



Declarer in No Trumps



Sometimes No Trumps is a race for declarer versus opponents to establish as many tricks as they can in their best suit. As soon as dummy goes down it is advisable for declarer to make 'the safest' plan. How? Start by counting sure winners in each suit, rather than losers. Say you're in 3NT and can see seven top tricks, devising the safest plan will help declarer establish extra tricks before opponents have a chance to cash enough of their longest suit to defeat the contract. A plan could be as simple as "I will win the spade and force out the Ace of hearts to make three heart tricks and make my contract".

Develop extra tricks early while you still hold winners (control) in the other suits to regain the lead.

Use Promotion, Finesse and Length to establish extra tricks.

Promotion – forcing out opponents' top cards so that your lower cards become winners.

Example: KQJ10 & 6532 – lead K to knock out opponents' A thus win 3 of the 4 tricks.

Match declarer's & dummy's hands together: Q1052 & J973=QJ109; lose AK to win QJ=2 of the 4 tricks.

Timing – establish longest & strongest (L&S) suit asap, making losers early while still have cover in other three suits.

Length – use your high cards to draw out opponents' length in your L&S suit so that your lower cards become winners. Remember to play high from the shorter holding when developing longest & strongest suit therefore unblocking and ending in the hand with length.

Dummy holds AK234 vs Declarer holding 56 in L&S suit. Lose first round by leading 5 and duck with the 2 in dummy; second round declarer leads the 6, taken with A in dummy; dummy then leads K for third round and providing opponents hold three each dummy will then win four tricks in the suit.

Lead High from Shortage to unblock short hand so that the lead is transferred to the long hand eg.

AQ432 & KJ65 – lead K then J unblocking honours in short hand then 5 to A in long hand followed by Q and then the 2 will also win a trick.

Declarer AKQ72 & 6543 and O = J1098 & void - Declarer can still win 4 of the 5 tricks.

May have to 'overtake' ie. AJ432 & KQ if no other entries.

Remember when opponents run out of declarer's L&S suit they must discard therefore unprotected their honours in other suits thus their high cards will fall out early when another suit is led.

Finesse – lead towards a broken sequence in the hope that the missing high card is in the hand that sits before the finesse eg.

North	Kx	KQx	Qx	Axx	AQJ	QJxx	J7654
South	xx	xxx	Ax	KJx	xxx	Axx	AK2

Lead - what can you glean from the lead? Is it a four or five card suit? A sequence?

Holding up an Ace for two rounds to de-suit other defender. Not holding up an Ace if O switch suit.

Remember your plan must give you a chance of making the contract before your opponents can score enough tricks to defeat the contract.

Examples of How to make a Plan in NT

Your hand South:	♠ A4	♥ KQ107	♦ A75	♣ K864
Bidding:	S: 1NT	W: Pass	N: 3NT	All pass
Lead:	QS (top of a sequence)			
Dummy North:	♠ K5	♥ J63	♦ K1064	♣ A972
Winners:	S: 2	H: 0	D: 2	C: 2 Total: 6
Strategy:	I will win the spade lead and establish three extra tricks in hearts. Declarer must approach hearts first whilst still holding AK cover in the other three suits so that when opponents win the AH they will have to lead straight back in to declarer's hands. Sometimes beginners can't see how to win the 9 tricks they need for the contract so they start playing their Aces and Kings hoping for some sort of miracle. If you do that on this hand then the defence will take their QJ and other winners and you will be down.			

Your hand South:	♠ A4	♥ KQ107	♦ AJ3	♣ QJ104
Bidding:	S: 1NT	W: Pass	N: 3NT	All pass
Lead:	QS (top of a sequence)			
Dummy North:	♠ 96	♥ J63	♦ KQ84	♣ A982
Winners:	S: 1	H: 0	D: 4	C: 21 Total: 6
Strategy:	I will win the spade lead and play the QC. If West holds the KC then the club suit will provide the three extra tricks that I need. Hearts could provide the extra three tricks, however, by losing to the AH our opponents will take four spade tricks and defeat the contract. So we look to clubs for the three extra tricks. This plan gives us a 50% chance of making the contract.			

Your hand South:	♠ A54	♥ K85	♦ A63	♣ QJ103
Bidding:	S: 1C W: Pass	N: 1H E: Pass	S: 1NT W: Pass	N: 3NT All pass
Lead:	KD (top of a sequence)			
Dummy North:	♠ KQ8	♥ A732	♦ 74	♣ A952
Winners:	S: 3	H: 2	D: 1	C: 1 Total: 7
Strategy: Planning a hold up play	I will hold up AD until the third round aiming to exhaust East of diamonds then run the QC to finesse KC. East wins the KC, is out of diamonds and leads back into your hand winning two more club tricks to make the contract.			

Your hand South:	♠ AK8	♥ A974	♦ 63	♣ A982
Bidding:	S: 1NT	W: Pass	N: 3NT	All pass
Lead:	W: 2H (4 th highest)	E: QH		
Dummy North:	♠ J74	♥ 65	♦ AK8742	♣ J6
Winners:	S: 2	H: 1	D: 2	C: 1 Total: 6
Strategy: how to establish a long weak suit	I will win with AH and duck the first round of diamonds. Provided diamonds fall 3-2, I will have nine tricks. West led the 2 so hearts fall 4-3. Opponents win the first round of diamonds and take three heart tricks. Declarer then takes five tricks in diamonds.			