This may not always work out to be the best defense but it does wonders for partnership confidence. If it does not work out partner will be quite understanding and sympathetic. On the other hand, if you ignore his lead, take off on your own ideas and that does not work out, partner just might lose his cool and have a few choice words for you. Hopefully that will wait until after the game and by

then he will have cooled off. But we all have our moments of loss of self-control.

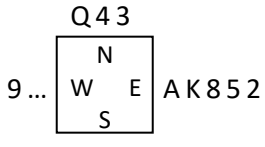
When returning partner's suit there are a few rules to follow regarding the choice of your card based on what you have **remaining** in your hand:

- Top of a sequence of high cards
- Top of a doubleton
- Low from 3 or more cards

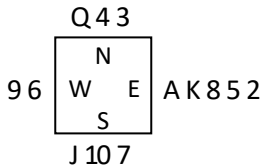
These rules are sometimes tempered by the cards held in dummy but are good general guidelines.

When Partner has Led Your Suit

When partner has made an opening lead in a suit you have bid, your play as third hand might be a little different from what it is when he leads his own suit. Here is an example.



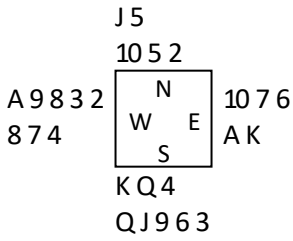
Partner's lead of the 9 really looks like he has a doubleton or possibly a singleton. Regardless, declarer is known to hold the jack and ten (see if you can figure out why) so declarer is always going to get one trick in this suit. If you have a sure entry in another suit it might be all right to play third hand high and continue the suit to establish your remaining cards as winners. But what if you don't have that sure entry? Then if you win this trick and continue leading the suit, partner will have no cards in your suit to lead back to you if he happens to get the lead. In that case you should duck this trick but play the encouraging 8. See how well this works if this is the full distribution.



Whatever declarer plays from dummy and his hand, you play the 8 and declarer wins the first trick. But now if West can obtain the lead, he still has the 6 to lead back to you and you can take 4 tricks in the suit. Note that even if the 7 were in partner's hand he would have no cards left if you first took your ace and king and then led it a third time to establish your remaining cards as winners.

Ducking after Leading Your Own Suit

Sometimes you must duck a trick even if you have led your own suit.



You (West) lead the 3, dummy wins the trick with the jack while partner encourages with the 7 and declarer plays the 4. The ten of declarer's suit is led from dummy and partner wins the king while declarer plays the 3 and you play the 4 (a count signal). East now returns the ten (top of a doubleton) and declarer plays the king. You must duck this trick so that when East wins the ace in declarer's suit he still has the 6 left to return to your ace. You can then take the other 2 winners in your suit. Their 3NT contract was just defeated because partner took 2 tricks and you took 3.

FINESSING

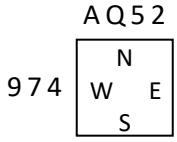
Finessing is a defensive technique that works against both notrump and suit contracts. Finessing as declarer is simple because you can see both your hand and dummy and can decide who you hope has the missing critical high cards. As defenders you have to use your imagination. There is a simple guideline to use in this process.

Lead through strength and up to weakness.

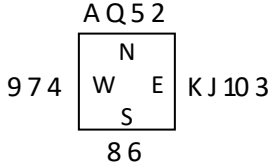
Another way to look at this is to

Lead a suit in which you see strength on your left or weakness on your right.

When leading through strength it should usually be a suit in which you have weakness and there are tenaces ("holes") in the strong suit.

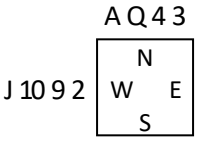


This is an example of leading through strength. You hope that the complete layout might be something like the following.

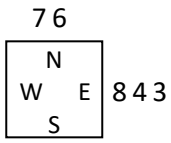


Can you see how much better it is for you to lead this suit than partner? East is said to have his cards "behind" or "over" North. Declarer can be held to only 1 trick in the suit if you lead it but could get 2 tricks if partner led the suit. In a sense you are protecting partner if you lead the suit. If declarer plays the queen, partner can play the king and then continue with the jack to promote his ten. If declarer plays small partner can win with the ten and then lead some other suit, hoping you can get in the lead later to continue leading the suit. If declarer plays

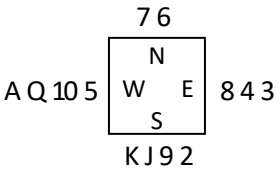
the ace, partner should probably encourage with the jack although that could cost a trick in certain layouts. In fact, if you are playing BOSTON your lead would be the 9 which puts even more pressure on declarer, for now if he plays small from dummy your 9 will hold the trick.



You need not always have weakness in the strong suit. Here you lead the jack hoping partner has the king and you can capture the queen in dummy. If declarer has the king you probably have not cost any tricks for the defense.

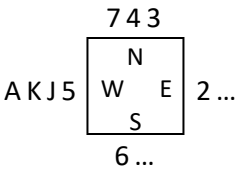


Here is an example of leading up to weakness. As East you lead this suit hoping the complete layout is something like the following.

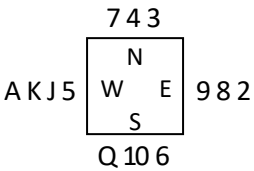


West will have to hope you can get the lead 3 times to continue leading this suit so that declarer does not get any tricks and he gets 4 tricks. Seeing that your 8 is higher than any cards in dummy, you should lead that card the first time. This will virtually force declarer to play a higher card from his hand or risk your 8 holding the trick.

Suppose you are West defending a suit contract and have the following in a side suit.



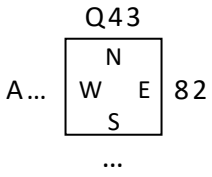
You lead the ace and the 3, 2 and 6 are played as indicated. Partner has discouraged with the 2 so declarer must have the queen which you would like to capture. You must switch to some other suit and hope that partner can gain the lead to return the suit. The complete layout could be as shown below.



If East gains tricks the lead he will return the 9 and you take 2 more tricks regardless of what declarer does.

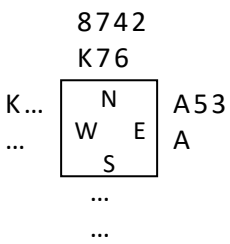
RUFFING

This technique obviously applies only to the defense of suit contracts. Here is a simple example.



West leads the ace in a side suit. You (East) see the dummy. Who do you think has the king? It is generally not a good idea to lead an ace against a suit contract unless you have the king, so partner probably has that card. What should you play? Assuming you have at least one small trump that you do not need for other purposes, don't you think you might be able to win a trick by ruffing the third round of the suit, thereby taking away one of declarer's tricks! So even though you do not have a high card that might win a trick in partner's suit, you still would like partner to continue leading his suit. Play the 8 as an encouraging signal. West should continue with the king. When you play the 2 on this trick you will confirm your 8 as encouraging so partner should then lead a third round which you will ruff.

Defenders should always be looking for ways to use their small trumps to ruff declarer's winners and take more tricks. Sometimes you go out of your way to accomplish this goal.



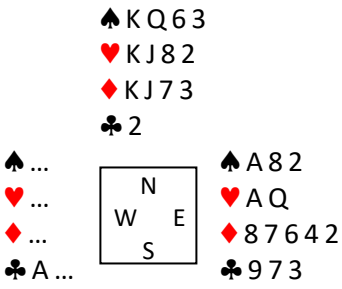
In this display the two suits shown are side suits and you are defending a contract of 4♥ or 4♠. You are East and partner leads the king in his suit. The 2 is played from dummy. You have a couple of small trumps. What should you play? It appears that you might get 2 tricks in partner's suit plus your other ace. Where is the fourth trick going to come from? You can see that you can get a ruff or two in your second side suit after you play your ace. How do you accomplish this? Since you know partner also has the queen in the suit he led, overtake partner's king with your ace. Then cash your singleton ace and return the 5 of partner's suit. If partner can trust you he should find it rather strange that you overtook his king and then played your other ace to set up that king in dummy. Why didn't you hold on to that ace to capture the king in dummy later? He should conclude that your second ace was a singleton and you want a ruff in that suit. So after winning the third trick with the queen (or perhaps a smaller card depending on what declarer plays) he should return a card in your second suit. Which card he should lead depends on several factors which we will not discuss at this point so as not to distract from the main theme of this example. Suffice it to say that his lead could be a suggestion as to the suit you should lead back to him so that you could perhaps get another ruff.

Note that in this example overtaking partner's king is unlikely to cost a trick in that suit. Unless partner has only 3 cards declarer has at most 2 and you will not get more than 2 tricks in that suit anyway.

SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNALS

We have previously discussed the use of a card you play to give an attitude signal or a count signal. Another signal you can make with the card you play is a ***suit***

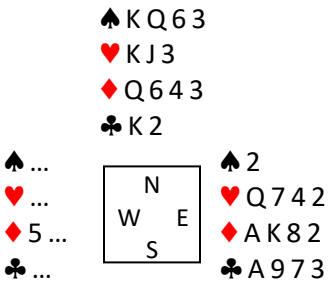
preference signal. A suit preference signal can be made when you would like to tell partner which of two suits you would like him to lead if he gets the opportunity. Since two suits must be eliminated, a suit preference signal is usually made when you are defending against a trump contract and then the trump suit is one of the two suits eliminated. The other suit to be eliminated depends on the specific situation, but there are two common applications.



Suppose you are East defending a 4♠ contract and partner leads the ♣A. Since he will presumably win this trick you should normally give him an attitude signal which would indicate whether or not you wanted him to continue leading clubs. But what future is there in attacking the club suit? With a singleton in dummy along with several trumps, your side will not take any more club tricks. Partner can also see this so he will conclude that he should shift to either diamonds or hearts at trick two. Assuming there are no indications from the bidding to guide him in his choice of suits, he would have to make a pure guess unless you could suggest which suit you want him to lead. This is one case where a suit preference signal is appropriate. The second suit eliminated in this situation is clubs. You can tell him which suit he should lead by the card you play on the first trick.

- A high card asks for the higher ranking of the two remaining suits.
- A low card asks for the lower ranking of the two remaining suits.

Clearly, you would like partner to shift to hearts because you hope to take 2 heart tricks and a trump trick to set the contract. So, you play the ♣9 on the first trick. If your red suits were switched you would want a diamond lead; then you would play the ♣3 on the first trick.



On this deal, as East you opened the bidding with 1♦, South bid 1♠ (showing at least a 5-card suit and 10 points), West passed and North bid 4♠. West led the ♦5 (the suit you bid), the ♦3 was played from dummy and you won the trick with the ♦K. You can see 3 tricks for your side, but where will you get more to set the contract? From the bidding and the cards you can see, it does not appear that partner has much in the way of HCP. His lead of the ♦5 could be from the ♦J third or fourth, or possibly a singleton! He is likely to have 2 or 3 trumps, so if he indeed had a singleton diamond, he will be able to trump a diamond or maybe even two. This looks like your best chance, so you go ahead and cash your ♦A on which partner discards a small club. You might be tempted to next cash your ♣A and then lead a diamond to partner for

him to ruff, but what is the hurry to cash your good ♣A? That is better used as an entry back to your hand so you can lead another diamond for partner to ruff. But how is partner to know if he should return a heart or a club after he gets his first diamond ruff? Aha! Another opportunity for a suit preference signal! Partner realistically has only two options: clubs and hearts. So, if you lead the ♦8 you would ask for a heart return while the lead of the ♦2 asks for a club return. Following this line of play results in a two trick set.

West	South
♠ 7 5 4	♠ A J 10 9 8
♥ 10 9 8 6 5	♥ A
♦ 5	♦ J 10 9 7
♣ 8 6 5 4	♣ Q J 10

Here are the other two hands. The bidding by N-S was very reasonable and South is in a decent contract. On the surface it appears he has only 2 diamond losers and 1 club loser. The unfortunate (from his perspective) distribution of the diamonds doomed his contract.

Now that we have three different kinds of signals we can make with the cards we play, which one should we use? This is not as difficult as it might seem because there is a priority ranking: 1 – Attitude, 2 – Count, 3 – Suit Preference. Your normal signal is one of attitude. If the situation is such that an attitude signal is useless, then you move to a count signal. But, if that is also useless, then you give a suit preference signal.

SUMMARY

Defenders take their tricks about the same way as declarer through

Taking winners
Promotion
Suit establishment
Finessing
Ruffing

They have more difficulty than declarer when applying these techniques because they cannot see each other's cards. They must rely on signals, imagination and careful inferences from cards played or not played.

Taking Winners

When the defenders attempt to take all of their tricks in a long suit against a notrump contract it is extremely important for the partner of the opening leader to cooperate by giving an **attitude signal**, a **present count signal** or **unblocking** when appropriate.

Promoting Winners

Attitude signals also play an important role when promoting winners for the defense. Of additional importance here is the principle that when trying to win a trick third hand should play high but **only as high as necessary**.

Suit Establishment

Consider a scenario where your partner has led a suit against a notrump contract and declarer won that trick. You later win a trick and have to decide on a lead. While there are many factors to be considered, it is usually best if you **return your partner's lead**. That means you should lead a card in the suit your partner lead at the first trick. The card you choose depends on your holding. But you have the following guidelines:

- Top of a doubleton
- Top of a sequence of high cards
- Low from three or more cards

If you have the opening lead and your partner has bid during the auction you should generally lead his suit, also using the above guidelines for your choice of card.

When you are playing to the first trick as third hand and partner has led your suit you will not necessarily follow the third hand high principle. Instead you

will analyze partner's lead and look at the cards in dummy to decide on an appropriate line of play.

When playing a card to a trick in your longest suit you may have to **duck** once or twice to preserve an entry to your hand.

Finessing

Declarer is not the only player who can take a finesse. Either defender can also apply this technique. However, since a defender cannot see his partner's cards he has to use his imagination. In this regard he uses the idea of **leading through strength and up to weakness**.

Ruffing

Both defenders should always be aware of the possibility of ruffing some of declarer's winners if declarer has not yet drawn trumps.

Suit Preference Signals

A suit preference signal can be used when there is a choice of two suits for partner to lead.

- A high card asks for the higher ranking of the two remaining suits.
- A low card asks for the lower ranking of the two remaining suits.

The two most common uses for a suit preference signal are when the opening leader against a suit contract has led a card which wins the first trick but there is a singleton in dummy and when one player is leading a card for his partner to ruff. In the former case the card third hand plays to the trick indicates which of the 2 remaining side suits his partner should lead at the second trick. In the latter case the card led indicates which of the other side suits his partner should return.

The priorities for the three types of signals are:

1. Attitude
2. Count
3. Suit Preference

CHAPTER 12

– Making Life Difficult for Declarer

Suit Establishment Prevention

Guard Duty

A Guessing Game

Defenders' Trump Management

Summary

The defenders' job is to try to set declarer or at least minimize the number of tricks he takes. To meet this objective they should try to make life difficult for declarer. One way to do this is to figure out declarer's plan and try to thwart it. As your declarer skills improve so should your defensive skills. Why is that? The better you, as declarer, are at figuring out how to develop more winners or eliminate losers, the better you should be able to anticipate what declarer is going to try to do when you are defending. Is declarer going to ruff losers in dummy? Maybe you should lead trumps and get rid of those in dummy before he has a chance to do that. Is declarer trying to set up a long suit in dummy to discard losers? Maybe you should use the defensive holdup play or remove his entries to dummy. Is declarer going to finesse for some missing high cards? Keep declarer guessing. Always remember that declarer cannot see through the backs of your cards. He does not know who has what. Don't make life easy for him. Anticipate his moves and be ready to play smoothly in tempo so as not to reveal your holding.

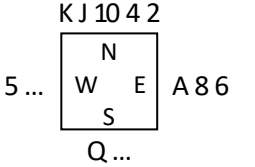
In this chapter we will review some of the topics discussed earlier and add a few more defensive maneuvers.

SUIT ESTABLISHMENT PREVENTION

Any time you are defending against a notrump contract and see a long suit (at least 4 cards and usually 5 or more) in the dummy you can guess that declarer will try to set up the small cards in that suit as winners either by promotion or by playing the suit until you run out of cards. Sometimes there will be nothing you can do to prevent this but other times you might be able to throw a monkey wrench into his plan.

The Defensive Hold-Up Play

We have already looked at this maneuver in Chapter 8 – "Protecting Yourself" but will review and expand on the idea here.



Declarer has won the opening lead (some other suit) in his hand and at trick two leads the queen of this suit. There are no other entries to dummy.

West, you have only small cards in this suit. Are you half asleep or are you wide awake and alert realizing that you are the critical defender for this suit? If declarer also has the ace it won't make any difference what you play. But suppose partner has the ace and a couple of small cards. How is he supposed to know when to take his ace to minimize the number of tricks declarer can take in this suit? It is easy for him to count the number of cards in his hand and dummy and deduce the total held by you and declarer. But he won't know how they are split unless you give him a count signal. Did you play the 5 simply because it was the lowest card in your hand or because you had 3 and were starting a low-high signal for an odd

number of cards? Or do you actually hold the 53 doubleton and are starting a high-low signal for an even number of cards? Good defense on this deal starts with the card you play to this trick. If you make the wrong play don't blame partner if declarer makes the contract or wonder why you always seem to lose at bridge. You have only yourself to blame. Actually you should have anticipated the development of this situation right after you made your opening lead and dummy's cards were put on the table. So you should have been prepared to make the correct play before the first trick was completed.

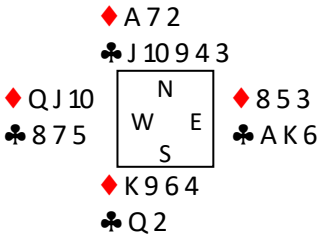
East, when the 2 is played from dummy I hope you don't play your ace just because aces were meant to capture kings and queens. It is very unlikely that declarer has the singleton queen and is trying to sneak 1 trick past you. You certainly want to hold up playing your ace and play a small card on this trick so that you can play your ace when declarer plays his last card in this suit. Whether you play the 6 or 8 is not very important at this stage of your bridge life although it could have significance. But we will leave that topic for another day.

So declarer wins the second trick with his queen and now leads the 9, West plays the 7 and dummy plays the 4. East, what will you play now? Does something seem a little strange? Do you remember what cards were played on the first trick? What card is still missing? The 3. Who has it? If West has it he should have played it on the first trick. But if South has it West should have first played the 7 and then the 5 to indicate a doubleton. What is going on here? It looks like West was not paying attention and forgot to start the proper signal at trick two, simply playing his lowest card. You better play your other small card and hold up the ace one more time to prevent declarer from taking 4 tricks in this suit. Congratulations on making a fine play and saving your partner from his error. You paid attention to all of the cards and worked this all out.

Do you see the problem West presented to East by not making the proper play of his cards? How much easier for East if West had first played the 7 and then the 5. Then East would not have had to draw inferences to make the proper play. If East had not been so thoughtful to recognize the missing card was the 3 he would have thought South started with a doubleton and East with 3 so would have won the second trick, leaving South with an entry to dummy to take the remaining tricks in this suit.

In the previous example we alluded to the possibility that declarer had a singleton queen. Holding up the ace at trick two still would have been the proper play if there were an entry to dummy in another suit. Then declarer could have used that entry to reach dummy but would not have been able to take any tricks in the shown suit.

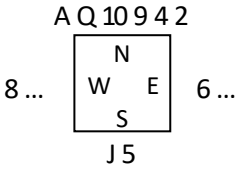
Let's look at an example where holding up when you have two stoppers may be necessary to prevent declarer from taking several tricks in a suit.



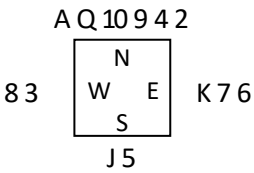
Suppose that when declarer leads the ♣Q you take your ♣A. When declarer later leads the ♣2 and plays the ♣9 from dummy it does you no good to hold up. He will just keep leading the suit until you play your ♣A perforce. He will still have an entry to dummy to play the rest of his club winners.

If instead you hold up on the first club trick and win the second trick you can block the club winners. Declarer can get to dummy with the ♦A but does not yet have the clubs established as winners.

So far we have looked at examples of holding up with the ace. Sometimes holding up the king is also effective.

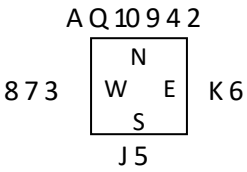


Put yourself in declarer's shoes when there are no other entries to dummy. You lead the jack, West plays the 8, you play the 2 from dummy and East follows with the 6. Don't you think, or at least hope, that West has the king? So you continue with the 5 and West plays the 3. Now what do you think? Is West giving a high-low signal indicating a doubleton so that East started with the K76? If that is the case, you should play the ace from dummy so you get at least 2 tricks from this suit. Or did West start with K83 and is he trying to buffalo you into playing the ace so he can stop you from taking all of your tricks? West knows that misleading partner by giving a false count signal will not hurt the defense. If that is the case you should play the queen (or ten or 9) from dummy.



Here is the complete layout of this suit. If East had played the king on the first trick, South would have had an easy time with the play by simply taking 5 tricks in this suit after he regained the lead. By holding up the king on the first round you hold declarer to no more than 2 tricks in this suit, and only 1 if declarer repeats the finesse.

Let's change this layout slightly.

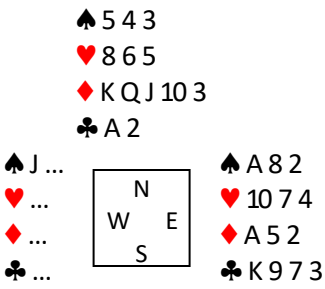


East, have you thought this through ahead of time. When declarer leads the jack, partner plays the 3 and the 2 is played from dummy, are you ready to play the 6 without thought? If you stop to think, when it is your turn you might just as well show South your doubleton king. Without the king you would automatically play a small card and with king third you would also play a small card. The only time you have a problem is with the king doubleton. If you smoothly play the 6 de-

clarer will think West has the king and undoubtedly finesse again. You then win the king and successfully block the winners in dummy. It takes nerves of steel and a poker face to pull this off but the whole key to success is preparedness.

Removing Dummy's Entries

One of the most important keys to good defense after learning the rules (guidelines) is knowing when to follow them and when to break them. Here is a good example of breaking the rules.



You are East defending a notrump contract and partner leads the ♠J. After dummy comes down you can draw several conclusions:

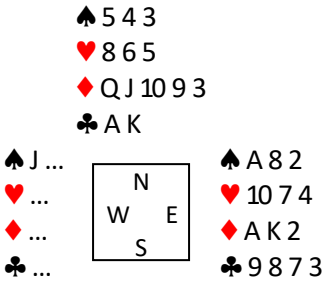
- Partner holds the ♠10 and either the ♠K or ♠9.
- Declarer holds the ♠Q and possibly the ♠K.
- Declarer has a source of tricks from the diamond suit in dummy.
- You have one stopper against those diamond tricks.
- The ♣A is an entry to dummy after you take your ♦A.

The two rules at this point are "third hand high" and "return your partner's lead." This is the time to follow the first one and break the second one. It is much more important to kill declarer's source of diamond tricks than establish your partner's spade winners. Play the ♠A and then return the ♣K. If declarer allows you to win a trick with the ♣K continue with a small club.

Partner should be alert to your play. Why are you breaking the rules? Because you have a diamond stopper and thought it necessary to remove the entry to dummy while you still had that stopper. This conclusion should especially alert him to the necessity of giving you a count signal when declarer starts playing diamonds so that you can take your ♦A at the optimum time.

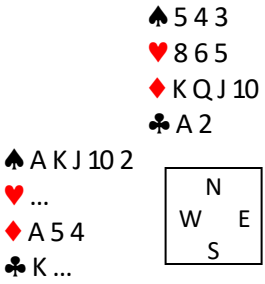
This idea of removing entries to dummy before declarer can use them to take established tricks in a long suit is appropriate in many deals. Most often it occurs when there is a single side entry in dummy but can also occur when there are multiple entries and you have multiple stoppers in dummy's long suit.

Let's change the above deal slightly to illustrate this point.



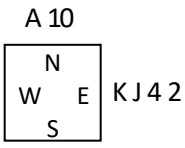
Win the first trick with the ♠A and return a club. When declarer plays on the diamonds win the first trick with the ♦K (this could be a case of second hand high but will let partner know you also have the ♦A) and lead another club. Then use partner's count signal in diamonds to decide when to play your ♦A if declarer continues to try to set up the diamond suit.

This ploy can even be used by the opening leader.

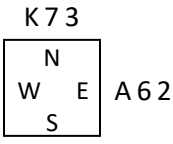


As West you are defending a notrump contract and make your natural lead of the ♠A. After you see the dummy you switch to the ♣K, continuing with a small club if allowed to hold that trick.

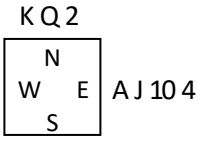
Here are some more examples when you are sitting behind the dummy:



Lead the king. If declarer does not play the ace from dummy continue with the 2.



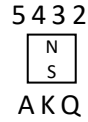
Lead the 2. Keep the ace to capture the king later in the play.



Lead the jack. If the trick is won with the king or queen you have your ace left to capture the other honor in dummy. If your jack is allowed to hold the trick, continue with the 4.

GUARD DUTY

For simplicity we limit our discussion in this section to defending against notrump contracts but the principles can also apply to suit contracts. Any time declarer has four or more cards in a suit in one hand, every card after the third card is a threat to take a trick, even if they are all small cards.

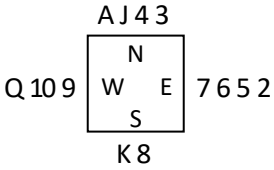


If this suit divides 3-3 declarer can play the 3 top cards from his hand keeping as little as the lowly 2 in dummy. Then if he has an entry to dummy he can use it to enter dummy to play the 2 as a winner. Now suppose you are either defender and hold the 9876 in this suit. Before declarer plays this suit he takes four winners in another suit where you have only three cards. On the fourth trick of that suit you must discard something. Since you cannot see the cards in declarer's hand you may think your 4 intermediate cards in this suit are not worth anything. Although you cannot see partner's cards he has only the J10 doubleton in this suit and they will fall when declarer plays his ace and king. You are the only defender who can guard this suit to stop declarer from taking the fourth trick. You must hold on to all of your cards in this suit and discard something in another suit.

Here is a general principle you can use.

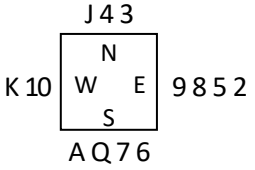
> *When faced with finding a discard, try to keep as many cards as dummy in each suit.*

Here is another example.



Can you see what will happen if East discards one of his cards in this suit? Declarer will lead his king playing the 3 from dummy. Next comes the 8 covered by West with the ten and the jack is played from dummy. Now the ace is led from dummy and West must play his queen. If East has discarded one of his cards on an earlier trick in another suit, the 4 in dummy is now a winner. Besides the "rule" given above East could apply some logic to the situation. He can see 8 cards between his hand and dummy leaving only 5 for declarer and partner. How are those 5 most likely split? 3-2. So he could conclude that he must hold on to all 4 of his small cards in this suit to guard against the fourth card in dummy becoming a winner.

You can also apply this principle to the number of cards declarer holds in each suit; it is just a little more difficult when you cannot see declarer's cards.



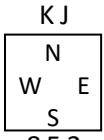
Declarer's best line of play to take 3 tricks in this suit is to hope that the missing cards either split 3-3 or that East has the king doubleton. He enters dummy with another suit and leads the 3 toward his queen losing the finesse to West's king. He now has two winners with the ace and jack but East will still have the 9 to prevent declarer's 7 from becoming a winner provided that East did not discard one of his cards on some other suit earlier in the deal.

How did East know not to discard one of these small cards? Perhaps he just guessed right or maybe he did not have any other suit he could protect so chose

this one by default. There is also the possibility he had a clue from the auction. While we are not really considering the bidding in this book, you will eventually learn that when a player bids a suit during the auction he usually promises or at least suggests that he has 4 or more cards in that suit. If declarer had bid this suit during the auction East would have a good idea that South held at least 4 cards and so should hold on to all of his.

A GUESSING GAME

Quack, Quack, Quack, … – Ducking



Put yourself in declarer's shoes for this combination. You lead the 2 and West plays a small card. Should you play the king or jack from dummy? It all depends on who has the ace and who has the queen. If either West or East has both cards it makes no difference. You will win if West has both cards and lose if East has both cards. But what if they are split? Then if West has the ace and East the queen you should play the king. But if West has the queen and East the ace then you should play the jack. How do you know who has what? Unless the defender's help you out you don't. It is a pure guess. Whichever way you guess you will be right half the time and wrong half the time.

Now suppose you are West in the above scenario and hold the Q76. When declarer leads the 2 from his hand would you ever have reason to play the queen? I surely hope not. (Well, maybe if there were some complex reason you wanted to make declarer think you had a singleton. But we'll keep things simple here.) If you do play the queen you have taken all of the guesswork away from declarer. He will play the king to promote the jack into a winner after partner takes his ace.

What if as West you held the A76? Should you play the ace? Maybe if it is the setting trick. Otherwise just smoothly play the 6 and let declarer guess. This may be the day he guesses wrong and plays the jack from dummy giving you and partner 2 tricks in the suit. Note that spending several seconds in thought at your turn to play is probably all declarer needs to determine you have the ace since you are more likely to think about your play when holding the ace rather than the queen. I have stated this before but it is worth repeating:

> *When defending always try to anticipate declarer's play and be prepared to play in tempo.*

This is a good opportunity to bring up a point of ethics in the game of bridge. Suppose you are West in this scenario and hold the Q76 as considered earlier. When declarer leads the 2 it would be considered highly unethical to hesitate significantly and then play the 6 with the intent of making declarer think you held the ace, hoping to entice him into playing the king which your partner could capture with his ace and also thereby promoting your queen into a winner. That is

not to say that bluffing or deception is not allowed. Here is the guideline you should always try to follow.

> *It is all right to deceive declarer* ***by the cards you play*** *provided you also deceive your partner, but* ***not by the tempo or manner*** *in which they are played.*

A similar statement holds for declarer. This is not to mean that you cannot think before you play. You will often need to take some time to decide what to play. But if you do take time you should have something legitimate to be thinking about. Bridge has been described as a game where you stand up and tell the opponents what you have, what you plan to do with it and dare them to stop you. This does not mean you have to tell them specifically what you hold, but any information you relay to partner should be equally available to your opponents.

Here is another situation to consider from declarer's viewpoint. You lead the 2, West plays small, you play the king from dummy and East plays small. Who has the ace? You think West has it, but might East also hold it and decided not to play it on the first trick? You really don't know. If whichever defender held that card had played it on the first trick your guesswork would be eliminated and you could go merrily on your way with the play of the rest of the deal. But when neither defender plays the ace you really don't know the complete layout and may not be sure exactly how to continue.

Now suppose you are West in the above example and held A94. When declarer leads the 2 don't make his life easy by playing the ace. Instead play the 4. Now declarer will have to use an entry back to his hand to repeat the finesse and that could put his contact in jeopardy. A similar argument holds if you are East with those cards.

Cover Ups

Dummy East
Q J 9 4
K 10

Earlier we suggested that you not cover an honor led from dummy until the last of touching honors was led. That is another rule that must sometimes be broken. In this layout if you play the ten when the queen is led from dummy you have made life easy for declarer. But suppose you play the king instead. Now declarer might think your king was a singleton and finesse your partner for the ten by leading from his hand toward the 9 in dummy. You will gladly win this trick that you did not really deserve.

West Dummy
A 7 5 4 2
K 6 3

There are no outside entries to dummy and declarer leads the queen from his hand. With a lack of high or even significant intermediate cards in dummy this might be a good time to cover the queen with the king. You may be able to block the

suit. Waiting until the second round would probably work out well too, but if you wait until the third round declarer may be able to make use of those small cards in dummy.

DEFENDERS' TRUMP MANAGEMENT

Back in Chapter 7 – "Managing the Trump Suit" we discussed declarer's management of the trump suit. Just as the defenders use many other declarer techniques to develop tricks they also need to learn how to make the best use of the trumps they hold.

One of declarer's frequent methods of eliminating losers in a suit contract is to ruff them in dummy. A good defender should be able to recognize when this is part of declarer's plan and try to prevent or minimize that option by taking away declarer's ability to execute that plan.

Opening Trump Leads

There are two times when you should consider a trump for an opening lead:

- When any other lead looks like it might give up a defensive trick
- When indicated by the bidding – especially if declarer opened the bidding in a Major and the contract is in a second suit bid by declarer

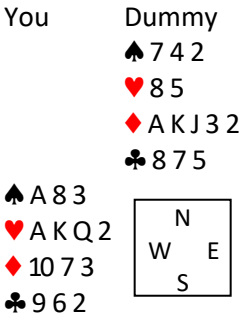
♠ 6 5 4 3
♥ K J
♦ A Q 10 3
♣ Q 9 4

Here you are defending against a spade contract. Leading a red suit is certainly unattractive and a club lead doesn't look much better. A spade lead is unlikely to cost a trick for your side and may help to cut down on declarer's ability to ruff losers in dummy.

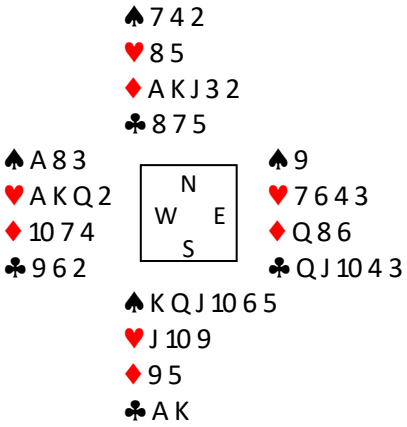
♠ 6 4 3
♥ A K J 2
♦ A Q 10 3
♣ Q 9

You are again defending against a spade contract. This time declarer has bid both spades and hearts. With your heart holding it looks like you might be able to take three heart tricks on defense. But if dummy is short in hearts declarer might be able to ruff your heart winners. If you lead a trump to start the defense and continue every time you gain the lead, you may be able to remove all of dummy's trumps before declarer gets a chance to ruff any of his heart losers.

Even if there is nothing from the bidding to indicate a trump lead you might decide that is a good idea after you make your opening lead. Let's look at another deal.



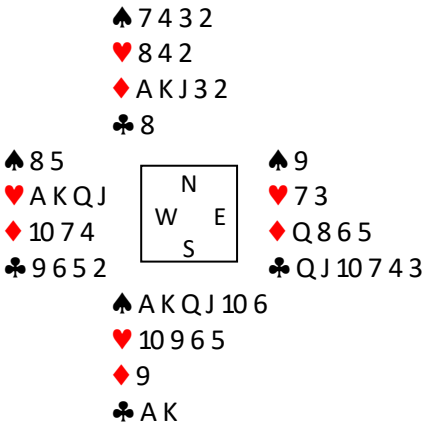
This time you are defending a 4♠ contract where the opponents have bid nothing but spades. You think you might have 4 tricks in your hand to set the contract so start by leading the ♥A. When you see the dummy you realize that declarer will be able to ruff one of your heart winners if you try to take all 3 heart tricks right away. What can you do to stop him from doing that? How about switching to the ♠A and another spade? Then if you get the lead with the ♥K you can lead your third spade to take away the last spade from dummy. Now you hope that declarer still has a heart loser in his hand with no other way to get rid of it so you eventually take a trick with your ♥Q. This could be the entire deal.



When you lead the second spade partner shows out and declarer knows you have another trump left in your hand. So he also knows that if he leads a heart to get rid of the last one in dummy you can lead your third trump to take away his ability to ruff his third heart. So he might just try a diamond finesse instead. But that will lose to partner's ♦Q so you will still set the contract. You may or may not even get your ♥Q depending on exactly how declarer plays the diamonds.

Overruffing

There are times when you cannot prevent declarer from ruffing in dummy but you can do him one better. Look at the following deal.

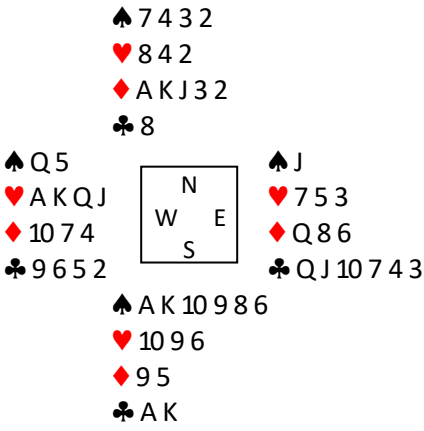


Against a 4♠ contract West starts leading his hearts from the top. Declarer is looking at just 4 heart losers but plans to draw trumps and then discard the fourth heart on one of the top diamonds in dummy. But on the first heart trick East plays an encouraging ♥7 hoping to be able to ruff a third round of hearts. With nothing better to do West continues playing two more rounds of hearts. On the third round East realizes partner's ♥Q is a winner so discards the ♣3 instead of ruffing as planned. West now knows that South has one more

heart and can see that the trumps in dummy are all relatively small. **Since East gave a discouraging club discard he suggested that he has a higher trump than the ♠7 in dummy.** This is somewhat of an inference since the defense will not be able to get a quick trick in diamonds. So West continues with the ♥J. Declarer does the best he can by ruffing with the ♠7 in dummy but East overruffs with the ♠9 for the setting trick.

A Little Boxing Action

Let's change the cards in the previous deal just a little.



West is again defending a 4♠ contract by South and leads the ♥A. When South sees the dummy he feels the contract is secure. He thinks the opponents can take the first 3 heart tricks and he can claim the rest. But something interesting happens along the way.

Even though East played the discouraging ♥3 on the first trick, West sees no reason not to continue the heart suit so takes two more heart tricks and then has to decide what to lead next. With the 12 HCP he holds he decides it is unlikely that East has the ♣A and there is not likely to be a diamond trick for the defense – even if East holds queen third, declarer has only a doubleton. So West decides to lead the ♥J. He knows this will give declarer a chance for a ***ruff and sluff***, perhaps discarding the club from dummy and ruffing in his hand. If this happens and East really did have the ♣A he will apologize later.

Declarer does discard the ♣8 from dummy. He does not want to encourage East to ruff.

Now it is East's turn to make the killing play for the defense. He knows that his ♠J is useless on its own. Once declarer gets the lead he will start to draw trumps and his ♠J will fall on the first round. East decides he might just as well play it now. Something good might come of it. Voila!

Declarer suddenly has a sinking feeling. If that ♠J was a singleton West still has the ♠Q doubleton. Declarer has to overruff with one of his top spades to avoid being set immediately. When he then plays the other top spade and the ♠Q does not fall he has to concede down 1.

By playing his high trump honor which was going to be useless to him East was able to promote a trump trick for his partner. This type of play is called an ***uppercut***.

SUMMARY

The defenders' primary objective is to set declarer if at all possible and their secondary objective is to minimize the number of tricks he takes. One of the strategies to accomplish these objectives is to make life difficult for declarer. In essence the defenders should decipher declarer's plan and do everything in their power to give him trouble executing it.

Suit Establishment Prevention

When the defenders see that declarer has a source of tricks from a long suit in dummy with a lack or shortage of entries they should use the holdup play or attack the entries early in the play of the deal. Both defenders must be alert to the holdup play option because it is usually the player with the weaker defense against the long suit who is the most important defender. It is this player who must give a count signal to partner so that partner knows when to play his stopper to minimize the number of tricks taken by declarer.

Guard Duty

The defenders must cooperate to prevent declarer from taking a trick with even as little as a fourth card in a suit. They do this by making sure that one of them can guard every possibility. One way to do this is to keep as many cards as dummy in each suit. If you cannot do that, then hang on to cards in some other suit that declarer might have. As you gain more experience and learn the inferences from bidding your ability to decide what you can afford to discard and what you must protect will improve.

A Guessing Game

In general it is a good idea not to play your high cards early when declarer is finessing. It is better to make him guess if at all possible. He has a 50% chance of guessing wrong if you give him the chance.

Defenders' Trump Management

Just as declarer manages his trumps to get the most tricks possible, or at least to maximize his chance of making his contract, the defenders need to learn to manage the use of their trumps to disrupt declarer's plan or take their own tricks.

One of the key factors in good defense is to anticipate the cards that declarer will play from his hand or dummy and be prepared to make your play when that happens. Countless tricks have been lost by defenders who tip off their holding by hesitating before they play. You might just as well use your phone camera to take a picture of your hand and send it to declarer. This is a skill that takes time to develop. The more you play the easier it becomes. So get out and play at every opportunity.

Don't forget that hesitations with the intent to deceive are considered highly unethical in this game. While they might be considered part of other games and

looked upon as favorable characteristics of those expert players, they have no place in the game of bridge.

CHAPTER 13

– Planning

Declarer’s Plan

Defenders’ Plan

Summary

All successful bridge players start their play by first making a plan regardless of whether they are a defender or declarer. Some players like to use PLAN[6] in an acrostic to remind themselves what they need to do.

P - **P**ause to consider your objective.
L - **L**ook at your winners/losers.
A - **A**nalyze your alternatives.
N - **N**ow put it into action.

We will look at these steps in more detail in this chapter from the viewpoint of declarer and the defenders. Regardless of your role in the deal you should think about your plan before the first card is played – as the auction progresses. We really haven't been able to do that effectively in this book because we have not addressed the details of bidding. During an actual auction you will have additional data regarding the number of cards in certain suits held by some of the players.

DECLARER'S PLAN

Pausing

The overall objective of declarer is to

- Make his contract if possible.
- Make overtricks.
- Minimize his losses if he cannot fulfill his contract.

This seems simple enough but is complicated a little by the method of scoring in the type of game he is playing.

In a rubber bridge game or a duplicate bridge team game where IMP or VP scoring is used making your contract if at all possible is of utmost importance. You will not try for overtricks if that line of play jeopardizes your contract. But if you can find a line of play that gives you a chance to make overtricks without risking your contract, you should take that approach.

In a typical duplicate game where matchpoint scoring is used, just making your contract is often not sufficient. Certainly if you can try for an overtrick or two without risking your contract you should do so. However, there are times when you might try for an overtrick or two even if it might result in failure to make your contract if that line of play fails. You would do this only if you feel the risk is worth the reward.

As you play more bridge and gain experience you will learn to appreciate these aspects of the game. For starters focus on just making your contract. But

[6] This suggestion was introduced by Audrey Grant in Resource 2.

even this focus depends on whether you are playing in a notrump contract or a suit contract.

Declarer's Objective

- *Notrump contract – Take the required number of tricks.*
- *Suit contract – Avoid too many losers.*

It may appear that these objectives are just two sides of the same coin, and they really are. But you will be able to develop your PLAN more effectively if you learn to think differently depending on the type of contract you are in.

Here are a few examples:

Contract	Objective
1NT	Take 7 tricks.
3NT	Take 9 tricks.
6NT	Take 12 tricks.
1♠	Don't lose more than 6 tricks.
3♣	Don't lose more than 4 tricks.
4♥	Don't lose more than 3 tricks.
6♦	Don't lose more than 1 trick.

If you have trouble remembering to make this distinction there is a little habit you should develop to emphasize the difference. When the contract has been completed or even during the play if you are checking on your status:

- If you are playing in a **notrump contract**, count the number of tricks you have **won.**
- If you are playing in a **suit contract**, count the number of tricks you have **lost.**

Note that you can actually be executing this step before you see the dummy – while the opening leader is choosing his lead.

Looking

If you are in a **notrump contract** look at your **winners**. Remember that winners are **sure tricks** – ones you can take without first possibly giving the lead to the opponents. If you do not have the ace in a suit you have no winners in that suit. Remember to look at the cards in your hand and dummy.

Generally you can count winners just by identifying the cards you have in sequence from the top down between the two hands. For example, if you have the ace, king, queen and jack but not the ten you have 4 winners. Of course you may have to adjust that number by the maximum number of cards you have in either hand. For example, if you have the AK doubleton in one hand and the QJ doubleton in the other hand you have only 2 winners.

Sometimes you can count additional winners if you have enough length and strength in the suit so that you can draw all of the opponents' cards. Then the number of winners is the maximum number of cards you have in either hand. For example, if you have a 6-card suit and dummy has 4 cards in that suit then the opponents have only 3. If you have the ace, king and queen between your 2 hands, you have 6 winners.

If you are in a **suit contract** you should count your **losers**. Remember that losers are tricks that the opponents might take in a suit before you run out of cards in your hand in that suit. You can never have more losers in a suit than you have cards in your hand. When counting losers you consider both the cards in dummy and your hand but need to **anticipate the most unfavorable lie of the missing cards**. Sometimes it will be difficult to accurately determine the number of losers but quite often it will be easy. For example suppose you have A643 in dummy and 52 in your hand. You have only 2 cards in your hand so you can't have more than 2 losers. But the ace in dummy will cover 1 of those losers leaving you with just 1 loser. The premise here is that you will have a trump remaining in your hand and can ruff that suit in your hand if the opponents were to lead it a third time.

Analyzing

If you are playing in a notrump contract and you have fewer winners than those required to make your contract, you need to see if there is some way you can develop enough additional winners to fulfill your contract. When doing this consider the following techniques:

- Promotion
- Length
- Finessing

You may have several options or combinations of options. Part of the analysis process is that of deciding which option or options are the best. Some may provide more tricks than others or involve more risk. It is your job to decide which ones to implement and which to reject.

If you are playing in a suit contract and have too many losers you will need to see if you can find a way to eliminate some of those losers by using one of the following techniques:

- Ruffing in dummy
- Discarding on a long suit in dummy
- Finessing

Just as for a notrump contract you will need to figure out which option, or combination of options, is the best and decide which to implement and which to reject.

Another part of the analysis process is deciding how you are going to play the cards. Which suit will you play first? How are you going to get from one hand to the other to take the winners you establish there? Is there a dangerous

opponent? If so, how can you avoid giving him the lead? Do you have to make use of the holdup play? Should you draw trumps immediately or delay?

From this discussion you can see why it is important to consider different objectives for notrump and suit contracts. Part of the analysis process is different for the two types of contracts.

If you are playing in a notrump contract and have counted enough winners to make your contract or if you are playing in a suit contract and do not have too many losers, there is not much analysis needed other than deciding how to play the cards. However, consistent with the idea of maximizing your score, you might consider possible lines of play that would give you a chance for overtricks.

All of this analysis takes a little time but needs to be done as soon as you see dummy's cards – **before** you play to the first trick. Nothing is more embarrassing than calling a card from dummy without forethought and then realizing you just made a mistake and have no way to recover. Don't be afraid to take a little time to think about the deal and plan your play. The opponents will actually appreciate your thoughtfulness because it will give them time to formulate their plan too.

Acting

If you have done a good job of making your plan, putting it into action should be straightforward. Simply go through the steps of your plan. The only time you should have difficulty executing it is if something doesn't go as planned. Perhaps you were counting on a 3-2 split in a suit and it breaks 4-1 or 5-0 instead. Did you consider that contingency in making your plan? If so you are prepared and know what to do. If not, you may have to pause and reconsider. It can be difficult to think about all of these possibilities in advance and quite often it is just not worth the time and effort to consider **everything** that might happen. Nonetheless the more you can anticipate possibilities before you start to play, the easier the actual play will be.

Example 1 – A Notrump Contract

♠ A 8 3
♥ A K 5 4 2
♦ 10 7 3
♣ A K

N
S

♠ 7 4 2
♥ 8 3
♦ A K J 9 2
♣ 7 5 4

You are in a contract of 3NT with an opening lead of the ♣Q.

Pause – You need to take 9 tricks.

Look – You have 7 winners: 1 spade, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs. You need 2 more tricks.

Analyze – If the heart suit breaks 3-3 you could get 2 more tricks in hearts, but you can always promote 2 more winners in diamonds. You are grateful the opening lead was not a spade because you will still have a stopper in each suit after you win the first trick. So you can afford to lose a diamond trick before you play the rest of your winners.

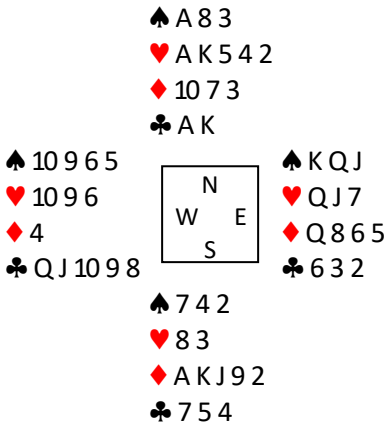
Is there a chance for overtricks? If East has the ♦Q and no more than 4 diamonds, you can capture his ♦Q and take 5 diamond tricks giving 1 extra. What about more overtricks? If the diamond finesse works you will still have all of the suits stopped after you take your diamond tricks. So you can afford to try for extra heart tricks too.

How will you play the cards? You realize that if you take all your winners right away you will not have enough tricks for your contract unless you are lucky and find the ♦Q doubleton. Then you will have to give up the lead and the defenders will take several tricks in the black suits and probably a trick in hearts and diamonds. So you will attack the diamond suit first.

How will you play the diamonds? You are going to finesse East for the ♦Q but you would be disappointed if the finesse lost to West and you later discovered West had a singleton ♦Q. You can protect against that by first leading the ♦3 to your ♦A. This is another example of a safety play. If the ♦Q falls on that trick your remaining top diamonds will all be winners. If not, you can lead a heart back to dummy and then finesse East for the ♦Q. (If East shows out of diamonds on the first diamond trick you will have to concede a diamond trick to West and then likely settle for your 9 tricks.) If you lead the ♦10 from dummy and East covers with the ♦Q you would be delighted. So you will lead the ♦10. If East plays low you will play the ♦2 from your hand. If the ♦10 wins the trick you will continue with the ♦7 from dummy playing the ♦9 from your hand if East again plays low. While playing the diamonds you will make sure that West plays a diamond on the first trick so that you will know East has no more than 4 diamonds. If the diamond finesse loses and West wins the ♦Q he will undoubtedly continue the club suit. Then you will have to abandon your quest for extra heart tricks because you cannot generate those without giving up the lead and if you do the opponents will likely take enough club tricks to set your contract.

But suppose the diamond finesse wins. Then you can afford to try for extra heart tricks too. Since you have no entries back to your hand you will take all 5 diamond tricks discarding 2 little spades from dummy. Then you will lead a small heart from your hand and play the ♥2 from dummy, ducking this trick. No matter what the defenders return you will win the trick in dummy and then play your top remaining cards. If you wanted to take the energy to watch all of the defenders' discards on your diamonds you might know if your 2 little hearts were going to be winners. But it really doesn't matter if you paid attention or not. Either they are both winners or neither is a winner.

Now put your plan into action! Here is the entire deal followed with a trick-by-trick description of the play where the card led to each trick is in italics and the card that won each trick is in bold.



Trick	W	N	E	S
1	♣*Q*	♣**K**	♣2	♣4
2	♦4	♦*3*	♦5	♦**A**
3	♥6	♥**A**	♥7	♥*3*
4	♠5	♦***10***	♦6	♦2
5	♠6	♦*7*	♦8	♦**9**
6	♠9	♠3	♦Q	♦***K***
7	♠10	♠8	♣3	♦***J***
8	♥9	♥2	♥**J**	♥*8*
9	♣8	♣**A**	♣*6*	♣5
10	♣9	♠***A***	♠J	♠2
11	♥10	♥***K***	♥Q	♣7
12	♣10	♥***5***	♠Q	♠4
13	♣J	♥***4***	♠K	♠7

Some of the discards shown for the play are immaterial and other choices could have been made with no effect on the final outcome.

By making a plan and playing carefully declarer not only made his contract but made 3 overtricks – a small slam! Was the deal underbid? Not at all. North-South had only 26 HCP plus they each had a 5-card suit. Was declarer lucky? Extremely so. He needed a finesse to work (50%) and a suit to split 3-3 (36%) for about a net 18% chance of making the small slam. In addition he needed the opening lead to be anything but a spade. But you certainly can't fault West for his opening lead of the ♣Q. Sometimes things just work out much better than you had expected.

Example 2 – A Suit Contract

♠ 7 4
♥ 8 6 3
♦ A K J 9 2
♣ 7 5 4

N
S

♠ A 8 3
♥ A K 5 4 2
♦ 10 7 3
♣ A K

These hands are very similar to those of the previous example but declarer and dummy have been reversed because the new dummy has 3 hearts instead of 2 as in the previous declarer hand. Since there is a Golden Fit in hearts the contract is 4♥ instead of 3NT. The opening lead is the ♠K.

Pause – You cannot afford more than 3 losers.

Look – You have 4 losers: 2 spades, 1 heart (assuming a 3-2 split) and 1 diamond.

Analyze – You have 1 too many losers so have to find a way to eliminate at least 1. What are your options? You could ruff a spade loser in dummy. You might be able to eliminate a diamond loser by finessing West for the ♦Q. You might also be able to discard a spade loser on the diamonds in dummy. But you do not have an outside entry to dummy and with eight diamonds between your hand and dummy one of the defenders has no more than 2

diamonds so would be able to ruff the third round unless you drew trumps first. But if you draw trumps first you won't have a trump left in dummy to protect your second spade loser. So you decide you will ruff one of your spade losers in dummy and try for an overtrick by finessing West for the ♦Q.

How will you play the cards? You can't draw trumps first since you have to ruff a spade in dummy. Since you have to lose a spade trick before you can ruff a spade in dummy you might just as well let West hold the first trick. Then when you win the second round of spades you will be in your hand with no spades remaining in dummy. That will allow you to draw two rounds of trumps to protect somewhat against an overruff by East. You will then ruff your third spade in dummy and lead a club back to your hand so you can take the diamond finesse. There will be no need to drive out the last trump because it will be a loser. If the trumps break 4-1 you will have to rely on the diamond finesse to make your contract and if they split 5-0 you won't be able to avoid 3 heart losers and 1 spade loser.

Now put your plan into action! Here is the entire deal followed with a trick-by-trick description of the play where the card led to each trick is in italics and the card that won each trick is in bold.

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

Trick	W	N	E	S
1	♠*K*	♠4	♠5	♠3
2	♠*Q*	♠7	♠6	♠**A**
3	♥J	♥3	♥7	♥***A***
4	♥Q	♥6	♥9	♥***K***
5	♠J	♥**8**	♠9	♠*8*
6	♣2	♣*4*	♣8	♣**A**
7	♦6	♦2	♦4	♦***10***
8	♦8	♦**9**	♦5	♦*3*
9	♦Q	♦*A*	♥**10**	♦7
10	♠2	♣4	♠*10*	♥**2**
11	♣3	♣7	♣10	♣***A***
12	♣6	♦J	♣J	♥***5***
13	♣9	♦K	♣Q	♥***4***

Some of the discards shown for the play are immaterial and other choices could have been made with no effect on the final outcome. After trick eight East can take his ♥10 whenever he wants, but that will be the last trick for the defense.

DEFENDERS' PLAN

Although we are not really considering bidding in this book, so much of defense depends on the auction that a little bit of bidding will be introduced in this chapter. You will learn more about bidding as you continue your bridge experience

and have probably picked up some vague ideas as you have gone through the previous chapters of this book. So the little bit of bidding that is presented here should not be a significant challenge.

Pausing

The overall objective of the defenders is to

- Set the contract if possible.
- Minimize declarer's overtricks.

Just as for declarer the priorities of these objectives depend on the method of scoring.

In a rubber bridge game or one where IMP or VP scoring is used the emphasis is on setting the contract. If there is even a small possibility of setting the contract at the risk of giving declarer an overtrick (or more), you almost always go for the set.

In a typical matchpoint duplicate game overtricks are very significant so you rarely make a play that has a low probability of setting the contract if there is a high risk of giving declarer an extra trick.

As you gain more bridge experience you will learn to appreciate these fine points. In the meantime you can focus on just trying to set the contract.

> ***Defenders' Objective***
> *Take the required number of tricks to defeat the contract.*

You will not be able to determine this until the auction is complete.

Looking

Before the opening lead

When it becomes apparent during the auction that you will be or are likely to be defending your opponents' contract, you should start anticipating the tricks you might be able to take. This will give you a head start on developing your PLAN. If you will or might be making the opening lead you should also be thinking about the suit and card you will lead. Much of your thought process at this stage will be based on the suits that your partner or the opponents have bid. For the time being you can keep a few thoughts in mind.

- If anyone has bid a suit he probably has at least 4 cards in that suit. Sometimes he may have as few as 3 and sometimes he promises 5 or more. He also usually has 1 or more honors in that suit.
- If your partner has bid a suit it is generally a good idea to lead a card in that suit.
- If the opponents have bid the same suit, they almost always have at least 8 cards between them in that suit – a Golden Fit.

- If you are defending against a suit contract the opponents almost always have at least a Golden Fit in their trump suit.

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

Suppose you are defending against a 3NT contract and you have the opening lead. Your partner has not bid and the opponents have not bid a suit. You need to take 5 tricks to set the contract. You are looking at 3 tricks with your 2 aces and king. You may be able to get another trick with your ♥J or maybe even the ♥2 if the suit divides evenly between the other three players. In fact you could take 4 heart tricks if the suit divides evenly and either

- partner has the ♥Q or
- declarer has the ♥Q and you can get one of the other players to lead hearts.

You also have a slim chance of getting a trick with the ♦10. But it looks like you need a little help from partner to defeat declarer. Since you have a near sequence in hearts you will lead the ♥A.

Now suppose you have this same hand defending against a 3NT contract and partner had bid diamonds while the opponents did not bid any suit. Now your prospects look better because it is more likely your side can take a couple of diamond tricks – maybe more. Your partner suggested you should lead a diamond but you might lead the ♥A first to indicate that you have something worthwhile in that suit. If you do choose that lead then you will probably switch to diamonds at the second trick. Which diamond should you lead? Here are the guidelines for leading partner's suit.

Leading Partner's Suit

- *Top of a sequence of 2 or more touching cards*
- *Top of a doubleton*
- *Low from 3 or more cards headed by an honor*
  - *But do **not** underlead an ace against a **suit contract***
- *Your partnership agreement if you have 3 or more small cards*

Now suppose you have this same hand and are still defending a 3NT contract but your partner did not bid, dummy bid diamonds and declarer bid hearts. Now you should adhere to the following guideline.

When choosing an opening lead, try to avoid leading a suit bid by the opponents.

There is one more guideline you can use when you have no other clear cut choice for an opening lead.

> *With no clear choice for an opening lead choose an unbid Major.*

So a spade lead might turn out to be your best option in this scenario.

Let's change the contract for this hand to 4♠ instead of 3NT. Now you still think you have 3 tricks with your 2 aces and king, but you can't be sure. One of the opponents could be void in either suit or have a singleton heart. You still have a chance for a third heart trick if each opponent has at least 3 hearts. Your other prospects are pretty slim. Partner is unlikely to have much strength considering your 12 HCP, and the fact that the opponents are in a game contract suggests they have around 25 or more points. That doesn't leave much for partner. But the opponents may be counting something extra for distribution, so partner may have a little something that could help to produce another trick. Perhaps the ♥Q or a doubleton heart so that he could get a heart ruff. Even the ♦QJ… could be useful. The lead of the ♥A is very attractive. **In fact, any time you are defending a suit contract and have the ace and king in a side suit that has not been bid by the opponents, the lead of the ace should be almost automatic.**

After the opening lead

After the opening lead has been made you will be in a better position to judge the value of your cards from the viewpoint of winning tricks.

♠ 6 4
♥ A K J 10
♦ A 8 3
♣ 9 6 5 3

Let's suppose you have this hand which is very similar to the one discussed above but now your partner has the opening lead against a 2NT contract and leads the ♦K after the following annotated auction (both you and partner passed throughout).

Dummy		Declarer	
1♣	Shows 13^+ points and 3^+ clubs	1♦	Shows 6^+ points and 4^+ diamonds
1♥	Shows 4 hearts (rarely more)	1NT	Shows 6 - 9 points, < 4 hearts, < 4 spades
2NT	Wants to be in game if partner has 8 - 9 points	Pass	Shows 6 - 7 points

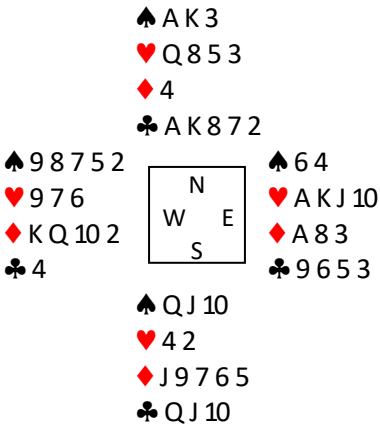
Your initial thoughts were about the same as discussed previously although your defensive prospects improved with the 1♥ bid by dummy. Your objective is to take 6 tricks.

Dummy
♠ A K 3
♥ Q 8 5 3
♦ 4
♣ A K 8 7 2

You can see the possibility of 4 heart tricks plus the diamond ace and king. That is enough to set the contract but how are you going to get all of those tricks, and is there the possibility of getting more? The answers to those questions are part of the analysis step.

Analyzing

We'll continue here where we left off in the previous topic. The entire deal is shown below to facilitate the discussion of the analysis of both defenders. For the purpose of discussion you are East and partner is West.



In order to get all of your heart tricks you need partner to lead hearts twice through the ♥Q in dummy. You are fairly confident he has at least 2 hearts from the auction. Also, since partner led the ♦K, he has the ♦Q and also the ♦J or ♦10. You tally up the HCP you can see or infer: Dummy – 16, You – 12, Partner – 5 for a total of 33. That leaves declarer with only 6 or 7, consistent with his final pass. Those points must be mostly in the black suits – the queens and jacks. Partner led a diamond, the suit bid by declarer – a little unusual. But it could well be his longest and strongest suit and he did not see much future in any other suit. You suddenly get really excited about your defensive prospects.

Your first challenge is to get partner to switch to a heart at trick two. Normally you would play the ♦8 on the first trick to encourage a diamond continuation. But you really don't want that now so you will play the ♦3 on the first trick.

Now let's look at West's analysis after the first trick. You played the ♦3 and declarer the ♦5. The ♦3 is the smallest card outstanding (from West's viewpoint) so you are either truly discouraging or have the ace doubleton of diamonds. But if the latter you should have unblocked the ♦A on the first trick and then returned the ♦3. So you must be discouraging. Could declarer hold the ♦A and have held up on the first trick? Absolutely. He could have the ♦A and ♦J hoping West will assume you have the ♦A and continue diamonds. This would give declarer tricks with both of his diamond honors regardless of which card West leads. This sneaky play by declarer is referred to as a Bath Coup and is quite common among experienced players.

So West decides to switch to some other suit, but which one? From the cards in dummy it certainly does not appear you would like him to lead either black suit. (Didn't I set this up conveniently? It is not always so obvious.) So you must want a heart shift. By the way, partner knows from the auction that you must have around 12 points just the way you analyzed the point count distribution from the bidding. So where can your points be? They are probably in hearts.

Now let's see how this all plays out.

Acting

Here is the play to the first 8 tricks.

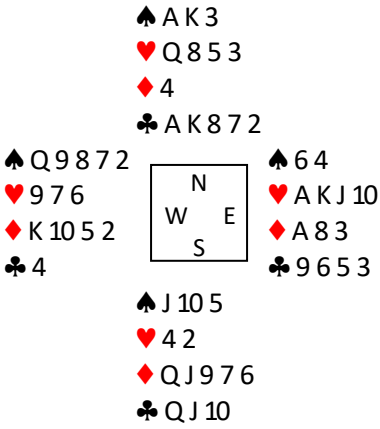
Trick	W	N	E	S
1	♦***K***	♦4	♦3	♦5
2	♥*6*	♥3	♥**10**	♥2
3	♦2	♣2	♦***A***	♦6
4	♦**10**	♣7	♦*8*	♦9

Trick	W	N	E	S
5	♦***Q***	♣8	♠4	♦7
6	♥*7*	♥5	♥**J**	♥4
7	♥9	♥8	♥***A***	♦J
8	♣4	♥Q	♥***K***	♠10

At the end of these 8 tricks the defenders have taken 4 diamond tricks and 4 heart tricks for a 3-trick set. All they have remaining are small black cards so declarer will win the last 5 tricks. Note that if declarer had been able to get the lead early in the play, he could have taken 5 club tricks and 3 spade tricks to make his contract. East could have taken another line of play to ensure defeat of the contract. He could have overtaken the opening lead with the ♦A, cashed the ♥K and then returned the ♦8 knowing that West held the ♦Q from the opening lead. When East played the ♥K West should know East also had the ♥A because of the ♥Q in dummy. This play would strongly suggest that East wanted West to lead another heart after winning the ♦Q.

Earlier in this chapter we saw a hand where declarer made several overtricks just because the cards happened to lie well. Here we have a case where the bidding was just fine but the cards were poorly placed and the result was very disappointing. Some days the sun will shine brightly and on others it will be pouring down rain or even a blizzard. The lesson – **never judge yourself purely by the result of a deal.** Learn to recognize the difference between errors in bidding or play and just good or bad luck of the cards. This is one reason many players enjoy the duplicate game. Your ultimate result is determined by how well you bid and play compared to others who held the same cards. The weather is the same for everyone competing against each other.

Let's look at just a minor change in this deal. Swap the ♦Q and ♠5 from the West hand for the ♠Q and ♦5 from the South hand keeping the same point counts and distributions for both hands.



Now West will probably choose the ♠7 for his opening lead. Using the "Rule of 11" declarer knows there are only 4 cards higher than that card between the other 3 hands and he has all of them between his hand and dummy, so can play the ♠3 from dummy and win with the ♠J in his hand. Note here that declarer can use this rule to his advantage just as well as East. In this layout the rule helps declarer more than East. Declarer can now count 5 club tricks and 3 spade tricks, enough to ensure his contract. Can he safely do better? Probably. After winning the first trick with the ♠J he can cash the top clubs from his hand and lead a spade to dummy. If he wants to keep both spade stoppers in dummy he can even overtake the third club from his hand with the ♣A or ♣K in dummy once he sees that the club suit is not 5-0. Then he can cash the 2 remaining clubs in dummy and perhaps even the remaining spades. That would ensure his contract. But during the run of the clubs West will have to find 4 discards and East 1. If declarer watches discards carefully, he may be able to conclude that it is safe to play the last spades in dummy (if West discards several spades). He will also have to find 2 discards himself but can easily part with both hearts. He can next lead a diamond from dummy playing the ♦Q from his hand. West will undoubtedly win this trick with his ♦K. But as the cards lie declarer is likely to win another trick with either the ♥Q or the ♦J. All of this depends on the discards made by the defenders and is difficult to analyze precisely ahead of time. But it is an example of declarer recognizing possibilities and then paying attention to cards played so that he can make reasonable final decisions later in the play.

You should find it educational to lay these cards out on the table and go through various discards by East and West to see how the extra trick might develop. You might even swap a few cards between East and West (but keep the top 4 spades in the West hand so his opening lead does not change) to see how they might play with a little different distribution. Incidentally, since the ♠2 did not appear on the first trick you can assume West has that card giving him at least a 5-card suit and he could also have the ♠6.

SUMMARY

Declarer and both defenders should all develop a PLAN for each deal.

PLAN

- *P – **P**ause to consider your objective.*
- *L – **L**ook at your winners/losers.*
- *A – **A**nalyze your alternatives.*
- *N – **N**ow put it into action.*

Declarer's PLAN

Although partially affected by the form of scoring, declarer's objective is primarily dependent on the type of contract.

Declarer's Objective

- *Notrump contract – Take the required number of tricks.*
- *Suit contract – Avoid too many losers.*

After declarer sees the dummy he should count his winners when in a notrump contract and his losers when in a suit contract.

Winners

Tricks you can take without possibly first giving the lead to the opponents

Losers

The number of tricks the opponents might take in each suit before you run out of cards in that suit in your hand

If declarer has too few winners or too many losers he should analyze his options for creating more winners through

- Promotion
- Length
- Finesses

or eliminating losers through

- Ruffing in dummy
- Discarding on a long suit in dummy
- Finessing

Even if declarer has enough winners or does not have too many losers he should consider ways to make overtricks to improve his score.

Once declarer has decided on the techniques he will use he must determine the order in which he will play the cards to apply the techniques.

All of this must be done before he plays to the first trick. Sometimes he will have to adjust his plan during play if suits don't break as expected or if part of his plan was contingent upon cards played by the defenders.

After declarer has developed his plan he puts it into action by playing the cards. This should be a straightforward process if he has developed a good plan. It is much better to think about your play before a problem develops than try to solve a problem after you have started play.

Defender's PLAN

Defenders' objectives are also partially affected by the form of scoring but they generally have one primary goal.

Defenders' Objective

Take the required number of tricks to defeat the contract.

Defenders start developing their plan during the auction estimating potential tricks they might take and thinking about their opening lead if their RHO will be declarer. The opening lead will often be significantly influenced by the bids made by the opponents and their partner.

If partner has bid the guidelines are:

Leading Partner's Suit

- *Top of a sequence of 2 or more touching cards*
- *Top of a doubleton*
- *Low from 3 or more cards headed by an honor*
  - *But do not underlead an ace against a suit contract*
- *Your partnership agreement if you have 3 or more small cards*

If partner has not bid there are two other guidelines that affect the opening lead.

When choosing an opening lead, try to avoid leading a suit bid by the opponents.

With no clear choice for an opening lead choose an unbid Major.

After the opening lead has been made the defenders have a significant disadvantage compared to declarer because they cannot see each other's cards. Observation of the cards in dummy is partial compensation but mostly they must use clues from the bidding along with attitude and count signals to help guide each other. Application of standard defensive play concepts such as third-hand high (but only as high as necessary) and second-hand low are also important. Inferring declarer's plan so they can try to interfere with it is another critical factor. Quite often the defenders must adjust their plan as the play develops.


INDEX OF TERMS


This index is primarily a reference to the definitions of various bridge terms used in this book. In a few instances more page references are included where additional information is provided for the term.

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TEXTBOOK

Are you tired of learning/teaching bridge from a cookbook? Tired of memorizing how many points you need to bid this or that? Do you have trouble determining if you have a minimum, medium or maximum hand and what you are supposed to do if it fits in a particular category? Then *Yes, No or Maybe* is what you need.

This is a series of three textbooks and companion workbooks for beginning bridge students. The series uses a logical paradigm for making bidding decisions by formulating two basic questions: 'Do we have a fit in a major suit?' and 'Do we want to be in a game contract?' All partnership bidding after an opening bid or intervention is guided by the answers (*Yes, No* or *Maybe*) to these questions and some fundamental bidding guidelines.

Introduction and Card Play Basics covers the mechanics of the game, a little bridge history, scoring, hand valuation and preferred contracts, along with the basics of declarer play and defense. No real bidding is included here but MiniBridge or a variant is used for sample and practice deals. The Yes, No, Maybe bidding concepts are introduced for the determination of preferred contracts.

I only wish that such a book had existed when I was starting out.

Barbara Seagram
Author of *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know*

DAVID GLANDORF is a retired aerospace engineer who has been teaching bridge 'forever', starting with lunch-time players at work, and then professionally since 2002. He was the 2013 American Bridge Teachers' Association Teacher of the Year. David lives in Houston with his wife, Becky.

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