

Declarer Play- Suit Contracts

When playing in a suit contract the first thing to do is to count your losers. Establish one hand as the “master” hand. This would normally be the hand that is longer in trumps, regardless of whether it is the dummy or the declarer. When each hand has the same number of trumps pick the one with a longer side suit. Count all your losers. For example: Contract 7S by South

North hand has: 987 75 A762 KJ76

South hand has AKQJT AK3 KQ3 A2

Using the South hand the only loser that you have that is not covered by an honor in the other hand is the small heart. You need to devise a plan to eliminate that card as a loser. Count the number of losers in each of the following:

- a) AK4 b) AQ2 c) AK43 d) QJ4 e) KQ32
f) QJT g) AJT

You may eliminate losers in one of three ways:

- a) finessing
- b) establishing a long suit
- c) trumping

Finessing: A finesse is when you attempt to win a trick with a lower card where there is a higher card outstanding. The finesse will win or lose depending on the location of the outstanding high card.

RULE: When taking a finesse you must always lead from the hand with the lower cards towards the hand with the higher cards.

For example:

a) 52 AQ b) AKJ 542 c) 32 K7

In each case you must start by leading the small card (the 2 in each of these cases) towards the high cards in the other hand.

Establishing a long suit: You can discard losers by establishing long cards in a side suit, but only if you have the entry to get to the long suit and only if the opponents are out of trumps.

RULE: When establishing a long suit start by leading the honors from the hand that is shorter in the suit so that you end up in the hand that is longer.

Sometimes side suits are set up without you doing anything.

Example: a) AK32 Q54 b) Q6 AK432

Sometimes you may first need to give up a trick in the suit or trump a card in the suit before it becomes established.

Example: a) K76 A832 b) 76 AK432

Trumping: You may set up an extra trick by trumping a loser.

RULE: You set up an extra trick only if you trump in the hand that is shorter in trumps or equal in trumps as the other hand. Trumping a card in the hand that is longer in trumps does not in itself produce an extra trick.

Example: Contract is 4S by South and the lead is the K of Clubs

North has T97 54 K865 A762

South has AKQJ3 A67 A742 8

Count your losers and see if you can eliminate some of them.