

TACTICS FOR DEFENDERS

When partner leads your suit in a no trump contract consider ducking the first round to maintain communication.

	Q73			QJ5	
92		AK654	62		K10943
	J108			A87	

In the first example the play of the ace on the first trick gains nothing but east will be able to run four of the suit if either he or west later gains the lead. In the second example declarer has two stops on any layout but he may play the queen from the north hand and duck if east plays the king on the opening lead, leaving both stops intact. A second lead from west will then be less of a threat to declarer. If east ducks the queen on the first round, however, a second lead from west will still be effective.

It may also be necessary for a defender with along suit to duck the return of the suit by his partner in order to maintain communication

	Q5			
K53		A9742		
	J106			

In this example east opens by leading the four of his suit, West wins and returns the three. It may be wise for west to duck to maintain communication

A further variation of this principle is to force an opponent to take the first round of the defenders' suit in order to help maintain communication between the defenders

	842			
93		KQ765		
	AJ10			

In this example south is in 3NT after east overcalled this suit. West duly leads the nine and east concludes that south has AJ10. If east plays an honour, south will duck and it will need two further leads to dislodge south's winners, one of which must be made immediately. If west gains the lead first he will have no further card in this suit to lead. East should therefore duck the opening lead. South must now win and if west gains the lead first he still has the three left to lead.

Despite the above considerations a defender with a long suit may refuse to hold up in the following circumstances

- He has good outside entries to his own hand and his partner does not.
- He needs to cash winners quickly.
- He wishes to switch to another suit.
- He judges that partner has no more of the suit

When defenders are trying to establish a long suit the defender with the shorter holding in the suit should aim to win the first available defensive trick.

This is a variation of the principles of the previous section known as “protecting partner’s entry”

	S K6	
	H K106	
	D 8432	
	C QJ76	
S QJ1085		S 973
H Q97		H J842
D A105		D K9
C 42		C 10953
	S A42	
	H A53	
	D QJ76	
	C AK8	

The contract is 3NT.

West leads spades. Declarer wins the second round in dummy and leads a low diamond. Either east or west could win this but if west wins, the defenders will be unable to play more than one further round of spades.

East will later win the KD but will have no spades left. Although it appears unnatural east must therefore play the KD on the first diamond trick--the opposite of “second hand low”

When partner leads his long suit, finesse against dummy but not normally against partner.

If dummy has all low cards it is normally correct for defender’s partner to play his highest card.

	942		732	
KJ53	A106	Q964		K105
	Q85		AJ8	

In these examples there is nothing to be gained as by withholding your highest card. If you hold a sequence such as QJ10 play the lowest to help partner to judge the situation

If you hold AQx or possibly AJx in partner’s suit, however, it may be appropriate to finesse on the opening lead if you think declarer has the king (eg if he has bid no trumps or shown a very strong hand). Because declarer does not know the position of the ace he will probably not dare to hold up the king. If so, this will maintain communication between the two defenders. The defender with the long suit must be aware that his partner may finesse and may have the ace.

	S 102		S J873	
	H Kx		H Q5	
	D AQJ1043		D 82	
	C AK2		C AQ1084	
S J9543	S AQ6	S 95	S A642	
H Qxxx	H 10xx	H 1042	H 9863	
D 52	D K8	D Q10754	D AJ3	
C 98	C Q7654	C 653	C K2	
	S K87		S KQ10	
	H AJxx		H AKJ7	
	D 976		D K96	
	C J103		C J97	

In these examples the contract is 3NT and west leads a low spade and a low diamond respectively. In each case east will defeat the contract by finessing unless declarer dares to hold up the king. In the second example it is clearly more risky to finesse the jack but on this layout the contract would still fail if south merely had the queen given that east has at least one more entry to lead diamonds again.

If dummy has high cards then the leader's partner should normally finesse against them

	J62		A104	
Q10743	K95	Q9632	J85	
	Ax		K6	

In these two examples west leads fourth highest and east should play the nine and the eight respectively. Note that the defenders will not lose any tricks overall even if south has a stronger holding such as AQ or K9.

The choice of card to play from the third hand is helped by use of the "rule of eleven" if the lead is a standard fourth highest. This simply involves deducting the number of the card led from eleven to show the number of higher cards held by the other three players

	K96	
10854	AJ7	
	Q32	

In this example the lead of the four by west reveals that there are seven larger cards with the other three hands. Since six of these are on view east should play the seven.

Avoid blocking the run of a suit which partner is trying to establish.

	843		953	
QJ1076	K5	J10862	KQ4	
	A92		A7	

In these examples west leads his highest honour and east must overtake to avoid blocking the run of the suit. If east does not overtake and south withholds the ace then it will require two further entries instead of one to establish the suit.

	A6			Q5	
J9532		KQ8	A108642		J3
	1074			K97	

Where a low card is led the position is less clear cut but it would still be correct on these examples for east to play the king under the ace and the jack under the queen.

	2	
AJ753		K1084
	Q96	

The principle of unblocking also applies to intermediate cards. In this case it is natural for east to play the king on the lead of the three, followed by the ten. He must however be sure to play the eight on the third round. Otherwise the eight will take the fourth round of the suit leaving west's fifth card stranded. In principle the defender with the shorter holding must take care to unblock.

After attempting to establish one suit defenders should be prepared to switch to another suit if the first suit will clearly not generate enough tricks.

	S 854			S J	
	H 76			H 72	
	D QJ64			D AKQ1087	
S Q973	C AK105	S A2	S 943	C AQ73	S AQ1087
H A542		H QJ109	H Q9853		H AK6
D 973		D 1052	D 95		D 732
C 82	S KJ106	C 9763	C 1094	S K652	C 82
	H K83			H J104	
	D AK8			D J8	
	C QJ4			C KJ85	

In the first example west leads 3S against 3NT. If this is fourth highest it appears that spades will not generate enough tricks and east will switch to hearts. In the second example west leads 3S against 3NT after east bid spades. The situation here is not so clear cut but east should be able to judge that declarer must have KS and at least eight quick tricks in the minors. West can at most have 2-3 points. East must therefore play AS and switch to hearts hoping that west has the queen.

Consider unblocking a high card in a side suit in order to create an entry to partner's hand where required.

	107		Q10842	
Q92	J85	K5	J93	
	AK643		A76	

In the first example declarer leads AK and west jettisons the queen to create an entry to partner's jack. In the second example declarer leads the ace and west jettisons the king, again to create an entry to partner's jack. In both cases west can place his partner with the jack because declarer would have finessed if he had the jack.

Try to impede the establishment of declarer's suits.

It is equally important for defenders to try to prevent the development of declarer's long suits and sometimes this must take priority. The long suit will normally be in dummy but may also be in declarer's hand.

If declarer has a long suit with no outside entry the defenders must try to withhold winning cards until entries are exhausted.

	KQJ109		AQJ109
653	A72	653	K72
	84		84

In the first example east can prevent the run of the suit by holding up his ace. He will initially be unsure whether to hold up for one or two rounds but if the defenders have a signalling system to show a three card suit with west he will know that he merely needs to hold up once. In the second example east must withhold the king on the first round unless he is confident that south has a singleton. Even when there are outside entries it is often a good practice to withhold the king where a finesse is likely to be repeated. This may not prevent the establishment of the suit but declarer may well use up a critical entry to repeat the finesse or may ignore an alternative finesse which would succeed.

In a trump contract, even if declarer holds all the high cards in a long suit, the defenders may be able to shut out the long suit by repeated leads before trumps are drawn.

	S 872		
	H 65		
	D AKQ109		
	C J97		
S K10973	S J54	S	W N E
H AK7	H 43	IH IS	2D -
D J8	D 5432	4H -	- -
C 532	C Q1086		
	S AQ		
	H QJ10982		
	D 76		
	C AK4		

West leads the ace of trumps then switches to a diamond. When he wins the king of trumps he plays another diamond. If south has three diamonds the defence is doomed but if south has only two he cannot cash any more diamonds and will lose four tricks.

When declarer needs a double finesse to establish a suit in dummy with no outside entry, the defenders may be able to disrupt this by playing second hand high

	AJ1097		AJ104		AJ1097	
K54	Q82	K76	Q95	KQ5	842	
	63		832		63	

In the first example if west plays low when declarer leads from the south hand east may win with the queen and south can then make four tricks by finessing the king. East may save the day by withholding the queen but then south can at least take two tricks. If west plays the king immediately, however, declarer can be held to one trick. In the second example south can make three tricks whether east withholds the queen or not but the play of the king limits declarer to two tricks as long as east withholds the queen until the third round. The situation in the third example is quite different. With KQ in the same hand west must play low on the first round. If he plays high south may duck the first round and finesse the second honour on the second round.

If declarer has one entry to a long suit it will normally be the defenders' priority to drive out the entry, even at the cost of a trick.

	S A3	
	H 643	
	D KQJ1095	
	C 98	
S J975		S K62
H 10987		H A52
D 6		D A82
C 7542		C QJ106
	S Q1084	
	H KQJ	
	D 743	
	C AK3	

The contract is 3NT. East leads 10H and west wins with the ace. Given that he has 14 points himself east judges that west can have very few points and there is little chance of establishing the heart suit. At the same time dummy's diamonds are menacing.

He therefore leads the king of spades to drive out the entry to the diamonds and holds up the ace of diamonds until the third round, having noted his partner's singleton.

Note that the lead of a low spade is insufficient. The lead of the king of spades costs a spade trick but saves three diamond tricks. This is known as the Merrimac Coup

Question 1

S J97	
H J102 (N)	
D 4	
C AQ10987	S A106
	H KQ94 (E)
	D 10953
	C K2

The bidding was 1NT (16-18) - 3NT. West leads 3S. Dummy plays the 9. How should east play?

Question 2

S Q97	
H 1042 (N)	
D 4	
C AQ10987	S A106
	H KQJ9 (E)
	D 10953
	C K2

The bidding was 1NT (16-18) -3NT West leads 3S. Dummy plays the 9. How should east play?

Question 3

S 97	
H Q974	
D 6 (N)	
C AQ10987	S AJ4
	H J1052
	D 10954 (E)
	C K2

The bidding has gone 1NT-2C (Stayman) -2D-3NT. West leads 3S and dummy plays 9S. How should east play?

Question 4

S 76			
H---	(N)	N	S
D AQJ109		1C	1H
C AKQ763	S AJ4	2D	2H
	H QJ107 (E)	3C	3NT
	D K83		
	C 1085		

West leads 3S. How should east play?

Question 5

S 643	
H AQ7 (N)	
D AQ	
C QJ632	S KQ1092
	H 863 (E)
	D 1097
	C A10

The contract is 3NT after east overcalled spades. Lead 8S. How should east play.

Question 6

S AJ4	
H K32	(N)
D QJ10987	
C K	S KQ7
	H AQJ8 (E)
	D 6
	C 96542

North opened 1D, south responded 2NT and north bid 3NT. West leads 2S and dummy plays the 4. How should east play?

. Question 7

	S A8
	H 543 (N)
	D 43
	C KQJ1097
S KJ7	
H AK7 (W)	
D Q1076	
C A32	

West opened 1D. North overcalled 2C, South bid 2NT and north bid 3NT. West leads the ace of hearts. How should he continue?

Question 8

	S 1065
	H J853 (N)
	D A92
	C K74
S KJ9743	
H A	
D Q63 (W)	
C Q93	

The contract is 4H, west having overcalled in spades. West leads a low spade. East wins with ace and leads a second spade taken by west's king. What should west play next?

Question 9.

	S AJ
	H J4 (N)
	D 853
	C AKJ1053
S KQ104	
H AQ3 (W)	
D 9742	
C Q6	

North opened 1C and the bidding proceeded 1C-1H-2C-3H-4H. E-W remained silent. West leads KS. Dummy wins and leads JH. How should west play?

Question 10

	S AK654
	H Q93 (N)
	D AKJ
	C J3
	S Q82
	H KJ1072
	D Q108 (E)
	C A2

East opens 1H, south bids 3C (pre-empt), north bids 3S and south rebids 3NT. West leads 8H and north plays the three. How should east play?

Question 11

S 104	
H K7652 (N)	
D AKQ	
C AQJ	S 532
	H Q104 (E)
	D 87654
	C 109

North opens 1H. South responds 1NT and north bids 3NT. West leads QS showing top of a sequence and south wins with the ace. South plays a club to the jack followed by a low heart. How should east play?

Question 12

S 64	
H 653 (N)	
D KJ10763	
C AJ	S Q103
	H A10 (E)
	D AQ4
	C 96542

The bidding was 1NT (strong)-3NT. West leads 4H. How should east play?

Question 13

S K104			
H J (N)		N	S
D 752			1S
C KQJ974	S A52	2C	2NT
	H K975 (E)	3S	4S
	D 984		
	C A83		

West leads 2C. How should east play?

Question 14

S K1083				
H 974 (N)		N	E	S
D AKJ73				1S
C 8	S A2	2D	2H	2NT
	H AQ10863	4S		--
	D 4 (E)			
	C Q1075			

West leads 2H. How should east play?

Question 15

S 4				
H QJ109				
D AKQJ9 (N)		N	E	S
C K73				1S
S AKQ762		DBL	2S	4H
H K32 (W)				
D 765				
C A				

West leads the ace of clubs. What then?

Question 16

	S 732		
	H AK1083 (N)		
	D 1052		
	C 86		
S J5		N	S
H Q75 (W)			1D
D Q84		1H	2S
C KQJ93		3H	3NT

West leads KQJ of clubs, east following, and south wins the third round. South then plays the five of hearts. How should west play?

Question 17

S AQ6			
H KQ1076 (N)			
D K93			
C 76			
	S 75		
	H A92 (E)		
	D AQ4		
	C A10842		

The bidding was 2S (Weak) – 4S. West leads the queen of clubs. East plays the ace and south the king. How should east proceed?

Question 18

S A			
H AK1087 (N)		N	S
D 85		1H	2D
C AJ982		3C	3NT
	S 76		
	H J953 (E)		
	D K97		
	C Q1076		

West leads QS. Dummy wins and plays the eight of diamonds. How should east plan the defence?

Question 19

	S AKJ1063		
	H 75		
	D K4 (N)	N	S
	C 876		1C
S 4		1NT	3S
H KJ94 (W)		3NT	
D J7652			
C AJ5			

West leads 5D. Declarer wins with the king and leads a club to the king. How should west play?