



Planning

You are declarer in a No-Trump Contract

The lead is turned over, dummy is exposed on the table

NOW STOP AND THINK.

Count your top tricks

How many top winners do you have? Is it enough? And anyway you want more. How many more tricks can you “establish”?

Look at each suit – across both hands

Count the cards in each suit across both hands

- ♣ A suit in which you have eight or more cards between the two hands is a source of tricks. You are keen to play this suit, even if you lose a trick or two. This will “establish” others.
- ♣ Any suit in which you have five or less cards is a threat. Even if you hold top cards, keep away from it. You need these cards (“controls”) for getting the lead back when you give it away.
- ♣ Suits with six or seven cards are problematic, the defence have too many of them. Where you have seven cards, the six missing ones are likely to split 4 and 2, sometimes 3 and 3. Sometimes you have no suits of eight or more and must play with these. If you can, leave these suits alone. If not, count them carefully.



LOOK AT THE LEAD

- ♣ An honour should promise the next two e.g. King promises the Queen and Jack. This is probably an enemy suit. You may need to “duck” a trick or two to reduce the danger.
- ♣ A low value card invites return, suggesting an honour, it is usually the fourth highest, so if it is a 2, that defender probably had a holding of four. This is probably an enemy suit.
- ♣ Middle order cards, 7,8 or 9, can be from poor four card suits.

MAKE A PLAN

- ♣ Take your losers early, while you still have high cards (“controls”) to get the lead back. Try finesses, Force out Aces. This is to “establish” (turn into winners) other cards in the suit.
- ♣ “Run” (win tricks, or if necessary, lose tricks in) your “long” suits (suits where you hold 8 or more, or perhaps 7, cards in hand and dummy combined).
- ♣ “Cash in” anything left. (When your other work is done, win tricks with any “controls” you still have.)
- ♣ “Exit” (Play a card knowing you are most likely to lose the remaining tricks but have hopefully already made your contract).



Communication

Communication is the process of playing tricks to transfer the lead from dummy to declarer's hand or back again.

You will want to do this to try finesses, or to lead low cards to high cards when trying to force Aces out.

Cards that can win tricks and transfer the lead are often called "entries". Plan to use entries wisely.

For example

Dummy

♠ A 4 3 2

♥ 7 6

♦ A 6 5 4

♣ 5 4 2

Declarer
♠ K 7 6
♥ A Q J 2
♦ 10 9
♣ A K J 5

In this dummy there are only two "entries": A♠ and A♦. You will only be able to get the lead into dummy twice. So, you may only have two chances to try finesses in hearts and clubs by leading towards missing honours in the other hand. You must use one entry, try a finesse, and then use the other entry and try the other finesse.

If you simply "cash" both the Aces, you will only be able to try one finesse at best. Consider the number of entries in each hand, and plan carefully how to use them.



High Cards from Short Suit First

In No Trumps Contracts you may find yourself with a solid set of top cards in a suit. Often you need to play the high ones from the short suit first to make sure of maximising the wins.

Dummy

10 2

Declarer

A K Q J 4

Start by playing the 4 from Declarer and the 10 from Dummy.

Dummy

~~10~~ 2

Declarer

A K Q J 4

Now the lead is in dummy and you can play the 2 and win it with the Ace.

Dummy

~~10~~ 2

Declarer

A K Q J 4

The lead is now with Declarer and the K Q and J can be played to win tricks. If the A and K had been played first, the 10 and 2 would have gone with them. The 4 might not have been a winner then!



Hold-up play: Protecting a "lonely Ace"

The defence will usually lead from their long suits, where they hope you are short of cards.

For example

Dummy

A 3 2

LHO

K J 10 7 6

RHO

Q 9 8

Declarer

5 4

You hold 5 cards in this suit, so the defence are likely to lead it. Often the lead will be fourth highest. If the defender leads the 7, there is a chance the holding is five cards in LHO, and RHO has three. Your strategy is to lose two rounds in this suit. Keep the Ace as long as you can.

After three rounds

Dummy

-

LHO

J 10

RHO

-

Declarer

-

LHO has 2 cards left in this suit. If he gets the lead, he will win tricks with them. This has become the "danger" hand. If you must take risks of losing tricks, eg. with a finesse, pick the route that allows RHO to win. (If possible!)