

DECLARER TECHNIQUES

Declarer Techniques are separate, identifiable techniques for Planning and Play of a hand of Duplicate Bridge as the Declarer.

Each is extensively defined and illustrated in this section and, in most cases, also has detailed Problems and Answers for extra learning by analysis.

Declarer Techniques throughout the book are marked with an asterisk, as they are often referred to in other Techniques descriptions, and other sections of the book or related documents. An example is Discovery*. This means there is a Declarer Technique named “Discovery”, and it will be found in this Section. Its exact page number can be found in the Table of Contents.

Declarer Techniques Table of Contents – *next page*

Auxiliary Play Terms. Following the Table of Contents is a page of auxiliary terms. They don't necessarily represent Declarer Techniques per se, but are language worthy of explanation: they can be synonyms, bridge slang, etc. If you come across a term in the reading that you don't understand, look first in the Declarer Techniques, then in the Auxiliary Terms for a possible synonym.

DECLARER TECHNIQUES

<i>Technique</i>	<i>Page</i>	
Advanced Play Planning – Multiple Choices – Advanced Split Odds	4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Blind Spot Avoidance	8	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Break a New Suit	10	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Blocking opponents play	12	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Unblocking	14	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Card Combinations (<i>Also in “Basic Section”</i>)	16	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Counting	23	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Cross Ruff	26	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Dangerous Opponent (<i>in Basic Section Only</i>)	-	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Dummy Reversal	31	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Deception	34	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Discovery	37	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Distribution - Percentages (<i>Also in “Basic”</i>) (AKA “Split Odds”)	42	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Elimination (AKA a “Strip Play”)	46	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Eliminating Safe Exit Cards	50	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Endplay	52	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Entry Management	56	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Establish a Suit (<i>in Basic Section Only</i>)	-	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Extreme Hand Patterns	61	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Finesse Avoidance	64	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Finesses	73	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Hand Evaluation (<i>in Basic Section Only</i>)	-	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Hold-Up (<i>or Play a Duck or a Safety Play</i>)	80	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Inference	83	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Jettison	88	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
LOL – Loser on Loser	90	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Play a Duck (AKA a Safety Play)	93	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Play Planning Overview (<i>Also in the Basic Section</i>)	96	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Reconciling the Count	103	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Ruff and Sluff	104	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Safety Play (<i>See Play a Duck - above</i>)	93	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Smother Play	106	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Strip (<i>See Elimination - above</i>)	46	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Squeeze	109	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Throw-In	113	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Trump Management	115	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Visualization	120	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Additional Terms / Terminology will be found on the next page.

AUXILIARY PLAY TERMS

<i>Name</i>	<i>See Also</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Break a Suit	Frozen Suit.	When a defender or declarer lead a “new” suit for the first time, it is usually a dis advantage to that party.
Brute Strength Tricks	HCP	Tricks won by high cards: Aces, Kings, etc.
Cutting Communications	Scissors Coup.	A Hold-Up* or other Technique that stops defenders from passing the lead by voiding a suit in dummy.
Equal Length Suit; e.g., Axx facing Kxx	End Plays. Mirror Distribution. Pancakes.	There are advantages for End Plays, as the play of the 3 rd round can Eliminate the suit on one trick. There are disadvantages in other contracts where it means there’s no opportunity for additional Length Strength Tricks or ruffs: a Mirror Image hand.
Exit Card	Throw-In. End-Play.	A “safe Exit card” is one that is safe for a defender to lead. An “unsafe Exit Card” is one that is advantageous to Declarer. Defenders should keep safe exit cards but good Declarers will exhaust them.
Inevitable Loser		With Axx in one hand and Kxx in the other, you have a loser in that suit, sooner or later, unless you can get a pitch in one hand or the other.
Length Strength Tricks	Shape	Tricks won by lower cards in long suits as opposed to Brute Strength – the 5 th Club or the 13 th card of a suit.
Mirror Image Distribution	Flat Hands. Pancake.	When suits in hand and in Dummy are all of the same length – 3 facing 3, 4 facing 4, etc. Very Difficult.
Pancake	Hand Pattern. Mirror Distribution.	The dreaded “flat hand”. Two 4-3-3-3 hands are the most extreme example. Only Brute Strength tricks are available, as there’s no Length Strength or Ruff tricks.
Positional Strength	“Upwind” vs. “Downwind” position in the rotation.	Since we play tricks in clockwise rotation, a ♣Queen “downwind” (following) the ♣King has additional strength as she can’t be captured by the ♣King; similarly, a ♣Queen “upwind” (in front of) the ♣King, is weakened, HCP-wise, by her position.
Safety Play	Play a Duck.	Not winning a trick that you could win. Tactical.
Strip	Elimination.	To exhaust one or more hands of all the cards in a suit.
Tempo		Whoever wins a trick gets to lead to the next trick; an advantage related to Timing and Momentum.
Trading Losers	E.G. Lose a Club instead of a Heart.	Accepting a loser in a suit where it is not necessary, in order to lose a loser in a suit that would be dangerous. Cutting defender communications is a good reason.
Trump Strength Tricks; Trump Length Tricks.	Length Strength; Brute Strength, Positional Strength.	Trumps are, of course powerful by definition. But Brute Strength trump tricks can draw all defender’s trumps, thereby keeping absolute control with Declarer, and Trump Length Tricks win with little cards.

ADVANCED PLAY PLANNING

Description

Elsewhere we've talked about finding key Declarer Play Plans to maximize our chances for making our contract: certainly a worthwhile effort. But there are often multiple choices for successful Declarer Plans: who says there can be only one per hand? Bridge would be a (more?) boring game if that were always true.

In Advanced Play Planning, we will look at 12 problems in Declarer Play Planning that each has more than one reasonable approach to success. This is often how the real world works in intermediate and advanced play. It's really fun and rewarding (when it works!). And, it's not a big risk or a lot of new stuff to learn. In fact, it's a way to win more contracts by giving yourself all the possible chances, rather than just one you pick from what we've learned so far. 2 or even 3 chances to make a hand are sooooo much better than only one. No?

Usage

The issue, and the reason we are going to study these 12 multiple-choice Play Plans specifically, is that it's not always clear about the sequence in which you should work the choices.

Sometimes, making the wrong choice about sequence can set you before you even have a chance at the other choices for success. Bad Planning! – but that's why we are going to study the logic of choosing the right sequence of choices in addition to recognizing that there are often multiple chances for success. If you can get a 68% chance PLUS a 56% chance PLUS a 36% chance all in the same hand, isn't that a lot better than the old single 50% Finesse Chance plan? Yes, it certainly is, and it's more fun, too.

So, here's 12 hands for you to Play Plan, each with more than one choice of plays. All of them assume you are comfortable with remembering the Odds for various Splits of defenders' cards. 68% for a 3 - 2 split of 5 cards or 78% for a 2 - 1 split of 3 cards, or 36% for a 3 - 3 split of 6 cards, etc.

Don't be discouraged. These are not harder problems than previous ones: they are just more interesting because they have multiple choices for making your contract; not just one Finesse Guess*, for example.

The number of choices is shown in italics in the little square next to the Contract / Lead. For example, #1 has 2 choices. Answers follow. Please struggle with thinking about possible choices, then read the answers and spend time to see where the choices occurred and why the sequence of using them is so important. Play Planning and Declarer Play doesn't get any better than this: we are going to spend the entire Season practicing exactly this stuff.

DECLARER PLAY 2014

Advanced Declarer Play Planning - Problems. How might you go about playing these hands?

<p>1</p> <p>♠ KQ75 ♥ AQ84 ♦ 643 ♣ Q2</p>	<p>2</p> <p>♠ T8 ♥ 9632 ♦ AQ85 ♣ KJ7</p>	<p>3</p> <p>♠ AJT4 ♥ 75 ♦ 63 ♣ AKJT3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>♠ 6 ♥ A872 ♦ AK643 ♣ 532</p>
<p>2 6 Spades, ♦J lead</p> <p>♠ AJT982 ♥ 3 ♦ AK2 ♣ A87</p>	<p>2 3NT, ♠Q lead</p> <p>♠ AK ♥ K8 ♦ 7642 ♣ AQT92</p>	<p>3 3 NT, ♥4 lead</p> <p>♠ Q92 ♥ KT ♦ AKJT5 ♣ 874</p>	<p>3 3 NT, ♠7 lead</p> <p>♠ AQ ♥ K43 ♦ 952 ♣ AK864</p>
<p>5</p> <p>♠ AK ♥ 62 ♦ KT9 ♣ AQJ843</p>	<p>6</p> <p>♠ 754 ♥ K3 ♦ AKQ2 ♣ KT65</p>	<p>7</p> <p>♠ A32 ♥ 8654 ♦ T97 ♣ AK7</p>	<p>8</p> <p>♠ 32 ♥ 854 ♦ A7632 ♣ AKQ</p>
<p>2 3 NT, ♥K lead</p> <p>♠ JT32 ♥ A8 ♦ AQ4 ♣ T752</p>	<p>3 6 Hearts, ♦T lead</p> <p>♠ KT ♥ AQJT74 ♦ 865 ♣ A2</p>	<p>2 6 Spades, ♥Q lead</p> <p>♠ KQJT974 ♥ AK2 ♦ K8 ♣ 6</p>	<p>3? 7 Spades, ♦K lead</p> <p>♠ AKQJT95 ♥ AQ ♦ - ♣ 8732</p>
<p>9</p> <p>♠ J9852 ♥ KQ ♦ AQT ♣ QJ3</p>	<p>10</p> <p>♠ T963 ♥ A7 ♦ AQJT87 ♣ 4</p>	<p>11</p> <p>♠ 54 ♥ 83 ♦ 652 ♣ AQJT97</p>	<p>12</p> <p>♠ A2 ♥ T93 ♦ K87643 ♣ 95</p>
<p>2 6 NT, ♥T lead</p> <p>♠ AT ♥ AJ2 ♦ KJ43 ♣ AT96</p>	<p>3 3 NT; ♥J lead</p> <p>♠ A4 ♥ K2 ♦ 932 ♣ KQ8753</p>	<p>2? 3 NT; ♠Q lead</p> <p>♠ AK ♥ AT97 ♦ AK843 ♣ 65</p>	<p>2 4 Spades; ♥Q</p> <p>♠ KT ♥ AJ85 ♦ AQ ♣ AK632</p>

DECLARER PLAY 2014

Answers to Multiple Play Planning - Problems

<p>♠ KQ75 ♥ AQ84 ♦ 643 ♣ Q2 6♠, ♦J ♠ AJT982 ♥ 3 ♦ AK2 ♣ A87</p>	<p>#1. 2 choices. 10 Winners. (1) The Heart finesse or (2) a Backhand Finesse of the ♣Queen. Both are 50% odds, but one loses and the other keeps your 2nd chance intact. So, win the lead, draw trump and lead low toward the ♣Queen. If West takes her ♣K, away goes your Diamond loser in dummy on your ♣Ace. Making 6. But, if you do the Heart finesse 1st and it fails, you go down with no 2nd chance. ♣Q 1st.</p>	<p>♠T8 ♥9632 ♦AQ85 ♣KJ7 3NT, ♠Q ♠AK ♥K8 ♦7642 ♣AQT92</p>	<p>#2. 2 Choices. 8 Winners. (1) A Diamond Finesse or (2) A Heart Finesse of the ♥A in the East hand.) If you take the Diamond Finesse first and it loses, you are down regardless of where the ♥A is, so try the Heart Finesse first, and, if it wins, you have 9 tricks. If it loses, chances are that defenders can't take 5 Hearts before you get back in for the Diamond Finesse after defenders take their ?? Hearts.</p>
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<p>♠AJT4 ♥75 ♦63 ♣AKJT3 3 NT, ♥4 ♠Q92 ♥KT ♦AKJT5 ♣874</p>	<p>#3. Choices in all suits except Hearts. You need 8 more winners before giving up the lead. Which of the 3 is right to start your Plan? None! Try all 3. Take the ♦AK first, hoping the ♦Q drops; no? Then take the ♣AK and hope the ♣Q drops. Either gives you 9+ tricks. No? Failing those 2, lead the ♠9, finessing in Spades, and keeping the lead in hand. If it works; 9 tricks. If not, neither does any other Declarer succeed on this hand.</p>	<p>♠6 ♥A872 ♦AK643 ♣532 3 NT, ♠7 ♠AQ ♥K43 ♦952 ♣AK864</p>	<p>#4. 3 Choices in all suits except Spades, where you have a 2nd stopper. Play Ace and King of both minors. If either splits 3 – 2 (68% odds), lose a 3rd trick in that suit and collect overtricks. If neither splits 3 – 2, Duck a Heart*, as a 3 – 3 Heart split is your 3rd chance. The Heart winner will lead a 2nd Spade. Win it, then play the ♥A and ♥K hoping for the 3 – 3 split, even at 36% odds: after all, both 68% odds minor splits lost! <i>Gimme a Break!</i></p>
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<p>♠ AK ♥ 62 ♦ KT9 ♣ AQJ843 3 NT, ♥K lead ♠ JT32 ♥ A8 ♦ AQ4 ♣ T752</p>	<p>#5. 2 Choices. 7 Winners after your Heart trick is knocked out. (1) Play the ♠AK first because the ♠Q <u>could</u> drop, even though it is only 10% chance, but it is for 9 tricks. If not, try the 50% Club finesse. Either it will win (if West has the ♣K), or East may hold up once to prevent the run of the Clubs if West shows up as void. <i>P.S. You should be in 5♣ or 6♣, not 3NT.</i></p>	<p>♠754 ♥K3 ♦AKQ2 ♣KT65 6♥; ♦T lead ♠KT ♥AQJT74 ♦865 ♣A2</p>	<p>#6. 11 Winners; 3 Choices. (1) The ♣Ace is in the East – 50%); (2) Diamonds split 3 – 3 (36% odds) or the ♣T sets up if the ♣Q and ♣J drop. (Start with the Clubs, as it protects your other suits; Play the ♣A and ♣K, then ruff a Club. The ♣Q and ♣J <i>could</i> drop, setting up your ♣T for a Spade pitch. Failing that, try the 3 – 3 Diamond split; and finally, the Spade finesse.</p>
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DECLARER PLAY 2014

<p>♠A32 ♥8654 ♦T97 ♣AK7</p> <p>6 ♠, ♥Q lead</p> <p>♠KQJT974 ♥AK2 ♦K8 ♣6</p>	<p>#7. 2 Choices; 3 possible losers: 1 in Hearts and 2 in Diamonds, but 1 will go on the ♣K. The Diamond Finesse is an instant loser if it fails. The other chance is if Hearts should split 3 – 3 (36% odds), but you don't have to lose one to test the split: pitch one on the ♣K, then win the top 2 Hearts and ruff the 3rd one. If they split 3 – 3, pitch a Diamond on the 13th one. Or, it's the boring Diamond Finesse. But 2 chances, even one at 36%, is better than just one at 50%, no?</p>	<p>♠32 ♥854 ♦A7632 ♣AKQ</p> <p>7 ♠, ♦K lead</p> <p>♠AKQJT95 ♥AQ ♦ - ♣8732</p>	<p>#8. 3 Choices. With a possible Heart and Club loser, you can pitch one on the ♦A, but which one? Clubs might split 3 – 3 or the Heart finesse could win (50%), or, even the Diamonds could split 4 – 4.</p> <p>So, draw trumps; take the ♦Ace and ruff 3 more Diamonds, possibly setting up the 5th one (? %) to pitch the Heart loser. Play Clubs 3 times to see if they split 3 – 3 (36%) and, if none of this works, take the 50% Heart Finesse.</p>
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<p>♠ J9852 ♥ KQ ♦ AQT ♣ QJ3</p> <p>6 NT, ♥T</p> <p>♠ AT ♥ AJ2 ♦ KJ43 ♣ AT96</p>	<p>#9. 2 Choices: Spades and Clubs. Which? Spades. The Club Finesse is always only 50%. Win the lead in dummy and lead a Spade. If East plays the ♠K or ♠Q, it's all over: drive out the other Spade honor and claim. If not, finesse the ♠T. If it wins, take the Club Finesse and claim. If it loses, play the ♠A as soon as you get in: if the missing Spade honor drops, claim. If not, it's the same old 50% Club Finesse again.</p>	<p>♠T963 ♥A7 ♦AQJT87 ♣4</p> <p>3 NT; ♥J</p> <p>♠A4 ♥K2 ♦932 ♣KQ8753</p>	<p>#10. 3 Choices. A Diamond Finesse; a Club "steal" or a 3 – 3 Club split. So, win the Heart lead in dummy and play a low Club: If the ♠K wins, you have "stolen" a Club: switch immediately to the ♦9 Finesse, losing or not, for 9+ tricks while your Spade stopper is OK. If East takes the ♠A, play the ♠K and ♠Q, hoping for a 3 – 3 Club split for 5 Club tricks; or the Diamond Finesse for 4 or 5 tricks.</p>
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<p>♠54 ♥83 ♦652 ♣AQJT97</p> <p>♠AK ♥AT97 ♦AK843 ♣65</p>	<p>#11. 2 Choices, Clubs is the only suit that can produce 3 extra tricks (you have only 6 winners). So take the Club finesse: it will probably win, as East will hold-up if she has the ♣Kx(x) and she sees you can't get back to dummy to run Clubs. (Defense at Duplicate – 2013 – 2014). But that eventually gets you 2 Clubs tricks; so then play the ♦A and ♦K and a 3rd Diamond; hoping for the probable (68%) 3 – 2 split, producing 4 Diamonds for a total of 9 tricks.</p>	<p>♠A2 ♥T93 ♦K87643 ♣95</p> <p>♠KT ♥AJ85 ♦AQ ♣AK632</p>	<p>#12. 2 Choices. 8 winners but with chances in Diamonds and Heart finesse(s). So, win the ♠K opening lead and play the ♦A and ♦Q, overtaking it with the ♦K. If both defenders follow to the ♦K, play another Diamond, setting up 5 tricks with the hoped-for 3 – 2 (68%) split. If someone doesn't follow, finesse Hearts thru East, with good odds for 3 Heart tricks.</p>
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BLIND SPOT AVOIDANCE

Description

You can have “blind spots” as a Declarer when you make an “obvious play” quickly and without planning the entire hand play before following to the opening lead. Do not do it!

Usage

Force yourself to mentally plan the entire hand before playing to the first trick, no matter how obvious it is to play. In fact, the more “obvious” a play is, the more you should hesitate before playing it.

As declarer, you are legally allowed a “minute or two” to plan the hand – take every second of it. Reject “automatic plays” until you have done complete Play Planning. It’s your right as Declarer.

When the contract is in danger or you need extra tricks (always), examine your resources in both hands and decide which play, or combination of plays you can make that will give you the best odds of making “iffy” tricks.

For example, this could mean Ducking* the first trick to keep the lead in West’s hand: one of many Declarer Techniques described in the following pages.

BLIND SPOT AVOIDANCE *Example*

N	E	S	W	♠ A 9 6 5	West's opening lead: ♣K
-	-	1♦	P	♥-	
7♦!	All	pass		♦ A Q T 8 6 5 2	Q1 - How many losers or winners are there?
				♣ A J	Q2 - What could set the contract?
				♠ K 8 3 2	Q3 - How do you prevent a loser?
				♥ A K 7	A1 - 12 winners, 3 losers
				♦ K J 9 7	A2 - 3 pitches needed, with just 2 on ♥'s
				♣ 8 6	A3 - How can you prevent a loser?

Declarer Play Planning: To plan the play correctly, Declarer must consider the probable distribution of all 4 suits. In this hand, there is the problem of losing a Spade, while taking 7 Diamonds, a Club, 2 Hearts and 2 Spades – for 12 tricks - but not the 13 that North contracted for.

Avoid your blind spot and make your contract.

The Blind Spot in this hand is the temptation to quickly pitch Dummy's losing Club and a Spade on Declarer's 2 Heart tricks and *then* stop to think about the rest of the hand. Bad!

Visualize* the play if you do that: you are going to lose a Spade, as there is nowhere to pitch it.

Down one.

So, don't make the obvious play of throwing the losing Club and a Spade on the ♥AK: stop and think before playing a single card.

Solution: instead of pitching Dummy's losing Club and one Spade, pitch 2 Spades from Dummy, then collect trump, play the ♠A and ♠K, then ruff the 3rd Spade in dummy, probably setting up your 4th Spade in hand to pitch Dummy's losing Club. How probable? 68%, That's how probable!

Q: Why might this work and why is it your best chance to make this ridiculously bid Grand Slam?

A: Because there is a 68% chance that 5 Spade cards in defender's hands will split 3 – 2. (See Distribution – Percentages* Declarer Technique and the Basic Skills section).

If Spades split 3 – 2, Declarer will have a remaining Spade – the 13th one - on which to pitch Dummy's losing Club, making 13 tricks. And 68% is pretty good odds, no?

BREAKING A NEW SUIT

Description

As defenders, we are severely cautioned not to “Break a New Suit”, meaning we should not be the first one to lead an as-yet unplayed side suit. Usually, it is a bad lead for the leader’s side.

As you might guess, good declarers can force defenders to “Break a new suit”, or make an equally bad lead, like a Sluff-and-Ruff, or leading into declarers tenaces, like a ♣AQ at the 12th trick. Forcing defenders to do things is a type of Declarer Technique of great satisfaction, and equally great skill by Declarer.

Usage

Breaking a New Suit (forced by declarer) is another technique in the Elimination, Throw-In, Ruff –Sluff, etc. End Play portfolio of experienced declarers. It is yet another fatal offer from a Declarer to the victim of her End Play, as is a Sluff – Ruff, for another example.

“Ok, West, here’s your trick (The Throw-In*). Now, you can give me a Ruff-Sluff, lead into my ♣AQ, or break the Diamond suit so I win all the Diamond tricks. Welcome to my End Play World, West”!

As with a Ruff-Sluff or other disastrous choice offered to defender, any choice at an End Play is a bad one, including Breaking a New Suit, and it has been so arranged by the wily Declarer.

Sometimes, declarer doesn’t know for sure which defender will win the Throw-In* trick, so her End Plays might not succeed 100% of the time. But even so, the prospects are good because of the defenders’ reduced choice of return leads. Perhaps East has a similarly disastrous, although different, choice of a lead than West does? It’s the same good result for declarer in many cases.

Incidentally, a good defender’s counter to these End Plays is to anticipate the likelihood of such a Play, and to keep an Exit Card. An Exit Card* (or Safe Card) is one that, when led, does not give declarer any of these disastrous results for defenders. Keeping a high trump could qualify, for example, as Declarer might use it as the Throw-In* card. This suggests defenders not hold on to the high trump, but should win it on some trick, even if on a unimportant one. Don’t let yourself be Thrown-In* to if you can possibly avoid it.

A possible escape for an Expert defender is to Jettison* her high Throw-In* card, thus avoiding being Thrown-In* to. Such a Jettison Play may switch the winning card to partner, who may not have the disastrous choices the victim has. Of course, such plays are most often seen only in newspaper Bridge articles, as the deliberate performance of such heroic defense is very rare. But, in general, if you smell a Throw-In coming, get rid of that card ASAP.

BREAKING A NEW SUIT – *Examples*

Here's a very common situation where **any** Club lead by either defender is a defensive disaster, changing declarer's odds of winning 3 Club tricks to 100% instead of the 50% odds of a Club Finesse* initiated by declarer or dummy.

Notice the Club holding in dummy and declarer's hands: the exact cards vary from case-to-case, but the scenario is the same for the declarer: "Which way should I finesse in Clubs in this example? "Where is the ♣Queen? I couldn't tell from Discovery*, as it's only a 2 HCP card."

♣AJx You could lead the ♣x from North and finesse the ♣Queen with the ♣Ten (50%) **or** you could lead the ♣x from South and finesse the ♣Queen with the ♣Jack. Also (50%). Or, you could flip a coin: the same 50% odds.

♣KTx

But, if you can force either defender to lead any Club, you will always win all 3 Club tricks. *Far Better!* Defenders recognize this trap and will never voluntarily lead a Club in normal play. This particular example is one of forcing a lead into a Two-Way Finesse*.

But, suppose declarer collects trumps (Spades), Eliminates* Diamonds from her hand and dummy and all but the high Hearts from West's hand; then Throws-In* West with a Heart? West might win a Heart or even 2, but then what?

West's choices are:

- Lead back another Heart, so declarer can ruff in dummy and pitch a losing Club, or
- Lead a Club, eliminating the issue about who has the ♣Queen in the above example, or
- Lead a Diamond, providing declarer with a Sluff-Ruff*, discarding a Club from either hand, thereby again eliminating any chance of a declarer Club loser.

So, forcing a defender to "Break a New Suit*", is another in the "End Play Bag of Tricks" employed by good declarers who know these possibilities and plan ahead to use them. They are usually done late in the hand when defenders' choice of cards to lead, having been Thrown-In*, have been reduced to those that declarer wants her to lead.

There are many other cases when the initial lead of a new suit provides declarer with a winning line of play. A very common one is always favorable to Declarer. Dummy and Declarer in a NT contract each hold ♦Jxx or ♦Qx(x). If either defender puts any Diamond on the table, declarer has a Diamond stopper (trick); but if declarer has to break Diamonds first, she has no trick and opponents can run Diamonds. In this case, it's a two-edged sword, caused by bidding NT with such a frail Diamond stopper. Nevertheless, defenders must be very aware of the implications, as good Declarers will arrange to force a defender to lead a Diamond.

BLOCKING

Description

Sometimes, as declarer, you can play so that defenders can't lead to their partner because they have only higher cards than partner can overtake, i.e., you can cause a Block* in their suit.

Also, sometimes you can play an unnecessarily high card in one hand to avoid having to lead a high card which the other hand can't overtake. This the reason for the infamous "High Card from the Short Hand" slogan: don't Block yourself.

Usage

If you can force a Dangerous Opponent to hold the high card in a suit, then she can't lead through you as the Declarer for her partner to take tricks. Or, the same logic can sometimes apply to let the Dummy protect you from the same problem.

This also means that you, as a defender, should consider this possibility and get rid of high cards in your partner's long suit as early as possible, perhaps even on the opening lead.

This is known as Unblock, naturally.

(See Defense at Duplicate 2013-2014)

BLOCKING EXAMPLE

♠ AK6	Contract:	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ K64	3NT	Pass Pass Pass
♦ J72		1NT Pass 3NT all pass
♣ T984		
♠ T32	♠ Q9854	West leads the ♦Ten as a “standard lead” from that holding – “the top of an interior sequence”.
♥ J73	♥ 9852	
♦ AT983	♦ Q4	
♣ A6	♣ 32	
♠ J7		As Declarer, your questions of the moment are:
♥ AQT		“What’s my biggest danger?” and
♦ K65		“What am I going to do about it?”
♣ KQJ75		

You have enough tricks once defenders’ ♣A is played. If defenders’ Diamonds are 4-3, then nothing can go wrong, as you cannot lose more than three Diamonds and the ♣A. So, the danger is a 5-2 Diamond split, and you have a make-or-break play facing you at Trick 1.

Pretending that you haven’t already peeked at the E-W hands, what 5-card Diamond holdings could West have led from? One possibility is ♦T9xxx, in which case you are safe whatever happens. A second possibility is ♦QT9xx, in which case East will win his Ace and return a Diamond, after which the contract will depend on the whereabouts of the ♣A ... if it’s in the hand with long Diamonds you are down ... if not, then you make your contract with an overtrick.

In both the above cases it doesn’t matter what you do as the lie of the cards will determine your success or failure. Now consider what to do if West has led from ♦AT9xx.

Low from Dummy, low from East, what do you play? You could Play a Duck*, hoping that the ♣A is with the short Diamonds. But the correct play is to win the first trick with the ♦King. Now the defenders’ Diamonds are blocked, unless East unblocks her ♦Queen. **The Winning Play.**

When the defense gets in with the ♣A, their Diamonds are all winners but they can’t be untangled. So, your winning plays at trick 1 are low from Dummy and the ♦King from hand, trying to block defender’s Diamonds. (*A very difficult, advanced Declarer play!*)

There is another possible West holding. She might have led from ♦AQT9x, (Journalist Leads, remember?) in which case Declarer may have a second stopper by playing Dummy’s ♦Jack at trick 1. But that play also requires West to hold the ♣A. The odds are probably better that West has ♦QT9xx than that she has ♦AQT9x *plus* the ♣A. Fun!

UNBLOCKING

Description

To “Unblock” means getting a card in your hand or Dummy’s hand out of the way because you can’t play that suit without the wrong hand winning the trick. It is often accomplished with a Jettison play* when a high card is thrown away to unblock the run of that suit. *See Jettison* examples for more unblocking type plays.* It’s the opposite of Blocking, as we just saw, because it’s trying to prevent your side from being blocked, whereas Blocking was trying to Block the opponents run of their tricks.

Usage

Simple but frequent examples of Blocking/Unblocking:

	1.	2.	3.
Dummy	♠AKQ65	♠AKQ65	♠AKQ65
Declarer	♠982	♠T983	♠T987

Here’s 3 cases of a side suit. They all look similar, so can there be a problem?

Case 1. You can run Dummy’s Spades, figuring on 5 tricks with the usual 68% odds of a 3 – 2 split. Or, if they split 4 - 1, you can make 4 Spade tricks if you can get back to Dummy after losing the 4th Spade trick. Right? Right! 68% isn’t 100%, after all. (*Also Entry Management**)

Case 2. Here you have 9 Spades, so the odds of defenders’ Spades splitting 3 – 1 or 2 – 2 together are about 90% – so just run dummy’s Spades from the top - - and go down! (*when lacking an outside Spade entry to Dummy*) WHY?

Why? What Spade are you going to play from hand on the 4th Spade? If you play the ♠3, then the ♠8 and then the ♠9 on the ♠A, K and Q, the 4th Spade trick will bring you to hand with the ♠T. If you can’t get back to Dummy in another suit (Entry*), you win 4 Spade tricks, not 5.

How to prevent this Blockage? Look ahead, Visualizing* a Block*. Then see that there’s no problem if you play the ♠9, then the ♠8, then the ♠10 (in any sequence) from hand under Dummy’s ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q, respectively. Then your 4th Spade in hand is the ♠3, going under Dummy’s ♠6. So, 5 Spade tricks because of Visualizing* a Block coming, and preventing it with careful play. And defenders had nothing to do with it!

DECLARER PLAY 2014

Case 3. Here you see a real Blocking* problem: you can't get rid of all 4 Spades in your hand fast enough to win Dummy's 5th Spade trick. At least, not just playing Spades. You must find a way to get rid of 1 of your Spades - on a trump, perhaps? - before running Dummy's Spades.

UNBLOCKING – A Problem & Answer

♠8732

♥Q98

♦652

♣AKQ

♠4

♥AKJT5

♦K7

♣J8753

Contract: 4

Hearts

West doubled 1
Heart and East bid 2
Spades.

West's lead: ♠K

Ruff the 2nd Spade, collect trumps and run 5 Club tricks, making 4 . . . No? Yes? Maybe? Why or Why not?

What if East has 4 Hearts?

After you ruff the 2nd Spade, you only have 4 trumps, so when you collect all East's trumps, you won't have any left, and your Clubs are Blocked. Great spots, yes, but Blocked!

You can take the ♣AKQ, but how do you get back to hand to run the rest of them when East has 4 trumps? (Remember, you trumped the 2nd Spade lead.)

And you have a real problem in Diamonds if East gets in and leads them thru you. Now that's a real Dangerous Opponent!. Any solution? No problemo! You hold 8 Clubs between you and Dummy.

What are the odds the missing 5 Clubs will split 3 – 2? Do you remember? **They are 68%.**

There's pretty good odds that East will have at least 2 Clubs, so play 2 trumps, ending in Dummy. (That's when you find out that East has 4 trumps and West had only one.)

So play the ♣AK, with fingers crossed, hoping East has at least 2 Clubs.

When that works, return to hand via a trump and collect the rest of East's trumps – **Unblocking** the ♣Queen from Dummy on trumps - and then run your good Club suit: 5 Hearts and 5 Clubs make 10 tricks.

In this example, we used at least 2 Declarer Techniques: Unblocking* (aka Jettisoning*) the ♣Queen, and remembering the Distribution of Missing Cards - Odds*. Clubs should split 3 – 2 about 68% of the time, no?

These are in addition to Counting, Planning the Play, Visualization and a couple other Basic Declarer Skills and Techniques, of course.*

CARD COMBINATIONS

Description

This section is a detailed look at a Basic Declarer Skill, not exactly a Declarer Technique, but rather information about how to play combinations of cards in a suit divided between Dummy and hand. (“hand” means Declarer’s hand.) Example: Dummy has 5 Clubs, “hand” has 3 Clubs.

Usage

Every single trick in Bridge is composed of cards played by each player: the Declarer usually dictates what suits are to be played and in what sequence, as she has contracted to take 8 or 10 or 12 tricks. She is the one who must know about playing a wide variety of card combinations. And there are certainly a large number of card combinations at Duplicate

Fortunately, there are only a few basics about trick-taking ability, and at least one applies to every combination. Many times, these factors say you are not going to take **any** tricks in the suit, or that you are going to take them **all**. These few basics are:

Brute Strength. Aces take tricks 90% of the time. And Kings and Queens and Jacks too, but in declining percentages. Aces are 99% winners; Jacks are ? % winners.

Trump Strength. The deuce of trump outranks the Ace of every other suit when played on the same trick. So trump has strength irrespective of its HCP value. Of course, the Ace of trump takes the three or King of trump because of its Brute Strength: they have equal Trump Strength.

Positional Strength. A Queen can take a trick even though the King of the suit remains in play. How is that possible? Because cards aren’t just thrown into the middle all at once with the higher or stronger one winning: we play bridge tricks in rotation clockwise, i.e., in a fixed sequence. (Leader, 2nd hand, 3rd hand, 4th hand.) So, if you lead “toward” a Queen and the King is played by 2nd hand, you Play a Duck* by not playing the Queen, saving it for another trick. But if a low card is played by 2nd hand, you play the Queen, hoping the King isn’t in 4th hand. Positional Strength occurs when honors are “behind higher honors”. *I think of it as ‘downwind’ of the higher honor.* But if an honor is “in front of” a higher honor, (*Upwind*) its Brute Strength can be “Smothered*” by a higher following honor. Kings take Queens, Aces take Kings, etc.

So if you lead a Club toward a ♣AQx combination in Dummy and the ♣Kxx is in the 2nd hand, the ♣Q can win the trick if the ♣K isn’t played. This sequence is called a Finesse*, of course, and illustrates Positional Strength. Further, if Dummy holds ♣AQJ, such a Finesse* can be repeated, with the ♣J gaining the same Positional Strength over the ♣K on round 2. Finally the ♣A can be played on the 3rd round, perhaps dropping the ♣K with all 3 Club tricks going to Declarer/Dummy, and the ♣K Brute Strength amounting to nothing in this particular hand. Now that is real Positional Strength, but very common.

CARD COMBINATIONS - *continued*

Notice there's another aspect to the above example: the ♣A has Positional Strength over the ♣K, which enables the ♣Q to take the first trick. This particular ♣Q has Positional Strength mainly because of the threat to the ♣King from the ♣A accompanying it. Thus the notion of "In Front Of" and "Behind" comes into bridge play. If a ♠K is "behind" the ♠A, it can take a trick even though it is not the higher card. But Positional Strength makes it safe from capture by the ♠A, so it's an equal Brute Strength card in this hand – both can take 1 trick. There is a small caution, however: the hand holding the ♠K usually can't lead Spades. If the ♠K is "In Front Of" (Upwind of) the ♠A, it can be taken by the ♠A, so it's Brute Strength is vulnerable. A frequent example occurs when a defender's hand is "Upwind Of" a 1NT opener, which has great Brute Strength (usually 15 to 17 HCP) by definition.

Length Strength. If one hand has more cards in a suit than any other hand, then it has Length Strength, regardless of its Brute Strength. But, there is a strong pre-requisite. The Brute Strength tricks in that suit must have been played out, and, especially, the lead must be from the hand with Length Strength and with no Trump Strength available in another hand to ruff it.

Summary of Trick Types:

Brute Strength – HCP value determines relative and absolute strength, unless preempted by Trump Strength.

Trump Strength – Trump outranks every non-trump card in the deck, and is only susceptible to capture by a higher-ranking trump card. Positional Strength applies to trump tricks too, however, because we can Finesse* the trump King, just as we can Finesse* a non-trump King.

Positional Strength. Because we play tricks in a clockwise rotation, lower Brute Strength cards can have a Positional Advantage over higher Brute Strength cards if they are "downwind", i.e., will be played after the higher Brute Strength card. Conversely, if they are "upwind", their Brute Strength might be negated as they can be Smothered* (captured). *Bidders: beware!*

Length Strength. A hand with more cards of a particular suit than other hands can win tricks with small, non-Brute Strength cards when other hands can't follow suit or can't trump in. A vital caveat is that Length Strength can only win tricks if that hand is on lead after other hands are exhausted of cards in the suit.

Combinations. A long solid trump suit, or a long solid suit at NoTrump is/are the ultimate trick-taking "combinations" – nothing can overpower them or out-position them. Similarly, a combination of such strength in both hands can amount to the same invincible trick-taking machine. But Length begins to become critical, as we shall see below. And Transportation* or Entries* as well. And Timing*, too. And 17* other things.

CARD COMBINATIONS – *continued*

Let's look at some specific card combination examples:

<i>Case:</i>	1.	2.	3.
<i>Dummy</i>	♠AKQJT5	♣AKQ	♣AQT
<i>Declarer</i>	♠9	♣JT9	♣KJ9

Case 1. This looks like 6 Brute Strength tricks, with Declarer holding a Spade to reach the Dummy. At NoTrump or if Spades are trump, almost certainly 6 tricks; **WHY ALMOST?**

Almost! What if East or West hold the other 6 Spades to the ♠8? Very unlikely, but possible.

A true-life story: Recently, I had an Ace-high 6-card Diamond suit as Dummy in a Spade Slam contract. Declarer won the first trick in my hand with the ♥Ace and led a small Diamond to ruff it, starting to set up the suit and also to get to his hand to collect trump. He was overruffed by 4th seat! Declarer and 4th seat were both void of Diamonds: East had 7 of them! We lost our slam because of that “very-very unlikely” split, so these things can and do happen. And, to Declarer's great chagrin, he had another entry to hand, so he could have easily made his correctly-bid slam.

How can you be absolutely assured of 6 tricks regardless of defenders' holding? Do you see it? No? Play the ♠9 and Dummy's ♠5, then go to Dummy in another suit and play off the other 5 top Spade winners. Ridiculous? . . . perhaps, but it introduces an important companion concept in card combination play: Entry Management*. To further complicate this example, what if Declarer didn't have any Spades? Easy: go to Dummy in another suit and take at least the top 5 Spade tricks, assuming there **is** an Entry* in another suit. (Lot's of pitches, too: at least 5; most probably 6 of them.)

Trump Strength tricks have additional power even if Declarer has no outside Entry: trumps might provide an entry to Dummy by “ruffing in” to dummy if a side-suit is void or short.

Case 2. Here's an unfortunate combination: you have the top 6 Brute Strength Clubs but you can take only 3 tricks and they will all be in the Dummy. They do provide 3 Entries to Dummy if they are needed, but none to hand. It's called “Duplication of Values”. Ugghhh!

Case 3. Here's the same top 6 Brute Strength Clubs, still with only 3 tricks available and the same Duplication of Values, but considerably more flexibility than Case 2. Why? Because these 6 Clubs can provide 2 entries to hand or 3 entries to dummy, or combinations thereof. Entries are sometimes the difference between a top and a bottom board: that's why there's a specific Declarer Technique on Entry Management*.

CARD COMBINATIONS – *continued*

<i>Case:</i>	4.	5.
<i>Dummy</i>	♠987	♣Q2
<i>Declarer</i>	♠654	♣J34

A lovely collection: are you going to take any tricks with these hands? No?
Wrong. You could take a trick with one of them. Surprised? Here is How & Why:

Case 4. No tricks here. Period.

Case 5. Believe it or not, this is a Stopper – a Club trick, but only if defenders lead Clubs first.

(see the Technique of “Breaking a New Suit”.)

Once opponents lay a Club on the table, you can make a trick with as little as these 5 Club cards. (This is something you should know as a bidder, too). How? Whenever either defender lead any Club (in this example), play low in the next hand: if West leads a Club; play low in the North. East then has to play the ♣Ace or ♣King or you take the ♣Jack. Says she takes the ♣Ace, then leads another Club. Play low again, and West has to take her ♣King, Smothering* dummy’s ♣Q but setting up the ♣Jack in South. The ♣Queen and ♣Jack can be reversed. A 3rd Club in either hand doesn’t help or change the tactic: just play 2nd hand low every time a Club is led by either defender. It’s magic!

<i>Case</i>	6.	7.	8.
<i>Dummy</i>	♣8765	♣8765	♣T8765
<i>Declarer</i>	♣432	♣9432	♣9432

Case 6. How is this mess ever going to take a trick unless it is trump?

Here is a very important thing to know as a Declarer: Any 7 card suit, even one as pathetic as this Case 6. one, might take a trick. Do you know what trick that is? It is the 13th Club. If Clubs are split 4-3-3-3 around the table, and you or defenders lead them 3 times, and you can get to the hand holding the 13th Club, and there’s no ruff by a defender, it is a **trick**, counting just as much as the Ace of Trumps. But 4-3-3-3 is not the most common Suit Distribution around the table. In fact, it ranks about #10, distribution-wise. 4-4-3-2 (almost a Pancake) is the most common Distribution but it occurs in only about 10% of all hands.

CARD COMBINATIONS – *continued*

Hand Distribution vs. Suit Distribution. 4-4-3-2 Suit Distribution means 4 of one suit in two hands around the table and 3 of the same suit in the 3rd hand and 2 in the 4th hand.

An individual hand can have 4-4-3-2 distribution too, of course, but that is Hand Distribution, not Suit Distribution. It means 4 of any two suits, 3 of a 3rd suit and 2 of the 4th suit. If an author wants to describe a specific hand distribution, she should print 4=4=3=2, meaning exactly 4 Spades, exactly 4 Hearts, exactly 3 Diamonds and exactly 2 Clubs, but 4-4-3-2 means any two 4-card suits, any one 3-card suit, etc.

Case 7. *Looks a lot like # 6.* Although #6 has a tiny chance, #7 has a much bigger chance. Can you figure out why? Do you know it's chances? Yes, you do. You have an 8-card suit, no matter how weak, meaning defenders have only 5 cards in that suit. And what is the percentage split of 5 cards in defenders' hands? It's **68%** that they will split 3 - 2, so that's the odds for this hand taking a trick – more than 2 to 1. Fun, eh? But statistics don't lie: only statisticians lie!

Case 8. OK, What is this hand going to make, if anything? It can't be any worse odds for taking a trick than #7, (68%) but is it any better? You bet it is – a lot better, believe it or not. There are only 4 “missing cards” – you have 9 Clubs! If they split 2 – 2, this hand makes 3 tricks on Length Strength alone! (40% odds.) If they split 3 – 1 (50% odds), it makes 2 Length Strength tricks, not counting any accidental crashing of defenders' high honors. Since either of these cases might happen, the collective odds are 40% plus 50%, bringing the total to 90% odds for at least 2 tricks and to 40% odds for 3 tricks, even though the highest Club is a Ten.

Length IS Strength. Say that always! How many tricks will you take with 13 Clubs?

Cases 7 and 8. So far we've only discussed these hands as Length Strength tricks. What if these are trumps? They have the Length Strength discussed above, but they can take more tricks even if defenders play Ace, King and a 3rd trump to start the hand. Why? Because they can ruff tricks individually – they don't have to be played two to a trick. (Just don't lead trump!)

The fewer times defenders lead trump, the more ruff tricks these hands can make. Trump Strength is the only way tricks can be won playing individual cards to win a trick.

Note to Defenders: did you learn anything from this discussion? You should have.

CARD COMBINATIONS – *continued***Case:** 9.**Dummy** ♣AQT52**Declarer** ♣J43

Case 9. Is a typical card combination in Clubs in a suit or NoTrump contract. How should you look at it before starting to play? First, what is the probable split among defenders' 5 Clubs? **3 – 2 or 68%, remember?** (*You MUST remember these percentages for at least 4, 5 and 6 missing cards*). So there are high odds of a favorable 3 – 2 split for Declarer. OK, that's good. Next, you have 4 of the top 6 Clubs, missing the ♣King and ♣9. If you Finesse* West for the ♣K and it works or not, you'll make 4 or 5 Club tricks. That's the easy part. *But, Always Beware of Easy! Let's look at some other tactics used by good declarers in this card combination.*

Plan A. Lead the ♣J. If it wins, repeat the Finesse* by leading again toward Dummy's ♣AQT5. If it loses, you'll still have 4 Club tricks. No problemo, Right? **Not Quite.** What if West covers your ♣J with the ♣K? You win the ♣A in Dummy and collect how many additional Club tricks? Four? **No.** If West's ♣K was a singleton, then East holds the ♣9876, so you get only 3 Clubs off the top: the ♣A and ♣Q and ♣T. You can bring your Club trick total back to 4 by giving up the ♣9 to East, then getting back to Dummy for your 4th Club trick. *But Problemos may still exist.*

- (1) What if you don't have an outside Entry* to get back to Dummy's 5th Club?
- (2) What if East is a Dangerous Opponent? Will she lead her ♦Q through your ♦Kxx, creating a disaster?
- (3) Can you avoid the problem of the singleton ♣K appearing on the first trick and possibly setting up Dangerous East's ♣9?

Plan B. First, look at your spot cards in Clubs – not just the Brute Strength cards. True, you have 4 of the top 6 Clubs, but your other 4 are the 2,3,4 and 5. You don't have any intermediates – 9's and 8's and even 7's. That should be a Red Flag on every hand you play. Every one!

When this happens, don't spend two honors – your ♣Jack and your ♣Ace – trying to capture one defender honor – the ♣King. Instead, lead low toward the ♣Queen at the first Club trick. If it wins, come to hand in another suit and lead low toward Dummy's ♣T. (Entry Management*) Again, not spending two honors to capture one when you have poor intermediate cards. If the ♣K appears on either of these two Finesses*, win Dummy's ♣A, come back to your high ♣J and then back to Dummy's ♣Q and ♣Ten to collect all your Club tricks.

CARD COMBINATIONS – *continued*

More on Case #9. You are kidding, right? Sorry, there's still more to learn in this hand.

Re: Plan A. You don't have to overtake West's ♣King on the first Finesse, especially if you see that you may then lose to Dangerous East's ♣9. Play a Duck*! True, you don't get 5 Club tricks – just 4 - but a safe 4, because you will avoid two possible problems: giving up a Club trick to a Dangerous East and finding an outside Entry* back to the Dummy. Of course, if neither problem is present, then go ahead and power your way thru the Finesse, win or lose. But that's too easy!

Plan A. and Plan B. In the Finesse* Declarer Technique, you will see that Finesses* should be your last choice of Declarer Techniques, not your first. So, especially if either of the above two problems is present, do not look at this as a Finesse* hand or suit. Look for alternatives.

Because students are taught Finesses* early in Declarer play, they tend to forevermore look for them first, whereas Eddie and I and other advanced teachers teach the opposite: look for Finesses* as a last resort – a 50% gamble, not a Technique.

And Finessing* into a Dangerous Opponent hand is called suicide, not Technique.

COUNTING

Counting is the primary skill in all forms and all phases of Bridge, by declarers and defenders, and needs no definition or Description here.

(1) First we will briefly address “Counting” as it applies to the few seconds Declarer has for Play Planning, before the first card is played.

Here is how it is defined in the Basic Skills section: current comments are in *italics*.

Dummy Evaluation

- a. Evaluate side-suit fits and lengths [*Evaluate*” means “**Count** the Length of ...”]
- b. Identify ruffing possibilities in short suits; in both hands. [*“Count shortness ...”*]
- c. Look for and count Entries in both hands. [*“Count entries ...”*]

Count Sure, Probable and Possible extra tricks

- a. Brute Strength Trump *tricks* e.g., A, K, Q etc. of trump
- b. Additional trump *tricks* (ruffs)
Ruffs in the short trump hand: the dummy, usually NOT in declarer’s hand
- c. Brute Strength side-suit *tricks* (HCP) e.g., A, K Q of a side suit
- d. Length Strength *tricks* – both hands.
Suits of 4+ cards are usually candidates for Length Tricks, as opposed to Brute Strength (HCP), although both Strength and Length tricks are possible in a suit.
- e. Possible Declarer Technique *tricks*; a Finesse*, for example

Estimate Defenders’ HCP & Shape if either bid. [*“Estimate” means “Count” ...*]

- a. West’s probable HCP and Shape
- b. East’s probable HCP and Shape. If neither defender bid, why not? [*Flat Count?*]
- c. Consider the implications of the opening lead: Aggressive? Passive?
Showing additional HCP (like the lead of the ♠K) or “I just don’t know yet.”
[*“Showing” means inferring additional HCP Count...*]

So Counting virtually everything that is known by the bidding and looking at the Dummy and the opening lead is what Declarer must do – in a big hurry – as the dummy comes down; and then, in a bigger hurry – devise a Plan to make or exceed her Contract.

Having a comfortable knowledge of Hand Patterns* is an aid in doing this quickly.

RECOGNIZE PATTERNS OF HANDS

There are only a few basic hand patterns, although there are usually combinations of patterns in actual play. But when you recognize the basic ones, you can clearly see the combinations.

Power Tricks HCP or Trump tricks in Suit contracts or HCP only tricks in NT contracts. *AKA Brute Strength Tricks*

Length Tricks Collect trump, run and/or establish, then run a side suit.
At NoTrump, run and/or establish then run, long suits.
AKA Length Strength Tricks – see below

Extra Trump Tricks (*Suit Contracts Only*) *AKA Trump Strength Tricks*

- a) Ruffs in Dummy
- b) Ruffs in Declarer's hand (*a Dummy Reversal**)
- c) Cross-Ruff* (*Ruffs in both Dummy and in Declarer hands*)

Technique Tricks

Finesses, End Plays, LOL, etc.

Combinations of the above.

As soon as the Dummy comes down, start considering the “pattern” of the hand. Most hands will be primarily one of the above, with an additional ruff or Finesse* or other Declarer Technique.

The primary Hand Pattern sets the tone for the specific Play Planning about to be done by declarer: most hands of the same Pattern have the same basic play pattern.

(2) Counting as Play Begins

(a) If one or both defenders have bid, their probable shape and HCP must be Visualized* and Counted immediately, possibly causing you to play the hand differently than “Standard Distribution Percentages” (Split Odds) might indicate. (*See below*)

Defenders' bidding shows shape: all bidders bid suits of 4 or more cards. (Except minor suit openings, which have no inherent size.) Suit rebids add considerably to your view of the bidders shape, and by using the Magic Number – 13 - you can get a pretty good idea of the shape of that suit all around the table, even during the bidding, and certainly afterwards when you are doing Declarer Counting.

(b) If defenders have not bid, assume that Distribution of Missing Cards - Percentages* will prevail if there might be side-suit Length Strength tricks. **What? Please explain!**

You must use “Standard Distribution Percentages” IF – AND ONLY IF - there are possible extra tricks for you in side-suits. These are suits of 7 or more cards held between Declarer’s hand and Dummy. If so, this is an extremely important source of tricks. They are not immediately visible and “countable”, like Aces. **It is also by far the most important skill you can learn in this Class.** How many tricks can you gain with a successful Finesse? One? How about 2 or 3 extra tricks gained by harvesting side-suit Length Strength suits. No comparison, is there!

Here’s an example: Dummy holds ♣QT763 (a side-suit) and you hold ♣AJ2 How many Club tricks can you expect or hope to take, and how do you go about it? (Hint: Entries is a key part of that answer.) Your initial count is 1 trick – the ♣Ace. Can you do better? How much better?

See Basic Skills Section - Basic “Split Odds” Estimating for a start. Later in the course, there is a section on Advanced Split Odds Estimating.

(c) The Opening Lead and 3rd Seat play is the first solid information about defenders’ hands.

The Opening Lead itself may show 6+ HCP or more: what does an opening lead of the ♠K suggest? The ♠Q and ♠J? Of course. That puts 6 HCP in West’s hand, of the missing total HCP. Also, it suggests a moderate length in Spades – not long Spades, as she might have opened 2♠ with 6 of them. Wouldn’t you with 6 or more headed by the ♠KQJ? Very possibly.

Or, if West leads the ♦A and ♦K, then East ruffs the 3rd Diamond, you have learned (Counted) both 7 HCP and the Diamond shape in both defender’s hands. When you then collect trump, you have a complete, accurate view of two suits in defenders’ hands, and, by inference, an initial view of what their remaining two suits might look like.

(3) Counting after the first few tricks, i.e., during the Play.

After the opening lead and the first few tricks, a lot has been seen, inferred and counted about each defender’s hand.

A trump collection decision will come early - before Discovery* - and, in most cases, physical trump collection will be an early declarer step after the first few tricks, although not always, and sometimes starting on the opening lead, if it’s a trump.

If the opening lead and initial tricks are passive they may provide you little useful information. If there are outstanding HCP or shapes you need to know about, you can use Declarer Techniques of Visualization* and Discovery* to help your Counting, which, as always, remains the primary avenue to the information you want.

Sometimes, however, the need for elaborate Counting ends early. Someone has the ♠King which is be the key card in your Plan to make your contract: what difference does Counting make?

Counting 3 HCP for the critical ♠King means nothing. Location: figuring out which defender has it may make or break your contract. Knowing that, you may be able to plan how to drive it out, Finesse* it or End-Play*.

Counting becomes more important for shape decisions than HCP: you know before the opening lead how many HCP you are missing; finding out which defender has them may be, but also may not be, important. And there is that other Magic Number – 40 – which is no mystery.

Other Techniques are available for location. HCP counting becomes irrelevant as you approach the middle or the end of the Play. HCP Counting has helped you plan and start the Play; it's importance diminishes. Later, Length & Shape Counting become more important.

“If East has only one Club left, I know which way to Finesse* Clubs to make my Contract”. The critical Count here is “1” – East's Club total: the decision about which way to Finesse* Clubs becomes evident from knowing East has only 1 Club left.

(4) Counting During End-Play Hands

Recall from our Overview that many hands end in Step 3 above.

Claims are often the actual finish of simple or straightforward hands.

In some hands, however, there is opportunity for extra tricks if Declarer can Plan and execute advanced techniques, which I have summarized as “End Play Techniques”.

There are several of them, and they are often used in cooperation and in specific sequences to win that extra trick for a Top Board.

HCP Counting is usually irrelevant at this point, and shape Counting and Visualization are the key techniques. Play Techniques include Elimination, Sluff and Ruffs, Throw-Ins, removing Safe Exit cards, Breaking a New Suit, etc.

We will have a series of specific Classes to illustrate this exciting and highly productive End Play Phase.

CROSS RUFF

Description

Sometimes the way to maximize your total trick count is not to collect all the trump, playing 2 of your trumps at a time, but rather make trump tricks individually by ruffing in one hand then ruffing in the other then ruffing in the first hand again, and so on.

Usage

If you and dummy have a 4 – 4 trump suit, you can often make 5 or 6 trump tricks instead of just the 4 that you would make by playing all of them as trump leads.

It only occurs with two shapely hands – flat hands don't have ruffing possibilities because you can't ruff until a hand is void in a suit. If you have to play a suit 2 or 3 times to make Dummy void, you may have too many losers before you can make a ruffing winner, plus a defender may be also void in the same suit and overruff dummy.

1.	♠8732 ♥Q98 ♦652 ♣AKQ	<p>This hand has no ruffing values, because the earliest it could ruff anything would be the 4th round of any suit.</p> <p>BTW, this is why we give hands with shortage more “Dummy Points” during the bidding – they have “ruffing values” - meaning the potential to ruff early rounds of a side suit, in addition to any Brute Strength points.</p>
2.	♠4 ♥KJT95 ♦K7 ♣QJ8753	<p>This hand has substantial ruffing values because it is short in 2 suits.</p> <p>Bidding or playing Hearts, it has 10 Brute Strength points, but in addition, 3 Shortness Points for being able to ruff the 2nd and all subsequent Spades, and 1 Shortness Point for being able to ruff the 3rd Diamond, for a total of 14 “Dummy points”, not just the 10 Brute Strength points.</p>

Cross-ruffing often occurs on the final 3 or 4 or more tricks, when Declarer claims, explaining ‘I will cross-ruff the remaining tricks’. In this manner, she may make 4 trump tricks with just two trumps in Dummy and 2 in her hand. Very effective – 4 trumps wins 4 tricks.

As defenders, you should anticipate this technique and lead trump often, even on the opening lead and even if it costs you a natural trump trick. (See Defense at Duplicate – Fall 2013)

CROSS RUFFING - Example I

1.	♠K732 ♥QT98 ♦K ♣QT53 ♠A3 ♥AKJ5 ♦A752 ♣J87	Contract: 4 Hearts	West's lead: ♠Q You have 9 tricks off the top: 2 Spades, 4 Hearts, a Club and 2 Diamonds. Down one. Where can more tricks come from? Well, they are not coming from Length Strength or Brute Strength, so there is just one avenue left – Trump Strength by ruffing or, in this example, Cross Ruffing.
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Fortunately for declarer, all the trumps in hand 1. are high: the ♥Ace thru the ♥8, so you can't be overruffed. But let's make it less of a no-brainer and change some of your trump spots:

1.a.	♠K732 ♥QT73 ♦K ♣Q953 ♠A3 ♥AK65 ♦A752 ♣J87	Contract: 4 Hearts	West's lead: ♠Q Now your trumps aren't all high, so there's some danger of being overruffed. Then defenders will take a Club trick and lead a trump, cutting down your ruffing power and therefore your total tricks. So what should you do about that possibility? Recall the Distribution of Missing Cards* – how do they split? Diamonds? You have 5 so they have 8, meaning a 5 – 3 split or 4 – 4 split is almost certain, so you are pretty safe trumping low on the 3 rd Diamond lead. After that, you can trump with the ♥Queen.
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In Spades: you have 6, they have 7, with high odds of a 4 – 3 split, so you can probably ruff the 3rd Spade with your low trump and with high ones after that.

Take the ♠K and the ♦King in Dummy for 2 tricks, then to hand with the ♠A and play the ♦Ace, pitching a Club in the Dummy for 2 more tricks, then ruff a Diamond in Dummy, a Spade in hand, another Diamond in Dummy, the last Spade in hand and another Diamond in Dummy for 5 more tricks. And you still have the top two trumps in hand, making 5 when you started off down 1.

CROSS RUFFING - *Example II*

2. ♠A964
 ♥-
 ♦KJ98
 ♣KJ432

**Contract: 6
Diamonds**

West's lead: ♠5

12 tricks off the top: The ♠A the ♥A, 8 Cross Ruff tricks and finally the ♣AK.

 ♠7
 ♥AQ8742
 ♦AQ76
 ♣A9

Any problemos? Is it safe to trump Spades in hand with the ♦7 and ♦6? You have 5 Spades including one winner, so the 1st two Spade ruffs – with the ♦7 and ♦6 should be safe, as defenders' 8 Spades figure highly to break no worse than 5 – 3 and maybe even 4 – 4.

And they have 7 Hearts between them, so they should be 4 - 3, meaning it's safe to ruff 2 Hearts with Dummy's ♦9 and ♦8. So, let's start Cross Ruffing at trick 2. Right?

CROSS RUFFING - Example II Answer

♠A964
♥-
♦KJ98
♣KJ432

Contract: West's lead: ♠5
6

Diamonds 12 tricks off the top: ♠A, ♥A, 8 Cross Ruff tricks and finally the ♣AK.

Any problems?

♠7
♥AQ8742
♦AQ76
♣A9

Is it safe to trump Spades in hand with the ♦7 and ♦6? Well, you have 5 Spades including one winner, so the 1st two Spade ruffs – with the ♦7 and ♦6 should be safe, as defenders' 8 Spades figure highly to break no worse than 5 – 3 and maybe even 4 – 4. And they have 7 Hearts between them, so they should be 4 - 3, meaning it's safe to ruff 2 Hearts with Dummy's ♦9 and ♦8.

So, start Cross Ruffing at trick 2 ... **and go down.**

WHY ???

Your Cross Ruffing Play Plan and Odds for Missing Cards* analysis are right – congratulations.

But you'll go down if you start cross ruffing at trick 2. WHY?

It is true that you are very probably correct in ruffing with the 4 small Diamonds on early tricks in Heart and Spades, but there's one critical thing you must do before starting to Cross Ruff – take all your side-suit winners first – not last: in this hand they are the ♣Ace and ♣King.

The reason is that defenders will see what you are doing once you start to cross ruff, especially in a Slam Contract. As you do so, they can't overruff you, that's true. But, when they run out of cards in the suits you are cross ruffing they will pitch cards in your side suit – Clubs in this case.

Remember that as you cross ruff you are using up all your trumps, but they aren't. So they will pitch Clubs on the long Heart and Spade tricks you are ruffing. Then at the end when you try to take your Club tricks, they will ruff them with their small trumps.

How do you stop this from happening? Easy: before starting to cross ruff, take all your top side suit winners first.

So, it then becomes 2 Clubs – *first* – then the 2 major suit Aces, then 8 ruffing tricks for a total of 12 tricks. *No problemo.*

DUMMY REVERSAL

Description

Dummy Reversal means “reversing” where you ruff and where you collect trumps: usually we ruff in dummy and collect trumps in hand. 5 – 3 is a common pattern with 3+ trumps in dummy and 5 in declarer’s hand (or even 6 – 3 or 6 – 2), so we usually try to ruff declarer’s losers in the dummy. In fact, during the bidding we award “Dummy points” – extra value – to a dummy with a singleton, void or a doubleton, and discount a Flat Hand, such as one with 4-3-3-3 shape.

Although it is usually the case that declarer has the longer trumps, it sometimes happens that dummy has longer trumps; for example when you use Jacoby Transfers to ask your opening NT partner to bid a major suit. In such cases, declarer should Visualize* the play of the hand from dummy’s perspective – you will be surprised how this “backwards Visualization*” sometimes clarifies your Play Plan a lot.

Occasionally there is an opportunity for a "Partial Dummy Reversal" - see Example 3 below.

Usage

Generally, you gain no tricks ruffing in declarer’s hand when it has the longer trump length, as they are winning trump tricks anyway. Sometimes you ruff in declarer’s hand for an Entry* or for Elimination*, but that gains you **no** extra tricks as a direct result of the ruff.

A Dummy Reversal can only occur when dummy has high trumps sufficient to draw defenders’ trumps. For example, with 8 Clubs as trumps, including ♣QJT in the dummy and ♣AK975 in hand, there’s a 68% chance that dummy’s 3 trumps alone can collect all 5 of defenders’ Clubs. If we simply collect trump tricks, we get 5 Clubs, whether we ruff in declarer’s hand or not.

Getting to dummy (Entry Management*) via trump both draws defenders’ trumps and provides an Entry, so declarer can then ruff tricks in her hand, increasing the total trump trick count by one or two, rather than just drawing all defender’s trumps. Side-Suit entries to dummy are useful too, provided you eventually collect all of defenders’ trumps.

As an illustration, in the example hand described above, if we collect defenders’ Clubs with three trump tricks in dummy, we can ruff side suits with the ♣A, ♣K and ♣9 in hand, bringing our trump trick total to 6, not five, and, in this case, with no danger of an overruff.

And we all know what one extra trick means to our score at Duplicate . . .

DUMMY REVERSAL - *Examples*

1.	<p>♠KJT This hand illustrates the essence of Dummy Reversal. (<i>Spades are trump</i>).</p> <p>♥-</p> <p>♦AXXX When Dummy's trumps are high as they are here, even though there are</p> <p>♣-</p> <p>♠AQ987 fewer of them than Declarer has, they may be sufficient to draw defenders'</p> <p>♥-</p> <p>♦2 trump. If you simply "draw trump", you will win 5 Spade tricks, whether</p> <p>♣-</p> <p> you play them all out or ruff in Declarer's hand.</p> <p> But if you ruff 3 Diamonds in hand, you then win 6 Spade tricks, not 5. A</p> <p> Dummy Reversal wins the extra trick.</p>
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2.	<p>♠A543 Contract: 7♦. Lead: ♠K. (<i>West bid 1 Heart over South's 1♦ opening.</i>)</p> <p>♥QJ43</p> <p>♦KT8 In view of West's overcall, the Heart finesse is certain to lose so why</p> <p>♣QJ chance losing a grand slam with a far less than 50% odds Heart Finesse*?</p> <p> But notice: Dummy's trumps are all higher than defenders' trumps, and</p> <p> there are 5 trumps outstanding, meaning a 68% chance they will split 3 – 2.</p> <p>♠2</p> <p>♥A2</p> <p>♦AQJ94 So what? So take the ♠A, then trump 3 Spades high in hand, getting back to</p> <p>♣AKT93 Dummy with (high) trumps.</p> <p> This Dummy Reversal yields 6 Diamond tricks, 5 Clubs, and 2 major suit</p> <p> aces for 13 tricks, with no risk from a losing finesse*. (Declarer's ♥2 goes</p> <p> off on Dummy's 3rd Diamond.)</p> <p> So, with a known loser in Hearts, we can still make a Grand Slam, using the</p> <p> Declarer Technique* of Dummy Reversal.</p> <p> Ain't Bridge just plain Wonnnerfull?</p>
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DUMMY REVERSAL - Example

<p>3.</p> <p>♠AJ87</p> <p>♥953</p> <p>♦A54</p> <p>♣AJ5</p> <p>♣K</p> <p>♠T963</p> <p>♥T872</p> <p>♦T8</p> <p>♣863</p> <p>♠KQ542</p> <p>♥AQ6</p> <p>♦KQJ9</p> <p>♣2</p>	<p>Contract: 6 Spades. West's lead: ♣K. (West bid 2 Clubs over South's 1 Spade opening)</p> <p>South's initial plan was to draw trumps, (probably) lose a Heart finesse, win 4 Diamonds, pitching a Heart from dummy and ruffing her last Heart in dummy for 12 or 13 tricks. Obvious, <i>but</i>:</p> <p>Careful! West showed at least 5, maybe 6 Clubs and all the missing Brute Strength, right? East has little if any Brute Strength, but if West has 6 Clubs and the missing Heart honors, who might have 4 trumps? East, that's who.</p> <p>If you draw all East's trump, you'll be void in Dummy and have one trump in your hand. What will you do with your 2 losing Hearts?</p>
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Plan carefully and do a Dummy Reversal instead.

Visualize* that East's 4 Spades can be collected with the ♠A, ♠K, ♠Q and ♠J, but they don't all have to be played in that sequence.

You can ruff the 2nd Club trick, play the ♠A and ♠K, ruff another Club in hand and take the ♠Q. (You are now out of trumps.)

But you can then go to Dummy's ♦Ace, collect East's last trump with the ♠J and win 3 more Diamonds.

This makes 6 Spade tricks – not 5 – plus a Club, a Heart and 4 Diamond tricks, making 6♠.

This is called a Partial Dummy Reversal* because you actually collected 3 of East's trumps in hand or Dummy, but collected the last one in dummy, after Declarer was void in trumps. *Neat!*

DECEPTION

Description

You should deceive defenders at every opportunity.

Your partner is the Dummy, but she is not allowed to complain about being deceived by you.

Deceiving should be about everything that matters: shape, HCP, remaining cards in a suit, etc.

Declarers must be familiar with defenders' leads and signals to deceive them successfully.

Usage

As a common example, when West leads a winner on the opening lead, Declarer plays last, of course. But never just play your lowest card in the suit without thinking about it: instead play a card as close to East's card as possible, and slightly higher if possible. ← KEY POINT!

This should become a firm habit. Its purpose is to confuse the opening leader about her partner's count or attitude or both.

When you play a card lower than East's, West starts to get a picture of East's hand; but if you play a card higher than East, Declarer appears to be shorter, as West will assume you are playing your lowest card in the suit. *Gotcha!*

Another example: when leading from 2 or 3 or even 4 small cards towards dummy, don't lead the lowest one; lead the top or middle card. Again, defenders will assume you are leading your lowest card in that suit, and they may come to a wrong conclusion about what their partner has.

Very often, you won't know if this technique is successful, because Deception is playing with defenders' minds, and they won't admit to you that it worked on them. Or they may not even recognize you are deliberately playing with their minds! Yes!

Another deceptive trick: win with the highest card you can on most tricks. A defender may assume her partner forced you to play a card that high and visualize cards in her partner's hand that she does not have. If East plays a ♣Jack and you have the ♣AKQ, win with the ♣Ace. Who knows what West might think about East's holding? Defenders are supposed to play the lower of touching honors, but in this example, will West think that East has the ♣QJx? Maybe.

It costs you nothing to deceive all the time; if defenders fall for it occasionally, that's a small edge for you, and winning at duplicate is always a game of small edges gained here and there.

DECEPTION BY DECLARER - *Examples*

1. ♠ Q8 **Contract:** West's lead: ♥9. You could have 4 losers: a Club, a Heart and
 ♥ J3 **4 Spades** the ♠A and ♠J, unless you can find the ♠J to Finesse* it.
 ♦ AK5
 ♣ J76543

 ♠ KT9653
 ♥ A2
 ♦ QT2
 ♣ A2
- If Declarer won the opening Heart lead and immediately played a 2nd Heart, it looks like she wants to ruff another Heart loser, no?
- So, might you as a defender win the 2nd Heart, then play the ♠Ace and a 2nd Spade to "stop Declarer's Heart ruff" by clearing dummy's trumps? *I certainly might!* But if she *doesn't* do that, why not? Because she has the ♠AJx and expects to win 2 Spades. So Finesse* her for the ♠J. You deceived both defenders because you made it look like you would ruff a 2nd Heart loser. Yes!

2. ♠ 943 **Contract:** West's lead: ♠K, East playing the ♠5.
 ♠ K **4 Hearts**
 ♠ 5
 ♠ Q62
- What should South play? The ♠6, not the ♠2. When West sees East's ♠5, she may think East has ♠Q65, as the ♠5 looks like a positive upside-down signal, so West may lead another Spade, making South's ♠Q good. But, if South plays the ♠2, West will have no problem figuring it out and won't lead another Spade, hoping to eventually win 3 Spade tricks. West sees the ♠4 and ♠3— don't show her the ♠2. You might make the ♠Q.

3. ♠ 63 **Contract:** East opened 1♠, so West's lead was the ♠9.
 ♥ 865 **3 NT**
 ♦ KQJT2
 ♣ 863
 ♠9 ♠K
 ♦964 ♦A85
 ♠ AQ52
 ♥ AT7
 ♦ 73
 ♣ AKQJ
- South, winning the ♠K with the ♠A, starts on the Diamonds, needing 2 Diamond tricks, but which Diamond? The ♦7, not the ♦3. West will play her ♦4 (Standard signals), starting to show a 3-card holding. East will Hold Up* her ♦Ace. But when the ♦Q is led, East has a real problem: Did West start with the ♦43, giving South 3 Diamonds? (West's ♦4 then ♦3 would be Hi-Lo, showing **even** Count – remember?) But East's 2nd Hold-Up* for safety gives Declarer her 2nd Diamond trick and her contract. Ha!

DECEPTION BY DECLARER – *Examples*

<p>4.</p> <p>♠ 9 ♦ 64</p>	<p>♠ 63 ♥ 865 ♦ KQJT2 ♣ 863</p> <p>♠ AQT2 ♥ AT7 ♦ 973 ♣ AKQ</p>	<p>Contract: 3 NT</p> <p>East opened 1♠. West's Lead: ♠9 (again).</p> <p><u>This time, South, lead the ♦3, not the ♦7.</u> West will play her ♦6, starting to show her doubleton with a Hi-Lo signal. East will hold up on the first Diamond, of course.</p> <p>But when the ♦Q is led from Dummy, East again has a problem: Did West start with ♦976? If so, East should take her ♦A now, because South has only 2 Diamonds. But East will likely hold up the ♦A again to be sure – and Declarer again gets 2 Diamond tricks <u>and her contract</u>. Generally, Declarer should lead low from 3 small and high from 2 small to have the best chance to deceive defenders.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>♠AQ4</p> <p>♠K3</p>	<p>My favorite: West leads a Spade; what to you play from dummy?</p> <p>Easy: you hesitate for a second like you're considering what to play (legitimately) and then say "Well, play that Ace!"</p> <p>Or even "OK, try the ♠Queen". Guess what card they will lead the next time they are in?</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>♠AQ4</p> <p>♠632</p>	<p>Another personal favorite Deception along the same line when West leads a Spade:</p> <p>Don't hesitate, just say "Low" right away to West's Spade lead. <i>Being a good defender, she didn't lead away from her ♠King, of course, so you know East has it.</i> East will win, but it will have to be with her highest Spade other than the ♠King, because "obviously Declarer has the ♠Ten or ♠9 or something". Declarer will then play her highest Spade, whatever it is.</p> <p>The main reason for this Deception is that now East can't immediately lead Spades back - - into Dummy's ♠AQ. To capture dummy's ♠Queen, East will have to get back to West in another suit, and that may put Declarer in control of the situation long enough to dump her remaining Spade loser.</p>

DISCOVERY

Description.

Inference is close to the first activity in Play Planning: “OK, what am I missing and where is it likely to be found?” **Discovery** is used to validate or negate those Inferences. “Discovery” means finding out or figuring out where Brute Strength (HCP) and/or shape are in defenders’ hands. Discovery means finding facts in actual play, as opposed to Inference, which is a form of speculation, although educated speculation, based on bidding, not bidding, etc. before play starts.

Usage

Discovery from the bidding: If defenders bid, you can Discover what they actually hold by playing their suit. After all, opponents can open 1 Heart with ♥J9875 or with ♥AKQ98: Until you Discover which is the case, you don’t have a good idea about HCP (Brute Strength) in Hearts: in opener’s overall hand; Yes: (12+ HCP), but in Hearts, no.

Discovery from not bidding: If West didn’t bid but her opening leads are the ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q, is she likely to hold the ♦A? First, there is an Inference from the fact she didn’t open: when play starts, she may lead, or you may play Spades so as to Discover she has those 3 top Spades, yet didn’t open. So you’ve Discovered 13 HCP: the top 3 Spades, and, by deduction, the ♦A.

Discovery from the Opening Lead. If West leads the ♠K, what else in terms of HCP and length in Spades is she likely to hold? If she opened 1 ♠ but her opening lead is the ♦9, what is her Spade holding likely to be?

Discovery from Leads and Signals. If West’s opening lead is the ♠2 at a NoTrump contract, and East’s 3rd seat play is the encouraging ♠9 after dummy wins the ♠Ace, what is the likely configuration?: West has 4 Spades and some values; East also has some values in Spades.

All this and more can be Discovered very early in the play of the hand, as defenders are trying to establish or implement their Defensive Strategy. True, defenders’ early plays may be quite passive, revealing nothing in HCP, but, by implication, trying instead to establish Length Strength tricks: they are not playing cards at random because they fell out of their hand!

They are trying to do something having to do with Strength or Length, or even both.

Declarer must observe and Visualize what it is they are doing: sometimes it’s perfectly plain; like leading the ♠K. Sometime it’s an apparent mystery at the moment, but it is something that will show later: the opening lead of a ♣8 can be a singleton, no?

DISCOVERY FROM BIDDING. *Example*

1.	♠ K975	Contract:	W	N	E	S
	♥ Q4	3NT	1♥	P	2♥	2♠
	♦ A972		P	3♠	P	4♠
	♣ 752					

West's lead: ♥A, ♥K, then the ♠4. You collect the remaining trumps. You must hold your Club losers to one to make 4 Spades. How do they figure to split? Does it matter?

♠ AQT62
♥ T5
♦ Q
♣ AQ863

No; the split doesn't matter this time: what matters is who has the ♣K? The ♦K is also missing, but is irrelevant in light of your singleton ♦Q.

Count HCP. West opened, so she has 12+; you two have 23, so East has a bare 4 or 5 HCP.

So? If West has both minor suit Kings, there aren't enough HCP for East to bid 2♥, so she must have one of them, but which one? If it's the ♣K, you can finesse thru East to hold your Club losers to 1.

The Solution (Discovery*). You can try to find the ♦K by False Finessing* West. Do this by leading your ♦Q. If she covers it, and she should, then East has the ♣K. If West doesn't cover the ♦Q, East has it and so West has the ♣K.

In this actual hand, West ducked the ♦Q and Declarer took her ♦A, thereby "Discovering*" the ♦K in the East hand, and, by Inference*, the ♣K in the West. So the only winning play is to play the ♣Ace, then a low Club, which West's ♣Kx may have to win.

An important Discovery* tactic: often you should Discover* a card you aren't actually concerned about in order to place the card you ARE worried about, as you did in this example. *Cool!*

DISCOVERY FROM LACK OF BIDDING

Defenders pass throughout an auction when they don't have Length Strength or Brute Strength to bid, just as you do.

To discover where missing HCP are when the bidding didn't tell you anything useful, play cards that force out defenders' high cards early, thereby building up a picture in your mind of both defenders' HCP; i.e., **Discover***.

DECLARER PLAY 2014

♠ JT4	Contract:	S	W	N	E
♥ K873	2♥		P	P	P
♦ 952		1♦	P	1♥	P
♣ QT3		2♥	P	P	P

West's lead: ♠A (showing the ♠King); East plays the ♠2 (discouraging) and West switches to a low Diamond.

♠ Q853
♥ AJT9
♦ QJ4
♣ KJ

East takes the ♦AK and leads a 3rd to your ♦Queen, winning.

You see immediately that you have 5 off-the-top Inevitable losers*: 2 Spades, 2 Diamonds and the ♣Ace. So you must find the ♥Queen. You can easily finesse it in either direction – a 50% Finesse Guess*. Is there any sure way to make that 100% odds - not 50% odds without peeking? No? **Yes!**

How? A simple **Discovery*** as to the location of the ♥Queen is easy this time . . .

Review the bidding: West and East both passed – didn't open - yet each has shown an AK combination, showing 7 HCP each. But one of them still has the ♥Queen and one of them still has the ♣Ace. If either of them hold both the ♥Queen and ♣Ace, that would give her 13 HCP.

Would you have opened with that 13 HCP hand?

Of course you would have, so you know both missing “interesting” cards are not in the same hand.

OK, Bob; where is the “easy” part? *Do you see it? Here it is:*

To find the ♥Queen, first Discover* the ♣Ace by leading the ♣King.

Play the ♣Jack next if defenders Play a Duck* on the ♣King lead.

It (the ♣Ace) is an Inevitable loser* anyhow but it will tell you where the ♥Queen is – in the hand without the ♣Ace. Neat, easy, classic Discovery*.

Go on and win the hand from here with no problem. . . Why not?

You know where every important card is, because of easy, early **Discovery***.

Nothing to this game, eh?

DISCOVERY FROM DEFENDERS' LEADS AND SIGNALS - Problems

Defenders use conventional leads and signals, which give you many clues about Strength and Shape: the Rule of 11 is the most obvious one. But you must know what system they use, so just ask! “Standard” is *Hi-Lo* for even count and *Hi* for positive Attitude and *Lo* for negative.

1.	♠ Q82	Contract:	West's Lead: ♠7.
		3NT	
	♠7	♠?	Declarer thinks for 2 seconds and “sees” the whole distribution of Spade cards and HCP in both the East and West hands! What?
	♠ A54		Can you do that? <i>Take all the “seconds” you need . . .</i>

2.	♠654	Contract:	West's Lead: ♠Q; East plays the ♠9.
		3NT	
	♠ Q	♠9	Declarer thinks for 2 seconds and “sees” the distribution of all Spade cards and HCP in both East and West hands.
	♠ A72		WHAT !? Can you figure it out? Again, take all the seconds you need. (But no peeking allowed)

3.	♠ 93	Contract:	West's lead: ♠5. East plays the ♠Q and you win with the ♠K. Now what? If Spades split 4 – 4, you are home with 3 Spade losers and the ♦A, but if Spades are 5 – 3, you're down. (You should be in 5♦ anyhow.)
	♥ K32	3NT	
	♦ QT2		
	♣ KQ864		
	♠ 5	♠Q	But, if Clubs split 3 – 3, you can take 9 tricks before losing to the ♦A and then losing 3 or 4 Spade tricks.
	♠ K82		
	♥ AQ9		
	♦ KJ943		But if you take ♣AKQ and Clubs don't split, then you'll also lose another Club trick – down two.
	♣ A3		
			How can you find out about Clubs as safely as possible?

DISCOVERY – *Signals Problem Answers*

<p>1.</p> <p>♠ Q82</p> <p>♠ KJ97(x)</p> <p>♠ A54</p>	<p>Contract: 3NT.</p> <p>♠Tx(x)</p>	<p>West's lead: ♠7. Some shape and HCP Inferences* from West's opening lead. Why this shape and HCP split?</p> <p>Because West has led her 4th best Spade, the Rule of Eleven applies: East has only 1 Spade higher than the ♠7: the ♠King, ♠Jack, ♠10 or ♠9. (1) It can't be the ♠King, because that means West had the ♠JT97, and would have led the ♠J, not the ♠7. (2) East's holding the ♠J or ♠T doesn't matter in this hand, because that means you have 2 Spade tricks, so play Dummy's ♠Q.</p>
<p>2.</p> <p>♠ 652</p> <p>♠ QJT_x</p> <p>♠ A84</p>	<p>Contract: 3NT</p> <p>♠K9_x</p>	<p>West's lead: ♠Q, East playing the ♠9. Here are some shape and HCP Inferences* from the opening lead.</p> <p>(1) ♠Q is the top of a sequence, so East has the ♠K. (2) East didn't play the ♠K, so she doesn't have ♠K9 doubleton, as she would have unblocked her ♠K. (3) West must have the ♠T, else East would have played it instead of the ♠9. (4) If West had ♠QJT, East would hold ♠K973, and would have played the ♠7, not the ♠9, to show even count using Standard Count.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>♠ 93</p> <p>♥ K32</p> <p>♦ QT2</p> <p>♣ KQ864</p> <p>♠ 5</p> <p>♠ K82</p> <p>♥ AQ9</p> <p>♦ KJ943</p> <p>♣ A3</p>	<p>Contract: 3NT</p> <p>♠Q</p>	<p>West's lead: ♠5. You win the ♠K. Now what?</p> <p>When they get in with their ♦Ace they will take 3 or 4 Spade tricks, so try to get 5 Club tricks first - <u>watch their count signals</u>. Play the ♣K then the ♣A. (Deception*). If both play low then high, i.e., odd count, then Clubs are split 3 – 3 and 9 tricks are there off the top. But if <u>either</u> plays high – low, Clubs are not splitting 3 – 3, so save the ♣Q and force out the ♦A, hoping for a 4 – 4 Spade split. <i>Winning play from careful observation of signals.</i></p>

DISTRIBUTION OF MISSING CARDS – PERCENTAGE ODDS

AKA “SPLIT ODDS”

Description

“Missing Cards” mean those in defenders’ hands. ➔ This is a key Declarer Technique. Without this knowledge and its constant use, all the other Declarer Techniques are downgraded considerably. It is a form of Counting, which, as you know, is easily the most important skill in all aspects of bridge. Counting to 13 is certainly not high math – or “math” at all for that matter.

Usage

Fortunately for declarers, defenders’ “missing” holdings in a suit can be predicted reliably as a set of Percentages. Those Percentages in turn influence many Declarer Lines of Play.

If defenders hold 5 Spades, then you and dummy hold 8. There’s no technical reason why all 5 missing Spades can’t be in West’s hand, but that would be very rare and “against the odds”. You **MUST** memorize the most common odds, i.e., for when defenders hold 4, 5 or 6 cards in a suit. The rule of thumb is: **An odd number of missing cards will tend heavily to split nearly evenly and an odd number will generally tend to not split evenly.** Look at 3, 5 and 7: great odds!

Distribution of cards in defenders’ hands.

7 cards split 4-3 about 62% of the time and 5-2 on 30%.	<i>Favorable (4-3) about 2/3 of the time</i>
6 cards split 4-2 about 48% of the time and 3-3 on 36%.	<i>Favorable (3-3) slightly less than ½</i>
5 cards split 3-2 about 68% of the time and 4-1 on 28 %.	<i>Favorable (3-2) 2/3+ of the time</i>
4 cards split 3-1 about 50% of the time and 2-2 on 40% .	<i>Favorable (2-2) only 40% of the time</i>
3 cards split 2-1 about 78% of the time and 3-0 on 22%.	<i>Favorable (2-1) 3/4 + of the time</i>
2 cards split 1-1 about 50% of the time.	

These percentages are *valid on average but not guaranteed* for any specific hand, of course.

See more about Split Odds in the Basic Section and in Advanced Play Planning.

DISTRIBUTION AND PERCENTAGE OF MISSING CARDS - Example 1

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>	♠J 5 4	Contract: 4 Spades. West's lead: ♥K
-	-	-	3♥	♥A 9 6 3	
P	P	3♠	P	♦A K 7	Q1 - How many Losers? ___ Winners? ___
4♠	all	pass		♣10 8 2	Q2 – What could set your 4♠ contract? ___
				♠A K 10 9 8 2	Q3 – How can you prevent a 4 th loser? ___
				♥7 4	A1 – 1 Heart, 2 Clubs and maybe 1 Spade
				♦9 5	A2 – A Heart Ruff by East, plus 3 other losers
				♣A 6 3	A3? _____

To plan the play correctly, you must remember the bidding and consider the missing card Distribution* and the HCP that it implies - - - *before* playing the first card from either hand. West probably has how many Hearts? HCP? And what does East have?

A3: How can you prevent a 4th loser? (a Heart ruff by East)

Duck* the initial ♥K lead and then Duck* the second Heart lead, saving Dummy's ♥Ace for a later Club pitch, but giving up 2 Heart losers early. A 2nd Heart loser now or a Club loser later: what's the difference? *Nada*. But DO NOT let East ruff your ♥Ace at all costs.

This means you must find the ♠Queen in the East, as you still have another Club loser. However, the odds of East having the ♠Queen are 13 – 6, because West only has 6 cards outside Hearts, and East has 13 of them, so Finesse* through East. Also, West shouldn't have more than about 10 HCP; Declarer and Dummy together have 23 HCP, so East has 7 to 9 HCP.

Declarer Techniques: Trade a Loser for a Loser* (Give up a 2nd Heart loser for a later pitch of a Club loser) and Distribution Guides the Probability of Finding Missing Cards*. “Split Odds”.

In this hand, the Spade finesse must work, or else the suit must split 2 – 2 and declarer then must play for the drop to make the contract. However, other declarers could be down 2 if East ruffs the ♥Ace and the Spade finesse also loses.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION - Example II

♠ 82	S	W	N	E	Both Vulnerable
♥ 73	1♠	P	1NT	P	
♦ Q982	4♠	P	P	P	
♣ A6432					

Against 4♠, West leads the ♥Q and, when Dummy appears, you can count 9 tricks. A Heart ruff in Dummy could be the 10th trick, (at least it could be if the defense is fast asleep).

♠ AKQJT3 But no, the defenders will see the need to stop a Heart ruff.
 ♥ 542 So, in case it is necessary to lead trumps through Declarer (West
 ♦ A might have ♠Kx from East's point of view), East overtakes the
 ♣ KJ7 opening lead with his ♥K and fires back a trump. Now What?

You are clearly not going to get your 10th trick via a Heart ruff: defenders are NOT asleep. So what's your plan now? Clubs must come to the rescue, and one obvious line of play is simply to draw trumps, cross to the ♣A and Finesse* the ♣J. There is a 50% chance that East will have the ♣Q, in which case you'll make your contract on a successful Club Finesse*. Can you find a line that is odds-on favorite to succeed, not 50%? YES! It's 68% odds that the missing Clubs will split 3-2. So you should lose the first round of Clubs. Play a Duck* and later play the ♣K, then the ♣A, hoping that the suit behaves, i.e., splits 3 - 2. But there's a slight snag, isn't there?

It won't work to win the trump shift at Trick 2, draw the remaining trumps, and then lose a Club. In that case, defenders will take 2 more Heart tricks: you DO have 3 Hearts losers in hand. Better timing is required. **Key:** The first Club must be lost before drawing any more trumps: that way there will still be a trump in Dummy to handle the 3rd round of Hearts. The whole hand:

	♠ 82	
	♥ 73	
	♦ Q982	
	♣ A6432	
♠ 97		♠ 654
♥ QJT98		♥ AK6
♦ J63		♦ KT754
♣ QT8		♣ 95
	♠ AKQJT3	
	♥ 542	
	♦ A	
	♣ KJ7	

ODDS DISTRIBUTION – *continued.*

♠ 652	Contract: No defender bidding. West's Lead: ♠J.
♥ 6542	6 NT
♦ A9	Top Tricks: you have 3 Spades; 1 Heart; 3 Diamonds and 4 Clubs for 11 tricks.
♣ KJ76	
♠ JT984	♠ 73
♥ KJ83	♥ T9
♦ 75	♦ JT63
♣ 95	♣ T8432
♠ AKQ	Possible additional tricks: the Heart Finesse (50% odds) or additional Diamond trick(s). But if the Heart finesse loses, you must still get additional Diamond tricks, whereas if additional Diamond tricks can be developed, the 50% Heart Finesse is unnecessary. Clearly the Diamond suit is the better choice, but what is the situation with 6 “missing” Diamonds? How do six “missing” cards usually split? <i>Hint: Not 3 – 3. 4 – 2 is the usual split. But in this hand, even if they split 4 – 2, you get the top 3 Diamonds plus the 5th one for your 12</i>
♥ AQ7	
♦ KQ843	
♣ AQ	

tricks, right? If they should split 3 – 3, you might get 13 tricks. But back to Play Planning; what are other considerations about the play of this hand before you play to that first trick? **Clubs** are a little weird: you have to take the ♣AQ in hand, then get to dummy to take the ♣KJ. But there's only one dummy **entry** – and that's in Diamonds, the critical suit in this hand. **Timing?** If you take the ♣AQ in hand then take the ♣KJ, you'll be out of Clubs in both hands, so if you then lose a Diamond while setting up the long Diamond trick, that hand could have a 5th Club and set you! So you can't do the awkward Club thing first; at least not take all 4 of them. **Tempo?** If you blast away and play 4 rounds of Diamonds, expecting to lose the 4th one but getting the 5th one, what do you do about the Clubs, remembering the risk of the Diamond winner also having a 5th Club? And how do you get back to dummy to collect the ♣KJ if you don't take them early? Let's think it **all** through first. *Hint: what difference when you lose a Diamond trick? How about losing it before all this other stuff becomes a problem?*

Let's Visualize* that tactic: losing a Diamond early on. Win the ♠A, take the ♣AQ to unblock the Clubs, then play . . . which Diamond? The ♦9! You expect to lose it, but everything else is still intact: the ♣KJ with the ♦Ace entry to collect them: 2 more Spades and a Heart in hand, and the overwhelming odds of picking up 3 more Diamond tricks in hand, for a virtually certain total of 12 tricks. Only a 5 – 0 Diamond split could beat you . . . very low odds indeed.

If the defenders don't win the ♦9, fine: take the ♦Ace and the ♣KJ (dumping your 2 Heart losers in hand), then return to hand in Spades for two more Diamond tricks – your planned-for total of 4 – plus your other 8 tricks, probably losing the 13th trick to the ♦J.

ELIMINATION

Description

“Elimination” means to exhaust a suit from declarer and dummy hands. This technique can force a defender “victim” to lead a suit Declarer wants her to lead for a Ruff-Sluff* or let Declarer play a Loser on Loser* or keep the lead away from a Dangerous Opponent* or any of several other reasons. *“Elimination” is synonymous with “Strip” (at Duplicate Bridge only!)*

Usage

Elimination is done in both hands, so that if either defender leads the Eliminated* suit, Declarer **or** Dummy can ruff it and the other hand can sluff a loser: a Ruff – Sluff* or Sluff - Ruff*.

And if defenders must Break a New Suit* to prevent giving Declarer a Ruff-and-Sluff* because of an Eliminated* Suit, that new suit lead can eliminate the need for Declarer to guess which way to Finesse* a Two-Way finesse* suit. If Declarer eliminates Spades from West’s hand and then concedes a trick in another suit to West, West can’t lead a Spade. This is called a “Partial Elimination”, i.e., it is successful from West’s hand but not necessarily from East’s.

Elimination or stripping is usually combined with a Throw-In* of one or either defender to create a Strip-and-Throw-in Endplay*. Some simple examples of the Elimination* Technique:

<p>1. Play the ♠A and ♠K and you have eliminated Spades, but you remain on lead.</p> <p>♠AK ♠98</p>	<p>2. Play the ♠A ♠K and ruff a Spade and you have eliminated them, but you are still on lead.</p> <p>♠AK2 ♠98</p>	<p>3. After winning West’s ♠K lead, collect trumps and play the ♠J, Throwing – In* West with her ♠Q and also Eliminating Spades.</p> <p>♠AJ ♠98</p>
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<p>4. Partially Eliminate suits other than Spades, then Throw-In* a defender in a side suit. She’ll break Spades or give you a “Sluff-Ruff”</p> <p>♠AJ2 ♠KT3</p>	<p>5. West opened 1♠ and lead the ♠Q, so win the first Spade, collect trumps, then lead the ♠A and ♠2: Who is going to be Throw-In?</p> <p>♠AK2 ♠987</p>	<p>6. West opened 1♠, led the ♠Q, so you win the ♠AK, collect trump and Clubs, then Throw-In* West in Diamonds.</p> <p>♠AK ♠98</p> <p>A Sluff and Ruff* coming maybe?</p>
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ELIMINATION - *Example I Problem*

1. ♠K8732 **Contract:** West's lead: ♣9
 ♥QJ **6 Spades**
 ♦A5 Faced with a possible Diamond and a Heart loser, how to play this
 ♣KQJT hand? "It's a terrible "Mirror Image" hand! ♠5-2, ♥2-2, ♦2-2, ♣4-4
- ♠AQJT9 There's two finesses* available: Diamonds and Hearts, right? Not!
 ♥A6
 ♦Q3 This "Diamond Finesse" is called an "idiot's finesse" or a "practice
 ♣A874 finesse" – in other words, it is not a finesse at all because West will
 cover your ♦Queen with her ♦King, leaving you with the same
 Diamond loser.

You can make this hand if you can get West to lead a Heart, right? Yes, guaranteed.

Or, if you can get her to lead another suit so you can ruff in Dummy and sluff your Diamond loser, right? (A Ruff – Sluff*). How can you force either one of these situations?

How? An Elimination Play plus a Throw-in* to West to get her on lead. *Let's see*

Example I answer

First, collect trumps, leaving at least one trump in both hands. *One or more trumps in both hands is necessary for a Sluff-and-Ruff*.*

Then Eliminate* the Club suit by taking all the Club tricks so defenders have only Diamonds and Hearts left. Now it's time for a Throw-In, hoping West is the victim.

Play the ♦Ace and the ♦Queen, eliminating Diamonds from both hands. If West wins the ♦K, claim! Why? Because she has to lead a Heart, giving you the free finesse in Hearts, or else she has to lead another Diamond for a Ruff in dummy and a sluff of your losing Heart in hand.

If East wins the ♦Queen, she has the same Ruff and Sluff* problem as West in Diamonds. Or else she will lead a Heart, in which case you have to Duck* her Heart lead to Dummy's ♥Queen - - a 50% odds finesse, as it was from the start. But at least you gave it a good try for 100% odds by Elimination of Spades and Clubs and trying to Throw-In* West.

An Elimination Play? Yes, but also a Throw-In* for a possible End-Play* on West, or a Duck* plus the threat of a winning Ruff and Sluff* on East. *There are virtually always multiple Declarer Techniques in all difficult or interesting hands.*

ELIMINATION - *Example II*

♠ AQ654 **Contract: 6 Hearts.** West's Lead: the ♣Q.

♥ K843

♦ K7

♣ 76

You have 11 tricks, and the obvious route to 12 is via a Spade finesse.

Does that mean that your slam is a 50% shot?

♠ 732

♥ AQJ972

♦ AQ

♣ AK

No, because after drawing trumps you can improve the chance of success to 53% by cashing the ♠A first (in case the ♠K is singleton with East) and then leading toward the ♠Q, gaining if the ♠K is in the East.

That's a little percentage gain, but you can do much better than that.

So, how should you maximize your chances for 12 tricks?

ELIMINATION - *Example II – Answer*

<p>♠ AQ654 ♥ K843 ♦ K7 ♣ 76</p> <p>♠ JT9 ♥ 65 ♦ J965 ♣ QJT9</p> <p>♠ 732 ♥ AQJ972 ♦ AQ ♣ AK</p>	<p>♠ K8 ♥ T ♦ T8432 ♣ 85432</p>	<p>Contract: 6 Hearts. <i>These cards have been played.</i></p> <p>Having won the opening lead and drawn trumps, cash all 4 minor suit winners and then lead a Spade to the ♠Ace.</p> <p>Then cross back to hand with a trump and lead a Spade towards Dummy's ♠Queen.</p> <p>East wins the ♠King on the second round of the suit, but has no safe Exit Card*, meaning that with nothing left to lead but minor suit cards, whatever she leads will give Declarer a Sluff and Ruff* of her Spade loser in hand plus a ruff on the board. Making 12 tricks.</p>
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Cashing the minor suit winners (Elimination*) and then leading toward the ♠A before leading towards the ♠Q gives declarer four ways to succeed:

- ... if the ♠Kx(x) is with West
- ... if the ♠K is singleton with East
- ... if the ♠K is doubleton with East
- ... if East has all 5 Spades (!) because when declarer leads toward the ♠Ace and West shows out, dummy Plays a Duck* and East is End-Played* in Spades.

The total chances of success works out to 69% using all these Techniques: Strip*, Throw-In* and Sluff-Ruff*. Certainly better than the 50% Finesse Guess* chance you started this hand with!

You don't need to be a mathematician to make the contract because it's easy to see that four chances are better than one, even if you don't know exactly why, but you see the way to get those extra chances is to strip East of all her Safe Exit* cards.

Defenders: try to keep a Safe Exit card if you can! This is why.

ELIMINATING SAFE EXIT CARDS

Description

End Plays are usually, not always, played in suit contracts. One of the keys to a successful End Play is to identify and “Throw-In”* a defender. (Usually, it’s a specific one but sometimes it can be either defender). To Throw-In* a defender means to force her to take a trick that leads to an advantageous return lead for Declarer. “Advantageous return lead” types are described below.

The key to success is that the defender – the “victim” of the Throw-In - must NOT have a “safe” card she can return that will frustrate Declarer’s winning End Play. One example of a “Safe” Exit card could be a trump, which is why End Plays usually happen after defenders’ trumps are drawn. Or, a card of a suit in which dummy holds AK is probably “Safe” for the defender, unless declarer has no Entry to the AK in the dummy.

Eliminating all “Safe Exit Cards” is the point of this Technique.

Usage

Looking at some types of “Unsafe Exit Cards” may make the concept easier to understand.

(1) If both declarer and dummy in a Spade contract are void of Clubs, for example, and declarer can Throw-In a victim who holds only Clubs, then declarer gets a sluff-and-ruff, meaning she ruffs in one hand and pitches a loser in the other hand. You could say “Yes, but she lost the trick that she used to Throw-In the victim. True, but declarer had 2 losers before the Throw-In: as a result of the End Play, she pitched one of them. *And, at Duplicate, one trick means*

(2) If the victim can be forced to Break a New Suit*, meaning she is the first to lead a specific suit, that frequently is worth a trick or more to declarer. It often precludes declarer from having to take a 50% Finesse Guess*. For example, with ♠AJ3 in dummy and ♠KT2 in hand, any Spade lead from either victim gives declarer all 3 Spade tricks. Breaking a New Suit* is often a defensive disaster, or, as we call it, a “declarer masterpiece”.

(3) If declarer (South) holds ♣AQ and can force West to lead a Club, she wins both Club tricks. If West holds only Clubs, declarer could even lead the ♣2 at the 11th trick, for example, throwing-in West with a losing Club, but then West must lead into declarer’s ♣AQ. Declarer wins 2 of 3 Clubs.

(4) Another type of End Play could be if declarer can force West to lead a card that will give declarer, South, a free finesse of important cards in East’s hand. For example, forcing West to lead a Spade thru the ♠KJ in the East into the ♠AQ in the South, when North, the dummy, has no Spades.

(5) Usually, End Plays present the victim with a “Devils Choice” of 2 unsafe exit suits: lead a Club, giving declarer a Sluff-And-Ruff, or a lead a Heart, Breaking the Heart suit.

DECLARER PLAY 2014

The Delayed End Play. The Throw-In does not have to immediately cause a disastrous return lead by the victim.

For example, suppose West started your 3NT Contract by leading her ♠K. Later, when Declarer has set up an End Play on West, stripping her of all other suits, Declarer can lead a Spade and let West take her 2 or 3 more Spade tricks, but, eventually, West has to make the disastrous lead declarer planned for – Breaking the Heart Suit, for example. Defenders can sometimes anticipate this ending and pitch unsafe Exit Cards. Really good defenders, that is.

Completely “Stripping” a defender of a suit is not literally the only way to establish an End Play after a Throw-In. In a suit contract, we often use Elimination to void dummy and declarer of a suit; Clubs, for example. Although the victim may still have a Club to lead, it is no longer a “Safe” Exit card, as it gives declarer a Sluff-and-Ruff. So “stripping” a defender isn’t necessarily about voiding the suit per se, it’s about stripping the SAFETY of that suit as a return lead.

♠KQ7	Contract:	West’s lead: ♥Q. West sees 2 Club winners as soon as dummy appears.
♥A972		
♦AQJ	6 Spades	A quick look at this slam hand: no problems in Spades, Hearts or Diamonds, but 2 Club losers. How can you make 6 Spades: you have no place to pitch Club losers.
♣753		
♥Q		
♣KJx		<u>Almost true:</u> you do have one Club pitch on the 3 rd high Diamond – so there goes one Club loser at some point.
♠AJT98		When you play that 3 rd Diamond, it Eliminates* Diamonds from both hands, right?
♥K4		
♦KT		
♣AQ42		So, for that 11th trick, you lead Dummy’s last Heart, pitching your 2nd Club loser - a Loser on Loser* play.
		You have also Thrown-In* West in Hearts when she has nothing left to lead except Clubs, so you win the last 2 tricks in Clubs. <i>Brilliant! Techniques Rule!</i>

(More detail on this Classic End Play hand in the End Play Techniques pages.)

ENDPLAY

Description

End Plays are situations contrived by you to force a defender to lead to your advantage, usually when there are few cards left in the hand, thus it's an "Ending" play. The "Declarer's advantage" is forcing a defender to (1) give up a Sluff-and-Ruff*, or (2) Break a New Suit*, which is usually to Declarer's advantage, such as with a Two-Way Finesse* or lead into your ♣AQ.

We saw how Elimination is one technique used to set up End Plays, in the Eliminate Safe Exit Card write-up.

Usage

Usually, End Plays are accomplished by a Throw-In* to a defender, i.e., deliberately losing a trick to a specific defender, or sometimes to either one, so that she has to lead into Declarer's or Dummy's winning hand.

How can you know which defender will win the Throw-in*?

If West leads the ♠K on the opening lead, who has the ♠Q? When you later lead your losing ♠J, who is going to win it? (A Throw-In* of West in Spades). Or, if East has bid 3 Diamonds and West shows out along the way, who will win a losing Diamond trick from your hand?

Discovery* is another answer to these types of questions, as well as remembering the bidding and opening lead and defensive signals.

Why "either defender"?

If you have a 3 – 3 split Two-Way Finesse* in Clubs, as shown below, you can collect trump, Eliminate* side suits by stripping both hands as the Throw-In trick is played. Then it doesn't matter which defender wins, because she will be forced to give up a Sluff-and-Ruff* or break the Club suit, guaranteeing Declarer no losers.

- | | |
|------|---|
| ♣KJ2 | Here's a Two-Way Finesse* Club suit |
| ♣AT3 | If you start Clubs, you have 50% Finesse odds, but if either defender leads any Club, you make all 3 Club tricks – 100% guaranteed. Or, if either defender leads an Eliminated* side-suit, you Ruff and then Sluff* a Club from either hand, and again have no Club losers. |

END-PLAY I – a classic example . Note: This example uses Visualization*, Elimination*, Sluff – and – Ruff*, Throw-In*, Entry Management* and Loser on Loser* Declarer Techniques because it is an illustration of all these techniques, and how they are used together.

<p>♠KQ7 ♥A972 ♦AQJ ♣753</p> <p>♥Q</p> <p>♣KJx</p> <p>♠AJT98 ♥K4 ♦KT ♣AQ42</p>	<p>Contract: 6 Spades</p>	<p>West's lead: ♥Q. West sees 2 Club winners as soon as dummy appears.</p> <p>A quick look at this slam hand: no problems in Spades, Hearts or Diamonds, but 2 Club losers. How can you make 6 Spades: you have nowhere to pitch Clubs?</p> <p><u>Almost</u> true: you do have one Club pitch on the 3rd high Diamond – so there goes one Club loser at some point.</p> <p>When you play that 3rd Diamond, that Eliminates* Diamonds from both hands, right? But Diamonds are a vital Dummy Entry suit in this hand.</p> <p>Somehow you have to get West to lead Clubs into your ♣AQ, or give you a Sluff-and-Ruff*, pitching a 2nd Club loser. But you can't get her to lead a Club without putting her into the lead - giving her a trick, right? Right?</p>
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More to follow . . .

END-PLAY – a classic example continued

<p>3.</p> <p>♠-</p> <p>♥9</p> <p>♦-</p> <p>♣753</p> <p>♠-</p> <p>♥J</p> <p>♦-</p> <p>♣KJx</p> <p>♠A</p> <p>♥-</p> <p>♦-</p> <p>♣AQ4</p>	<p>Contract: West's lead: ♥Q. West sees 2 Club winners as soon as dummy appears.</p> <p>6 Spades</p> <p>♠-</p> <p>♥-</p> <p>♦9</p> <p>♣xxx</p>	<p>Also, critically, you saved the 3 Diamond tricks so as to be in the Dummy to lead the 10th trick. If you had won your 3 Diamond tricks earlier, you would be down – you MUST save them to be in Dummy when leading to the 10th trick. (Entry Management*)</p> <p>And, for that 10th trick, you lead Dummy's Heart, pitching your 2nd Club loser – the ♣4 – a Loser on Loser*.</p> <p>You have also Thrown-In* West in Hearts when she has nothing left to lead except Clubs, so you win the last 2 tricks in Clubs. <i>Brilliant!</i> Techniques Rule!</p>
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Some more things about this Classic example hand.

Q.1. How did I know West had 1 Heart left at the 10th trick?

A.1. Because you counted everyone's Hearts, of course; plus; doesn't the lead of a ♥Q against a Slam suggest 4 Hearts or at least QJx?

Q.2. What if West pitched her 4th Heart? Then she couldn't be Thrown-In with the ♥Jack.

A.2. Great idea, West, but then Dummy's 4th Heart is **good**, and away goes a Club loser.
Defenders: Keep length with Dummy. Remember?

Q.3. Why such fanaticism about Timing* (i.e., the sequence of tricks).

A.3. Because you must Visualize* the play of the last few tricks - - specifically the 10th trick in this example. You should Visualize* Diamond Entry Management* before the first card is played.

You have only 1 Entry to Dummy in Hearts, and must ruff out one of Dummy's Hearts, so you need a way to get back to Dummy late in the play. It can't be in trumps, because you need all 3 of them to collect defenders' trumps early. So it has to be in Diamonds, and therefore you must leave them until near the end. What difference when you win those 3 tricks and pitch a Club – no difference. But what difference when you must be in the Dummy to make your Slam with a Throw-In* of West? *All the difference there is in the game of Duplicate: making your contract.*

END PLAY – *Example II*

♠ A6	Contract: 6 Clubs
♥ A9654	Lead ♠ Jack
♦ 765	
♣ KQ3	
♠ K5	
♥ 2	
♦ AQ8	
♣ AJT9876	

Your Play Planning will see that there is a danger of losing 2 Diamonds – 50% + or - depending on the Diamond finesse. But, can you get West to lead a Diamond?

Possibly: but maybe the 5th Heart will set up. So first give that a try, as there's no other Length Strength suit to generate additional tricks for Diamond pitches. (Suit Establishment*)

Win the ♠King and play the ♥Ace and then ruff a Heart, all following. Then to Dummy with a trump, both defenders following, and then lead a 3rd Heart, *but East plays a Spade*.

Rats! West has 5 Hearts, so they won't set up. You can ruff the 3rd one, but then what?

Because West has to win the 5th Heart trick if you play it, let's give her a Heart trick and see if she will lead a Diamond for us. Can you force her to lead a Diamond? Yes you can.

Use the **End-play* Technique . . .** via a **Throw-In*** After ruffing the 3rd Heart, go to Dummy with the ♠Ace and ruff the 4th Heart, then back to Dummy again with a trump (Eliminating* defenders' trumps) and lead the 5th Heart, pitching your ♦9. A Throw-In* into West in Hearts.

West must win the 5th Heart and then she must (1) lead a Diamond into your ♦AQ or (2) lead a Spade, giving you a Ruff-and-Sluff* of your losing ♦Q. The End-Play*. Either way, all the remaining tricks are yours once West is Thrown-In* to lead to the 12th trick.

A perfect End Play with an Elimination/Strip* and a Throw-In* because you eliminated all cards in West's hand except Spades and Diamonds. And it worked because even though Hearts didn't break, West was the Throw-In* victim. If Hearts broke, it's a Length Strength hand, with the 5th Heart as your 12th trick, or, if West pitches her 5th Heart, Dummy's is good.

ENTRY MANAGEMENT

Description

Entry Management is the technique of recognizing and counting entries to Dummy and to hand, and in forcing additional ones where there appears to be none. Foremost is your need to have enough entries to Dummy to collect tricks established there, and sometimes in hand as well.

Notice it is not named Trump Management; the two are related, but Entry Management can be in any suit, not just trumps. But Trumps can be Entries for Entry Management.

Usage

Entry problems can be solved with trumps or side suits using several techniques, but planning the entire play before playing to the 1st trick is vital to assure success. A necessary part of that planning on every hand is to count how many entries you need – to Dummy or to hand or both – before you start to play. But during play, keep as many entries to both hands as possible, as long as possible, even if you don't have a specific need for them as the play starts. It's a very valuable habit to develop: Keep Entries on both sides as long as possible.

You might get a 5 – 0 split in a suit, as you know: there's no guarantee of 3 – 2 splits or 4 – 1 every time.

♠ 6432 Trump: Spades

♥ A93

♦ -xx

♣ -

♠ AKQJ5

♥ K8

♦ -

♣ -

Spades are trump, but you must NOT trump the 3rd Heart trick with the ♠5 – trump it with the ♠Ace if you want, but NOT the 5. That ♠6432 is an Entry to Dummy, or “another entry to Dummy”, leading your ♠5 from hand. Be especially aware of small cards in Dummy when you have smaller cards in hand to lead after defenders' trumps are collected. E.g., the ♠5 to the ♠6.

Often you can establish a lengthy suit in Dummy if you ruff it two or three times in hand, BUT you also have to be able to get back to Dummy to collect that long trick, or it's pointless to ruff those several tricks. See *Jettison** and *Unblocking** and *Throw-In** and *Unblocking* Declarer techniques for additional ways to effect Entry Management.*

ENTRY MANAGEMENT - *Examples*

1. ♠6543 **Contract:** West's Lead: the ♥A, then the ♥K, then the ♥Q.
 ♥864 **4 Spades.**
 ♦KQJ What should you play on the ♥Q?
 ♣865 As Eddie says above "If you ruff it in hand, you better ruff
 with the ♠Ace and not the ♠2, or down you go!
 I see a more elegant solution: pitch your ♦Ace on the ♥Q and
 claim. (An Unblock* of Dummy's ♦Ace.) Getting to dummy
 with the ♠2 to the ♠6 after collecting trumps high. But the key
 in either case is to recognize the ♠6 as an Entry*.
- ♠AKQJT2
 ♥T7
 ♦A
 ♣AJ43

2. ♠543 **Contract:** West's Lead: the ♦9. (*Defenders are never going to lead a*
 ♥J9 **6 Hearts** *Spade – forget it.*) The good news is that the ♠K is in the East,
 ♦JT5 but it is ♠Kxx, so it won't drop. How to get to dummy twice?
 ♣Q8542 See any chance of a solution? How about a 50% chance?
 Would you take a 50% chance sight unseen?
 Here it is: lead to dummy's ♥9! A Finesse* of the ♥T.
 Win the Spade Finesse* in hand, then back to the ♥J for
 another Spade Finesse* and your contract. *Brilliant!*
- ♠AQJ
 ♥AKQ432
 ♦AKQ
 ♣7

3. ♠8765 **Contract:** West's Lead: the ♠Q.
 ♥T4 **4 Hearts.**
 ♦9765 How to get to those lovely Club winners in dummy to pitch
 ♣AKQ your Diamond losers? There's one chance: lead toward
 dummy's ♥T.
 You'll get there the first time or the 2nd time if West has the
 ♥Jack – a 50% chance, but better than none at all. *Always*
 Visualize potential entries in dummy.*
- ♠A92
 ♥AKQ632
 ♦A842
 ♣---

ENTRY MANAGEMENT - *Examples continued*

4. ♠Q **Contract:** West's Lead: ♣6. A Free Club Finesse!
 ♡AT862 **3 NT**
 ♦AKQJ2
 ♣KJ

 ♠KT64
 ♡3
 ♦765
 ♣A5432
- But **you** don't play to a single trick before planning the whole hand and counting your winners, right? Right! So let's see: you have 5 Diamonds, 2 Clubs, 1 Heart and 1 Spade for 9 tricks. So you can take the Club Finesse* for 10 tricks, right?
- No! If you play the ♣J, East will cover and it you'll never get back to hand to collect your ♠K. No. Free. Anything. Ever.

5. ♠72 **Contract:** West leads the ♡J.
 ♡K **3 NT**
 ♦K43
 ♣AKQJ983

 ♠J943
 ♡AQ5
 ♦QT65
 ♣74
- Oh Good. 3 Hearts and 7 Clubs and a Diamond for 11 tricks. Right? (*You know the answer!*)
- You had better get your 9 tricks and your contract without letting defenders in to take their Diamond and 5 Spades. Overtake the ♡K with the ♡A, take the ♡Q and your 7 Clubs. In a hurry.

6. ♠--- **Contract:** West leads the ♣Q. *East's double was a Lightner Double, calling for the lead of dummy's first bid suit – Hearts. Apparently, she has the ♡AQxx.*
 ♡KT965 **6 Spades.**
 ♦KQJT
 ♣AK73

 ♠AKQJT98
 ♡7432
 ♦A
 ♣2
- Doubled by
 East. North bid
 2♥ over South's
 1♠ opening.
- How many Hearts does West have? How about **none!** East has 5 of them. So what? (*You're lucky, that's what!*)
- How to make this doubled contract with those 8 poor Hearts? Well, you're in dummy for the first and only time, so guess what? Another dramatic Unblock*. Dump your ♦Ace on Dummy's ♣King, then play Dummy's Diamonds to pitch 3 Heart losers – making at least 6 Spades Doubled, maybe 7.

ENTRY MANAGEMENT - Problems

1.	♠643 ♥52 ♦7653 ♣7632	Contract: 4 Spades	West's Lead: ♦A then ♦K then ♦Q, East sluffing a Heart on the 3 rd Diamond. South, what is your plan?
	♠KQJ9875 ♥AQ ♦J4 ♣AK	West opened 1♦ and East bid 1♥.	

2.	♠A42 ♠KQ8753	Contract: 4 Spades. Spades split 2 – 2.	(A) How can you draw 2 rounds of Spades, ending in Dummy and keep maximum transportation options? (B) How can you draw 2 rounds of Spades, ending in Declarer's hand and keep maximum transportation options?
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3.	♠762 ♥QT8 ♦KQJT92 ♣2 ♠AJ98 ♥A95 ♦5 ♣AQ763	Contract: 3 NT	West's Lead: ♥6. How can you get (back) to Dummy's Diamonds after East Holds-Up* and takes the 2 nd Diamond trick?
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4.	♠862 ♥T97 ♦532 ♣KQ43 ♠QJ3 ♥KQ ♦AQJT ♣AJ82	Contract: 3NT	West's Lead: a Heart. How should you take your 8 tricks after your ♥Q wins?
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ENTRY MANAGEMENT - Problem Answers:

<p>1. ♠643 Contract: ♠52 4 Spades ♦7653 West opened 1♦ and East ♣7632 bid 1♥.</p> <p> ♠KQJ9875 ♥AQ ♦J4 ♣AK</p> <p>Ruff the 3rd Diamond with the ♠9, ♠8 or ♠7; not the ♠5: you need it for an entry to Dummy's ♠6 for the Heart finesse thru East. Visualize* and <u>treasure</u> those dummy entries*!</p>	<p>2. ♠A42 Contract: 4 Spades</p> <p> ♠KQ8753</p> <p>(2a) How can you draw 2 rounds of Spades, ending in Dummy and keep maximum transportation options? (If Spades split 2 – 2)</p> <p>Play the ♠K, then the ♠8, ♠7 or ♠5 to ♠A, leaving the ♠3 to the ♠4 if needed.</p> <p>(2b) Play 2 rounds ending in Declarer's hand. The ♠8,7 or 5 to the ♠A, then the ♠2 to the ♠K, keeping the ♠4 as a Dummy entry.</p>
<p>3. ♠762 Contract: 3 NT. ♥QT8 West leads the ♥6. ♦KQJT92 ♣2</p> <p> ♠AJ98 ♥A95 ♦5 ♣AQ763</p> <p>How to play for 9 tricks? (or How to get back to dummy's Diamonds after defender holds up until the 2nd Diamond is played?)</p> <p>You will have to lead twice toward the ♥Q, hoping West has the ♥King. Therefore, you must win the first trick with the ♥A, NOT the ♥Queen.</p>	<p>4. ♠862 Contract: 3 NT. ♥T97 West leads a Heart. ♦532 ♣KQ43</p> <p> ♠QJ3 ♥KQ ♦AQJT ♣AJ82</p> <p>How to take 8 more tricks at once after the ♥Q? If you give up the lead . . . Uh Oh!</p> <p>You need 3 Club entries in dummy for 3 Diamond finesses: first lead the ♣A, playing dummy's ♣4, then the ♣8 to the ♣K and 1st finesse; the ♣J to the ♣Q for the 2nd finesse and finally the ♣2 to the ♣3 for the 3rd Diamond finesse.</p>

EXTREME HAND PATTERNS

All hands have “patterns”. But some are “extreme”, because the shape is so far in one direction of the other, they have to be played (and should bid differently).

Patterns can mean differences of several or many tricks, given the same Brute Strength - HCP. Pattern differences are largely related to Length Strength. As a Declarer, you must recognize the implications of Hand Patterns in planning your play.

The classic illustration of such extremity is suggested by the theoretical question:

“How many “points” would you have in a hand with 13 Clubs? and how many tricks would you take in the same hand?”

The answers are “10 HCP and all 13 tricks”, or “25 points and all 13 tricks” (counting 3 voids) and 10 HCP, or “40 points and all 13 tricks”. The point is that Bridge is NOT a game about “points”: it is a game about tricks.

It is also easy to get the two confused, as bidding styles focus on HCP more than Tricks. Better bidders know this and focus their bidding on tricks, not exclusively on HCP. But that’s Bidding: what about Declaring?

Consider these hands as Declarer; regardless of how your bidding got to your final contract:

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | <p>♠AK9
♥xxx
♦AK9
♣xxxxx</p> <p>♠xxxx
♥AK9
♦xxx
♣AK9</p> | <p>Contract: West leads the ♦Q.
3 NT</p> <p>8 Brute Strength tricks (HCP) off the top, and low chances for another trick anywhere else: the only possibility is a 3 – 3 split in Spades or in Clubs, and Entries problems to gather them, too. Not <u>impossible</u>, but hard to make. Yet, HCP-wise, there are 28 HCP in the hand, which is more than enough to make an average 3NT contract; we might expect to make 4 or 5 NT, considering only HCP. Everyone will be in 3NT, as it’s the logical contract; but down one is Par, no doubt.</p> |
|----|--|--|

Why? The HCP are excessive if anything for a theoretical 3NT Contract; but the Hand Pattern is atrocious: totally Flat – two “pancakes”, i.e., 4-3-3-3 shape, with not even a 4 – 4 fit anywhere between the two hands.

How to Play or Plan this hand? Who knows? This is the dreaded “Mirror Hand”: identical, flat distribution in both hands in all suits, despite more than adequate HCP – high Brute Strength, but almost zero Length Strength.

2. ♠AKT96 **Contract:** West leads the ♦Q.
 ♥xx **3 NT or**
 ♦AK **4 Spades** The same 8 Brute Strength tricks off the top as in #1 above,
 ♣xxxx but very high odds for more tricks in Spades or in Clubs or
 in NoTrump: an average split in either Spades or Clubs, and
 straightforward play to gather them, because of adequate
 Entries. Not difficult, and easy to plan and to make as many
 as 12 tricks.

 ♠xxxx Yet, HCP-wise, there's still just 28 HCP, which should be
 ♥AK9 more than enough to make a 3NT or a 4♠ Contract.; but
 ♦xx again we should expect to make 4 or 5 or 6 NT or 6♠,
 ♣AKQ9 considering HCP *plus* Shape: in other words a great Hand
 Pattern.

 Everyone will be in 4♠, 5♠ or 6♠, 6 NT or 3 NT, as they are
 all logical contracts; 1 to 3 overtricks is the norm, and better
 bidders will be in Slam, probably making.

And the difference between these 2 hands is **exactly zero HCP**: it's all in the Hand Pattern.

It might be a little harder to get to 6♠ or 6NT; but they are the right contracts, and good bidders will get there.

But, this is a class in Declarer Play: not bidding. What are the Implications for Declarer Play if you are in 4♠ or 3NT?

1) Realize you are in the wrong contract, even though others will make the same error.

(2) Plan and Play as though you are in the better 6♠ Contract.; in other words, play as though you are in a Slam. A decent break in Spades or Clubs will give you 12 tricks: take them; maybe lose to those who bid the Slam or win over those who only make 5. Visualize and play for 12 tricks; lose only to better bidders; not to wimpy Declarers.

In the end, you will win more Masterpoints, and be known as a better Declarer to yourself and your partners, by playing for 6 even if you are in 5 or 4.

Let's look at some more Extreme Hand Patterns, and the difference they make in tricks taken. That is, after all, all that matters in Bridge: how many tricks did you take?

And did you bid for the maximum number that you made?

Example Hand Pattern - Hand A; 2 Spades, doubled; 0 HCP: East-West have **all 40** HCP.

Declarer (<i>Opened 2♠, Really, really weak.</i>)	With Spades as trumps, and 0 (Zero) HCP, how many tricks might Hand A take at 2 Spades?
♠XXXXXX ♥X ♦XXXXXX ♣ - (6=1=6=0)	
Dummy	NOT. EVEN. CLOSE. To. 8. TRICKS. At most 5 tricks. How? A good Hand Pattern, of course.
♠XXX ♥X ♦XXX ♣XXXXXX (3=1=3=6)	

Look at Hand A at a 2 ♠ contract: Heart Losers? 1. Club Losers? 0. Diamond Losers? Max 3. Spade Losers? A max of 4, but only if the ♠A, ♠K, ♠Q and ♠J – all 4 top trump honors - are in 1 defender's hand, i.e., a 4 – 0 split. Total losers? 8 max, and so 5 winners, for - 3, scoring minus 500, doubled, of course. Check it out. And with not a single HCP. Opponents can make 7 NT!

But, what if the top 4 Spades are split 2 – 2 between defenders' hands? In other words, a 40% odds Spade split. Regardless of what the opening lead is, Defenders can take only 1 Heart and 3 Diamonds and 2 Spades, for 5 tricks: meaning Declarer **makes** 2 Spades – 8 tricks. And with 0 HCP – ZERO! 2 Spades would be doubled, Vulnerable or not, making +590 or +790 for Declarer. And the opponents can make 7 NT because they don't lose ANY tricks!
Embarrassing? You betcha! Big Time! But True!

And what did we change? A 2 – 2 Spade split in defender's hands - a 40% chance. **That's all!**

How many tricks might Hand A take with Diamonds as trumps? Figure it out: it is similarly dramatic with just a couple of changes in defenders' trump split.

So, what is it about dramatic Hand Patterns that makes such differences in possible scores?

It's the fact that even minor variations in trump splits produce **huge** variations in trick totals. A "Pancake" hand of 4-3-3-3 has virtually no tricks other than Brute Strength tricks. (Aces and Kings, for example). And, if both dummy and declarer are Pancakes, then good luck! No extra tricks anywhere; no ruffs in a suit contract and no Length Strength tricks in any contract.

But, with 5 – 3 or other good splits in side suits or trumps or both, or singletons / doubletons / voids in a suit contract, there are lots of extra trick possibilities, regardless of Brute Strength.

A good Hand Pattern, especially with one or both hands far away from a Pancake, is a virtual guarantee of extra tricks, in a suit or NT contract. Entries* are the key factor to collect those extra tricks.

Why bother with this Hand Pattern analysis? Does it ever happen? You bet it does, although never in the extreme case as in Hand A above. In fact, it is true to a certain extent in every hand; the worst Hand Pattern by far is a Pancake facing a Pancake. But with two 5+ cards suits and some trump support, regardless of Brute Strength, you are going to take some tricks.

FINESSE AVOIDANCE

Description

This is Finesse Avoidance and it is far more important to good Declarer Play than Taking a Finesse, which follows. It should be your first thought about apparent Finesses*: How can I avoid them?

The first rule is to make a finesse your last choice, not your first. Why? It will be there later; if nothing else works, you can always do it then. But if you can get a defender to lead into it, or you can dump your loser in that suit, or you can End Play* a defender or Squeeze* her, go ahead and do it. Try everything else before that 50% odds Finesse Guess*. 50% isn't good enough.

And, don't finesse because you know how to: finesse if there's no better way, and do it carefully, in context of the contract (being aware of Dangerous Opponents, for example) and what you've learned so far in the play, i.e., Discovery*.

And, especially, no Practice Finesses, please! They are finesses you take because it looks like one but that you don't need at all.

Usage

Carefully reviewing the following examples best illustrates how and why to avoid Finesses until you have tried everything else.

OK, let's go learn how NOT to take finesses. But first, be sure you know the Distribution of Suits in Hidden Hands – Percentages.* (Split Odds*)

Read that topic carefully before continuing with reading Finesse Avoidance, or any other Declarer Technique, for that matter.

Finesse Avoidance Rules!

FINESSE AVOIDANCE - Examples I

1.	♠987 ♥AJT3 ♦QJT ♣AQT	Contract: West's Lead: ♦2 4 Hearts	East-West take 2 Diamonds, then East ruffs a 3 rd Diamond and leads a low Spade. Should you play your ♠A or your ♠Q? Why? Why not?
	♠AQ ♥KQ987 ♦7543 ♣J3		

2.	♠J98 ♥AKT3 ♦QJT ♣AQ4	Contract: West's Lead: ♦A 4 Hearts	West takes 2 Diamonds, then East ruffs the 3 rd and leads a Spade - again. Now what?
	♠AK ♥QJ987 ♦5432 ♣73		

3.	♠AKJ2 ♥K63 ♦752 ♣KQ7	Contract: West's Lead: ♦K 6 Hearts	You take the ♦Ace and then . . . ?
	♠Q4 ♥AJ854 ♦AJ ♣AJT3		

FINESSE AVOIDANCE - *Examples I - continued*

4. ♠T8 **Contract:** West's Lead: ♦K
 ♡QJT **4 Hearts**
 ♦643 E-W take 3 Diamonds and East then leads a Spade . . . again!
 ♣K9764 Which Spade this time? ♠A or ♠Q?

 ♠AQ
 ♡AK9862
 ♦J98
 ♣A3

5. ♠AQ **Contract:** West's Lead: ♠4
 ♡KQ765 **4 Hearts**
 ♦Q72 Boring!
 ♣987 Which Spade this time? (*like that's a mystery!*)

 ♠32
 ♡AJT98
 ♦J65
 ♣AKQ

6. ♠KQ4 **Contract:** West's Lead: the ♡A, then the ♡K
 ♡85 **5 Diamonds**
 ♦JT54 Ruff the ♡K and . . .
 ♣A874

 ♠A76
 ♡4
 ♦AQ9872
 ♣KJT

FINESSE AVOIDANCE - *Examples I Answers*

1.	♠987 ♥AJT3 ♦QJT ♣AQT ♠AQ ♥KQ987 ♦7543 ♣J3	Contract: West's Lead: ♦2 4 Hearts East-West takes 2 Diamonds, then East ruffs the 3 rd and leads a Spade. Play the ♠A. . . . because? Because even if the Spade finesse worked, you will still need the Club finesse to work; but if the Club Finesse* works, you can pitch your Spade loser.
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2.	♠J98 ♥AKT3 ♦QJT ♣AQ4 ♠AK ♥QJ987 ♦5432 ♣73	Contract: West's Lead: ♦A 4 Hearts West takes 2 Diamonds, then East ruffs the 3 rd and leads a Spade. Now what? Win a Spade, draw trump and play the other Spade. However unlikely, the ♠Q <i>could</i> drop, eliminating the Club Finesse* problem. If it doesn't, only then take the Club finesse. <i>A 2nd chance, no matter how slim, is better than none.</i>
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3.	♠AKJ2 ♥K63 ♦752 ♣KQ7 ♠Q4 ♥AJ854 ♦AJ ♣AJT3	Contract: West's Lead: ♦K 6 Hearts You take the ♦Ace and then . . . ? Play the ♥Ace and ♥King, the ♥Queen not falling. Then play 3 Spades, pitching the ♦J. Why? Because there is a 62% chance of a 4-3 Spade fit for the Diamond pitch vs. a 50% chance of the Heart finesse succeeding. <i>Know the rough odds of suit splits and use them to give yourself your best chances. Don't fight it: you MUST know these odds. Rough odds are OK: not the exact numbers.</i>
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FINESSE AVOIDANCE I *Answers – continued*

4. ♠T8
 ♥QJT
 ♦643
 ♣K9764
- ♠AQ
 ♥AK9862
 ♦J98
 ♣A3

Contract: West's Lead: ♦K. E-W take 3 Diamonds and East leads a Spade . . . again! Which Spade? The ♠Ace, of course.

Then ♣A, ♣K and ruff a Club with the ♥A. Then to Dummy with a Heart and ruff another Club with the ♥K and back to Dummy; collect trumps and pitch the ♠Q on the long Club.

Its 36% odds of a 3 – 3 Club split plus 48% more if its 4-2, for a total of 84% odds of success vs. 50% on a Spade Finesse. In this case, 4 – 2 OR 3 – 3 splits win for you.

5. ♠AQ
 ♥KQ765
 ♦Q72
 ♣987
- ♠32
 ♥AJT98
 ♦J65
 ♣AKQ

Contract: West's lead: ♠4 *Boring!* Play the ♠A again, naturally!

Collect trump, then play all 3 Clubs, (an Elimination*) then the ♠Q (a Throw-In*) that doesn't matter which defender wins!

That forces defenders to Break the Diamond suit*, giving you a trick, or give you a Ruff and a Sluff* of a Diamond loser if they lead Spades or Clubs. Spades are an "equal length suit", ideal for a Throw-In* because it eliminates the suit in both hands on the same trick. Equal length Elimination suits are great.

6. ♠KQ4
 ♥85
 ♦JT54
 ♣A874
- ♠A76
 ♥4
 ♦AQ9872
 ♣KJT

Contract: West's Lead: ♥A, then the ♥K

5 Diamonds

Ruff the ♥K but don't take Diamond and Club finesses.

Eliminate one of them by playing the ♦A, (the ♦King won't drop, of course.)

Then play 3 rounds of Spades (Elimination*) and then the ♦Queen for a Throw-In*. This forces defenders to break the Club suit, giving you all 3 Club tricks or else they must give you a Ruff-and-Sluff* of your Club loser. (They won't have any Diamonds left to lead – Count 'em!)

FINESSE AVOIDANCE II - Problems

1.	♠AQT98 ♥3 ♦J864 ♣K98 ♠J2 ♥AKQJ ♦K ♣AQJT43	Contract: West's Lead: ♦A, winning, then the ♥7. 6 Clubs	Is there any better line of play than to take the Spade finesse with a 50% chance of success?
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2.	♠AK87 ♥3 ♦AQJ54 ♣K84 ♠QJT6542 ♥A86 ♦T6 ♣2	Contract: West's Lead: ♥Queen. 6 Spades	Is there any better line of play than to take the 50% Diamond finesse?
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3.	♠- ♥AQT972 ♦742 ♣AK52 ♠K8 ♥KJ843 ♦AQ53 ♣98	Contract: West's Lead: ♠Queen. 6 Hearts	Is there any better line of play than to take a Diamond finesse, possibly losing 2 Diamonds, not just one?
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FINESSE AVOIDANCE II – *Problems continued*

4.	♠AQ ♥T762 ♦AK84 ♣763 ♠86 ♥AKQ93 ♦QJ3 ♣K42	Contract: West's Lead: ♠3 4 Hearts	Make an easy overtrick by finessing the ♠Q on the opening lead – Right??
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5.	♠Q85 ♥K765 ♦AQ72 ♣54 ♠AK4 ♥A98 ♦KJ65 ♣AKJ	Contract: West's Lead: ♠Jack. 6 NT	Take the 50% Club finesse? Is there any other way? Is it any better?
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6.	♠K ♥876532 ♦964 ♣QJT ♠AQJT93 ♥AQ ♦A72 ♣A4	Contract: West's Lead: ♦Q 4 Spades	There are finesses available in both Hearts and Clubs. Take which one . . . or both?
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FINESSE AVOIDANCE II - Answers.

1. ♠AQT98 **Contract:** West's Lead: ♦A, winning, then the ♥7.
 ♥3 **6 Clubs**
 ♦J864
 ♣K98
- ♠J2
 ♥AKQJ
 ♦K
 ♣AQJT43
- Is there any better line than to take the 50% Spade finesse for a chance of success? Maybe: Take the ♣A, then enter Dummy twice with Clubs and trump Diamonds high - with the ♣T or higher so you can't be overruffed.
- The ♦Q might drop on the 3rd round, solving your Spade problem with the ♦J. If not, only then take the Spade finesse. *2 chances are always better than one . . .*

2. ♠AK87 **Contract:** West's Lead: ♥Queen.
 ♥3 **6 Spades**
 ♦AQJ54
 ♣K84
- ♠QJT6542
 ♥A86
 ♦T6
 ♣2
- Is there any better line of play than the 50% Diamond finesse?
- Yes. Collect trump, Eliminate* Hearts and then lead a Club toward the ♣King (a Finesse, that's true.) If West wins it, then you can pitch your losing Diamond on the ♣King. If East wins it, you were going to lost 1 Club trick anyhow, and East can't lead Diamonds or Hearts or Spades. But if you take the Diamond finesse first and it loses, you are down immediately as East will lead a Club.
- 2 chances are . . .*

3. ♠- **Contract:** West's Lead: ♠Queen.
 ♥AQT972 **6 Hearts**
 ♦742
 ♣AK52
- ♠K8
 ♥KJ843
 ♦AQ53
 ♣98
- Is there any better line of play than the Diamond finesse, possibly losing 2 Diamonds?
- Absolutely. Pitch a Diamond from dummy on the opening lead (East wins the ♠Ace, of course), then later pitch a 2nd Diamond from dummy on your good ♠King.
- Easy. Can't lose. Do **not** be in a hurry - especially to ruff.*

FINESSE AVOIDANCE II – *Answers continued*

4.	♠AQ ♥T762 ♦AK84 ♣763 ♠86 ♥AKQ93 ♦QJ3 ♣K42	Contract: West's Lead: ♠3 4 Hearts	Make an easy overtrick by finessing the ♠Q on the opening lead? Absolutely not! East wins and leads her ♣Jack. How many are you down? And on a sure 10 trick contract! Shame! <i>A Dangerous Opponent* situation: East cannot be let in!</i>
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5.	♠Q85 ♥K765 ♦AQ72 ♣54 ♠AK4 ♥A98 ♦KJ65 ♣AKJ	Contract: West's Lead: ♠Jack. 6NT	Take the Club finesse? Is there any other way? <i>Of course there is.</i> Take 2 Spades and 4 Diamond tricks, watching discards closely. Then Duck* a Heart. Win any return and play ♥A and ♥K. If Hearts break 3 -3 or someone discarded their 4 th Heart, there goes your ♣J loser. If not, then Finesse* it. <i>2 chances are ...</i>
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6.	♠K ♥876532 ♦964 ♣QJT ♠AQJT93 ♥AQ ♦A72 ♣A4	Contract: West's Lead: ♦Q 4 Spades	There's finesses available in both Hearts and Clubs. Take which one . . . or both? Neither. Guarantee it easily by NOT collecting trump before playing the ♣Ace and the ♣4, setting up a Club winner in dummy for your Heart loser. Easy if you defer trump collection, getting to dummy with the ♠K. Collect trump first and fail. <i>100% is better than any other odds.</i>
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TAKING A FINESSE

After every effort to avoid taking a Finesse(s)*, sometimes there is simply no other play, so you have to take it or them. Doing them in the correct order is the primary skill to develop.

False Finesses

Don't lead an honor for a finesse expecting defender NOT to cover it. If you don't have the card lower than the one led, you haven't won anything. 10xx in the other defender's hand can become a winner. Defenders: cover an honor with an honor (almost always).

♣AJxx If you lead the ♣Queen, West should play her ♣King. You have then spent two honors to capture one. Also, the ♣10xx in East's hand will win the 3rd round. To finesse properly, lead low toward the ♣Jack; don't lead the ♣Queen. Only if you hold the ♣Q10x, can you lead the ♣Queen *or* ♣Ten. *Count.* In this 2nd case, you have 4 of the 5 top honors – no problemo. In the first case, you're missing 2 honors; don't spend two to capture one.

♣Qxx

Two-Way Finesses

Often you can finesse for a missing card in either direction. For example:

♣AJx You could lead from North and finesse the ♣Queen, playing the ♣Ten
 or you could lead from South and finesse the ♣Queen, playing the ♣Jack.

♣KTx

If neither opponent has bid nor shown high cards, you have a 50% chance. Even then, no guarantee. But, if you can force either opponent to lead any Club, you will win all 3 Club tricks. This is Breaking a New Suit* - a bad defender play. Sometimes, you can force them to Break It.

Ruffing Finesses

Example: Your partner opened 1♣, RHO opponent bid 1NT (15 to 17 HCP), showing Club stoppers and you end up declaring in 3 Hearts. Opener has the ♣AQJxx and you have ♣x. Obviously you will finesse with the ♣Queen for that 9th trick, right?

Really? Who has the ♣King? Is it really 99% that it is East – the 1NT bidder? No, it's probably higher than 99%. So, use the Ruffing Finesse* technique. Collect trump, then play to the ♣A – not the ♣Q - then lead the ♣Q. If East plays low, pitch a loser somewhere in your hand. If she plays the ♣King, ruff it, return to Dummy and pitch a loser on the ♣Jack. Even if by some 1% miracle West has the ♣King, you've still pitched a loser, so you're even.

DECLARER PLAY 2014

If there has been no bidding, you may not know who has the ♣King, but you may be able to Discover* who is more likely to have it by Counting* - carefully and as completely as possible.

General Finessing Principles

- Lead low toward honors - - don't lead unsupported honors.
- See as many of defender's cards as you can before committing to a finesse.
- Defer finesses and force defenders to discard (on your long trumps, for example) before finessing. Watch for clues to distribution from their signals and discards.
- Picture in your mind the defenders' distribution in the suit in question - - 3 - 3?; 4 - 2?; 3 - 2?, etc. and how it changes as defenders' discards. (Visualization*)
- Play to keep the lead in the same hand if possible, to repeat a winning finesse.
- Lacking any bidding or Discovery* information about defenders, play for Split Missing Honors*, meaning that if East has the ♣K, then assume West has the ♣Q. (See #8 below)
- Keep the defenders' bidding and signals in mind as well as Inferences* from their leads - the opening lead especially.

Finesse Exercises: What's the right way to play these finesses?

♦ Qxx

♦ AJx

♦ Kxx

♣ Qx

♦ Axx

♦ KTx

♦ xx

♣ Axx

- 1 -

- 2 -

- 3 -

- 4 -

1. First, play the ♦Ace (the ♦King could drop), then lead toward the ♦Queen. Also, West's ♦King could drop on the 2nd round, making dummy's ♦Queen good on the 3rd round.

2. A Two-Way Finesse*. Two Way Finesses are for Queens only. Don't finesse at all if you can make the defenders lead Diamonds. (See *Elimination** and *Strip** and *Throw-in** and *End Plays** and *Breaking a New Suit** techniques to do this). If you must break Diamonds, finesse away from any Dangerous Opponent*. If there's no dangerous opponent, play low toward the ♦Ace or ♦King, then back for the Finesse*. Don't finesse on the first trick because the missing ♦Queen could drop on the 2nd lead. Let good luck for you happen whenever there is any chance.

DECLARER PLAY 2014

3. Get East to lead Diamonds for a sure Diamond trick. Or, if you can't do that, lead low toward the ♦King. There is no other choice, is there? A 50% chance, unless you know something about defenders' hands.

4. Get East to lead Clubs and you will make 2 tricks in Clubs. If you have to break Clubs, first lead low toward the ♣Queen: don't play the ♣Ace first, obviously.

♦ AQxx

♦ Qxx

♦ KJx

♦ AJ9x

♦ Jxx

♦ Axxx

♦ xxx

♦ Txx

- 5 -

- 6 -

- 7 -

- 8 -

5. Get East to lead Diamonds. Or, depending on entries to dummy (Entry Management*), lead low toward the ♦Queen but don't lead the ♦Jack – you don't want West to cover it. Then low from dummy toward the ♦Jack, hopefully setting up the suit. If 3 tricks are OK, or you have no more entries to dummy, return to hand and play the ♦Jack, hoping West covers with a 3-3 Split.

6. Get East to lead Diamonds. Or, if you can't, play the ♦Ace than lead low toward the ♦Queen, like #1. Count all the Diamonds played, as you may make the 13th one if they were 4-3-3-3.

7. Get East to lead Diamonds. Or, if you can't, lead low, intending to play the ♦Jack. You can't actually finesse an Ace; but you might find the ♦Queen in West's hand, making a Diamond trick.

8. Get East to lead Diamonds. Or, if you can't, lead the ♦Ten, keeping the lead in hand if it wins. If so, lead them again, intending to play the ♦9 in dummy. You might win 3 Diamond tricks!

Planning a Finesse

If you can't avoid a finesse – it's your last choice, remember - then at least do some planning.

“Can't avoid” means you can't get any opponent to lead the suit, or can't get the right one to lead it, as with a Throw In*. The first consideration is to avoid a Dangerous Opponent. Do not take a finesse if it is into the hand of that defender – that's suicide, not smart Declarer Play.

Play all the other tricks you can before taking a finesse: they should be your last plays, definitely not your first ones. Give up a losing trick and let the defenders make a mistake, or maybe they will be forced to lead the suit you were going to finesse in because they have no other cards to lead. One way to do this is to play all, or all but one of your trump tricks, depleting opponents of their side-suit cards. This is a Squeeze*.

TAKING A FINESSE - Problems

1.	♠KT3 ♥AT94 ♦K653 ♣J2 ♠A6 ♥KJ7 ♦A987 ♣8765	Contract: 3 NT West bid 2♠ over South's 1♦ opening.	West's Lead: ♠Q. You win the first trick with the ♠A. Now what? (Be very glad they didn't lead a Club, that's what!)
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2.	♠T4 ♥763 ♦KQ75 ♣KT92 ♠KQ6 ♥AK5 ♦A4 ♣A8643	Contract: 3 NT	West's Lead: ♠3, to dummy's ♠T, the ♠J from East, which you win with the ♠Q. Who is the Dangerous Opponent? Why? Plan the Play.
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3.	♠A98 ♥J54 ♦AQJ54 ♣65 ♠QT7654 ♥KQ32 ♦2 ♣AT	Contract: 4 Spades	West's Lead: ♣K You could lose 2 Spades, a Heart and a Club. Plan the Play to always make 10 tricks.
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TAKING A FINESSE – *Problems continued*

4.	<p>♠J6 ♥K753 ♦KJ7 ♣JT98</p> <p>♠AKQT987 ♥2 ♦A3 ♣AK4</p>	<p>Contract: 6 Spades</p> <p>West bid 2♥ over South's 2♣ opening.</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♠2. Spades split 2 – 2.</p> <p>Plan the Play.</p>
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5.	<p>♠875 ♥62 ♦AQ652 ♣KQT</p> <p>♠962 ♥AKJT43 ♦KJ ♣A5</p>	<p>Contract: 4 Hearts</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♠K, then the ♠A and then the ♠3 to East's ♠Q.</p> <p>East then leads a Club. A Free Finesse!</p> <p>Now what?</p>
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6.	<p>♠2 ♥AJ53 ♦AKQJ ♣AQT6</p> <p>♠84 ♥K9762 ♦843 ♣KJ5</p>	<p>Contract: 6 Hearts</p> <p>West opened 4 Spades.</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♠K and then the ♣7, obviously a singleton.</p> <p>How should you play the Heart suit, which is the only problem?</p>
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TAKING A FINESSE - Answers

1.	♠KT3 ♥AT94 ♦K653 ♣J2 ♠A6 ♥KJ7 ♦A987 ♣8765	Contract: 3 NT West opened 2♠	West's Lead: ♠Q. You win the ♠A, of course. Count: West has 7 non-Spades and East has 11 non-Spades. These are called "empty spaces", so finesse East for the ♥Q by leading the ♥Ten from dummy. "Empty spaces" means East has more room in her hand for the ♥Q. <i>Hey! It's something at least.</i>
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2.	♠T4 ♥763 ♦KQ75 ♣KT92 ♠KQ6 ♥AK5 ♦A4 ♣A8643	Contract: 3 NT	West's Lead: ♠3, Dummy's ♠T and ♠J from East Win with the ♠Q. (No Deception). West knows you have the ♠K because East played the ♠Jack. You must keep East off-lead, (she's the Dangerous Opponent*) so finesse Clubs into West. If that doesn't work, play the 4 th Diamond from dummy, hoping West must win it, and she will have to lead away from her ♠Ace, making your ♠King good. "Finessing into" a defender means you finesse so that if it loses, the winner of the trick is not a Dangerous Opponent.
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3.	♠A98 ♥J54 ♦AQJ54 ♣65 ♠QT7654 ♥KQ32 ♦2 ♣AT	Contract: 4 Spades.	West's Lead: ♣K, you win the ♣A. What's your Plan? If you finesse in Diamonds you could go down immediately, losing a trick in each suit or even 2 Spades and 1 in each other suit for down 2. Instead, play the ♦A, then the ♦Q, pitching your Club loser on the ♦Q as a Ruffing Finesse*. Winning or losing the ♦Q, you have gotten rid of your Club loser and have the good ♦J. If East covers the ♦Q, you might make 5 if you're lucky and Spades split 2 - 2.
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TAKING A FINESSE - *Answers continued*

4. ♠J6 **Contract:** West's Lead: ♠2. They split 2 – 2: there's 3 chances on this
 ♡K753 **6 Spades** hand: West has to have all the missing HCP, no?
 ♦KJ7 West bid 2♥ (1) Lead the ♥2 toward ♥K. If West takes the Ace, you get a
 ♣JT98 over South's 2♣ Club pitch, (90% odds or better?) and/or:
 opening
- ♠AKQT987 (2) Play ♣A and ♣K, hoping for ♣Q drop, 10% odds, and/or
 ♡2 (3) Play the ♦A then Finesse* the ♦J, hoping to pitch a Club
 ♦A3 loser on the ♦King. Good odds, but it might lose, if so, then so
 ♣AK4 will everyone else in 6♠, where you belong on this hand. *3
 chances are even . . .*

5. ♠875 **Contract:** West's Lead: ♠K, ♠A and ♠3 to East's ♠Q.
 ♡62 **4 Hearts**
 ♦AQ652 East then leads a Club. You have all the minor suit tricks, but
 ♣KQT a Heart loser is possible and the 3 Spades you already lost.
- ♠962 You must use both Hearts in dummy for finesses of East.
 ♡AKJT43 Don't play the ♥A first: it can lose to ♥Qxxx in East. Win the
 ♦KJ 1st Club in dummy and then finesse in Hearts. If the first
 ♣A5 finesse wins, return to dummy with a Diamond and finesse in
 Hearts again. If it loses, concede, down 1.

6. ♠2 **Contract:** West's Lead: ♠K, then the ♣7.
 ♡AJ53 **6 Hearts**
 ♦AKQJ How should you play the Heart suit? The important missing
 ♣AQT6 West opened 4♣ honors are the ♥Q and ♥J, obviously.
- ♠84 Play the ♥A: if the ♥T or ♥9 drops in West (who is likely to
 ♡K9762 be short in Hearts), run (Finesse*) the ♥J against East.
 ♦843 If no honor drops, play the ♥K next, hoping for a 2 – 2 split.
 ♣KJ5

HOLD-UP

Description

A Hold-Up is the deliberate play of a losing card when you could win the trick.

(It is very similar to or perhaps synonymous with Play a Duck)*

Usage

A Hold-Up is done for any of several reasons, often to keep the lead in the hand on lead so as to cut defenders' communications.

Example: West leads the ♠K to start the attack on your 3 NT contract. Obviously she has the ♠Q and the ♠J and probably more Spades - - a real threat. You, as declarer, hold the ♠ATx and Dummy has ♠xx. You can certainly take the ♠K on the first trick, but you need to exhaust East of Spades so she can't later lead thru your ♠Tx. Therefore, you "hold-up" (avoid) taking your ♠Ace until you're sure East has played her last one or until you are forced to play the ♠Ace on the 3rd round. Counting* often tells you when it is time.

Note that if West continues with Spades when you hold the ♠AJx, you get a 2nd Spade trick right away. This is called a Bath Coup and you should look for the opportunity even if you don't need to Hold-Up*. Duck* the ♠King and hope she leads another Spade into your ♠AJ. *Bad defense.*

If you hold ♠Axx and dummy ♠xx, then hold up until the 3rd round, assuming West started with 5 Spades; for example if she opened 1♠. If East still has a Spade after you take your ♠Ace, they have split 4 - 4, and you won't lose two more Spades even if East can get back to West in Spades.

Generally, Hold-Ups are used to exhaust a defender, as described above, or to exhaust dummy's cards in the led suit so it can ruff a continuation of the suit.

HOLD UP– Problems

<p>1.</p> <p>♠AK42 ♥974 ♦73 ♣KJ62</p> <p>♠J976 ♥KQJ ♦KT84 ♣97</p> <p>♠Q83 ♥A6532 ♦AJ9 ♣A4</p>	<p>Contract: 4 Hearts</p> <p>♠T5 ♥T8 ♦Q652 ♣QT853</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♥K</p> <p>Wow! Missing 100 Honors (4 honor cards) in the trump suit. However, such things happen and the contract is OK as to shape and HCP, but how to make it?</p> <p>Hint: with so many small trumps, you are going to have to make a lot of them individually – with ruffs or Cross Ruffs* - not by “drawing trump”.</p> <p>And West is trying to draw trump for you so you can't ruff many times. <i>Nasty defender!</i></p> <p>Where are the ruffing possibilities? A Diamond in dummy and some Clubs in Declarer's hand.</p>
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<p>2.</p> <p>♠K982 ♥63 ♦J ♣AQT987</p> <p>♠JT63 ♥852 ♦KT853 ♣4</p> <p>♠74 ♥AKQJ9 ♦A72 ♣J63</p>	<p>Contract: 4 Hearts</p> <p>♠AQ5 ♥T74 ♦Q964 ♣K52</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♦5 (Luckily not the ♠J)</p> <p>South won East's ♦Queen, ruffed a Diamond, drew trumps, then let the ♣J ride, losing to East.</p> <p>East then returned a Diamond to West's King but 2 Spades went to defenders, setting South by one.</p> <p>Did South do something wrong?</p> <p>What?</p>
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HOLD UP – *Answers*

<p>1.</p> <p>♠AK42 ♥974 ♦73 ♣KJ62</p> <p>♠J976 ♥KQJ ♦KT84 ♣97</p> <p>♠Q83 ♥A6532 ♦AJ9 ♣A4</p>	<p>Contract: 4 Hearts</p> <p>♠T5 ♥T8 ♦Q652 ♣QT853</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♥K</p> <p>So you have to somehow get at least 4 trump tricks to make 10 tricks. Where are the ruffing possibilities? A Diamond in dummy and some Clubs in Declarer's hand?</p> <p>But, to get a Diamond ruff in dummy, it must have a trump available, so you can't let West in to collect the rest of dummy's trumps. So you take the opening trump lead of the ♥K, Right? Wrong!</p> <p>Why? Because if West then gets in with a Diamond, she'll play the ♥Q and ♥J, exhausting dummy's trumps and taking away 2 more of Declarer's trumps as well. Any solution?</p> <p>Hold-Up* on the opening Heart lead and take West's 2nd trump lead. Now West has the high trump and East has none, so she can't lead back to West in trump. Plus, if Declarer ruffs Clubs in hand, West can overruff, but if she does dummy will get a Diamond ruff with her 3rd trump because West can't both overruff Declarer and collect dummy's 3rd trump.</p> <p>So, Declarer takes 2 Clubs and ruffs one, then takes 3 Spades and ruffs the 4th, then takes her ♥Ace, ♦A and Diamond ruff for 10 tricks, while West sees her high trump brought her nothing. <i>Brilliant!</i></p>
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<p>2.</p> <p>♠K982 ♥63 ♦J ♣AQT987</p> <p>♠JT63 ♥852 ♦KT853 ♣4</p> <p>♠74 ♥AKQJ9 ♦A72 ♣J63</p>	<p>Contract: 4 Hearts</p> <p>♠AQ5 ♥T74 ♦Q964 ♣K52</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♦5 (Luckily not the ♠J)</p> <p>South won East's ♦Queen, ruffed a Diamond, drew trumps, then let the ♣J ride, losing to East's ♣K. East leads to West's ♦K and 2 Spades are lost. Down 1.</p> <p>South has to cut off East's ability to get to West to lead a Spade, and that can only be via Diamonds. How to do that?</p> <p><u>South must Hold-Up* on East's ♦Queen on the first trick, plus NOT draw trumps immediately.</u> Magic then happens!</p> <p>If East leads a 2nd Diamond, South ruffs it in dummy, collects trump, and runs the ♣J to East's ♣K. She has all good tricks from that point on, including the ♦A, except the ♠A, which East must cash or else South makes 5.</p>
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INFERENCE

Description

An Inference* is a working conclusion based on one or several of the many parts of the game: the bidding, including what opponents did NOT bid; the opening lead and its implications; play to early tricks; defenders' signals and discards, etc. . . . in short anything that provides information to an observant Declarer can support or negate an Inference*. (*Equally important*)

Discovery* is a Declarer Technique used to verify Inferences*, for example to determine in fact which opponent has a missing Ace, thereby confirming or negating an Inference*. (And you didn't think Declarer Play was sophisticated, eh? Ha!)

Usage

Our "standard" Planning sequence for Declarer Play is:

- (1) Review defenders' bidding, including a lack of bidding. Visualize* feasible Length Strength, Brute Strength and even Trump Strength in each defenders' hand. (If East did not open 2 Hearts, is she likely to have 6 Hearts and 6 to 10 HCP?)
- (2) Infer from that Review where important high cards and length are, can be or can't be.
- (3) Where possible (safely), challenge your Inferences by driving out defenders' high cards and/or length early on to validate or negate them. This is Discovery*. Change Inferences if necessary.
- (4) Once validated and/or corrected, play on, using your Inferences* with confidence that you have taken your best shot.

So, simply: Review*, Visualize*, Infer*, Discover*, Validate or correct* and Play on.

Important Note: Be Careful: Don't always assume your opponents have bid or played logically.

If you take an inference or count from opponents' play or bids and they turned out to have bid or played illogically, then you have been "fixed" by bad play. So be it. No one is an infallible expert – at least no one you or I are likely to be playing against this week.

Shrug your shoulders, go on with it and mentally resolve not to trust her always. But, if you try to anticipate her errors and go down, there's no excuse – you screwed up.

INFERENCE – I *Answers*

<p>1.</p> <p>♠ 83 ♥ 52 ♦ ? ♣ 7</p> <p>♠ KJT65 ♥ 83 ♦ A ♣ AJ942</p>	<p>♠ Q974 ♥ K4 ♦ Q86 ♣ KT65</p> <p>♦ A2 ♥ AQ ♦ ? ♣ 83</p>	<p>Contract: W N E S</p> <p> 4♠ 1♥ 1♠</p> <p> P 4♠ all pass</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♥2. East wins 2 Heart tricks, than plays ♠A and ♠2, collecting defender's trumps for you. Your thinking at this point:</p> <p>"Let's see: West started with 5 Diamonds so East had 1. East responded in a 4-card Heart suit and West raised with 3 (We have 6 Hearts, so they're 4-3). They have 8 spades but neither of them bid or opened them, so they must be 4 – 4.</p> <p>HCP don't matter, as either one could have the ♣Q. <i>Solution?</i></p>
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And the answer is . . . More Counting! "I have 9 Clubs; they have 4. They have played 3 of them at this point. But, if East has the ♣Q, she had 3 of their 4 Clubs, leaving West with a singleton. With a singleton to lead to your opening partner, would you lead it if you were West? Probably. Did she? No, she led a Heart, so you should not take the Finesse; instead play for the drop; not because of some dumb slogan, but because the logic of this particular hand tells you that it is probably the right play. Good Luck!

<p>2.</p> <p>♠ ♥ 3 ♦ AKJ ♣ 2</p> <p>♠ A7 ♥ A82 ♦ 743 ♣ AJ965</p>	<p>♠ K43 ♥ 964 ♦ QT65 ♣ KT4</p> <p>♠ 7 ♥ 5 ♦ 3 ♣ 3</p>	<p>Contract: W N E S</p> <p> 1♦ P 1♥ 2♣</p> <p> 2♥ 3♣ all pass</p>	<p>"I've counted all the suits, mostly by inference about what they didn't bid, so I have a complete picture of East's shape: 4=4=1=4. So . . . West has only 1 Club and therefore the finesse goes thru East.</p> <p>I'll lead to the ♣K and the ♣Ten back thru East's 4 Club cards for a sure winning finesse*." <i>Brilliant !</i></p>
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INFERENCE – II Problems

<p>3.</p> <p>♠ AT753 ♥ Q852 ♦ Q54 ♣ 7</p> <p>♠ ♥7 ♦9267 ♣</p> <p>♠ KJ2 ♥ JT9643 ♦ 3 ♣ AJ8</p>	<p>Contract:</p> <p>4 Hearts</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><i>W</i></td> <td><i>N</i></td> <td><i>E</i></td> <td><i>S</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> <td>2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>4♥</td> <td>all</td> <td>pass</td> </tr> </table>	<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>			1NT	2♥	P	4♥	all	pass	<p>West leads the ♦9, North ducks, East wins the ♦J, then she leads the ♦King, and you ruff. You lead the ♥J, East takes the ♥Ace and ♥King, then plays the ♦Ace, Smothering* dummy's ♦Q, but ruffed by you. Your thinking at this point:</p> <p>“5 tricks have been played with East showing 15 HCP. She can have one black Queen left, but not both. My concern is the ♠Q; I can finesse for it either way. I don't care about the ♣Q.”</p> <p>“Now how about West? Can her play help me find the ♠Q, which is key to my making this contract?” <i>How so?</i>”</p>
<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>												
		1NT	2♥												
P	4♥	all	pass												

<p>4.</p> <p>♠ KQJ ♥ AT74 ♥ AJT ♣ JT5</p> <p>♠347 ♥KQ ♦ ♣AKQ7</p> <p>♠ AT9862 ♥ 9 ♦ K96 ♣ 864</p>	<p>Contract:</p> <p>4♠</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><i>W</i></td> <td><i>N</i></td> <td><i>E</i></td> <td><i>S</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1♣</td> <td>1NT!</td> <td>P</td> <td>4♠</td> </tr> </table>	<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	1♣	1NT!	P	4♠	<p>West takes 3 Clubs then leads the ♥K. Dummy takes the ♥Ace and you ruff a 2nd Heart, dropping West's ♥Queen. You draw trumps in 3 rounds and ruff another Heart. Now you have to find the ♦Queen to make your contract.</p> <p>You can't Throw In* someone to force a Diamond lead, as that would put you down one.</p> <p>Where is it? Why?</p>
<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>								
1♣	1NT!	P	4♠								

INFERENCE – II *Answers*

3.	♠ AT753 ♥ Q852 ♦ Q54 ♣ 7	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: right;">W</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">E</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1NT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">P</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">all</td> <td style="text-align: center;">pass</td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S			1NT	2♥	P	4♥	all	pass	
W	N	E	S												
		1NT	2♥												
P	4♥	all	pass												
	♠ ♥7 ♦9267 ♣	♠ ♥AK ♦JKA ♣	<p>West leads the ♦9, North ducks and East wins the ♦Jack. Then she plays the ♦King and you ruff. You lead trumps and East takes her ♥Ace and ♥King, then plays the ♦Ace, ruffed by you.</p> <p>Your thinking: “5 tricks played; East has showed 15 HCP. She has only one Queen left – maybe – but not both. West has the ♠King.</p>												
	♠ KJ2 ♥ JT9643 ♦ 3 ♣ AJ8		<p>“Can West’s play help solve the ♠Q problem, which is key to making this contract? Let’s see: her lead was a worthless Diamond. I think that if she had both missing Club honors she would have led one of them because her partner opened 1NT. Did she?”</p> <p>“No, so she doesn’t have both Club Honors, meaning East has the ♣Q, and that puts the ♠Q in East’s hand, hopefully”. <i>Simple counting and inference half way through the play of the hand. Neat!</i></p>												

4.	♠ KQJ ♥ AT74 ♦ AJT ♣ JT5	Contract: 4♠	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: right;">W</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">E</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1♣</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1NT!</td> <td style="text-align: center;">P 4♠</td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S		1♣	1NT!	P 4♠	
W	N	E	S									
	1♣	1NT!	P 4♠									
	♠347 ♥KQ ♦ ♣AKQ7	♠5 ♥2356 ♦ ♣239	<p>West takes 3 Clubs then leads the ♥K. Dummy takes the ♥A and you ruff a 2nd Heart, dropping West’s ♥Q. You draws trumps in 3 rounds and ruff another Heart. Now you have to find the ♦Q to make your contract. Where is it? It could be in either hand, or could it?</p> <p>Your thinking at this point: “West had 3 Spades, 2 Hearts, 4 Clubs and 4 Diamonds – a balanced hand. So far, she’s played ♣AKQ and ♥KQ. With the ♦Q as well, what would she have opened?”</p> <p><i>Not 1 Club</i> – she would have opened 1NT.”</p> <p>And so, where’s the ♦Queen?” <i>Nothing to this game. Constantly counting HCP and Shape throughout the play of the hand wins.</i></p>									
	♠ AT9862 ♥ 9 ♦ K96 ♣ 864											

JETTISON

Description

To “Jettison” is to deliberately discard a high, winning card on a different suit. Most often Jettison plays occur when there are singleton or doubleton honors in Declarer’s or dummy’s hand that threaten to block the run of a suit.

Usage

To Visualize* Jettison plays, remember that at the end of the hand it’s only the number of tricks you have taken that counts, not what cards you have taken them with.

Suppose dummy holds the stiff ♣A (a singleton) and you hold the ♠KQJT9 but have only one outside entry, in Spades. (Entry Management*). If dummy has the ♠x and you have the ♠AKx, you can play the two top Spades, “Jettisoning” dummy’s ♣A on the 2nd round of Spades.

This makes all your Clubs good. Similarly, dummy could hold the stiff ♣K and you have the ♣AQJT9. Play the ♣A and Jettison (Smother*) the ♣King under it, even though it could take the first trick.

These examples could all work the other way around – Jettisoning in Declarer’s hand, or in defender’s hand, for that matter. Jettisoning is not restricted to Dummy or Declarer hands.

The examples that follow show to what extremes Jettisoning logic can take you.

JETTISON - *Examples*

1. ♠JT942 **Contract: 7♥.** West's Lead: ♦K, won by your Ace.
 ♡A63
 ♦J85 West shows out on the 2nd Heart, so East has a 3rd trump. If you draw it, you
 ♣AK can't get back to Dummy to play the 4th & 5th Spade winner, even though
 you have 14 top tricks!

 ♠AKQ Win ONE Spade - the ♠A. Then go to dummy, drawing East's last trump,
 ♡KQJ987 and Jettison the ♠K and ♠Q from your hand on the ♣AK, making dummy's
 ♦A763 Spades high, to pitch all your Diamond losers. Wow!
 ♣-

2. ♠K62 **Contract: 6♠.** West's lead: ♦Q. The ♦A in Dummy wins.
 ♡QJT
 ♦AK62 **Where can you get rid of 3 losing Clubs?** The Diamond suit handles one
 ♣965 of them, but where else? It has to be on Hearts, but do you have enough
 Entries* to dummy? (Entry Management* or Trump Management*)

 ♠AQJT953 No, but . . . On the ♦K, **Jettison** your ♡Ace. Then lead the ♡Q for a
 ♡A Ruffing Finesse* against East. If she covers the ♡Q, ruff it, otherwise
 ♦3 pitch a Club loser and repeat and repeat. Win or lose, you have homes for
 ♣A874 your 3 Club losers on Hearts, making at least 6 and 7 if East covers.

3. ♠AQ **Contract: 7 NT.** West's Lead ♠J.
 ♡KQJ
 ♦3 *(This is the granddaddy Jettisoning play of all time!)*
 ♣JT76542

 Is running (or Finessing*) the Diamond suit your only chance to make
 13 tricks? Maybe not, because there are 4 Diamonds out against you.

 ♠K Play ♠A, then ♠Q, pitching your ♡A. Then play the ♡KQJ, pitching
 ♡A the ♣AKQ !!! *Woo hah!* Then the ♣J and ♣10. If the ♣9 drops,
 ♦AKQT9864 the Dummy is good. If the ♣9 doesn't drop, run the Diamonds.
 ♣AKQ

Two chances are better . . .

LOL – LOSER ON LOSER

Description

LOL means Little Old Lady, Laughing Out Loud and Loser on Loser, and sometimes all three at once!

But we'll just look at Loser on Loser duplicate plays.

“Loser on Loser” plays occur when you have a loser in two suits but can arrange to lose them both on one trick, thereby cutting the number of losers from two to one.

Often, this situation will look like a Ruff-and-Sluff* play, but instead of ruffing, you or Dummy pitch a loser on the led suit and then a 2nd loser in another suit in the other hand, instead of ruffing.

Usage

Although you may lose a trick that you could win, it is often an advantage to lose that trick in order to pitch a loser in another suit. When? Why?

One example is when you and dummy both hold a losing Diamond and they enable communications from East to West that could prove fatal to your contract, such as to a Dangerous Opponent*.

But, instead of ruffing that Spade lead, dump a Diamond from one hand or the other and a losing Club from the other hand and Presto! – no East – West communications in Diamonds, and you've dumped your Club loser too, and without spending a trump.

LOL - Examples

1. ♠KT7 **Contract: 4** West's Lead: the ♣K, then the ♣2 to East's Ace and a 3rd
 ♥QJ53 **Hearts** Club back. West ruffs with the ♥7 and dummy overruffs.
 ♦AK86 East bid 2♣. Now what? **You are down one** if East has ♥K98.
 ♣65
- ♠A65 LOL Play: Do not overruff the 3rd Club: simply discard
 ♥AT642 your losing Spade from dummy. It's always a loser, right?
 ♦J7 It's called an "Inevitable Loser". So why not pitch it now,
 ♣874 ensuring no trump losers *or* Spade losers?
- And West has trumped your Spade loser! *Nanner Nanner!*

2. ♠J532 **Contract: 6** West's Lead: ♦J to dummy's ♦Q and East's ♦K and your
 ♥9 **Spades** ♦A.
 ♦Q652 So, ruff 3 Hearts in dummy, right? Making 6? *Nope.*
 ♣QJT7 *Because East overruffs the 3rd Heart and cashes a*
 Diamond.
- ♠AKQ864 Instead, Declarer should take the ♠AK, then the ♣A, then
 ♥AQJ7 the ♠J in dummy, drawing trumps.
 ♦A4
 ♣A

LOL Play: Lead the ♣Q (a Ruffing Finesse* on East). If East plays low, throw your losing Diamond, possibly losing the ♣Q to West, but at the same time setting up dummy's ♣JT as winners.

If West doesn't win the ♣Q, then play the ♣J, pitching a Heart, etc. If she does, win any return, play the ♥A, then ruff a Heart in dummy and pitch two more Hearts on the good ♣JT for 12 tricks.

There's some Entry Management* here too: do you see it?

LOL – More Examples

3.	♠AQ7632	Contract: 4 Spades	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
	♥AQJ3			1♦	P	2♣
	♦7		Dbl	2♥	2♠	P
	♣J4		4♠	P	P	P

West's Lead: ♦9, won by East's ♦Q and the ♣7 returned.
The ♣7 may be a singleton, so you must win your ♣A.

♠J983
♥42
♦JT5
♣AT92

Now what? Play the ♠A and ♠Q to East's ♠K, exhausting her trumps. She will then lead the ♦K for dummy to ruff, but you still have Club and Heart losers. What to do with them?

LOL Rules!

Do not ruff the ♦K in dummy. Instead, dump dummy's losing Club. East is now still on lead, either leading into dummy's ♥AQJ3 or giving you a Ruff-and-Sluff* of a Heart by leading a minor suit.

4.	♠Q6	Contract: ♠3 doubled.	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
	♥754					1♥
	♦K8763		P	1NT	2♠	P
	♣A97		3♥	P	3♠	Dbl

West's Lead: ♥A, K and Q of Hearts; East discarding on the ♥Queen. Any problems? Yes, there sure are problems!
West must have 4 Spades to Double, including the Ace.
(With 5, she would have opened 1 Spade). So she will play a Forcing Game (*Defense Class 2013-14*), making South ruff Hearts until she – West - has the long trump, then play her winning Hearts for down about 500!

LOL Play:

You must think this through before playing to the 3rd Heart. Counting your losers, you see 1 Diamond, 1 Spade and 2 Hearts – making 3♠ doubled. But you must also see that West can hold up on the trump Ace until Dummy is out and then play another Heart, shortening your trumps to the same length as hers. But why not just play the Inevitable Diamond* loser on the 3rd Heart and not trump in? Dummy then controls Hearts and you have no more problems. A simple, winning LOL play, but only if Declarer Visualizes* the whole hand before making any Blind Spot* or unthinking plays. *Don't ruff right away – first pitch any Inevitable Loser. Make this a habit.*

PLAY A DUCK

Description

“Ducking” means deliberately losing a trick in a suit that has a winner.

An example: The ♠K is led. Dummy has ♠xx and Declarer has the ♠Axx, but doesn't take the ♠King. Why? Because when West wins the 2nd Spade trick, dummy will be void and defenders can't communicate in Spades any more.

It is virtually the same as a Hold-Up* play; perhaps synonymous.

A Safety Play* is usually also a Duck – a “Safety Duck”.

Usage

It is often used to avoid a lead from a Dangerous Opponent*, frequently on the opening lead and it's also often necessary because of a shortage of entries. (Entry Management*)

As an example of ducking the opening lead, suppose West bids Clubs and then leads the ♣K, showing the ♣Queen and probably the ♣Jack. Dummy has 2 small Clubs and you as Declarer have the ♣Axx. Obviously you can take the opening ♣K lead. But should you? Let's look at two different cases:

1. **In a suit contract.** If you take the ♣King with your ♣Ace on the opening lead, East can later get back to West by leading a Club because she knows West has the ♣Queen and dummy still has a Club. If West regaining the lead at that time will be a danger to you for some reason, then “Play a Duck” on the first trick, keeping West in the lead. Take the second Club and then East can't get back to West, at least not in Clubs. This is “Cutting Defenders Communications via a Duck* of a trick that you could win.

Even if dummy has only one Club, it still isn't always necessary that you take the first trick and then sit back to plan your play: it may already be too late.

You lost a Club early that you didn't have to, but later pitched another loser from dummy, which might be a much more important card to pitch, or an inevitable loser.

2. **In a NoTrump contract.** If there's been some bidding, and maybe even if not, there's often a reason to Play a Duck early in order to cut defenders' communications later. Take your ♣Ace only when forced to or when you are sure it's East's last Club, meaning she can't get back to West later in the hand in Clubs, perhaps when West's Clubs are then running.

Play a Duck Usage – *continued*

As an example of the latter case, Entry* shortage, suppose you have ♣AK987 in the dummy and ♣432 in hand. (Entry Management*)

You know from memorizing the Percentages of Missing Cards* Technique that 5 outstanding Clubs are quite likely to be distributed 3 – 2 in defenders' hands.

You need several Club tricks to make your contract, but you have no entries to dummy other than Clubs. If you play ♣AK, chances are that at least the ♣Jack or ♣Queen or both will remain out as a stopper(s) to more Club tricks for you. But if you Play a Duck* (first duck a Club, losing the first trick, then later play a low Club to dummy's ♣AK, you have a 78% chance of scoring 4 Club tricks: losing only the one you ducked to start with.

This can work even when you are 4 – 3 in a side suit; perhaps ♠Axx in hand and ♠Kxxx in Dummy. Play a Duck* in Spades early in the hand. Then collect trumps, play out all your other winners, then play on Spades for the last 3 tricks, winning the ♠A then the ♠K. If defenders have been squeezed or played poorly then maybe the 4th "X" in dummy will be the long Club trick.

Recall that 6 missing cards in defenders' hands split 3 – 3 less than 35% of the time: it's against the odds to play 3 Clubs tricks early on, hoping they break 3 - 3. But if you play the ♠Ace and the ♠King, then another low Spade early on, expecting to lose it, defenders will know not to pitch their 4th Spade, so you will have tipped your hand. Be subtle – lay traps for defenders early on so they are pressured to make choices about what suit and cards to hold on to and which they can discard as the hand progresses.

Or maybe they will just forget!

PLAY A DUCK - Examples

<p>1. ♠AK742 ♥K42 ♦AT ♣654</p> <p> ♠53 ♥AQJT986 ♦7 ♣AT2</p>	<p>Contract: West's lead: ♦K. 6 Hearts.</p> <p><i>Uh Oh!</i> 2 Club losers to pitch – where?</p> <p>Discards must come on Spades, so you must win 4 Spade tricks. But the odds say a 6-card enemy holding splits 4-2 split 48% of the time – higher than any other split, with the desired split 3-3 at only 33% odds.</p> <p>Visualize*: your ♠A and ♠K are good, and your 5th Spade is probably good, so you need just 1 more Spade trick. Entry timing* and a Duck can do it. Collect just 2 rounds of trump, then <u>Duck a Spade</u>. Now one opponent probably has 3 left. So then play ♠A and ♠K, pitching a Club; then ruff a Spade in hand, dropping opponent's last one of 4, and finally return to dummy via the ♥K for your 4th Spade trick and 2nd Club pitch.</p>
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<p>2. ♠AK42 ♥Q2 ♦A54 ♣K642</p> <p> ♠Q7 ♥KJT953 ♦T62 ♣J9</p>	<p>Contract: West's lead: ♠J. 4 Hearts</p> <p>A Heart, 2 Diamonds and 1 or 2 Clubs to lose, but one loser can go on Spades. Take the ♠Q, and lose a Heart to East, who leads a Club to West's Ace. West returns the ♣Q, Smothering* your ♣J.</p> <p>Do you cover West's ♣Q or not?</p> <p>NO! You need the ♣King for your Diamond losers, and East might ruff it. <u>Duck the ♣Q</u> and ruff in hand if West continues Clubs.</p> <p>Then collect trumps and pitch 2 Diamond losers on a top Spade and the ♣King, making 4 with just 1 Heart and 2 Club losers.</p> <p>Duck a lead that would kill your ♣King.</p>
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PLAY PLANNING OVERVIEW

Objective of this Overview. This Overview summarizes our process of Planning for Declarer Play, as opposed to describing all the Play Techniques and their use.

In this course, we are going to study and practice Declarer Planning and the Play of a hand. We will do lots of actual play in class, and the group can practice playing out the whole hand afterwards as much as desired, as usual.

I have categorized the Declarer Play Planning process into 3 phases: each of the 3 phases name briefly describes the Declarer Techniques used in that phase.

(Phase 1) Play Planning

(Phase 2) Physical play of the hand using the Plan from (1), and

(Phase 3) Final Play – End-Plays

There are many Declarer Techniques, as I have termed them: Finesses, Play a Duck, Card Combinations, etc. These are each documented extensively with examples, etc., in the section of the book called Declarer Techniques.

There are lots of them and some are so complicated that we will not get to a complete examination of all of them. Nevertheless, it is important that you read this integrated description of all of them, including the ones we may not cover.

This Overview describes the process of Declarer Play Planning, combined into a few pages and in one place.

With 10 minutes reading, we can all share this single structure and terminology, upon which we will base our classes and build our skills this season.

(This Overview was also distributed individually before classes started – see Basic Section.)

PHASE I: PLAY PLANNING

Believe it or not, most Play Planning occurs in the few seconds between the time the opening lead hits the table and Declarer plays her first card . . . legally up to 60 seconds or so. Do not be pushed by defenders: it's your right as the Declarer to take a "minute or so" to do Play Planning. Use it without fail. There's little time to "Plan" once play starts.

Every Hand of Bridge Starts with Play Planning. If you Plan your Play well, actually playing it out for a winner is a skill that comes with at-the-table practice, which we will do in every Lesson. "Plan your Work and Work Your Plan" applies clearly to declaring a bridge hand, as in so many sequences in life that are repetitive and where you can envision a desired result.

Declarer Technique Descriptions. These are not in any sequence, as each hand is different. They are listed alphabetically in the Declarer Techniques Table of Contents and described in detail, with examples. Also see "Auxiliary Terms" on the page following the Table of Contents. These are often synonyms for Techniques, alternative names, Duplicate slang, etc. Every term in this document is described and well-defined, as a Declarer Technique, a Basic Skill or an Auxiliary Term.

Note; during Play Planning, you will consider the use of Techniques to be used later in the Play, and so design a Plan to use those Techniques. The term "Considering" is the difference between knowing what a Technique is and does vs. when to use it. Techniques are often contradictory: you can plan to collect trump or plan to Cross-Ruff a hand, but you can't do both. Rarely, the play may force you to change your Plan: but you should do so only if things change drastically, like a 4 – 0 trump split.

PLAY PLANNING: TECHNIQUES TO BE CONSIDERED WHILE PLANNING

Counting. Review opponents' bidding for Inferences about HCP and shape, if any. Also the opposite: with no opponent bidding, what are the negative Inferences?

Split Odds. Are there any possibilities for estimating long suits held in common by my hand and dummy? If there are no 6+ cards suits between the two hands, this is not an issue. If there are, then consider Suit Establishment.

Suit Establishment. For suits with 6+ cards between Declarer and dummy, can I develop Length Strength tricks in addition to whatever Brute Strength tricks and Trump Strength tricks there are in these suits?

Finesse. There are always Finesse possibilities. They might be OK, given my need to avoid Dangerous Opponents and sometimes a 50% odds Finesse is all there is.

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Finesse Avoidance. Finesse Avoidance is the preferred choice, not with low 50% finesses. How should I avoid obvious Finesses, even on the opening lead?

Inferences. What can I infer about HCP, shape, and probable Defensive Strategy from the opponents' bidding, opening lead & signals?

Visualization. What do defender hands look like, based on Inferences determined above?

Card Combinations. Suit-by-suit, what are my tactical possibilities or vulnerabilities.

Hand Evaluation. Suit-by-suit, what are my sure or possible tricks. What Techniques to use?

Entry Management. Identify and count Entries in both hands, in side suits and in trump.

Trump Management: The Decision: Do I draw trump first? or early? or later? or not at all?

Cross Ruff. Are there shortages in both hands that could make the Cross Ruff Technique superior to drawing trump in this hand?

Dummy Reversal. Can I make extra trump tricks by ruffing in hand while collecting trumps in dummy?

Jettison. Is there a high card in either hand that I need to get out of the way (Unblock*) by Jettisoning* it?

Blind Spot. Is there some obvious play at the start of the hand that I should carefully reconsider before making an obvious play?

Identify Dangerous Opponents. Frequently, one or the other, or both, opponents will present a "Danger" to your Play Plan. This is by virtue of being able to make a dangerous lead if they get on lead. These dangerous leads must be anticipated and avoided whenever possible during the Play and the Planning for it.

SUMMARY OF PLAY PLANNING

OK, so you've done all the above in your 30 seconds or so! Well done!

But, you have a plan for the play of the hand based on the best you can do in this brief time. It's time to play that first card from dummy, even if it's a singleton. By the way, dummy must not play that singleton until you – the Declarer – say "play it." Never let the dummy play any card until you specifically tell her to. It is a Law of Bridge, and rightly so; dummy can have NO influence on the Play. Defenders could call the Director on you.

PHASE II: PLAY of the HAND

So it's time to get on with the Play: you have a Plan in mind for the play of the whole hand.

Defenders don't yet have such a vision, because they don't yet know what you are planning to do. Of course, they are declarers too, on other hands, so they can guesstimate by imagining what they would do, but you as Declarer always have some advantage – worth about 1/2 a trick. That's because you can see 27 cards to start, all of which you can manage and your dummy can't confuse you with bad signals, count, etc., whereas defenders may have such problems.

Here's Declarer Techniques that are actually used during the play. Of course, these all might have been be considered during your Play Planning, so you will see some duplication.

Discovery. Discovery suggests you force defenders to play some (High) cards, so you can verify your Inferences. Where is the ♦Ace?, for example. If West can't have both minor suit Aces because of the bidding, and plays the ♣Ace, then you have Discovered where the ♦Ace is. But it's not physically possible until play starts.

Collect Trumps. You decided while planning when to collect trumps: now it's time to do it or not, based on your plan.

Finesse Avoidance. Finesses, especially with no opponent bidding, should be your last play plan choice: your plan should be built around **not** finessing until or unless it's necessary or until defenders force you to do so.

Deception. You should deceive defenders at every opportunity during the play: Example: never play your lowest card as a discard or when following suit. Another example; take initial tricks with your Ace and not your King, holding both. Anything to confuse “the enemy” is good technique during the play.

Finesse. There are always some available: avoid them until necessary; then try to let opponents lead into them, because 50% odds aren't high enough for good declarers like you.

Cross Ruff. If you have decided it's to your advantage to Cross-Ruff, be sure to take your side-suit Brute Strength tricks first; or else defenders will later ruff them.

Dummy Reversal. If you have planned to collect trumps in dummy so you can ruff in hand, be sure to ruff high in hand –don't get overruffed - and keep low trumps to lead to dummy's entry cards. You can lead a ♠2 to a ♠3, but not the reverse.

Jettison. A Jettison is a pitch of a high card, almost always to unblock a suit.

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Smother. A lead of a card higher than a visible card, usually in dummy, so as to negate it's HCP value. Example; lead of the ♣Q with a singleton ♣J in dummy.

Establish a Suit. If you have a 5 – 2 holding or better between your hand and dummy, then you may be able to set up Length Strength tricks by playing it several times, losing or winning tricks along the way, but gaining Length Strength tricks.

Trump Management. Play Planning decisions about when or whether to collect trump will dictate when you start Trump collection, if at all. Managing trumps for dummy or hand Entries is a part of Trump Management and Entry Management.

Counting the Fall of Card in a suit(s). If you have planned to establish a side suit of considerable length, you must also carefully count the actual fall of defender's cards in that suit to see if Establishment is possible. And you must count how many tricks may become available as a result of a suit Establishment. Also, your Entry Management / counting must tell you there are enough Entries to collect the Length Tricks when established. Count!, Count!, Count! (*Says Who?*)

Unblock. If a high card in either hand blocks the run of a suit, Jettison (get rid of that card) to clear the suit to run tricks in that suit in the other hand.

Block. Sometimes it is possible to play so that opponents' suits are blocked; i.e., a defender can't get to partner to run a suit because the high card in the suit is in the wrong hand, usually as a singleton.

Entry Management. During the Planning Stage, you identified and counted Entries in both hands. During the play, you must carefully use those Entries only when necessary, and sometimes have to generate Entries that were not apparent when the dummy originally came down.

Reconcile the Count. In a contract with only one loser allowed to make the contract, lose it early in the hand to squeeze opponents to the max as you play out all your winners. (*Usually in a Slam Hand and a very advanced technique*)

Play a Duck. (aka a Hold-Up). Deliberately NOT winning a trick, when you have the winning card in the suit, is a tactic useful to keep the lead in the non-Dangerous Hand, for example, or to cut defenders' communication in that suit.

Loser on Loser: Sometimes it is possible to arrange to play a loser from two different suits on one trick, thereby reducing your losers from 2 to 1.

Trading Tricks. Sometimes it is wise to trade a loser in Clubs, where you didn't have a loser to pitch a loser in Diamonds, for example, which could be disastrous. A Loser is a Loser: at the end of the hand, it is a loser: who cares what suit it was in?

Ruff and Sluff or Sluff and Ruff (*the same thing*). You can often arrange the Play so that defenders will have to lead a suit in which both your hands are void. This allows a ruff in one hand to win the trick, and a sluff (discard) of a loser in the other. This is most often near the end of the hand, and typically the result of your planned-for End-Play.

SUMMARY: PHASE II PLAYING THE HAND

You've developed your Plan and executed it; it has worked well, OK or poorly, but that's life: at least it's a far better approach than NOT having a plan. One reason is that you can learn to Plan and to Play better. Failures teach you as much as successes; maybe even more. Besides, a failure may not be because of your Plan or Play; ← it can easily be because of a bad split or being in the wrong contract, or misleading opponent bidding; any number of things outside your control.

But, in many cases at the end of this Phase, good results or not; the hand is over: you made it, went down one, made an overtrick, etc. There may not be a Phase 3.

Many bridge hands are claimed after just a few tricks: Claims occur by you, the Declarer, or by a defender: either is legal. A "Claim" is an assertion by the claimant that the hand needn't be played out, as the outcome is clear. Most of the time, this is done by the Declarer as she has the rest of the tricks in some manner or other: Brute Strength tricks, Cross-Ruff, an Established suit, etc. PLEASE claim when the outcome of a hand is clear: win or lose. It's a severe insult to opponents to play out the last 7 tricks when you know what the outcome will be.

Important: Once claimed, a Hand CANNOT be "played out" to see what happens: it's over when claimed. If there is a dispute about the outcome, the Director must be called at once.

When you claim, be sure to state your Plan for the rest of the tricks immediately, and especially, state what you are going to do about any outstanding trump: if you claim and an opponent still has a trump, she will be awarded that trick unless you recognize and state your plan, including your plan for any outstanding trumps.

PLAY of the HAND – PHASE III FINAL

END OF HAND TECHNIQUES. I call these “End-of-Hand Techniques” because they are used mostly late in the play after you have collected trumps, run your suits, etc. and are in control. These techniques, often used together, can be used to extract an extra trick to get you a top board. You may have planned to use them in Phase I, even though they occur 10 tricks later.

Elimination. (aka STRIP). To void a suit in both hands; Clubs, for example. Then, with skilled Play, forcing a defender to lead a Club so that you get a sluff-and-ruff of a loser in another suit, or some other advantageous lead, such as leading into your ♠AQ. It’s a frequent preparation step for your End-Play plan.

Throw – In. When an Elimination has been accomplished and you are ready to force a defender to make a lead advantageous to you, you have to put her into the lead to do so. Putting her into the lead involves losing a trick, obviously, and the act of forcing her into the lead by losing that trick is called a “Throw-In”. She might not want the lead, but a wily declarer can force defenders into these situations with careful planning and play and Elimination techniques.

Ruff and Sluff. As defined above, a Sluff and Ruff (or Ruff and Sluff), is a trick on which you or dummy ruffs the lead and the other hand discards a loser in another suit. Sometimes they happen by accident, but you can look ahead to see the possibility and plan your play to force such a lead from a defender. They hate it.

Squeeze. We will not study Squeezes in any detail, but you should play out as many winners as possible, forcing defenders to make discards in suits they would prefer to keep. Defense is always hard; defending against a Squeeze is probably the hardest Defense of all. A Squeeze is a very advanced Technique.

End Play. A collective term, often composed of several Declarer Techniques described above; draw trump, Eliminate a suit or suits, arrange to Throw-In a defender and thus force her to lead into an advantageous holding in your hand or dummy, or concede a Ruff-and-Sluff or Break a New Suit. It is frequently the final trick in a hand, or nearly so, thus the term “End” play.

CONCLUSION : PLAY PLANNING OVERVIEW

In these few pages, I have outlined a process used by good Declarers. Examine the situation as the dummy hits, remember and visualize the opponents’ bidding or lack thereof; decide on a plan of Play, select from a bunch of Declarer Techniques, visualize mentally the steps to get your Plan effectively executed, count everything and then get on with it: all in 38 seconds or so.

It is our baseline for this course: “Plan your Work and Work Your Plan” – for top boards.

RECONCILING THE COUNT

Description

When in a tight contract where you can afford only one loser - in a Slam, for example - you should lose that trick early but not to a Dangerous Opponent*. Do it with a Duck* or a Hold-Up* or LOL* or just play low from both hands – but do it early in the hand.

See the Squeeze Declarer Technique write-up for an example.*

Usage

When you lose an inevitable loser early and are still one trick short of your contract, you should subsequently play off all your winners in all suits, noting carefully all discards and counting the cards remaining in each defender's hand.

Then, at the last card or two, one defender may have to guard two suits, or will otherwise be squeezed with very few cards left.

Don't plan on conceding your inevitable loser at the last trick; lose it early so your Squeeze* will automatically work on both defenders to its maximum effect.

As a matter of fact, just do it even if you don't exactly know why, because after losing your loser early, defenders may make a bad lead and hand you your contract.

If you see you are going to do this, perhaps you should first Eliminate* a suit from your hand and Dummy so defenders can't lead that suit without giving you a ruff-and-sluff.

Or Eliminate* 2 suits?

Why not?

RUFF AND SLUFF

Description

A Ruff-and-Sluff (AKA Sluff-and-Ruff) is a sequence where Declarer or Dummy (or rarely, a defender) ruffs in one hand while sluffing (pitching a loser) in the other hand.

For example, if Declarer and Dummy are both void in Clubs and a defender leads a Club, Declarer can ruff in either hand and pitch a loser in the other. This is sometimes accidental (not by a quality defender), but are more often forced by Declarer via one or more Declarer Techniques, like Elimination*, Throw-In*, End Play*, etc.

Usage

It is a very common Declarer Technique, often creating a 100% chance of gaining a trick instead of, for example, a 50% chance of a winning Finesse Guess*.

If, for example, you hold ♣AJx and Dummy holds ♣KTx, you can Finesse* in Clubs in either direction, but it's still 50% odds of success if you "Break the Suit".

But if you can get defenders to lead Clubs, (i.e., "break the Club suit".) you have all 3 tricks 100% of the time, unless there's a ruff. You might be able to do this by collecting trump, then eliminating Diamonds in both hands and then concede a Spade trick or even concede 2 or 3 Spade tricks.

But if defenders will eventually have to lead a Club, giving you all 3 tricks, or lead another Spade or Diamond, letting you Ruff-and-Sluff* in one hand and pitch a low Club in the other, eliminating your need to Finesse-Guess* Clubs, then your odds in Clubs are 100%, not 50%.

RUFF AND SLUFF - *Examples*

<p>♠ AKT72 ♥ 863 ♦ AJT ♣ Q7</p> <p>♠ 5 ♥ J952 ♦ 962 ♣ KT843</p> <p>♠ QJ984 ♥ AQ7 ♦ 854 ♣ A6</p>	<p>Contract: West's Lead: ♥2 4 Spades</p> <p>♠ 63 ♥ KT4 ♦ KQ73 ♣ J952</p>	<p>A Heart loser, 1 or 2 Diamond losers and a Club loser.</p> <p>How can you win, no matter what?</p> <p>You can't avoid a Club loser and a Heart loser because there is nothing to pitch them on, is there?</p> <p>So somehow you have to get East to lead Diamonds</p> <p>or . . . is there something else?</p> <p>A Ruff and Sluff* threat, that's what else there is.</p>
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First, Duck* the opening Heart lead and let East win her ♥King. A Heart loser is inevitable in this hand, so let them have it early: maybe they will make a defensive error – that **is** easy to do, right?

East will return partner's Heart lead, so you win it, collect trumps, win the 3rd Heart and then play the ♣Ace and the ♣Queen, Eliminating* both Hearts and Clubs from both hands, as well as Spades (trumps).

Someone will win the ♣Queen; so far you've lost a Heart and a Club.

If West wins the ♣King, she will have to give you a Ruff and Sluff* by playing a Club or Heart, **or** she can lead a Diamond that East will win – with her King? But then East will be in the same position: give you a Ruff-and-Sluff of your losing Diamond by leading a Club or Heart, or by leading away from her ♦Queen, or **thru** West's ♦Queen into dummy's ♦AJ. Bingo: only one Diamond loser.

If East wins the ♣King, she has the same Ruff and Sluff* problem in Clubs or she can lead into dummy's ♦AJT.

You win no matter who has the ♣King.

Notice the recurring patterns of good End Play: Eliminations, Throw-Ins, Ducks, Ruff and Sluffs, etc. in virtually all difficult and therefore interesting hands.

SMOTHER PLAY**Description**

To Smother* is to negate the Brute Strength of a card, almost always an honor, by leading or playing a higher Brute Strength card.

For example, if there is a singleton ♣Jack in the Dummy, or it is known to be in East's hand, then a lead by Declarer or defender of the ♣Q "smothers" the ♣Jack. It might as well have been a ♣2 for all the Brute Strength it provided in this hand.

Usage

You've seen one in a prior example of Play a Duck*.

♠AK42
♥Q2
♦A54
♣K642

Contract: West's Lead: ♠J.
4 Hearts

A Heart, 2 Diamonds and 1 or 2 Clubs to lose, but one loser can go on Spades. Take the ♠Q, and lose a Heart to East, who leads a Club to West's Ace. West returns the ♣Q, potentially Smothering* your ♣J, taking it out of the play of this hand.

♠Q7
♥KJT953
♦T62
♣J9

Should you cover West's ♣Q with Dummy's ♣K or not?

NO NO NO! You need the ♣King entry to Spades for your Diamond losers, and East might ruff it. Duck the ♣Q and ruff in hand if West continues Clubs.

Then collect trumps and pitch 2 Diamond losers on a top Spade and the ♣King, making 4 with just 1 Heart and 2 Club losers.

Duck a lead that might kill your ♣King winner. This Play a Duck* Technique is part of your prize-winning Entry Management*.

SMOTHER PLAY - Examples

<p>1.a.</p> <p>♠A73 ♥J84 ♦A53 ♣K974</p>	<p>Contract: 4 Spades</p>	<p>West's lead: ♥A, ♥K, ♥7; 3rd Heart ruffed by Declarer.</p> <p>You then play the ♠K & ♠Q with East dropping her singleton ♠J along the way, so West had ♠T542 to start.</p> <p>You win 3 rounds of Diamonds, (Elimination*), then play 3 rounds of Clubs, East winning the 3rd with her ♣Q.</p> <p><i>See 1.b. below for the finish . . .</i></p>
<p>♠T542 ♥AK7 ♦T86 ♣J82</p>	<p>♠J ♥QT962 ♦J942 ♣QT3</p>	
	<p>♠KQ986 ♥53 ♦KQ7 ♣A65</p>	

<p>1.b.</p> <p>♠A ♥ - ♦ - ♣9</p>	<p>East</p> <p>♠ - ♥ T ♦ J ♣ -</p>	<p>The situation after the 11th trick, with East on lead, after winning the 3rd Club trick.</p> <p>She has no black cards left, so she must lead a red one that you ruff with the ♠9.</p> <p>. . . and away goes West's "sure trump trick". . .</p> <p>A Smother play in action – in Trump, no less!</p> <p><u>A "sure" trump winner goes into the dust.</u></p> <p><u>Cute, Eh?</u></p>
<p>♠T5 ♥ - ♦ - ♣ -</p>	<p>♠98 ♥ - ♦ - ♣ -</p>	

SMOTHER PLAY – *Examples*

2.a.	♠QJT6 ♥A4 ♦KJ7 ♣KT42	Contract: 6 Clubs	West leads the ♠A, winning, then the ♦8, won with Dummy's ♦J. Your plan: ruff out East's ♠K, and pitch a Diamond on the ♠T. Play ♥AK and ruff a Heart in dummy, then ruff out the last Spade.
	♠A954 ♥Q72 ♦843 ♣Q87	♠K832 ♥T965 ♦965 ♣J6	Play 2 more rounds of Diamonds, ending in hand and then lead the ♥J . . . leading to . . . <i>See 2.b. below for the finish . . .</i>
	♠7 ♥KJ83 ♦AQT2 ♣A953		
2.b.	♠ - ♥ - ♦ - ♣KT4		The 3-card ending. Apparently the defense gets a trump (♣) trick, right? But, when Declarer leads the ♥J, the “sure” defensive trump goes bye – bye . . . Smothered* by great Declarer play. A few things had to happen right for Declarer, distribution wise, but who says they can't?
	♠ - ♥ - ♦ - ♣Q87	♠ - ♥T ♦ - ♣J6	
	♠ - ♥J ♦ - ♣A9		

SQUEEZE

Description

A Squeeze occurs when a defender must discard many cards on Declarer's winning tricks and has trouble keeping winning or significant cards in one or more suits for end-of-hand play.

Usage

As a simple example, if Declarer and Dummy have 10 tricks in the majors, there are only 3 tricks to be played in the minors. *BTW, the major suit tricks don't all have to be winners unless you're in a slam contract.*

As defenders will not have many cards in the majors, they will have to discard from minor suits, but which one(s)? If East holds ♣Kx and ♦Kx on the play of the 10th major suit trick, in which suit does she discard?

As a Declarer Technique, play out all your winners ASAP, because Squeezes are automatic, even if you cannot see in advance (or even afterwards) why they will (or did) work. You may want to keep one trump, but unless it's absolutely necessary, play out every trump to increase the Squeeze on defenders. Just that one final trump trick can squeeze one or both defenders into a fatal discard.

Do not get in the habit of saving your last trump for the last trick: that's amateur city!

There are card games where playing a trump as the last trick gains a "point" or something, but duplicate is definitely NOT one of them!

A SIMPLE SQUEEZE *example – playing the last trump.*

♠ - ♥ - ♦ A9 ♣ A3	<p>Contract: 6 Hearts</p> <p>You took your one inevitable loser on the 3rd trick to Reconcile the Count*, and have taken all the tricks since then to this point.</p>
♠ - ♥ - ♦ KT ♣ KT	<p>You have 3 more tricks mechanically: the Heart 9 (trump) and two Aces, but you need all 4 tricks to make your slam. But: what to lead ?</p>
♠ ♥ 9 ♦ 73 ♣ 9	<p>Simple: lead your last trump and . . . West: Pick a Card; Any Card!</p> <p>West has been squeezed mercilessly!</p> <p><i>Students: lay out these 12 cards (East doesn't matter) and see this Squeeze at work.</i></p> <p><i>The challenge is not the Squeeze per se: it is your Visualization* and play to get to this point where a Squeeze can win all the tricks.</i></p>

SQUEEZE PLAYS - Example II

N-S are vulnerable. You are South and you hold

♠ K4
 ♥ AKQ5
 ♦ AQJ
 ♣ KJT4

Your left-hand opponent (West) opens 1♠, your partner bids 3♣, showing long Clubs and a weak hand. At this vulnerability, it is safe to assume that partner has seven Clubs, all the more so considering that you have three Club honors in hand. Even though West is almost certain to hold the ♠A and the ♦K, slam looks possible.

Should you bid 6♣ or 6NT? The answer is definitely 6NT, protecting your ♠K from an opening Spade lead by East. It's called "right-siding the contract": here is the complete deal:

DECLARER PLAY 2014

	♠ 53	
	♥ 3	
	♦ 964	
	♣ AQ98432	
♠ AQJ962		♠ T87
♥ JT2		♥ 98764
♦ K532		♦ T87
♣ -		♣ 76
	♠ K4	
	♥ AKQ5	
	♦ AQJ	
	♣ KJT5	

As can be seen, 6♣ (played from the North) is down one in a hurry after East's opening Spade lead.

Against South's 6NT, West leads the ♥J.

How can you make 12 tricks? CAN you make 12 tricks?

Here's how:

You can count 11 top tricks and you can be sure from the bidding that the ♦K and ♠A are both with West. Does that mean that your 6NT is destined to fail?

Actually, no, because you can organize a Squeeze* End - Play.

Win the opening Heart lead, cash the other 2 Heart winners and rattle off 7 Club tricks.

DECLARER PLAY 2014

Here is the end-position with your last Club about to be cashed in the Dummy:

	♠ 5	
	♥	
	♦ 96	
	♣ 8	
♠ AQ		<i>Immaterial</i>
♥		
♦ K5		
♣		
	♠ K	
	♥ 5	
	♦ AQ	
	♣	

When that last Club is cashed, you pitch your Heart and West is caught in what is known as a Strip Squeeze:

- If she pitches a Diamond then you score two Diamond tricks
- If she pitches a Spade then you Throw her In* with a Spade, forcing her to lead into your ♦AQ for the last two tricks.

12 tricks either way via a classic Squeeze Play.

West had all the Brute Strength, but could not hold on to all of it while those little Club tricks, with their great Length Strength, squeezed her like an orange!

Again, thanks to ACBL.ORG Bridge Bites for this example.

THROW-IN

Description

A “Throw-In” occurs when Declarer deliberately gives a specific defender “victim” a trick to force her to lead a suit advantageous to Declarer. *See Ruff-and-Sluff* and End Plays* and Loser on Loser* and Elimination* Techniques.* Frequently these techniques are used in a controlled sequence to Declarer’s advantage, i.e., as a precursor to a Throw-In*.

Sometimes the Throw-In* can be to either defender, to make them lead into a Two-Way Finesse, for example: in that case, it doesn’t matter which defender leads the suit Declarer wants led. (*See Two-Way Finesse**)

Usage

Example: suppose West leads the ♠King and you or dummy hold the ♠AJ. Take the ♠Ace (unless there’s a reason for a “Hold-Up*” or “Play a Duck*”), then collect trump, Eliminate* side suits, etc. preparing to throw West back into the lead and force her to (eventually) lead a suit you want her to lead. It might be for a Ruff-and-Sluff* or into your Two-Way Finesse*, to Break a New Suit*, etc. You know she has the ♠Queen. When ready, just lead the ♠J – you know West has the ♠Queen and is not Dangerous.

Sometimes you won’t know which defender has the Throw-In card, but it may not matter, because a Sluff-and-Ruff* or Two-Way Finesse* works with a lead from either side (providing one defender is not still Dangerous, of course.)

Throw-ins are not always for the ruff-and-sluff or two-way finesse cases described above: often they are to put the lead into the non-Dangerous Opponent’s hand.

Perhaps she then has to lead away from her ♣Ace “upwind of” your ♣King, giving you a trick you can’t make by yourself. This negates her ♣Ace’s Positional Strength and Brute Strength if she has to lead toward your “downwind” ♣King.

THROW IN - Examples

♠ QJ98 **Contract: 4 Spades**
 ♥ A4 Lead: ♣ 2
 ♦ Q865
 ♣ AQ3 *Plan the play for 10 tricks.*

♠ AKT53
 ♥ KQ6
 ♦ J74
 ♣ 75

Take the ♣ Ace – do not take the Club Finesse*, then draw trump in 2 or 3 rounds.

Pitch a Club from Dummy on the 3rd Heart so you then hold exactly 1 Club in both hands. Then exit with the ♣Queen, finishing the Club suit Elimination* and creating a Throw In Play* on either defender, as follows:

Defenders will have to break Diamonds for you, giving you a Diamond trick, or else give you a Sluff-and-Ruff* by continuing Clubs as you pitch a Diamond loser.

♠ JT765 **Contract:** West's lead: ♥Q.
 ♥ 652 **4 Spades**
 ♦ A7
 ♣ AT8

♠ AKQ32
 ♥ AK4
 ♦ 43
 ♣ J43

When dummy appears you see that the hands have the dreaded “mirrored distribution”, meaning no ruffs in either hand and no pitching of losers on side-suit winners. There is an inevitable loser in Hearts and another in Diamonds. So, if 4♠ is to make, you must avoid losing two Clubs. There are various, *all bad*, ways to Finesse* in Clubs. So, which one?

The correct answer is that you don't have to do a Club Finesse* because you know the 100% Throw-In* method.

To do it right, draw trumps, cash your red suit winners and exit with a Heart or a Diamond. The defenders will then take their red suit tricks – your known losers, but now their goose is cooked.

If they lead another red card then you sluff a Club loser from one hand and ruff in the other hand - a Ruff and Sluff*. But if they break open Clubs, then you will lose only one Club trick however the suit is distributed. Throw-In, Yes! Finesse, No!

TRUMP MANAGEMENT

Description

Trump is of course your primary concern in a suit contract. Managing trump so that you keep control of the hand is the primary objective, even if you lose one or more trump tricks.

Control is the key, something not available in a NoTrump contract.

Usage

Sometimes you have a trump loser, sometimes not and sometimes multiple losers if you're not careful.

Also, frequently trumps are your Entries* to Dummy for Entry Management* reasons.

Trumps can be used for a Throw-In* if you know which defender has the high missing trump.

Trumps can be used as simple Length or Strength tricks, or can be maximized by ruffing in the short hand or even via a Cross-Ruff*, where you ruff in both hands.

TRUMP MANAGEMENT - Problem Answers

1. ♠ AKJ64 **Contract:** West's lead: ♦ 4
 ♥ AKJ3 **6 Clubs**
 ♦ 63
 ♣ K5
- How do you prevent a 4 – 0 trump distribution from defeating you?
- Lead the ♣2 and play the ♣5 (!) from Dummy if West plays the ♣3 or ♣4.
- ♠ 32
 ♥ 75
 ♦ AK
 ♣ AT98762
- If the split is 2 – 2 or 3 - 1, there is no problem; but if it is 4 – 0 in the West, this play prevents 2 losers.
- If it is 4 – 0 in the East, West will show out on the first lead, so you will play the ♣King – not the ♣5! - and lose only one trick by Finessing* the ♣Ten through East.

2. ♠ AJ2 **Contract:** West's Lead: ♣ 2, East plays the ♣Q
 ♥ K42 **4 Spades**
 ♦ AJT97
 ♣ 73
- You must keep West out of the lead, as there could then be 3 Heart losers plus a trump loser: a Dangerous Opponent*. How should you do this?
- ♠ KT986
 ♥ 76
 ♦ KQ4
 ♣ AJT
- On the 1st trick, let East win with her ♣Q. A Hold-Up*. She can't ever get back to West's ♣King because you hold the ♣A and dummy will then become void. (*Cutting Defender Communications – AKA a Scissors Coup**)
- Winning East's return, lead the ♠8, finessing West for the ♠Q. If it wins, finesse the ♠Jack, and then take the ♠Ace and ♠King.
- If the ♠8 loses, East can't get back to West in Clubs to lead Hearts thru dummy's ♥King; all she can do is take her ♥Ace or lead a Heart, making dummy's ♥King good.
- Just 1 Club, 1 Spade and 1 Heart loser, for 10 tricks.
- Look ahead and win; play quick and die.*

TRUMP MANAGEMENT - *More Problems*

3. ♠ 752
♥ 743
♦ AQJT
♣ Q53

Contract:
4 Hearts

West's Lead: ♣J

Technique: Play ♣ Q from dummy on the opening lead to put the idea that you have 2 Clubs into defenders' minds.

A Deception* play that costs you nothing. Of course, East will play the ♣King if she has it, and now defenders think they can win the ♣Jack later.

♠ K84
♥ AK9652
♦ K52
♣ A

Problem: East is a What? So what?

Solution?

4. ♠ AKQ
♥ K4
♦ JT53
♣ Q842

Contract: ♣6

West's Lead: ♥Q.

You will lose 2 Club tricks if West has all 4 but there's no problem if they are split 2 – 2 or 3 – 1 or even 4 – 0 in the East.

♠ 865
♥ A3
♦ AKQ
♣ AJ765

How do you prevent 2 losers if they **are** split 4 – 0 in the East?

TRUMP MANAGEMENT - Answers

3. ♠ 752 **Contract: 4 Hearts** West's lead: ♣J
 ♥ 743
 ♦ AQJT **Technique:** Play the ♣ Q on the opening lead to put the idea you have 2
 ♣ Q53 Clubs into defenders' minds. A Deception* that costs you nothing.
- Of course, East will play the ♣King if she has it. But later, there's no additional Club winner for them!
- ♠ K84
 ♥ AK9652 **Problem:** East is a Dangerous Opponent* in Spades.
 ♦ K52
 ♣ A **Solution:** On the 2nd trick, go to dummy in Diamonds and lead a small
 trump, covering anything East plays: she **must** be kept out of the lead.
- Repeat if necessary. It is OK to lose a trump trick to West, but never to East. **Do not** play "Eight Ever, Nine Never" because East could win the 3rd trump trick. Eventually you will pitch a losing Spade on a Diamond.

4. ♠ AKQ **Contract: 6 Clubs.** West's Lead: ♥Q
 ♥ K4
 ♦ JT53 **Problem:** You will lose 2 trump tricks if West has all 4 but it's no
 ♣ Q842 problem if they are 2 – 2 or 3 – 1 or even 4 – 0 in the East, but not if
 they're all in the West.
- ♠ 865
 ♥ A3 **Solution:** Play East for possibly all 4 missing trumps: How? Visualize*
 ♦ AKQ East's theoretical 4 Clubs: ♣KT93.
 ♣ AJ765
- Lead low toward the ♣Q, losing to someone. If they both played any Club, they're splitting OK – no problem.
- But if West was void, East will win the ♣K. Regain the lead, go to dummy with a Spade and lead the ♣8. If East covers the ♣8, win, then return to dummy with another Spade for a second finesse through East's remaining ♣T3.
- Spots are crucial in bridge! A ♣8 that wins a trick counts exactly the same as the ♣Ace when you count up your tricks at the end of the hand.*

VISUALIZATION

Description

Often, to Plan a hand successfully or to see clearly how to Discover* HCP or for other reasons, you must mentally place that missing ♣King in one defender's hand or the other to make your contract. This may sound like fantasy, but it's an important skill of good declarers.

If the ♣King has to be there to make your contract, then mentally put it there before you start to plan the hand.

Next, with that ♣King mentally placed in the East hand, for example, ask "where are other important cards? If the ♠Ace is also in the East hand, then might she have opened the bidding? If not, the ♠Ace is probably in the West hand? (Inference*)

Note that you haven't played a card yet.

There are ways to ascertain whether your Visualization* can be correct, primarily by using the Discovery* Technique. For example, in the case cited above, you can find out where the ♠Ace is by leading the ♠King from your ♠KQJx, without harming your hand. If it is in the West hand, then your assumption (or hope) about where the ♣King is can be or probably is true.

The above is Visualization of Brute Strength - HCP. It can also work for Length Strength.

Example: "Spades weren't bid in this auction even though everyone bid. That means no one has 5 of them. Dummy and I together have 5 Spades, so that means they must be 4 - 4 in defenders' hands. That means East has 4 Spades to go along with her 6 Diamonds and 2 Hearts, so she has only one Club. Since she has only one Club, I'll finesse Clubs through West because I know she has 4 of them. But first, I'll play my ♣Ace to be sure East's Club isn't the missing ♣Queen".
Visualization from a lack of opponents' bidding is just as valid as from actual bidding.*

Usage

When your Plan comes down to a need to Finesse*, even though we discourage it as an initial choice, then Visualization* can help you maximize your chances - to get above the 50% odds of an uneducated Finesse Guess*. And it may help you identify a Dangerous Opponent that may not be initially obvious.

Remember, there's only about 12 important high cards - the Aces, Kings and Queens. As declarer, you can usually see 6 to 9 of them in your hand plus the Dummy. Any competitive bidding will locate some more.

How hard can it be to Visualize* where just one card or two can be? Give yourself some credit.

EXAMPLE OF VISUALIZATION

Every Declarer hand is an exercise in Visualization. But so is every Defender's hand. It works both ways. Here's a very classy example of both Declarer and Defenders' Visualization*:

<p>♠ QT ♥ AKQ3 ♦ 93 ♣ QJT94</p> <p>♠J7652</p> <p>♠ A98 ♥ 74 ♦ AQJT2 ♣ 832</p>	<p>Contract: 3 NT</p> <p>♠K43</p>	<p>West's Lead: ♠5 to Dummy's ♠Queen, East's ♠King and your ♠Ace.</p> <p>You and the defenders all see the main trick source in this hand at once: you (South) have a bunch of Diamond tricks because that is where virtually all the missing high cards are after the first trick, and everyone sees that.</p> <p>But defenders found your weakest suit on the opening lead, and can cash several Spades once they knock out your 2nd Spade stopper. You stand to lose 2 Clubs, a Diamond and 3 Spades for down 2. Or maybe not? You are in-hand for trick 2, but have no Entry back to hand to run those lovely Diamonds once the King has been played.</p>
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Obviously, sharp defenders are not going to take their ♦King until they have to, holding those 4 Diamond tricks of yours at bay while they set up their Spades. But, is your Visualization* better than theirs - - maybe; lead the ♦2 to dummy's ♦9 at trick 2. If defender's take their ♦King, it's all over, so they won't, of course.

So then lead dummy's ♦3 back to your ♦Ace – two Diamond tricks taken so far, but as soon as you lead another Diamond, they will take the ♦King, and you are stuck in the dummy forever and going down . . . unless you Visualize* the key play: do you? It's a tough one, but here it is: lead the ♦Queen, losing to the ♦King, but discarding the ♠Ten from dummy! *Brilliant!* Your 2nd Spade stopper is now in-hand, (and it's an Entry!) where those lovely Diamonds reside, and your contract.

But, defenders can Visualize* your plan, and so won't lead Spades to your hand and those Diamond tricks: they will start attacking Hearts. However, you have 3 Heart stoppers, and will use two of them to set up 3 Club tricks.

1 Spade, 3 Hearts, 2 Diamonds and 3 Clubs makes . . . 9 tricks!