

## TECHNIQUES OF SUIT ESTABLISHMENT

This seminar relates to the establishment of extra tricks in suits over and above the tricks you can take simply by leading high cards.

### *Use safety plays where appropriate.*

There many safety plays which guarantee or help to achieve a specific number of tricks, sometimes at the cost of an overtrick. These were covered in detail in August 2018 (see notes on the website). A few examples are given below.

AJ10xxx      AJ10xxxx

x              -----

In the first example if you need five tricks finesse the ten or jack, playing west for KQx. If you need four tricks play the ace then a low card. You will always make four tricks whenever the suit splits 3-3 but the play of a low card at trick two also ensures four tricks when either opponent has a doubleton honour. In the second example, using the same reasoning, play the ace then a low card.

A109xxx

Qxxx

If you can afford to lose one trick play low from the north hand towards the queen. Guards against KJx with either opponent.

K10xx

A9xxx

If you need five tricks play the ace and king, hoping for a 2-2 split. If you need four tricks lead a low card and cover the opponent's card as cheaply as possible or play the high honour if the opponent is void. Guards against QJxx with either opponent.

### *Be prepared to duck when entries are short.*

This is another form of safety play where you can increase the chance of making a specific trick target, sometimes at the cost of an overtrick. Examples are given below assuming there is no outside entry to the north hand.

a) AKQxx

xx

b) AKQxxx

xx

c) AKQxxxx

xx

In a) a duck on the first round will ensure four tricks whenever the suit splits 3-3 or 4-2 (84%). If you don't duck you will make five tricks on a 3-3 split (36%) and otherwise just three.

In b) you will make all six tricks without ducking on any 3-2 split (68%). If you duck for one round you will make five tricks on any 3-2 or 4-1 split (96%)

In c) you will make seven tricks on any 2-2 or 3-1 split (90%) without ducking. Ducking helps only with a 4-0 split (10%)

You will clearly be inclined to duck with team scoring where overtricks count for little. In pairs scoring you would not duck with hand c and possibly not with hand b

**If your entries to a long suit are limited, protect them carefully.**

Typical measures include the following

- Refuse a finesse which may take away a critical entry.
- Take an unnecessary finesse to create an entry
- Be prepared to overtake a winning card to create an extra entry
- Postpone drawing trumps (see next section)

a) AJ10      b) AJx      c) AJ1098

K98              Kxx              K

In hand a), if west leads one of this suit, you must take the ace and refuse the “free” finesse if the king is a vital entry to the south hand.

In hand b) if you only require two tricks from the suit you may still finesse against the queen if you need two entries to the north hand.

In hand c) be prepared to overtake the singleton king if you only have one outside entry to the north hand.

**When establishing a side suit in a trump contract be prepared to deal with the side suit before drawing trumps.**

If you have plentiful trumps you may be able to draw the opponents’ trumps before tackling a side suit but in many circumstances the side suit must be tackled first. This applies particularly where

- your trump holding is precarious and you are at risk of losing control if you draw trumps immediately
- you need to retain trumps as entries to your side suit.
- you need trumps to establish your side suit

S 64  
H 5  
D AJ95  
C AK8642

S A83  
H 97642  
D KQ103  
C 7

Contract 5D. Lead QS. To make your contract you need to establish the club suit. If trumps are 3-2 and clubs are 3-3 you can afford to draw trumps but the chance of this is only about 24%. You should therefore keep your options open by testing the clubs first--AK followed by a high ruff.

**If you have to leave one or more trumps at large with the opponents you may be able to neutralise them by leading up to high cards so that a trump can only be used to ruff a loser.**

432

AK8765

If you are trying to establish this side suit lead from the north hand. This will not help if west can ruff but if east ruffs he will merely be ruffing a loser as you will play low from the north hand

**When establishing a long suit try to avoid losing the lead to the “danger hand” which can make an unwelcome lead (e.g. to lead through a weak suit in your hand, cash a long suit or give his partner a ruff.)**

The principal methods of achieving this are

- Finesse towards safe hand.
- Let the safe hand retain the lead when you can discard a loser instead.
- Make a lead where the danger hand cannot afford to win the trick without enabling you to develop the suit.

In the following examples assume that east is the danger hand

AQ10932                      QJxx                      Axxxx

K8                              Kxx                      Kxx

In the first example lead low from the north hand and finesse the 8 to guard against Jxxx with east. In the second example lead low from the north hand. If east plays the ace this establishes three tricks in the suit which may be enough for your contract. Alternatively, if east has the ace but ducks you will make the king and you may then be able to move on to another suit.

In the third example you cannot establish this suit without losing the lead once, possibly to the danger hand. If you can create the opportunity to discard one of this suit from the south hand, however, you may be able to establish the suit with a ruff without losing the lead

**If you can afford to lose the lead to the danger hand once but not twice try first to establish the suit where the danger hand may win a trick.**

S 95  
H AK72  
D KJ62  
C QJ2

S AQ6  
H 643  
D A1073  
C K83

In this example you are in 3NT. West leads the four of spades, east plays the jack and you win with the queen. You need to establish extra tricks in diamonds and clubs but you can afford to lose the lead to west only once, assuming that he has led from a long spade suit. In diamonds you can keep west out of the lead by finessing towards east but you have no control over who wins the ace of clubs. You therefore start with clubs to establish two tricks there. If another spade is led you duck for one round and then finesse the jack of diamonds.

**Beware of layouts where the running of a long suit is blocked by high cards in the opposite hand**

QJ10987                      AKQ654

AK                              10987

In these examples there is no problem if you have an outside entry to the north hand but if not you should aim to discard the AK and the 10 respectively on a side suit

**Where you have two alternative suits which might be established try to play in a manner which keeps your options open.**

Your objective should be to test one suit in a manner which enables you to switch safely to the second suit if the first suit does not produce the required tricks.

S AQ543  
H AK542  
D Q  
C ----

S K6.  
H 103  
D 10974  
C 763.

In this example diamonds are trumps and you need all the remaining tricks. You have nine top tricks and a club ruff in dummy. You therefore need just one extra trick from either spades or hearts and this will be easy as long as one of them splits 4-2 or 3-3. How do you deal with this? Although it looks natural to play spades first this will fail if spades split 5-1 and hearts are 4-2 because you will then lack the entries to establish the hearts. If you start with AK of hearts and find them 5-1, however, you still have the entries to play for a 4-2 spade fit.

**When trying to establish a long suit consider leading a low card initially.**

If you can afford to lose a trick from a long suit in the process of establishing the suit it may be better to lose the trick right at the beginning while entries, trumps and controls are still intact – usually the first or second round of the suit. If you leave it until later you may have insufficient trumps or have difficulties with entries. Two examples are given in the questions.

**Role of the defence.**

This is a subject but it is assumed that the defence will play its part in attempting to thwart declarer's objectives. This includes holding up master cards, attacking entries and leading through declarer's weak suits.

**QUESTIONS**

Question 1 S J  
H K  
D J7432  
C AK9842

S A6432  
H A98  
D A8  
C 1063

Contract 3NT. Lead 5H. How do you play?

Question 2 S 9  
H AJ9654  
D AK  
C J832

S AQ3  
H 2  
D QJ10987  
Q 75

You are in an optimistic 3NT contract. West leads 5S and East play the king. How do you play?

**Question 3** S 73  
H 642  
D 1076  
C AK1087

S AKQJ104  
H AJ103  
D A  
C Q9

Contract 6S. Lead 4D. You win and draw trumps in three rounds. You can establish extra tricks in hearts and clubs to make your twelfth trick. What is the best way of approaching this?

**Question 4** S AQ5  
H 10752  
D KQ84  
C 105

S K6  
H AK643  
D AJ5  
C A63

Contract 6H. Lead 4C. East plays the king. You cash AK of hearts and find that west has three to the queen. You need to establish winners in diamonds and spades to discard your losing clubs before west can ruff. How do you set about this?

**Question 5** S A7  
H A52  
D AK8543  
C A5

S Q9653  
H K8  
D 6  
C KQJ73

Contract 6C Lead JH. The play will be easy if trumps and diamonds split 3-3 as you can establish the diamonds for discards. If these suits split 4-2, however, you will need four rounds to draw trumps and will have only one trump left to ruff two losing diamonds. Can you see a way round this?

**Question 6** S 87653  
H AQ10  
D 632  
C A10

S K2  
H KJ9876  
D AK7  
C 98

Contract 4H Lead QD You have nine top tricks. Where do you get your tenth?

**Question 7** S KJ10  
H AK762  
D Q3  
C AJ6

S A43  
H 43  
D KJ10974  
C 83

Contract 3NT. Lead 5S. How do you play to ensure your contract?

**Question 8** S K842  
H 84  
D J73  
C KJ83

S A93  
H AQJ  
D AQ8  
C Q1065

Contract 3NT. Lead 5H. East plays 9H. How do you play?

**Question 9.** S A87653  
H A7  
D 52  
C 642

S KQ  
H K102  
D AJ9  
C AQ1075

Contract 3NT. Lead QH. You might make your contract through establishing the spades or the clubs. What is the best way to approach this?

**Question 10** S KQJ  
H A  
D AK654  
C K632

S 987  
H J105432  
D 3  
C AQ7

Contract 4H. Lead QD. How do you set about drawing trumps?

**Question 11** S AQJ32  
H AQJ2  
D 76  
C 65

S 5  
H 43  
D AKQ4  
C QJ10987

Contract 3NT Lead 10H. You can virtually guarantee your contract. How?

**Question 12** S 75  
H AK6  
D A10876  
C Q109

S K43  
H 2  
D 532  
C AKJ876

Contract 5C Lead QH. What is your best chance of making the contract?

**Question 13** S J4  
H A42  
D A943  
C A852

S AK96532  
H 873  
D 6  
C K4

Contract 4S Lead QD. How do you ensure your contract?

**Question 14** S Q54  
H 732  
D K108  
C AQJ9

S KJ32  
H AK  
D AQ4  
C 10642

Contract 3NT after east opened 1H. Lead 4H. You have six top tricks and you need three more from spades and /or clubs. How do you approach this?

Question 15 S 95  
H 942  
D J82  
C AK852

S AKQJ8762  
H AK6  
D A3  
C ----

Contract 6S. Lead QH. How do you play?

Question 16 S 74  
H AK10753  
D A5  
C 864

S AK6  
H Q  
D KQ8642  
C AK3

Contract 6NT Lead JC. If hearts or diamonds split evenly you will make 13 easy tricks . What if they split 4-2 and 4-1 respectively?

Question 17 S AK43  
H QJ10  
D AQ43  
C 105

S 65  
H A54  
D 765  
C KQJ43

Contract 3NT. West leads 9H and east plays the king. How do you proceed?

Question 18 S 74  
H K65  
D AQJ102  
C Q4

S 98  
H AQ1073  
D K4  
C A852

Contract 4H Lead AK10 of spades, east following. You ruff the third round. How do you play to protect against a 4-1 trump split?



Question 19      S 42  
                      H Q62  
                      D KQ8  
                      C AJ732

                      S A76  
                      H AK3  
                      D A9643  
                      C 65

Contract 3NT Lead QS. East overtakes with the king and leads back another spade. You take the third round of spades, east following. How do you proceed?

Question 20      S A32  
                      H AJ1098  
                      D 63  
                      C 954

                      S KQJ109  
                      H K  
                      D K54  
                      C AQ32

Contract 4S Lead 5S. All follow to this and a second round of spades. How do you proceed?

Question 21      S 854  
                      H 9652  
                      D A  
                      C AK842

                      S J73  
                      H A7  
                      D KQJ106  
                      C 642

Contract 3NT West leads AKQ9 of spades, all following to the first three rounds, then leads 3H to east's king. How do you play?

Question 22      S J3  
                      H 653  
                      D J64  
                      C AKQ43

                      S ---  
                      H AKQJ72  
                      D A93  
                      C 10865

Contract 6H. Lead 7C. You win with the ace and draw trumps in three rounds. How do you proceed?

Question 23

S A63

H 2

D AK10987

C 953

S Q542

H AK73

D Q

C AJ76

Contract 3NT. Lead QH. How do you play?