

Week 6: Defence – Counting Tricks

“There was no way in which I could tell.” How often is it true? Early in the play, not often; towards the end, never. ...there must always be an indication of some sort.

Terence Reese, The Expert Game

If you are ever to amount to anything at this game, you must build up a picture of the unseen hands.

Robert Hamman, BOLS Bridge tip

Counting

When defending, we need to be counting, all the time. There are three key things to count:

1. **Tricks**
2. **Points or high cards** (what does declarer hold and what does partner have to help us?)
3. **Distribution or shape** (how many cards does declarer have in each suit?)

Counting Tricks

There are two questions we should consider and revisit as we defend:

- Which tricks are we going to take to defeat the contract?
- Does declarer have enough tricks (either now or in due course) to make it?

The second question will guide us as to whether to pursue an 'active' or 'passive' defence.

Active vs Passive Defence

Active

- Take fast tricks
- Willing to take a risk to do so
- If we wait, Declarer has enough tricks

Passive

- Play safe
- No help to Declarer
- If we wait, Declarer will lose too many tricks