

Think and Play

Defence against Trump Contracts

Opening Leads against Trump Contracts:

Guidelines:

The aim of the defence is to prevent declarer making extra tricks with his trumps such as discussed in Lesson 1.

This means that the defender making the opening lead will often lead a trump but ***there are many exceptions*** such as:

- ❖ she has a side suit singleton and is hoping to get one or more ruffs. This is more likely if her hand is weak and her partner strong.
- ❖ when the bidding tells her that her partner has a short suit. She may lead this suit in the hope of giving her partner a ruff. This is more likely if her hand is stronger with quick entries.
- ❖ when the opponents' bidding tells her that dummy dislikes declarer's suit. She should rather try to allow the defence to make their trumps separately than allow declarer to draw two of the defence's trumps for one of her own.

Opening Leads against Trump Contracts:

Guidelines:

When **not** to lead a trump (continued)

- ❖ when dummy has indicated a long strong side suit before agreeing upon trumps. Leading a trump now will lose a tempo and give declarer more time to draw trumps and set up that side suit.
- ❖ when she has a good strong trump suit which will win tricks without having to ruff.
- ❖ when she has a trump holding that will probably lose a trick, if led
viz: Kx, KJ, KQ, AQ, AJ, Qx, Jx, Qxx, Jxx, AJx, KJx, KQx, QJx
- ❖ she may also choose to lead partner's suit if partner has made an overcall.

Opening Leads against Trump Contracts

The following holdings are considered less likely to give away a trick if leading trumps:

J, 10, x, QJ, J10, 10x, xx, Axx, Kxx, xxx, Axxx, Kxxx, Jxxx, xxxx

As a general rule when leading against suit contracts the following leads are often ill-advised:

- ❖ do not lead away from an Ace in a side suit .
- ❖ do not lead an unsupported Ace to have a look at the dummy (unless there is an urgent need for the defence to take tricks quickly)
- ❖ avoid leading doubletons unless they are touching honours such as AK, KQ, QJ, J10, 10,9. Do not lead from Ax, Kx, Qx, Jx, 10x, or xx unless partner has bid the suit.

Opening Leads against Trump Contracts (no indication from bidding):

HOLDING	CARD TO LEAD
AKx (x...)	The Ace(top of a sequence). Note: Lead the King from AK doubleton.
A non-trump singleton	Only if you have useful trumps that wouldn't otherwise have won tricks.
KQx (x...)	The King
QJx(x---	The Queen
J10x(x...)	The Jack
109(x...)	The Ten
xx	The higher x
xxx(or longer)	From three small lead middle-up-down (MUD). This allows partner to differentiate from a doubleton lead. From four small lead the second highest then follow with the next highest. From five or more small, lead fourth highest,
Weak trumps	Any, if they end up in a contract that wasn't their first choice.
Kx, Qx, Jx,10x (all or longer)	If you have only two, start with the higher card. With three lead the lowest. With more, lead fourth highest.
A singleton trump	
Ax (x---) *	Only one better than underleading the A from this combination.

(source: "Murder at the Bridge Table" Granovetter)

Opening Leads against Trump Contracts (no indication from bidding):

Footnotes to the Table:

- ❖ Against a slam, the lead of an unsupported Ace is more attractive.
- ❖ A lead in partner's bid suit ranks nearly as high as the most favoured leads above.
- ❖ The lead of an unbid suit (especially an unbid major) usually helps the defence.

Suit Preference Signals in Defence

April 7, 2015

South led her singleton 6C. East decided to finesse because it didn't look risky and was a strategy by which she could get to her hand to start dragging out the trumps.

North returns a club to give South a ruff *but which one?* In this situation it is useful to give partner an indication of what to lead next. Using McKenney formalism, a high club would ask for a heart and a low club for a diamond. North returns 2C, South ruffs, plays KD (showing AD) and a small diamond which North ruffs. North now leads 10C asking for a heart.

Dir: South
 Vul: E/W

♠ 1042
 ♥ K103
 ♦ J
 ♣ K108532

♠ --
 ♥ AQ75
 ♦ Q98632
 ♣ AJ4

North
19
South

♠ AKJ753
 ♥ 84
 ♦ 75
 ♣ Q97

7	
13	10
10	

♠ Q986
 ♥ J962
 ♦ AK104
 ♣ 6

	♠	♥	♦	♣	N
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	1	-	1	-	-
E	-	1	-	1	-
W	-	1	-	1	-

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Suit Preference Signals in Defence

There are a number of other situations when suit preference signals can be used effectively in defence.

In a slam situation, it is quite common for a defender to lead an unsupported A. If partner plays an unnecessarily high card such as a J, she is asking for the higher of the other two suits to be led and vice versa if she plays an unnecessarily low card like a 2 or 3.

The same applies after competitive bidding where the defence must establish their tricks quickly. Knowing that only one trick in their suit is likely, a winner (eg A or K) is led hoping to get a suit preference signal from partner.

When following to declarer drawing trumps, a higher rank played first can be used to indicate a preference for one of the higher ranked side suits and vice versa.

Forcing Defences:

You are West on lead against 4S.
 Your partner has bid strongly (vulnerable) in hearts with limited support from you.
 With a weak hand like yours, a singleton and the likelihood that partner can get in to give you ruffs, you would normally lead that singleton.

Do you think that the singleton lead holds the best chance of defeating the contract? Decide on your lead.

Dlr: North
 Vul: E/W

April 6, 2015

♠ Q J 5 4 ♥ 10 4 3 2 ♦ 10 ♣ 10 8 4 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #d9534f; color: white; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">WEST</td> <td style="background-color: #2e8b57; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="background-color: #d9534f; color: white; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">EAST</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">25</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #d9534f; color: white; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">WEST</td> <td style="background-color: #2e8b57; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> <td style="background-color: #d9534f; color: white; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">EAST</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	25			WEST	SOUTH	EAST	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣
WEST	NORTH	EAST									
25											
WEST	SOUTH	EAST									

♠
♥
♦
♣

<i>Bidding</i>			
<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>
	Pass	1♥	1♣
2♥	2♣	3♥	4♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Forcing Defences:

If you lead the 10D singleton, partner will win the AD and give you a diamond ruff. Declarer should anticipate that the 10D denies the JD and let any return by East other than the JD run to the table. Partner should lead back the 7D rather than the 2D (suit preference, more on that later) when she wins the AD to call for a heart return.

Your best hope now is to return a heart hoping for a second diamond ruff but declarer has a void and trumps your heart.

Declarer now cashes KS in case a singleton honour lies with East and leads towards the A9. You play JS and declarer AS, East showing out. Declarer now finesses the JD and plays on diamonds discarding clubs from dummy until you ruff with your QS winner. Declarer's 10th trick now comes from a club ruff in dummy.

Dir: North
 Vul: E/W

April 6, 2015

<p>♠ QJ54 ♥ 10432 ♦ 10 ♣ 10843</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">North</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; font-size: 2em;">25</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">South</td></tr> </table>	North	25	South	<p>♠ A96 ♥ Q75 ♦ 863 ♣ 9752</p>	<p>♠ 7 ♥ AKJ986 ♦ AJ72 ♣ QJ</p>
North						
25						
South						

<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">6</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">3</td><td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">16</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">15</td></tr> </table>	6	3	16	15	<p>♠ K10832 ♥ -- ♦ KQ954 ♣ AK6</p>	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>♠</td><td>♥</td><td>♦</td><td>♣</td><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>		♠	♥	♦	♣	N	N	1	3	-	3	1	S	1	3	-	3	-	E	-	-	4	-	-	W	-	-	4	-	-
6																																				
3	16																																			
15																																				
	♠	♥	♦	♣	N																															
N	1	3	-	3	1																															
S	1	3	-	3	-																															
E	-	-	4	-	-																															
W	-	-	4	-	-																															

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
	Pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	2♠	3♥	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Forcing Defences:

Lead the 2H.

Declarer ruffs the heart and leads a small spade towards 9S. You play JS and declarer AS. Declarer now leads a low diamond to the KD and then a low spade towards the 9S. Assume you play QS and a second round of hearts. Declarer now has to ruff again (or throw the club loser) and now has only one trump left in hand and dummy and you have two. Declarer has now lost trump control and the hand falls apart.

You could duck the lead to the 9S. Declarer wins (and is very despondent when East shows out) All declarer can really do now is cash the two club tricks before they run away. East will win AD if diamonds are led give you a diamond ruff and you can draw declarers last trump and enjoy the rest of the hearts.

Dir: North
Vul: E/W

April 6, 2015

♠ A96
♥ Q75
♦ 863
♣ 9752

♠ QJ54
♥ 10432
♦ 10
♣ 10843

West	North	East
	25	
	South	

♠ 7
♥ AKJ986
♦ AJ72
♣ QJ

	♠	♥	♦	♣	N
N	1	3	-	3	1
S	1	3	-	3	-
E	-	-	4	-	-
W	-	-	4	-	-

♠ K10832
♥ --
♦ KQ954
♣ AK6

Bidding				
W	N	E	S	
	Pass	1♥	1♠	
2♥	2♠	3♥	4♠	
Pass	Pass	Pass		

2H lead

Forcing Defences

The guidelines to adopt a forcing defence are:

- ❖ You have a lot of trumps and usually one or more honours.
- ❖ You know that you have a strong side suit to play on with your partner.
- ❖ You don't believe that declarer has a mismatch in side suits with his partner which would enable a cross-ruff. A trump lead is better in this case.
- ❖ It doesn't matter whether your hand is weak or strong, just that you have a lot of trumps and a side suit fit with your partner.

Trump Promotions

April 7, 2015

You are West. East leads KH and a second heart to your 10H or QH. *How do you plan your defence?*

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
2♦*	Pass	2♥#	Pass
Pass	2♠	3♥	3♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

* Multi-twos

Pass or Correct

Lead KH

Dir: West
 Vul: All

♠ 7

♥ A Q 10 9 5 2

♦ 8 5 3

♣ K 10 8

W	NORTH	E
E	20	S
S	SOUTH	T

♠

♥

♦

♣

♠ A 5 4 3

♥ J 8 4

♦ A J 2

♣ 6 4 3

Trump Promotions

You have 2 x hearts tricks and must find 3 more defensive tricks. You could play a third heart round knowing that both declarer and your partner are now out. If partner has the KS this is sure to allow her to make it and then maybe 2 x club tricks will set the contract.....*but what if she doesn't have KS?* After all North came in vulnerable.

The answer lies in your thinking about club tricks. For example, play the 10C and if that wins cash the KC before playing the third heart round. Declarer must now ruff to make her contract. If partner has the KS she will make it. If not, one of her lower trumps might make or you might get another club if declarer has three.

Dir: West
Vul: All

April 7, 2015

♠ KQ1098
♥ 63
♦ KQ106
♣ 72

♠ 7
♥ AQ10952
♦ 853
♣ K108

West	North	East
	20	
South		

♠ J62
♥ K7
♦ 974
♣ AQJ95

♠ A543
♥ J84
♦ AJ2
♣ 643

	♠	♦	♥	♣	N
N	-	3	-	3	-
S	-	3	-	3	-
E	3	-	3	-	-
W	3	-	3	-	-

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠	3♥	3♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Trump Promotions

Note that if you play a third round of hearts immediately North can throw a losing club (loser on loser) to make her contract iron-clad. If she ruffed high instead she now has to play for the 2-2 in spades or finesse the Jxx in the right direction. A lot of work and uncertainty if she can simply throw a loser on a loser to guarantee her contract.

Playing two rounds of clubs before the third round of hearts doesn't guarantee that you will set the contract in this example but gives you a good chance.

Trump promotions can be effected if you are positioned under declarer and you must ensure that declarer has no idle cards to throw away before playing the card that has the potential to promote a trump in your partner's hand.

Dir: West
Vul: All

♠ KQ1098
♥ 63
♦ KQ106
♣ 72

April 7, 2015

♠ 7
♥ AQ10952
♦ 853
♣ K108

North		East
W	20	E
est		ast
South		South

♠ J62
♥ K7
♦ 974
♣ AQJ95

	10	
9		11
	10	

♠ A543
♥ J84
♦ AJ2
♣ 643

	♠	♦	♥	♣	N
N	-	3	-	3	-
S	-	3	-	3	-
E	3	-	3	-	-
W	3	-	3	-	-

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠	3♥	3♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Hold-up Plays to Destroy Communications

West made the inauspicious lead of JC. 😞
 Declarer discarded a heart from dummy and won the trick. Her spades are not quite good enough in both hands to cross ruff and she decides correctly to try to set up the diamond side suit and hopefully lose only AS and AD.

She plays two more rounds of clubs discarding the other two heart losers before playing the KS. East has an easy forcing defence here by playing on hearts forcing dummy to ruff but declarer may hold the KH and dummy is now void so she ducks.

If declarer now plays another trump East wins with AS and plays a third round. South can now try to set up diamonds but East ducks until the second round, locking South out of dummy and after taking AD plays on hearts. Declarer should only make 8 tricks.

♠ Q104 April 7, 2015

♥ J106

♦ KQ98632

♣ --

Dir: East
Vul: All

♠ 85 ♥ K92 ♦ 104 ♣ J108643	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">West</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">North</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">East</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="3" style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">10</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">West</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">South</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">East</td></tr> </table>	West	North	East	10			West	South	East	♠ A73 ♥ AQ43 ♦ A5 ♣ 9752
West	North	East									
10											
West	South	East									

	8	
4		14
	14	

♠ KJ962
♥ 875
♦ J7
♣ AKQ

	♠	♥	♦	♣	N
N	-	2	-	2	1
S	-	2	-	2	1
E	3	-	1	-	-
W	3	-	1	-	-

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
		1NT# 2♣	
Dble*4♣		Dble	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Weak NT

* The first double was for stolen bid indicating W was weak with long clubs but E forgot that!!