



# Topics In Declarer Play

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Declarer Play In Suit Contracts

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Notes

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After the opening lead has been made, and before you play a card from dummy, take a few seconds to plan the play of the hand.

Work down this list.

<b>A</b>	<b>Analyse</b>	the opening lead
<b>B</b>	<b>Bidding</b>	what does it tell you about the defenders' hands.
<b>C</b>	<b>Count</b>	Potential Losing Tricks
<b>D</b>	<b>Dispose</b>	of the extra losers you have.
<b>E</b>	<b>Entries</b>	needed to reach winners or to make the plays you plan
<b>F</b>	<b>Failure</b>	might be caused by what

### **A Analyse The Opening Lead**

You know the principles of the opening lead.

Apply them to the opening lead on your left and consider what the lead reveals.

There is more on this in Section 6.

### **B Review The Bidding**

If one or both of your opponents either intervened in the bidding or passed before the opening bid, this discloses information about the strength and shape of their hands.

Consider what their bids have meant or even what the lack of a bid tells you.

You should have done this as the bidding progressed.

### **C Count Potential Losing Tricks**

See Section 2.

### **D Dispose Of The Extra Losers you might Have**

See Section 3.

### **E Examine Your Entries**

You will need to have entries to your own hand and to dummy in order to:

cash tricks in suits you have established

make the plays you have decided on to make your extra tricks

Consider what entries you need to your own hand and to dummy in order to execute the plan you have for the play of the hand.

### **F What Might Cause The Plan To Fail.**

Could there be an adverse break of the trump suit which may cause a problem.

Can you counter it?

You may be planning to use a long suit in dummy to dispose of side suit losers.

Will a bad break of the outstanding cards cause a problem and can you counter it?

Is there any reason not to draw trumps.

In a suit contract you could count Immediate Tricks in the same way as in a no trump contract. However; planning is often easier if you count the number of Potential Losing Tricks you have and then work out how to reduce this number to the level that your contract allows.

Do not confuse this planning technique with The Losing Trick Count which is a method of hand evaluation.

Use whichever method you feel most comfortable with.

When dummy is put on the table you plan as follows.

Plan the hand from the standpoint of **THE HAND WITH MOST TRUMPS**.

This is termed **The Long Trump Hand**.

It will usually be your own hand but, on some hands, it may be dummy.

For example, you open 1NT and partner makes a transfer showing a 5+ card major and you end up playing in that major.

You may have 5 spades in dummy and 3 (or even 2) in your own hand

Dummy will be the long trump hand so you plan the hand from that perspective.

For each suit in turn:

Count how many cards you have in that suit **IN THE LONG TRUMP HAND**.

This is the maximum number of losing tricks you can have in that suit.

The short trump hand contains no Losing Tricks but its “**High Card Helpers**” can be used to eliminate losing tricks in the long trump hand.

Take into account the high cards in the long trump hand and the short trump hand and work out how many certain tricks you can win in the suit.

Subtract these certain tricks from the number of cards in the suit in the long trump hand to give you the **Potential Losing Tricks** for this suit.

In essence you are working out how the suit will play.

Take a pessimistic view at this stage.

Do not make the intuitive leaps about disposing of losers.

That is the next stage and you may have to consider alternative possibilities for different suits.

Consider the following hand.

Contract : 4♥

Opening Lead : ♠A

	♠ 9 8 5										
	♥ 8 6 5 4										
	♦ A 9 4										
	♣ A Q 3										
♠ A K Q	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 7 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 10 9		♥ 7									
♦ J 10 8 7 6		♦ K Q 5									
♣ 8 5 4		♣ J 10 9 7 6									
	♠ 4 3 2										
	♥ A K Q J 3 2										
	♦ 3 2										
	♣ K 2										

South is the long trump hand so you will count losing tricks from the standpoint of that hand.

- Spades** You have 3 spades in the long trump hand.  
You have no high card assets in either hand so you have **3 losers**.
- Hearts** You have 10 cards between the 2 hands so the defence have 3.  
You have A K Q so you have **no losers**.
- Diamonds** You have 2 small diamonds in the long trump hand both of which are losers.  
However:  
You have the Ace in dummy helping with one of these losers so there is **1 loser**.
- Clubs** You have 2 clubs in the long trump hand one of which is the king.  
With the Ace in dummy as a "helper" you have **no losers**.  
Note also that you have the queen in dummy.

This is referred to as an extra winner and may allow you to dispose of a loser from another suit.

You have a total of 4 losing tricks.

In 4♥ you must win 10 tricks so you can only afford to lose 3 tricks.

In order to make your contract you must dispose of 1 loser.

Disposing of losers is discussed in Section 3.

Note:

On this particular hand the defence will cash the first 3 tricks in spades.

Whatever west does next you will win and draw trumps.

You will then play the ♣K and the ♣2 to win with dummy's ♣A and cash the ♣Q discarding your losing diamond.

The contract will now make.

There are 3 ways of disposing of potential losing tricks in a suit contract.

The first two ways involve looking for side suits where there is an imbalance in the number of cards between your own hand and dummy.

When playing in a suit contract get into the habit of looking for these imbalances.

1. Look for side suits\* where you have losers in hand but dummy has fewer cards than you have in your own hand

You can trump (ruff) some of your losers in this suit in dummy.

**Length in hand with losers.....**

**Shortage in dummy.....**

**Ruff in dummy.**

2. Look for a side suit in dummy which contains more cards than you have in hand and which has cards which are winners or which can be established as winners.

You can play the high cards from dummy and discard losers in another suit from your hand.

You may need to draw trumps first to prevent the defence ruffing your winners in this suit.

**Length in dummy with winners or potential winners.....**

**Shortage in hand.....**

**Discard losers in another suit from hand on dummy's side suit winners**

3. By taking advantage of the position or distribution of defenders' high cards.

This is the only means you have available for disposing of losers in the trump suit.

You may be able to take a finesse to eliminate a loser or losers.

You may find the defenders' cards in a particular suit break favourably.

\* Side suits are the suits other than trumps.

Look at these techniques with reference to the example hand opposite.

1. Consider the heart suit in the example hand.  
South has two losing hearts but dummy contains only one heart.  
When declarer plays the ♥A from his own hand he creates a heart void in dummy.  
He can then play two further hearts from his hand and ruff them in dummy.  
By this means declarer eliminates both of his heart losers.

**Length in hand with losers - Shortage in dummy - Ruff in dummy.**

2. Consider the club suit in the example hand.  
Declarer has 2 small clubs which are losers.  
These are taken care of by dummy's A and K so he has no losers in clubs.  
Dummy also has two extra winners in clubs (Q & J)  
After he has drawn the defenders' trumps declarer could play the clubs from dummy.  
He plays the ♣A and ♣K and now has no clubs left in his own hand.  
The ♣Q and ♣J will then win tricks and allow declarer to discard his two losing diamonds.  
Declarer has eliminated 2 losers from his hand by discarding them on a side suit in dummy.

**Length in dummy with winners or potential winners – shortage in hand  
Discard losers in another suit from hand on dummy's side suit winners**

3. Consider the spade suit in the example hand.  
With this holding you can take a simple finesse against the ♠K.  
You can repeat it if necessary.  
As the cards lie you eliminate 1 potential loser by taking advantage of the position of the defender's high card.  
A similar tactic is to hope that defenders' cards break favourably.  
For example you might have 8 cards in your trump suit.  
You can expect the defenders' five trumps to break 3-2 two thirds of the time (67%).

### Disposing Of Losers In The Trump Suit

The only means you have of disposing of losers in the trump suit is card play technique as in 3 above.  
On some occasions you may simply have to hope that the outstanding cards in the trump suit break in the expected way so that your losers in the suit are restricted.

South is playing in a contract with spades as trumps.  
Put this deal out on a table and try to make 13 tricks after west has led  $\heartsuit K$ .  
Remember – it is generally wise to draw trumps early.

<b>Dummy</b>	$\spadesuit$ 9 8 3 2			
	$\heartsuit$ 9			
	$\diamondsuit$ 8 7 5			
	$\clubsuit$ A K Q J 4			
$\spadesuit$ 10 5		N		$\spadesuit$ K 7
$\heartsuit$ K 10 8 7		W	E	$\heartsuit$ Q J 6 5 4
$\diamondsuit$ K Q 10				$\diamondsuit$ J 9 3 2
$\clubsuit$ 8 7 6 5				$\clubsuit$ 10 9
		S		
	$\spadesuit$ A Q J 6 4			
	$\heartsuit$ A 3 2			
	$\diamondsuit$ A 6 4			
<b>You</b>	$\clubsuit$ 3 2			

Try playing the hand yourself then play the hand following the matrix on the next page.

The card led to each trick is the leftmost on each line in the matrix.  
It is led by the player who won the previous trick.

Trick	W	N	E	S	W	N	E	Trick won by	Declarer's Play
1	♦K	♦5	♦2	♦A				S	
2				♥A	♥7	♥9	♥4	S	
3				♥2	♥8	♠2	♥5	N	A heart ruff in dummy
4		♠3	♠7	♠J	♠5			S	A simple finesse in spades
5				♥3	♥10	♠8	♥6	N	A heart ruff in dummy
6		♠9	♠K	♠A	♠10			S	East has to play the ♠K
7				♣2	♣8	♣A	♣9	N	
8		♣K	♣10	♣3	♣5			N	
9		♣Q	♥J	♦4	♣6			N	Discarding a losing diamond
10		♣J	♥Q	♦6	♣7			N	Discarding a losing diamond
11		♦7	♦3	♠4	♦10			S	Cashing the last 3 winning trumps in declarer's hand
12				♠Q	♦Q	♣4	♦9	S	
13				♠6	♥K	♦8	♦J	S	

You should make 13 tricks.

It is important to remember that the thrust of the play in a suit contract is to dispose of losers.  
Ruffing a loser from your hand in dummy disposes of that particular loser.

If you have a void in your own hand and lead a card in this suit from dummy to ruff, you do not dispose of a loser.

You have no cards in this suit in hand so you can have no losers in this suit.

Whilst ruffing in hand does not dispose of losers it may, nonetheless, be necessary either as a means of entering your hand or as an attempt to establish a long suit in dummy to allow you to discard losers from hand later.



In Section 3a we established that there are 3 ways of disposing of losers from declarer's hand. The first two of these involve side suits where there is an imbalance in the number of cards between declarer's hand and dummy.

Where this imbalance involves:

**Length in hand with losers - Shortage in dummy : You plan to ruff in dummy.**

This is a matter of recognising the relevant hand patterns.

In a suit contract you should always consider drawing trumps early to prevent the defence using their trumps to ruff your side suit winners.

When you are planning to ruff losers this may affect your trump management strategy.

This is discussed fully in Section 4.

Consider the following hands.

A	B	C	D
Contract 4♠ Lead ♦Q	Contract 5♣ Lead ♥5	Contract 4♥ Lead ♣Q	Contract 6♠ Lead ♥4
<b>Dummy</b> ♠ 4 3 2 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ A K 6 5 4  <b>Your Hand</b> ♠ A K Q J 10 ♥ A K 2 ♦ 4 3 2 ♣ 3 2	<b>Dummy</b> ♠ A K 5 4 ♥ Q 4 3 ♦ 6 ♣ 9 8 7 6 5  <b>Your Hand</b> ♠ 3 2 ♥ A K 2 ♦ 4 3 2 ♣ A K Q J 10	<b>Dummy</b> ♠ 6 5 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ A K 6 5 4 ♣ 5 4 3  <b>Your Hand</b> ♠ 4 3 2 ♥ A K Q J 10 ♦ 3 2 ♣ A K 2	<b>Dummy</b> ♠ K J 6 5 ♥ A 5 ♦ J 4 ♣ A J 4 3 2  <b>Your Hand</b> ♠ A Q 4 3 2 ♥ Q 6 ♦ A K Q 10 ♣ 6 5
<b>Losers</b> ♠ 0 ♥ 1 ♦ 3 ♣ 0	<b>Losers</b> ♠ 0 ♥ 0 ♦ 3 ♣ 0	<b>Losers</b> ♠ 3 ♥ 0 ♦ 0 ♣ 1	<b>Losers</b> ♠ 0 ♥ 1 ♦ 0 ♣ 1

**Hand A**

There are 3 hearts in hand with 1 loser and 2 hearts in dummy.

This is the imbalance you need to allow ruffs.

The defence will cash 3 diamond tricks but you win trick 4 and draw 2 rounds of trumps....

.....retaining one in dummy so you can.....

....play ♥A and ♥K and ruff your third heart in dummy.

Return to hand probably by winning two club tricks and ruffing the third.

Draw the last trump.

You cannot draw 3 rounds of trumps before ruffing - you need a trump in dummy for the ruff.

You have disposed of one loser and will make your contract.

**Hand B**

You have 3 diamonds in hand (all of which are losers) and one in dummy.

This is the imbalance you need to allow ruffs so you plan to ruff 2 diamonds in dummy.

You can afford to draw trumps because you only need to retain two clubs in dummy for the ruffs.

Having disposed of two losing diamonds by ruffing you will make your contract with an overtrick.

**Hand C**

On the previous 2 hands you had control of the suit where you planned to ruff losers.

On this hand you need to give up the lead twice in order to achieve your ruffs.

This affects your trump strategy.

You have 3 losing spades and a losing club – 1 loser too many so you must dispose of one.

You have 3 losing spades in hand. You have only two spades in dummy.

You can dispose of a spade loser by ruffing in dummy.

However, you must give up the lead twice in spades in order to reach a ruffing position.

The defence will be aware of your strategy and will lead trumps each time they win a spade trick in order to prevent you ruffing.

You cannot afford to draw any trumps or the defence will totally deplete dummy's trumps.

Win the opening lead and lead a spade.

Win the (trump) return and lead a second spade – you now have a ruffing position in spades.

Win the (trump) return and ruff a spade.

Having disposed of your spade loser you can now draw trumps and you should make your contract.

**Hand D**

You may need to discard a card or cards from one of dummy's suits in order to establish the imbalance necessary to allow you to ruff in dummy.

You have a losing heart and a losing club.

The diamonds in declarer's hand are strong and will allow a heart discard from dummy.

This sets up the imbalance necessary so that a losing heart can be ruffed in dummy.

Win trick 1 in dummy with ♥A.

Draw trumps if they are 3-1 or 2-2.

If trumps are 4-0 your contract is in danger.

Play ♦A and ♦K and a third diamond discarding ♥5 from dummy.

Play ♥Q and ruff in dummy.

You will lose only a club trick.

Management of the trump suit is discussed in detail in Section 4.

**Trump Strategy**

It is important to remember that ruffing in the short trump hand disposes of potential losers but ruffing in the long trump hand does not.

South is playing in a contract of 4♠ and the club suit below is a side suit.

South is the long trump hand.

	1.	2.
<b>Dummy</b>	♣ - ♣ A K 9 8 7                      ♣ Q J 10 6 5	♣ 4 3 2 ♣ A K 9 8 7                      ♣ Q J 10 6 5
<b>Declarer</b>	♣ 4 3 2	♣ -

In 1.

There are 3 club losers in hand which can be disposed of by ruffing in dummy.

In 2.

Declarer has no clubs in hand so can have no club losers.

He does not dispose of a club loser if he ruffs a club in hand.

However, that is not to say that it is never correct to ruff in the long trump hand.

You may do it to help establish a long suit in dummy which you will later use for side suit discards or you may do it to gain an entry to your own hand.

In Section 3a we established that there are 3 ways of disposing of losers from declarer's hand. The first two of these involve finding side suits where there is an imbalance in the number of cards between declarer's hand and dummy.

Where this imbalance is:

**Length in dummy with winners or potential winners – shortage in hand.....**

Declarer should plan to

***Discard losers in another suit from hand on dummy's side suit winners***

Dummy's winners are called "extra winners" and allow declarer to discard losers from his own hand.

<p><b>1</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;"> <p>♠ A K Q</p> <p>♠ 3 2</p> </div>	<p><b>2</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;"> <p>♠ K Q J</p> <p>♠ 3 2</p> </div>	<p><b>3</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;"> <p>♠ Q J 10</p> <p>♠ 3 2</p> </div>
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In each example notice the imbalance in the number of cards between the two hands. There is length in dummy with winners or potential winners and shortage in hand.

The extra winners may already be set up as in 1 or may need to be set up (established) as in 2 and 3.

In 2 declarer has 1 loser in this suit but, having given this up, dummy has an extra winner established to allow him to discard a loser from another suit (a side suit).

In 3 declarer has 2 losers in this suit but, having given these up, dummy has an extra winner established to allow declarer to discard a loser from another suit.

In these situations the play of the hand can develop into a race.

Can dummy's winners be set up before the defence take their tricks in the suit(s) where declarer has losers and plans to make discards.

### Setting Up Dummy's Suit By Force

On each of the following hands south is declarer in a contract of 4♠.

**A**

Contract 4♠

Lead ♥Q

<b>Dummy</b>
♠ 8 7 6 5
♥ 7 6 5
♦ A 5 4
♣ A K Q
<b>Your Hand</b>
♠ A K Q J 3 2
♥ 4 3 2
♦ 3 2
♣ 3 2

**B**

Contract 4♠

Lead ♦K

<b>Dummy</b>
♠ 10 9 8 7
♥ K Q 3
♦ A 6 5
♣ K 3 2
<b>Your Hand</b>
♠ K Q J 3 2
♥ A 2
♦ 4 3 2
♣ Q J 10

**C**

Contract 5♣

Lead ♦Q

<b>Dummy</b>
♠ A 3 2
♥ Q J 10
♦ 4 3 2
♣ K 10 6 5
<b>Your Hand</b>
♠ K 5 4
♥ 3 2
♦ A K
♣ A Q J 4 3 2

Count losing tricks from the standpoint of the long trump hand – south.

A

♠ : 0	♥ : 3	♦ : 1	♣ : 0	= 4
-------	-------	-------	-------	-----

Note the imbalance in clubs.

Dummy's clubs will allow the discard of a losing diamond from hand and the contract will be successful. The defence will cash 3 heart tricks.

Declarer will then gain the lead, draw trumps and play dummy's established clubs to allow the discard of his losing diamond.

B

♠ : 1	♥ : 0	♦ : 2	♣ : 1	= 4
-------	-------	-------	-------	-----

Note the imbalance in hearts.

Dummy's hearts will allow the discard of a losing diamond from hand and the contract will be successful.

But note: declarer is missing the ♠ A and to draw trumps must give up the lead.

If he does the defence will cash their winning diamond and the contract will fail.

Declarer must play hearts to achieve his diamond discard before drawing trumps.

C

♠ : 1	♥ : 2	♦ : 0	♣ : 0	= 3
-------	-------	-------	-------	-----

Note the imbalance in hearts.

Dummy's hearts can be set up allow the discard of a losing spade from hand and the contract will then be successful.

Notice how different this hand is on a spade lead rather than a diamond.

Declarer will still draw trumps but he does not have time to set up the hearts.

When he loses the first heart the defence will play another spade and he now has no control of spades.

When he loses the second heart the defence will cash their spade trick to defeat the contract.

This section has looked at disposing of losers on dummy's extra winners.

Dummy's extra winners may have been there to start with or may have needed to be established by forcing out the defenders' high cards.

You can also set up extra winners with small cards in long suits in dummy.

Establishing dummy's suit is dealt with in Section 5.

Sections 3b and 3c discussed how declarer's side suit losers can be disposed of by ruffing or discarding when there is an imbalance in the number of cards between declarer's hand and dummy.. These imbalances allow ruffs and discards and are very often a certain means of disposing of losers. It is important to recognise such imbalances and to use them to their full potential.

In the trump suit there is obviously no facility either to ruff or to discard losers. If trump losers are to be disposed of we have to rely on the defenders' cards lying favourably and use card play technique to take advantage of this. The same technique must also be applied to side suit losers when no imbalance is present and hence no potential for ruffs or discards. In Section 6 the finesse is discussed in detail.

The following represent a side suit with declarer playing in a suit contract.

1

♣ A K J
♣ 4 3 2

2

♣ A Q J
♣ 4 3 2

3

♣ K 6 5
♣ 4 3 2

### 1.

Declarer has 1 loser.

To dispose of this loser declarer needs to win a trick with dummy's jack.

To achieve this he will lead small towards dummy planning to play the jack if west plays low.

If west holds the queen he will be successful but, if east holds the queen, he will fail.

By playing this simple finesse he gives himself a 50% chance of disposing of the loser.

### 2.

Declarer has 1 loser.

To dispose of this loser declarer needs to win tricks with both dummy's jack and queen.

To achieve this he will twice lead towards dummy and play low unless west plays the king.

By playing this repeated simple finesse he gives himself a 50% chance of disposing of the loser.

### 3.

Declarer has 3 losers.

None of the cards in dummy can be relied upon to dispose of any of these losers.

However, if west holds the ace, correct card play will make dummy's ♣ K a winner and so dispose of one of declarer's losers.

Declarer plays small from hand towards dummy.

If west plays the ace the king will win a subsequent trick.

If west holds the ace but does not play it dummy's king will win so taking care of one of declarer's losers.

You would apply the same technique in the trump suit.

4

♣ 4 3 2
♣ A K J 6 5

5

♣ 4 3 2
♣ A Q J 6 5

In both cases you would play a simple finesse to (hopefully) dispose of the loser.

In 4. A simple finesse should suffice.

In 5. The finesse needs to be repeated.

### Why play with a trump suit rather than in no trumps?

You have chosen to play with a trump suit rather than to play in no trumps probably because this is a major suit where you have an 8-card fit between the two hands.

Alternatively, you may be playing in a minor suit because one of your side suits is weak and, were you to play in no trumps, your opponents would take several tricks in this suit.

However, by making your strong suit trumps, you can control your opponents' suit by ruffing if they try to cash their tricks in it.

### How does the trump suit affect the play of the hand?

In a no trump contract you usually cannot be prevented from winning your top tricks.

When you play in a suit contract the trump suit introduces a new dimension.

Just as the trump suit allows you to ruff your opponents' winners it also means your opponents can ruff your side suit high card winners.

Consider the club suit below as a side suit when you play the hand with spades as trumps.

If you were playing in no trumps you would play ♣ A K & Q making 3 tricks and you would hope that the suit breaks 3-3 so you would make a fourth trick.

In a suit contract if you play A-K-Q and one opponent started with only 2 cards in this suit, when you play the queen he will win the trick by playing a trump.

**Dummy**

♣ K 5 4

**You**

♣ A Q 9 7

To prevent this you start by playing the trump suit until the defenders have no trumps left.

This is referred to as "drawing trumps".

Having drawn trumps you can cash your club winners.

When you are playing in a suit contract you should usually plan to draw trumps early in the play.

However, before deciding to draw trumps you should ask yourself if there is a good reason why you should not.

The following looks at some of the commonest reasons why you might delay drawing trumps and also why you might consider drawing only some of the opponents' trumps.

### Counting Trumps

Try to avoid counting to 13 or counting rounds of 4 – these methods are too tortuous.

Count the total trumps in your hand and dummy and work out how many the defence hold.

Make a mental note of how you expect these to break e.g.

Missing 5 cards	:	they should break 3-2
Missing 4 cards	:	they should break 3-1
Missing 3 cards	:	they should break 2-1

Each time a defender plays a trump count down.

It will be easier to count down from 5, 4 or 3 than to count up to 13.

<p><b>1.</b></p> <p>♠AQ10 7 ♥K6 ♦J1065 ♣K54</p> <p>♠KJ86 ♥Q4 ♦KQ87 ♣QJ6</p>	<p><b>When your loser count is satisfactory and you can make your contract through high card winners you should draw trumps at the earliest opportunity and then cash your high card winners.</b></p> <p>West leads ♥J against your contract of 4♠.</p> <p>Your Potential Losing Tricks are:</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>♠</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♣</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Excess</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>If spades break 5-0 you will have a spade loser but this occurs only about one time in 25.</p> <p>You must hope it is not today.</p> <p>It looks as though the only thing which might prevent you making your contract is if one of your opponents ruffs one of your winners.</p> <p>In this situation you should draw trumps immediately then cash your winners.</p> <p>You should make your contract losing only to each of the side suit aces.</p>	♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess	1	1	1	1	4	1
♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess								
1	1	1	1	4	1								

<p><b>2.</b></p> <p>♠10942 ♥1084 ♦J5 ♣9874</p> <p>♠83 ♥AKQJ 5 ♦AK4 ♣AK3</p>	<p><b>Do not draw all trumps when you need trumps in dummy to ruff side suit losers.</b></p> <p>West leads ♠A against your contract of 4♥</p> <p>He continues with two further rounds of spades.</p> <p>Your Potential Losing Tricks are:</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>♠</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♣</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Excess</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>To reduce your loser count to an acceptable level you need to ruff a diamond in dummy.</p> <p>You will need to retain a trump in dummy to do this so you can only afford to draw two rounds of trumps initially.</p> <p>When you gain the lead you will draw two rounds of trumps and then play the ♦A and ♦K.</p> <p>You then ruff your third diamond in dummy and return to hand with a club to draw the last trump.</p>	♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess	2	0	1	1	4	1
♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess								
2	0	1	1	4	1								

**3.**

♠ A942  
♥ 1084  
♦ J5  
♣ 9874

♠ 83  
♥ AKQJ5  
♦ A74  
♣ AK3

**When you need to give up the lead to reach a ruffing position keep sufficient trumps to ensure the defenders cannot shorten dummy's trumps to prevent you ruffing.**

West leads ♠Q against your contract of 4♥.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
1	0	2	1	4	1

This is similar to 2.  
However, note the difference.  
On this hand you have to give up the lead in diamonds in order to reach the ruffing position.  
If you initially draw 2 rounds of trumps and then play ♦A and ♦4 the defenders will see through your plan and, when they win the diamond trick, will lead another heart to remove dummy's last trump.  
Now you will be unable ruff the losing diamond.  
You should draw just one round of trumps and then play ♦A and give up the lead in diamonds.  
Now, if the defence lead a trump, you will win in hand and ruff a diamond.  
You then return to hand to draw the last trump.

**4.**

♠ A96  
♥ J54  
♦ AK6  
♣ 8752

♠ 853  
♥ KQ1076  
♦ Q4  
♣ KQJ

**Do not draw trumps immediately if this means giving up the lead and allows the defence to cash quick winners.**

West leads ♠K against your contract of 4♥.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
2	1	0	1	4	1

If you start to draw trumps the defence will immediately win ♥A and can then cash two spades and a club to defeat your contract.  
Before playing trumps you must use dummy's diamonds to allow you to discard a losing spade.  
You must hope the outstanding diamonds break no worse than 5-3.  
You play ♦Q and then cash dummy's ♦A & ♦K discarding a losing spade.  
Now, when you give up the lead in trumps the defence can only cash one spade trick – you will ruff their next spade.

5.

♠KJ3  
♥A94  
♦K973  
♣KQ8

♠Q109875  
♥K65  
♦Q4  
♣J5

**Do not draw trumps if this means giving up the lead and allows the defence to set up immediate winners.**

West leads ♥J against your contract of 4♠.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
1	1	1	1	4	1

You plan to discard a heart loser on dummy's clubs after forcing out the ♣A. With a 2<sup>nd</sup> heart stop it may seem right to draw trumps.

However, this means giving up the lead and, when you do so, the defence may lead another heart to remove your stop.

Now, when you give up the lead in clubs to establish dummy's suit, the defence will cash a heart and a diamond to defeat your contract.

You must play clubs first in order to establish dummy's suit before playing a trump and giving up the lead.

6.

♠J6  
♥J76  
♦AQ863  
♣854

♠85  
♥AKQ105  
♦K4  
♣A932

**Do not draw all the trumps if this removes your only entry to dummy before you have established dummy's long suit for discards from hand.**

West leads ♣K against your contract of 4♥.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
2	0	0	3	5	2

You plan to discard two losing spades on dummy's long diamonds.

You cannot afford to give up the lead or the defence can cash 2 club tricks and 2 spade tricks.

If the outstanding diamonds are 3-3 you have no problem.

You could draw trumps immediately then play ♦K and then ♦4 to ♦A to cash diamonds.

However, it is more likely that diamonds are 4-2 (see below)

You can set up dummy's diamonds with a ruff but you then need an entry to enjoy the established winners.

The only other entry is in the trump suit.

You should draw two rounds of trumps with the ♥A & ♥K from hand.

Play ♦K and then ♦4 to ♦A followed by the ♦6 which you ruff high in hand to prevent an over-ruff.

Dummy's diamonds are now good and the ♥J provides an entry to enjoy them and discard two losing spades.

*A 3-3 break occurs about 36% of the time.*

*A 4-2 break occurs about 50% of the time.*

<p><b>7.</b></p> <p>♠83 ♥842 ♦J10754 ♣AK3</p> <p>♠AKQJ104 ♥AJ10 ♦2 ♣875</p>	<p><b>Do not draw trumps immediately when you win the opening lead in dummy and need to use this entry.</b></p> <p>West leads ♣Q against your contract of 4♠.</p> <p>Your Losing Tricks are:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>♠</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♣</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Excess</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>There is no possibility of avoiding the 2 minor suit losers. In hearts, providing east holds at least one of the missing honours, you can take two finesses and reduce your losers by one. You need 2 entries to dummy to do this and only the club suit provides them. You would like to draw trumps but the need to take a heart finesse takes priority. You win trick 1 in dummy with the ♣A and take the heart finesse. If the finesse fails you will draw trumps when you regain the lead and then cross to the ♣K to repeat the heart finesse. Your heart strategy will be successful about 3 times in 4 (75%)</p>	♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess	0	2	1	1	4	1
♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess								
0	2	1	1	4	1								

<p><b>8.</b></p> <p>♠A75 ♥K5 ♦953 ♣AK973</p> <p>♠K62 ♥AQJ1073 ♦A6 ♣82</p>	<p><b>Do not draw trumps immediately if you need them to provide communication with dummy to set up a long suit.</b></p> <p>West leads ♦K against your contract of 6♥.</p> <p>Your Losing Tricks are:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>♠</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♣</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Excess</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This hand is similar to 6 but you need to conserve entries to dummy to aid in establishing dummy's long suit. Dummy's club suit will hopefully provide a discard of one of your losers. The defender's clubs may split 3-3 but the more likely split is 4-2 and you need to play for this. To set up dummy's clubs you will need 2 entries outside of the suit itself. These have to be ♠A and ♥K so you cannot afford to draw trumps until you have set up dummy's suit. You will win trick 1 in hand with the ♦A and then play two rounds of clubs. You ruff a 3<sup>rd</sup> club in hand with ♥10 in order to prevent an over-ruff. Play ♥3 to ♥K and play another club which you ruff high in hand. One club winner is now established in dummy to allow the discard of a losing diamond. Draw the outstanding trumps then cross to dummy with ♠A to enjoy the established club.</p>	♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess	1	0	1	0	2	1
♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess								
1	0	1	0	2	1								

9.

♠Q3  
♥K82  
♦AK2  
♣J9653

♠9  
♥AQJ104  
♦Q63  
♣Q1072

**Do not draw all trumps immediately if the defence can force you in their strong suit before you have set up your own suit.  
Retain at least one trump in dummy to control the opposition suit while you set up your own suit.**

West leads ♠A against your contract of 4♥ and then continues with the ♠K.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
1	0	0	2	3	0

On the face of it all looks well.

Not so: look more closely.

You could ruff the second spade and draw trumps.

Even if you find the favourable 3-2 trump split you now have only one trump left in hand.

You need to concede the lead twice when you play the clubs.

The first time you do this the defence will lead another spade to exhaust your trumps.

When you do it again they will cash spade winners to defeat your contract.

The solution is to draw only two rounds of trumps by leading two top hearts from hand.

Now play a top club.

If the defence lead another spade you can ruff it in dummy (the short trump hand) and you retain trump control in your hand.

You now return to hand with the ♦Q, draw the last trump and play another club to finish setting up the suit.

You still have a trump in hand to control a further spade lead and you can then enjoy your established clubs.

### Should You Draw An Opponent's Master Trump

This is a question which often arises.

When a single, master trump, remains with the opposition should you draw it.

Generally you should not draw a master trump held by the opposition.

It may take two of your trumps to do so, one from your hand and one from dummy - a poor swap.

In some situations it can even jeopardise the contract.

<p><b>A</b> Contract 4♥ Lead ♣4</p> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p><b>Dummy</b></p> <p>♠ A K 7</p> <p>♥ K 4 2</p> <p>♦ J 5 3</p> <p>♣ A 8 7 2</p> <p><b>Your Hand</b></p> <p>♠ 6</p> <p>♥ A 9 8 6 3</p> <p>♦ Q 10 9 7 4</p> <p>♣ 10 5</p> </div>	<p><b>B</b> Contract 4♥ Lead ♠K</p> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p><b>Dummy</b></p> <p>♠ 8 4 2</p> <p>♥ A 9</p> <p>♦ Q 7 4</p> <p>♣ A K 9 5 3</p> <p><b>Your Hand</b></p> <p>♠ Q</p> <p>♥ K 10 8 7 6 2</p> <p>♦ K 10 3</p> <p>♣ Q 10 2</p> </div>
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In Example A your contract is 4♥ and the opening lead is the ♣4.

You can discard a losing club on dummy's ♠K. You can then afford to lose 2 diamonds and a trump trick.

You win trick 1 with ♣ A in dummy then draw two rounds of trumps with the ♥A & ♥K.

If you then concede the lead by drawing the last (master) trump the defence will return a club.

You will be obliged to ruff this and you will then have only one trump left whilst you must give up the lead twice in diamonds in order to set up your winners.

The defence will be able to set up their club suit.

Play just two rounds of trumps and then start on the diamonds and you will retain control of the hand.

Example B shows the classic situation where you should draw an outstanding master trump.

Your contract is 4♥ and the opening lead is the ♠K.

You have 1 losing spade, 1 losing heart and 2 losing diamonds.

You plan to discard a losing diamond on dummy's clubs.

If the clubs break reasonably dummy's will run but your only entry to dummy's clubs is in the suit itself.

If you leave an outstanding trump one of the defenders may ruff the third round of clubs, exit with a spade and prevent you getting the discard.

If you force out the remaining (master) trump only ♣ J x x x in the east hand will prevent you running dummy's clubs to provide diamond discards.

Note

You should play the clubs by leading ♣10 from hand to the ♣K in dummy then back to the ♣Q in hand.

If west started with ♣ J x x x you can now finesse dummy's ♣9.

We saw in Section 3a that, when playing in a suit contract, you should count Potential Losing Tricks. You then try to dispose of the excess losers over the number your contract allows.

The first step is to look for side suits where there is an imbalance in the number of cards between declarer's hand and dummy.

Where this imbalance involves:

**Length in dummy with winners or potential winners – shortage in hand**

You can

***Discard losers in another suit from hand on dummy's side suit winners***

Dummy's suit may already have "extra winners" or you may have to do some work establish them.

<p><b>1.</b></p> <p>♠854 ♥A8 ♦985 ♣KQ965</p> <p>♠A7 ♥KQJ1032 ♦AK6 ♣A4</p>	<p><b>Dummy's winners may already be established</b></p> <p>West leads ♠Q against your contract of 6♥.</p> <p>Your Losing Tricks are:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>♠</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♣</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Excess</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Dummy's clubs show the imbalance we are looking for. Length with winners or potential winners – shortage in hand</p> <p>With the top three cards in the suit between the two hands and, with only two clubs in hand, dummy's club winners will allow us to discard a losing spade from hand.</p> <p>Should we draw trumps before taking the discard? The trump suit is solid so the lead will not have to be given up in drawing trumps. The club suit itself provides an entry to dummy's club winners. Draw trumps then play ♣A followed by ♣4 to dummy's ♣K (high card – short hand first).</p> <p>Discard a losing spade from hand on dummy's ♣Q. If the defenders' clubs break 3-3 they will also allow the discard of a losing diamond and the contract will make with an overtrick.</p>	♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess	1	0	1	0	2	1
♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess								
1	0	1	0	2	1								

2.

♠ J1082  
 ♥ A103  
 ♦ 1073  
 ♣ K65

**You may have to do some work to set up dummy's long suit.  
 This is termed "establishing the suit"**

The defence lead 3 rounds of diamonds against your contract of 4♥.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
1	0	2	1	4	1

♠ KQ3  
 ♥ KQJ94  
 ♦ 52  
 ♣ A72

Dummy's spades show the imbalance we are looking for.

Length with winners or potential winners – shortage in hand

Having forced out the ♠A dummy's "long" spades will allow the discard of a losing club from declarer's hand.

Should we draw trumps before taking the discard?

The trump suit is solid so the lead will not have to be given up in drawing trumps.

The lead has to be given up in spades to establish dummy's suit.

We have the club suit stopped so the defence cannot cash a club winner when they gain the lead.

The ♣K provides the entry to enjoy dummy's established spades.

Ruff the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of diamonds in hand.

Draw trumps.

Play ♠K followed by ♠Q and, if the ♠A has not yet appeared, the ♠3.

Note this follows the principle of high cards – short hand first.

Dummy's ♣K provides an entry to cash the established spade if necessary to allow the discard of a losing club from hand.

3.

**You may have to do some work to establish dummy's long suit.  
Card play principles must not be ignored.  
You must consider the entry position to achieve this.**

♠AK2  
♥KQ3  
♦763  
♣KQ52

West leads ♦Q against your contract of 4♥.

You win with the ♦A.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
1	2	2	1	6	3

♠764  
♥A8752  
♦A42  
♣74

You must assume trumps break 3-2 so there are no trump losers or the contract is hopeless.

This leaves you with one loser to dispose of.

The only hope is to establish a club winner in dummy to allow a spade loser to be discarded from hand.

To achieve this the ♣A must be with west.

Should we draw trumps before taking the discard?

The trump suit is solid so the lead will not have to be given up in drawing trumps.

The lead has to be given up in clubs to establish dummy's suit but west may not oblige by playing the ♣A immediately.

The only entry to declarer's hand after playing the ♦A is in the trump suit.

Trumps must not be played immediately so that this entry is conserved.

At trick 2 play a small club from hand.

The ♥A provides an entry back to hand to lead a second club if west holds up the ♣A.

When west wins the ♣A the defence will cash two diamonds but declarer's losing spade can be discarded on the established club in dummy and the contract is safe.

4.

♠AQ7  
 ♥J83  
 ♦K1063  
 ♣A65

♠4  
 ♥KQ105  
 ♦AQJ975  
 ♣97

**You may need to take a finesse to attempt to establish an extra winner in dummy but, if it fails, you will go 2 down in your contract.**

West leads ♣Q against your contract of 6♦.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
0	1	0	1	2	1

You will certainly lose a trick to the ♥A so you must avoid a club loser.

The only possibility is the spade finesse to establish an extra winner in dummy to allow a losing club to be discarded from hand.

Win the opening lead with the ♣A.

Draw trumps in as many rounds as it takes finishing in hand.

Play the spade finesse.

If it is successful the ♠A will provide a discard for the ♣9 from hand.

If the spade finesse were unsuccessful you would go two down losing a trick in each side suit.

This is a risk worth taking to make your contract.

5.

♠A65  
♥J873  
♦J542  
♣83

♠K74  
♥A  
♦AQ  
♣AKQJ963

**Sometimes a finesse is a mirage and involves danger.  
You may be able to set up dummy's suit more simply.**

West leads ♠Q against your contract of 6♣.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
1	0	1	0	2	1

It seems that the diamond finesse, if successful, will dispose of the diamond loser. Even if unsuccessful it seems as if the (now established) ♦J will give you a spade discard from hand.

So it looks tempting to win T1 in dummy with the ♠A to take the diamond finesse.

True, but if it fails, how will you get back to dummy to enjoy the established ♦J to allow you to discard your losing spade.

Look again.

Dummy's diamonds show the imbalance we are looking for.

Length with winners or potential winners – shortage in hand

Having forced out the ♦K dummy's ♦J will allow the discard of a losing spade from declarer's hand.

The ♠A is still in dummy stopping the spades and it will also provide the entry to enjoy the ♦J and discard a losing spade from hand.

Can we afford to draw trumps.

The trump suit is solid so the lead will not be given up in drawing trumps.

Win trick 1 in hand with ♠K.

Draw trumps in as many rounds as it take.

Play the ♦A and then the ♦Q.

Dummy's ♦J is now established as an extra winner to allow declarer to discard a losing spade.

The ♠A provides the entry to do this.

6.

♠K7  
 ♥K6  
 ♦AK9752  
 ♣987

♠AQJ1095  
 ♥A9  
 ♦63  
 ♣A54

**In a suit contract you can use a ruff to establish dummy's side suit. The great benefit of this is that it may prevent the defence gaining the lead and cashing tricks in another side suit.**

West leads ♣K against your contract of 6♠.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
0	0	0	2	2	1

We need to dispose of a club loser.

We play the ♣A at trick 1 but now the suit is exposed since we have 2 immediate losers.

Dummy's diamonds show the imbalance we are looking for.

Length with winners or potential winners – shortage in hand

However; we need to do some work to establish the winners and we cannot afford to give up the lead or the defence will cash their club winners to defeat the contract.

Win trick 1 with ♣A.

Play ♦A and ♦K and ruff a diamond high.

The suit breaks 3-2 as expected and dummy's suit is now established without having given up the lead.

Draw trumps.

Enter dummy with ♥K and play dummy's established diamonds to allow two club discards from hand.

The contract makes with an overtrick.

7.

♠954  
♥K3  
♦A85  
♣AK762

♠A7  
♥AQJ10982  
♦62  
♣85

**In a suit contract you can use a ruff to establish dummy's side suit.  
You may need to ruff twice to set up the suit.  
You should exercise care to ensure you have the necessary entries.**

West leads ♠Q against your contract of 6♥.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
1	0	1	0	2	1

Dummy's clubs show the imbalance we are looking for.

Length with winners or potential winners – shortage in hand

However; we need to do some work to establish the winners and we cannot afford to give up the lead or the defence will cash their spade winner to defeat the contract.

If the defenders' clubs break 3-3 a single ruff will set up dummy's suit.

If they are 4-2 we will need to ruff twice to establish the suit.

Can we afford to draw trumps?

The trump suit is solid so the lead will not be given up in drawing trumps.

The entry situation now needs to be considered.

If two club ruffs are needed to set up dummy's suit we need 3 entries to dummy – 2 for the ruffs and a third to enjoy the established trick (to discard a diamond from hand).

These entries are provided by ♣A, ♦A and ♥K.

These entries must be conserved so trumps cannot be drawn immediately.

Win trick 1 in hand with ♠A.

Lead the ♣5 from hand and cash dummy's ♣A and ♣K.

Lead ♣2 from dummy and ruff high in hand to prevent an over-ruff. West shows out of clubs.

Play ♥A then lead ♥2 to dummy's ♥K.

Lead another club from dummy and again ruff high.

Dummy's last club is established so you can complete drawing trumps before leading the ♦2 to dummy's ♦A to cash the last club and discard of a losing spade or diamond from hand.

**8. When you are short of entries to dummy and, providing you can afford to give up the lead, you can also use a ducking technique to set up dummy's suit.**

- ♠ Q54
- ♥ J6
- ♦ AK953
- ♣ 643

West leads a trump against your contract of 6♠.

Your Losing Tricks are:

♠	♥	♦	♣	Total	Excess
0	1	0	1	2	1

- ♠ AKJ1076
- ♥ A7
- ♦ 74
- ♣ AK2

The only hope of making this contract is to establish dummy's diamonds to allow the discard of a losing club.

If the outstanding diamonds are 3-3 the suit can be established with a single ruff and then the ♠Q will provide an entry to play another diamond for the club discard. However, if the diamonds are 4-2, two ruffs will be needed to establish the suit. If ♦A and ♦K of diamonds are played and then a diamond ruffed, dummy can be entered with ♠Q for a second ruff but there is then no entry to enjoy the established trick.

The solution is to initially duck a diamond trick.

Win trick 1 in hand with ♠A.

Play a low diamond from hand and duck in dummy.

Win the return.

Play the ♦7 to the ♦A.

Lead ♦5 from dummy and ruff high to prevent an overruff.

Play the ♠K and then enter dummy with ♠Q drawing the last trump.

Play the ♦K from dummy to draw the last diamond and dummy's ♦9 is then good and allows the discard of a losing club from declarer's hand.

The first step in planning the play of any type of contract is to analyse the opening lead.

A large amount of information can be gathered about the defenders' hands if you give the lead some thought.

Apply your knowledge of the principles of the opening lead to the card led.

Always keep in mind the opening lead.

Against a suit contract there are 5 types of lead.

### 1. **Top of an honour sequence.**

Against a no trump contract this would be top of a complete sequence, a broken sequence or an internal sequence.

Against a suit contract an honour lead could also be from an incomplete sequence such as:

K Q x x                      Q J x x

You know that the hand leading does not have the honour above that led but they should have the honour below.

Work out how many points the lead shows.

This information may be useful later in the play.

### 2. **A low card (usually 4<sup>th</sup> highest) from an unsupported honour.**

If a low card is led it is usually this type.

It indicates that your left hand opponent has an honour(s) in the suit and is interested in developing tricks there.

Against a suit contract there is also the possibility that it may be a 3-card suit.

This knowledge can help you to decide whether to play high or low from dummy.

Note also.

If a 2 is led this is likely to be 4<sup>th</sup> highest so LHO probably has 4 cards in this suit.

You can now work out how many cards RHO has in this suit and this tells you the full distribution of the suit.

If a 3 is led and you can see the 2 in hand or in dummy LHO has led from a 4-card suit.

If a 5 or 6 is led and you think it is this type of lead it is likely that LHO has a 5 or 6-card suit.

### 3. **Top of nothing or 2<sup>nd</sup> highest from nothing.**

If the lead is a high spot card the lead is likely to be from an empty suit (no honour).

You may need to check with RHO opponent whether they lead top of nothing or 2<sup>nd</sup> highest from an empty suit. Both systems are used by different people.

Knowing that the lead is from an empty suit allows you to place any missing honours in that suit in RHO's hand.

It then helps you to decide how to play to trick 1.

But be careful – see opposite.

**4. Singleton Lead**

Against suit contracts singleton leads are popular.

The lead of a 9 is singleton or doubleton.

The lead of an 8, if you can see the 9, is the same.

Be careful that LHO does not get an opportunity to ruff in this suit.

**5. Doubleton Lead**

Against suit contracts doubleton leads are popular.

If a suit has been bid on your right and a high card is led in that suit it may be a doubleton.

Be careful that LHO does not get an opportunity to ruff in this suit.

One of the favourite leads against a suit contract is the A from a suit headed by A K.

If you are missing the ace and king in a side suit and that suit is not led, it is likely that the A and K are in different hands.

Note also:

You should never under-lead a side suit ace at trick 1 against a suit contract.

If LHO leads low to your suit contract and you cannot see the ace of that suit you should be able to place it with RHO.

**The Rule Of Eleven**

Providing you are sure the opening lead is fourth highest (4<sup>th</sup> from the top) you can apply this rule.

Subtract the card led from 11.

For the suit led, the answer gives the number of cards higher than the card led which are contained in the three hands other than the hand leading.

The following example is given in The Official Encyclopaedia Of Bridge.

LHO leads the ♠6 against your 3NT contract.

$$11 - 6 = 5$$

	♠ A Q 9 5 4	
♠ 6 led		♠ 3 played
	♠ 10 7 2	

You can deduce that, collectively, there are five cards higher than the ♠6 in your own hand, dummy and RHO's hand.

You can see all five of them between your own hand and dummy.

West has led from K J 8 6

You know your ♠7 will win the first trick and you can subsequently finesse against west's

♠ K J 8 to make 5 spade tricks.

The same principle can be applied when playing a suit contract.



The hand progresses as follows.

Trick	W	N	E	S	W	N	E	Trick won by	Declarer's Play
1	♣3	♣5	♣7	♣8				S	Declarer wins the opening lead
2				♠K	♠2	♠5	♠8	S	Declarer cashes his spade side suit winners early to prevent the defence discarding spades and later ruffing his winners.
3				♠7	♠3	♠Q	♠9	N	
4		♠A	♠10	♠J	♠4			N	
5		♥3	♥9	♥A	♥4			S	Cash ♥A
6				♥2	♥6	♣10	♥J	N	Ruff a heart in dummy
7		♦A	♦2	♦9	♦4			N	Cash ♦A
8		♦3	♦6	♣9	♠6			S	Ruff a diamond to return to hand
9				♥5	♥10	♣Q	♦7	N	Ruff a heart in dummy
10		♦5	♦10	♣J	♥Q			S	Ruff a diamond to return to hand
11				♥7	♥K	♣K	♦Q	N	Ruff a heart in dummy
12		♦8	♦K	♣A	♣4			S	Ruff a diamond – west wastes a trump
13				♥8	♣6	♦J	♣2	W	The defence waste their trumps

Your Cards	Their Cards	Division Of Missing Cards	% Of Time	Chances
11	2	1 – 1	52	1 in 2
		2 – 0	48	1 in 2
10	3	2 – 1	78	3 in 4
		3 – 0	22	1 in 4
9	4	3 – 1	50	1 in 2
		2 – 2	40	4 in 10
		4 – 0	10	1 in 10
8	5	3 – 2	68	2 in 3
		4 – 1	28	1 in 4
		5 – 0	4	1 in 20
7	6	4 – 2	48	1 in 2
		3 – 3	36	1 in 3
		5 – 1	15	1 in 6
		6 – 0	1.5	1 in 100
6	7	4 – 3	62	2 in 3
		5 – 2	31	1 in 3
		6 – 1	7	1 in 15
		7 – 0	0.5	1 in 200
5	8	5 – 3	47	1 in 2
		4 – 4	33	1 in 3
		6 – 2	17	1 in 6
		7 – 1	3	3 in 100
		8 – 0	0.2	1 in 500

You will notice:

An odd number of cards can be expected split evenly

An even number of cards can be expected to split oddly

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