



How to Play

***Winning
Advanced
Bridge***



Byron Lund

From the Author

*How to play **Winning Advanced Bridge*** is the second book in a three book series designed for competitive bridge players.

It is designed to provide the conventions and techniques to advance to the top of the club level.

The first book, *How to play **Winning Intermediated Bridge***, was designed for players wanting to improve their game beyond what was taught in introductory bridge lessons.

The third book, *How to play **Expert Bridge***, was designed to players in the top tournament brackets.

Enjoy the game,

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Hand Valuation

Most bridge players retain the same rules about hand valuation as those taught in introductory bridge lessons.

Players wishing to play better than average can quickly start their journey by upgrading their hand evaluation.

The following are some of the better hand evaluation methods that the author introduced in his book *How to play **Expert Bridge*** and included in *How to play **Winning Intermediate Bridge***.

These are currently the most modern methods that will improve top echelon players, yet are simple enough that intermediate players may apply them.

Once used, these methods take only one or two seconds longer than those proposed in introductory bridge lessons.

The change will quickly improve a player's results while they work on upgrading the rest of their game.

1. High Card Point Count Adjustments

Most bidding decisions are based on the estimated value of the hand. These estimates are originally based on the high card point (HCP) count of the hand.

Having a correct assessment of the value of the hand is critical to making a correct bid. If that assessment is incorrect it may result in a poor bidding decision and a poor score.

Most players use the Works 4-3-2-1 point count system. That system values each ace as 4 points, king as 3 points, queen as 2 points and jack as 1 point. It is easy to use and usually provides a good assessment of the value of a hand.

The following hand is an example of its use:

♠ KQJ
♥ QJ5
♦ QJ6
♣ QJ65

Based on holding one king, four queens and four jacks, most players would assess this hand as having a value of 15 high card points (HCP). Most would open the hand with a 1 NT bid. Some may open with only a 1 ♣ bid. On this hand, an incorrect bid opening bid would have been made because of an incorrect assessment of the hand's value.

This chapter details a method for determining what the correct value of the hand is and what, if any, adjustments need to be made.

On some hands, such as the one above, the Works 4-3-2-1 count needs to be adjusted to provide a better assessment of the hand's value. In order to arrive at a correct value of the hand, a player should develop an understanding of situations when an adjustment is needed and the amount of adjustment to make.

Three situations where the high card points should be adjusted are:

a. Unprotected Honors

Unprotected honors are those that are situated in a suit with either a singleton face card or a doubleton containing a jack or queen. The honor is likely to drop in the first or second round played in the suit. The points assigned to the unprotected honors should be reduced.

In a suit contract, when the honor in the short side suit does promote an honour in their partner's hand, it is redundant unless a loser may be tossed instead of trumping. In order to toss a loser from the hand with the unprotected honor, that hand would also need to hold a three cards side suit which does not contain the queen. If the three cards side suit contains a queen, a discard in the suit will likely not create a future trick.

One point should be deducted for a holding of singleton king or jack or a doubleton queen or jack.

Two points should be deducted for a singleton queen.

Once a suit fit of at least eight cards is confirmed, shortness points may be assigned for the singleton or doubleton. However, the points for the honor cards should still remain discounted.

b. Hands with a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 Pattern

Hands with a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 pattern should have their initial value reduced by one point.

In a suit contract, this hand pattern lacks a short suit. This limits their ability to provide an extra trick through a ruff.

The 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 hand pattern has less of an impact in a notrump contract, but is less successful than either the 4 – 4 – 3 – 2 or the 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 hand patterns.

In an IMP game, a player should gamble on making the bonus points for bidding a game contract. In deciding on whether to accept an invitation to a notrump game contract, the potential game bonus outweighs the disadvantage of the 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 hand pattern. In those circumstances, the player should disregard the deduction for that hand pattern.

c. Imbalance of Honor Cards

The 4-3-2-1 point count undervalues aces. It also overvalues queens and jacks. If the hand contains more than one of a specific honor, an adjustment to the high card point count may be needed to provide a better assessment of the value of the hand.

There are more accurate point count systems. They are seldom used because the 4-3-2-1 point count is much easier to use. Most of those alternate counting systems do not total to 10 points per suit. As such, they would require a major change to the number of points required for different bids, responses and ability to open or bid a game or slam contract.

When converted to a 10 point scale, however, the more accurate point count systems all¹ value the honors at, or close to:

- Aces at 4.5 points each
- Queens at 1.5 points each
- Jacks, if unaccompanied by tens, at .75 points each

The Works 4-3-2-1 count can easily be adjusted to those more accurate values if and when needed. These adjustments are simple.

The amount of the undervaluation of aces is the same as the amount of the overvaluation of queens. The amount of the overvaluation of jacks is offset by the undervaluation of tens.

To correct any imbalances, a player should;

- i. add 1 point if the hand contains two or three more aces than queens,
- ii. add 2 points if the hand contains four more aces than queens,
- iii. subtract 1 point if the hand contains two or three more queens than aces,
- iv. subtract 2 points if the hand contains four more queens than aces, and
- v. subtract 1 point if the hand contains three or four more jacks than tens.

An illustration of the effect of a high card imbalance is shown in these two hands:

(a) ♠ KQJ	(b) ♠ QJ52	(c) ♠ AJ52
♥ QJ5	♥ KQ	♥ AK
♦ QJ5	♦ Q1054	♦ A1054
♣ QJ65	♣ QJ7	♣ A107

On hand (a) the original count is 15 HCP. There is a 1 point initial deduction for the flat 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution. Since there are four

more queens than aces, there is a further 2 point deduction. There are four more jacks than aces which warrants another 1 point reduction.

Once those adjustments are made, this hand has an adjusted value of 11 HCP.

This is the hand shown in the example at the beginning of this chapter.

On hand (b), the original HCP count is 14 HCP. There aren't any point deductions for a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution or unprotected honors. There are four more queens than aces so the hand should have a 2 point deduction. The final adjusted value of the hand is slightly under 12 HCP since the hand contains more jacks than tens.

On hand (c) the original HCP count is 20 HCP. There aren't any point deductions for a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 distribution or unprotected honors. The hand contains four more aces than queens so should be adjusted up to 22 HCP.

Once the adjustments are made, the corrected high card point (HCP) values are used for opening bids, responses, games, slams, conventions, etc. to provide a more accurate value.

In summary, a player should continue using their 4-3-2-1 point count method. It is easy to use and provides the correct assessment most of the time. When needed, the following adjustments should be made to that number;

- a. if the hand contains an unprotected face card, deduct 2 points for a singleton queen (Q) or 1 point for a singleton king or doubleton queen or jack (K, Qx, or Jx),
- b. in the hand has a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 pattern, subtract 1 point, and

- c. if the hand contains an imbalance of honor cards;
 - i. subtract 1 point if the hand contains two or three more queens than aces,
 - ii. subtract 2 points if the hand contains all four queens and no aces,
 - iii. add 2 points if the hand contains all four aces and no queens,
 - iv. add 1 point if the hand contains two or three more aces than queens, and
 - v. subtract 1 point if the hand contains three or four more jacks than tens.

The benefit of making these adjustments to the high card point count is that more hands will be played at the appropriate level.

If a player realizes that a situation requires an adjustment but cannot remember if the adjustment is one or two points, they should make a one point adjustment. It is the most likely of the adjustments. After the game, they should review this chapter to ensure that they make the correct adjustment the next time.

¹ *Alex Martelli is credited with the $4\frac{1}{2}$, 3, $1\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{1}{4}$ point count, which values the hand to within one eighth of a point and is considered the most accurate point count. He did so by multiplying the Four Aces (3,2,1, $\frac{1}{2}$) point count by 1.5 and adding a $\frac{1}{4}$ point for the ten, bringing the total to 10 points.*

When converted to a 10 point scale, the Kleinman Point count, or the Little Jack Points from which it is derived, closely resemble Martelli's figures. So does Zar Points.

2. Minimum Response Points

Introductory bridge lessons taught students that when a opening bid is made, the minimum strength that a hand needs to respond at the one-level is 6 HCP.

While the 6 HCP is a good, simple rule, it does not consider the inaccuracy of the Works 4-3-2-1 point count system or that all 6 HCP hands are not equal.

At the higher levels in their development, a player should adjust the 6 HCP minimum number to one which more accurately reflects a hand's value.

Below are suggestions for a more accurate assessment of whether a hand contains sufficient value to respond to a suit opening bid made at the one-level.

Even though, excluding length points, the hand only contains 4 HCP, a five cards major suit headed by the ace is sufficient to respond if the suit can be bid at the one-level.

The contract will play well if the opener raises the suit.

If the suit is raised by the opener and the pair is not vulnerable, the hand is strong enough for a three-level sacrifice bid if necessary. This is because of the ace and the nine cards fit.

If the opener replies with a notrump bid, the responder should pass and allow the hand to be played in a notrump contract. The opener's points will likely provide stoppers in the other suits. The ace and length in the responder's suit should provide the declarer with sufficient stoppers.

When the opener has three cards support in a notrump contract, they will likely be able to set up the responder's suit by playing the ace on the third round. That will place them in the responder's hand where they can play the two established tricks and toss losers from the declarer's hand.

When the response is made and the opponents win the contract, the bid has provided a good suit lead indicator for the opener.

A four cards major suit headed by either the KQ or the AJ10 are sufficient to respond even though the hand only contains **5 HCP**, when the bid can be made at that one-level.

The suit will play reasonably well if raised by the opener.

In a notrump contract, the king and queen provide reasonable stoppers. With their opening points, the opener is likely to hold either the ace or jack to compliment the responder's KQxx holding, or the king or queen to compliment the AJ10x holding. The opener will hold both of the missing honors in the responder's suit about one-sixth of the time.

If the suit splits 4 – 3 – 3 – 3, there is a chance that the suit will provide an extra trick.

When the opponents win the contract, the bid provided the opener with a good lead indicator.

Unless they also have suit with at least five cards in length, the only hands containing **6 HCP** that the responder should bid are those which contain either two kings, or an ace and a queen.

Any hand opening with **7 HCP** should contain either an ace or a king.

Any other 7 HCP holding does not contain enough stoppers to warrant a response.

At **8 HCP**, a hand containing three queens and two jacks may respond. In those cases, the opener's points will be in high honors and will likely promote the honors in the responder's hand.

3. Short Suit Points

Shortness in one suit is only helpful if it is helpful in making the contract.

Points should be only be counted for shortness in a suit if;

- a. the pair has established a suit fit of at least eight cards in length,
- b. the contract is likely to played in the suit with the long fit, and
- c. the shortness is not in the trump suit.

Points should not be counted for doubletons, singletons or voids in the trump suit.

When counting points for a short suit, any high card points relating to length should be removed from the high card point count. Counting points for both shortness and length is double-counting since any suit with at least five cards length in one suit will always contain one or more doubleton, singleton or void (i.e., a hand containing a five cards suit will contain at least one other suit which contains two or fewer cards. When counting the points for the side suit, the point originally assigned for the fifth card should be removed.).

The value of the shortness in a side suit is usually dependent on the number of rounds that the hand may trump that suit. Points assigned for shortness in a suit are suggested to not exceed the number of cards held in the suit fit.

Once a suit fit is found, each of the two hands should count;

- a. 5 points for each side suit void,
- b. 3 points for each singleton in a side suit, and
- c. 1 point for each doubleton in a side suit.

The restrictions on the short suit count are:

- a. With five or greater cards in the trump suit, voids are worth five points, singletons are worth three points and doubletons are worth one point.

- b. With four cards in the trump suit, the maximum points assigned for a void is four.

- c. With three cards support for the trump suit, the maximum points assigned for a singleton or void is three.

- d. With two cards support for the trump suit, the maximum points assigned for a singleton or void is two.

Placing short suit point restrictions based on the number of trump cards held in that hand provided a better assessment of the hand's ability to provide tricks through ruffs in the short suit.

4. Double of an Opening Bid

A double of an opening bid implies a desire to compete in the bidding. It usually* indicates shortness in the suit opened and at least three cards in each of the other suits.

- * A double followed by a bid is also used with a hand that is too strong for an overcall

The double requests their partner to bid their longest unbid suit unless they hold six or more cards in the opened suit.

The minimal requirement for a double in the direct seat is at least 10 HCP greater than the length of their holding in the opened suit. These are;

10 HCP with 0 cards in the opened suit *

11 HCP with 1 card in the opened suit **

12 HCP with 2 cards in the opened suit ***, or

13 HCP with 3 cards in the opened suit ****

* The void will count for at least 4 points once a (likely) eight or nine cards fit is found

** The singleton will count for 4 points once a (likely) eight cards fit is found, bringing the total to 14

*** The doubleton will add 1 point if an eight cards fit is found

**** This is usually a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 hand so needs 14 honor points

In the fourth seat, three fewer points are required to make a double.

5. Suit Overcalls at the One-Level

An overcall made at the one-level is usually made with a suit of at least five cards in length.

The overcall should be either, or both, a lead directing bid or a desire to compete for the contract.

If the hand was strong enough to open, it is strong enough to overcall because it is competing for the contract. It does not require any honors in the overcalled suit.

At the low end of the range (6 to 8 points not-vulnerable, or 8 to 9 points vulnerable), the suit overcall is mainly a lead directing bid and should contain either the ace or the king and queen. In the direct seat following an opening bid the king is usually a sufficient stopper because the opener has indicated that they hold a significant portion of the points that are not held by the overcaller. The opener is likely to hold the ace in the overcaller's suit.

For an overcall made with a hand containing 10 or 11 honor points, the suit bid should contain either the ace or two of the top four honors. Those hands are good for lead directing and for sacrifice bids.

The advantages of following these suggestions are that they often prevent poor leads, contracts and sacrifice bids.

Bidding: Conventions and Agreements

1. 1 Notrump Opening Responses

a. Four Way Transfers

Four way transfers is a term used where Jacoby transfers are made specific to all four suits. Using four way transfers changes both the previous 2 ♠ Jacoby transfer and the 2 NT direct response.

Using four way transfers, those two bids become;

- i. 2 ♠ - transfer to clubs, and
- ii. 2 NT - transfer to diamonds.

The two advantages of this are;

- i. a diamond contract is more likely played with the opener as the declarer, and

This often results in more tricks taken and a better score, and

- ii. it specifies which minor suit is the responder's long suit.

This enables the opener to use a minor suit superaccept bid to search for a game in either notrump or the responder's long minor suit.

The superaccept bid requires that the opener have support for the responder's suit so that they may use that suit to obtain extra tricks.

The use of the 2 NT bid changes how the responder shows an invitational hand without a four cards major. Using four way transfers, the responder goes through Stayman prior to making a 2 NT invitational bid.

When using four way Jacoby transfers, the responder does not guarantee four spades after the opener replies 2 ♥ to a Stayman ask and the responder bids 2 NT. Therefore, the delayed 2 NT bid must be alerted. The alert states that it may, or may not, contain a four card major.

b. Minor Suit Superaccept Bids

This is a convention that allows a partnership to look for game in a notrump contract after a minor suit transfer.

The opener uses the superaccept bid when they believe that a game in notrump is possible through tricks in the responder's long minor suit. It is best used when playing four way transfers since the responder's long minor suit is known.

A notrump game is possible when the opener holds either;

- i. three cards support containing one or more of the top three honors for the responders' longer minor suit, or
- ii. four cards support for the responder's long minor suit and a maximum hand for their 1 NT opening bid.

Holding either of these supporting hands, the opener may make a superaccept invitation by bidding the suit below the responder's long suit;

- i. if the responder's long suit is the club suit, as indicated by their 2 ♠ transfer bid, a 2 NT rebid by the opener is a superaccept bid for clubs, or

- ii. if the responder's long suit in diamonds, as indicated by their 2 NT transfer bid, a 3 ♣ rebid by the opener is a superaccept bid for diamonds.

The responder should accept the invitation for game with either;

- i. a six cards holding headed by either the ace, the king and queen, the ace and queen or all three top honors in their long minor suit,
- ii. a six cards holding with one of the top three honors in that suit and an entry to their hand in another suit, or
- iii. a seven cards holding with one of the top three honors in that suit.

If the responder accepts the invitation for a notrump game, they do so by bidding either;

- i. 3 NT holding a 6-3-2-2 pattern hand, or
- ii. a higher ranking suit containing either a void or singleton.

This warns the opener of a potential problem if played in a notrump contract. It also describes a potential advantage if played in the minor suit contract.

If the opener does not have a sufficient stopper in the responder's short suit, they may elect to play the contract in the responder's long suit.

With an insufficient holding in their long suit, the responder bids their suit showing that they do not have an interest in a notrump contract.

An advantage of using minor suit superaccept bids is that without it neither the opener nor the responder would know whether a 3 NT contract is likely to make.

When the opener has support for the responder's long suit, the chance of finding a game in a notrump contract is high since:

- i. if the opener holds either the ace or king of the responder's long suit, there is a 60 percent chance that the responder holds the other one of the top two honors,
- ii. if the opener holds two of the top three honors in the suit, there is a 60 percent chance that the responder holds the other top honor,
- iii. if the opener's honor is the queen, there is a 36 percent chance that the responder holds the other two top honors,
- iv. if the opener's honors in that suit are the queen and either the ten or jack, there is a 36 percent chance that the responder holds the ace and either the ten or jack, and

This will allow a finesse to set up the suit.

- v. the chance of the opponents' four cards splitting 2 – 2 is 40.7 percent and the chance of a 4 – 0 split is less than 10 percent.

If the opener holds either of the holdings listed above, they should consider bidding 3 NT even if the responder denies their invitation.

c. Smolen

Smolen is a convention used by a responder of a notrump opening bid. The responder uses it when they hold one four cards and one five cards major suit. This convention enables the pair to find a fit in either major suit. It also allows the opener, which is the stronger hand, to play the hand as the declarer.

With a 5 – 4 holding in their major suits, the responder first goes through Stayman. This will locate a possible fit for either of their major suits.

The opener may respond with a 2 ♦ bid, denying a four card major. Using Smolen, the responder then bids their shorter major suit. This announces that they hold four cards in that suit and five cards in the other major suit.

The Smolen bids after the 2 ♦ denial by the opener are either;

- i. 2 ♥ - shows five spades and four hearts, and is invitational,
- ii. 2 ♠ - shows five hearts and four spades, and is invitational,
- iii. 3 ♥ - shows five spades and four hearts, and is game forcing, or
- iv. 3 ♠ - shows five hearts and four spades, and is game forcing.

The use of the shorter major suit allows the playing of a 5 – 3 fit with the opener, the stronger hand, as the declarer. This often results in an extra trick being made and a resulting better score.

Many players dispatch with the two level invitational responses after the 2 ♦ bid. They use the two-level bids, after a Stayman ask, to show the longer major suit and less than invitational points.

Smolen may also be used with five cards in each major suit.

d. 3 ♥ Response

The 3 ♥ response to a 1 NT opening bid is used as a game forcing splinter bid. It shows a hand with 3=1=4=5 or 3=1=5=4 distribution. This provides the opener with enough information as to where to place the contract.

These bids require at least ten HCP placed in either the minor suits, the ace of hearts, the ace of spades or the king of spades.

Some of the choices for the opener are;

- i. with both majors stopped, the opener may choose to play in a 3 NT contract, or
- ii. with a five cards, or good four cards, spade suit the opener may choose to play game in spades,

The responder's singleton in hearts is also a great help if the opener chooses to play in a Moysian (4 - 3) spade fit. The responder, who has the shorter trump holding may be able to ruff one or two rounds of hearts. This is quite likely when the opener has the aces of both hearts and spades.,

- iii. Without adequate protection for the heart suit, the opener may choose to play in a minor suit, and

The responder may raise that suit to game level.

iv. With 17 HCP placed in either the minor suits, the ace of hearts, the ace of spades or the king of spades, the opener may elect to play in a minor suit game contract .

They do so by bidding either;

a) 5 ♣ with 2=3=3=5 distribution,

b) 5 ♦ with 2=3=5=3 distribution, or

c) 4 ♥ with 2=3=4=4 distribution.

This requests the responder to place the contract in their longest minor suit.

With extra points in the appropriate places, the responder may place or raise the minor suit in a slam contract at the appropriate level.

Playing the 3 ♥ response in this manner is useful to avoid playing in a notrump contract when there is inadequate protection against the opponents long heart suit. It also ensures that the contract is highly likely to be played with the stronger hand as the declarer which may result in an extra trick.

e. 3 ♠ Response

This is similar to the 3 ♥ response, except with the spade suit as the short suit. It is a game force hand with either 1=3=4=5 or 1=3=5=4 distribution.

These bids require at least ten HCP placed in either the minor suits, the ace of hearts, the king of hearts or the ace of spades.

Similar to the 3 ♥ bid, some of the choices for the opener are;

- i. with both majors stopped, the opener may choose 3 NT,
- ii. with a five cards, or good four cards, heart suit the opener may choose to play game in hearts,

The responder's singleton in spades is a great help in a Moysian (4 - 3) heart fit.

The responder, who has the shorter trump holding may be able to ruff one or two rounds of spades, if the opener has the aces of hearts and spades.

- iii. without adequate protection for the spade suit, the opener may also choose to play in a minor suit, and

The responder may raise the suit to game level.

- iv. with 17 HCP placed in either the minor suits, the ace of hearts, the ace of spades or the king of spades, the opener may elect to play in a minor suit game contract.

They do so by bidding either;

a) 5 ♣ with 3=2=3=5 distribution,

b) 5 ♦ with 3=2=5=3 distribution, or

c) 4 ♠ with 3=2=4=4 distribution.

This requests the responder to place the contract in their longest minor suit.

With extra points in the appropriate places, the responder may place or raise the minor suit in a slam contract at the appropriate level.

Again, using this meaning for the 3 ♠ response is useful to avoid playing in a notrump contract when there is inadequate protection against the opponents long spade suit. After the 3 ♠ response, the contract is highly likely to be played with the stronger hand as the declarer.

f. Texas Transfers

Texas transfers allow the opener to bid major suit games directly when the responder determines that game is likely and that they do not have an interest in a slam contract.

The Texas transfer bids are;

- i. 4 ♦ transfers to 4 ♥, and
- ii. 4 ♥ transfers to 4 ♠.

The advantages of the direct transfer are;

- i. it confirms an eight or greater cards fit with sufficient points for game but insufficient for a slam contract, and
- ii. it interferes with the opponents bidding.

If the opener's LHO either doubles or overcalls with a bid lower than 3 ♦, the Texas transfer bids are still in effect. This prevents the opener's RHO from bidding.

When the opener's LHO does not interfere, the Texas transfer bid prevents the opener's RHO from bidding.

Texas transfers may also be made over a 2 NT opening bid.

If the responder has a stronger hand with a six or greater cards suit, they should forgo using Texas transfers if they have an interest in a slam contract. The responder may show their slam interest with these hand by starting with a Jacoby transfer bid followed by either;

- i. a splinter bid, or

This is a jump bid used to show either a singleton or void in the jumped suit.

These jump bids are either;

a) *after a heart transfer, either 3 ♠, 4 ♣ or 4 ♦ (i.e.: 1 NT, 2 ♦ (transfer), 2 ♥, 4 ♦, or*

b) *after a spade transfer, a four-level bid in either clubs, diamond or hearts (i.e.: 1 NT, 2 ♥ (transfer), 2 ♠, 4 ♦).*

Following the splinter bid, the opener may either:

a) *bid four of the agreed major suit denying slam interest,*

b) *cuebid a suit showing interest in a slam contract, or*

c) *ask for keycards through a 4 NT bid.*

- ii. a game bid in the transferred suit (i.e.: 1 NT, 2 ♦ (transfer), 2 ♥, 4 ♥).

With only two cards in the transferred suit and/or a minimum hand, the opener may pass after this bidding sequence.

With a stronger hand and three or more card support the opener may show slam interest by either cuebidding or through a 4 NT keycard ask.

g. Lebensohl

Lebensohl is a convention used over an opponent's overcall of a 1 NT opening bid. The Lebensohl convention is also used after a reverse by the opener or after a double of a preemptive opening bid.

The core part of the convention is that it uses the 2 NT bid to relay, or puppet, to 3 ♣ after which the responder either;

- i. passes if they have a six or greater cards club suit and a weak hand,
- ii. corrects to a suit lower than the overcalled suit to show a five card or more cards in the suit a weak hand,
- iii. corrects to a suit above the overcalled suit to show an invitational hand with a five or more cards in the suit,
- iv. bids the overcalled suit, or

This bid shows four cards in the other major suit and a stopper in the overcalled suit.

The bid is forcing to game.

- v. bids 3 NT, which shows fewer than four cards in the unbid major suit and a stopper in the overcalled suit.

The other parts of the Lebensohl convention are;

- i. a double is for penalties,

It shows invitational values.

This allows the opener the option of bidding game if they have a maximum hand for their notrump opening.

ii. an overcall at the two level is to play,

The overcall shows a five cards or longer suit with no interest in a game contract.

iii. a cue bid of the overcalled suit shows a game forcing hand with four cards in the unbid major,

The cue bid denies a stopper in the overcaller's suit.

iv. a direct bid of 3 NT over the overcall shows sufficient points for game,

The direct 3 NT bid denies four cards in the other major suit and denies a stopper in the overcaller's suit.

iv. a 4 ♦ bid is a Texas transfer to hearts, and

The 4 ♦ bid It shows a six cards or longer heart suit with game values but no desire to search for a slam contract.

v. a 4 ♥ bid is a Texas transfer to spades.

The 4 ♥ bid shows a six cards or longer spade suit with game values but no desire to search for a slam contract.

To remember the bidding sequences, a player should remember that a fast arrival in 3 NT denies a stopper. A slow arrival to 3 NT

or to the cuebid showing four cards in the other major shows a stopper in the opponent's suit.

The advantages of the Lebensohl convention are;

- i. it distinguishes between game force, invitational and weaker hand responses,
- ii. it distinguishes game point hands between those that contain a stopper in the overcalled suit and those that do not contain stoppers, and
- iii. the cuebid of the overcalled suit being used to show four cards in the other major suit allows a distinction between a game force hand with a four cards and with a five cards major suit holding.

2. Other Notrump Opening and Responses

a. Gambling 3 Notrump

Gambling 3 Notrump is a convention used with a solid, very long minor suit that does not have an ace in a side suit and has very few, if any, honors, in the side suits.

Defensively, these hands are poor. To score two tricks on defense usually requires that the declarer and dummy both hold at least two cards each in that long minor suit. With only six or less cards outstanding in that suit, either the declarer or dummy likely holds either a void or singleton in that suit.

Offensively, it is a good hand. The seven cards suit headed by the ace, king and queen can usually take seven tricks if the contract is played in that suit. They also have the potential of taking seven tricks in a notrump contest.

Playing the Gambling 3 Notrump convention, these hands are opened with a 3 NT bid rather than a preemptive bid of the minor suit.

The advantages of using this convention are;

- i. the 3 NT bid is as preemptive as opening with a minor suit at the four level,

This makes it risky and difficult for the opponents to find a fit. If the opponents bid, they will be forced to do so at the four-level.

- ii. It fully describes the hand,

Their partner can make a reasoned decision on the likely best contract to play in and the number of tricks that it will

likely make. The convention also distinguishes the hand from other preemptive minor suit openings.

When using the Gambling 3 Notrump convention, their partner can also better determine what the holding is when they open with a 4 ♣ or a 4 ♦ bid.

iii. it preserves the option of playing in a game contract at the three-level,

Should their partner have stoppers in three suits and at least one card in the other, 3 NT is a viable option.

iv. it retains the option to play the contract in the long minor suit,

Should their partner not have stoppers in the three other suits, this is a good option.

v. it provides mechanisms to find and play in game or slam contracts in the opener's long suit, and

vi. It retains the option to play a game contract in a major suit.

This is helpful when the responder has a long suit of their own, entries to the responder's long suit and shortness in one or both of the other suits.

A Gambling 3 Notrump bid requires that the long suit must be at least seven cards long headed by the ace, king and queen. The bidder must not hold an ace in an outside suit.

The responses to the Gambling 3 Notrump opening are;

- i. pass - stoppers in three suits,
- ii. 4 ♣, 5 ♣, 6 ♣ or 7 ♣ – asks the opener to pass if their suit is clubs, or correct to diamonds,
- iii. 4 ♦ – slam try, asks the opener to bid their short suit,

These bids are either;

- a) 4 ♥ showing a singleton or void in hearts,
 - b) 4 ♠ showing a singleton or void in spades,
 - c) 4 NT showing no singleton or void (7-2-2-2 shape), or
 - d) their long suit at the five-level showing a singleton or void in the other minor.
- iv. 4 ♥/♠ - to play, and
 - v. 4 NT – the responder has four likely tricks and asks the opener to bid slam if they have an eight cards suit.

If the responder replies with a four-level bid of a major suit, it is to play. It requests that the opener pass the responder's bid.

If using the Gambling 3 Notrump the previous balanced 25 to 27 HCP point hand must be bid in a different way. To show those hands the opener first uses a 2 ♣ opening bid followed by the 3 NT bid.

b. Puppet Stayman

Puppet Stayman is a convention used to find a major suit fit when the responder has either three or four cards in one or more of the major suits. It is best used after a 2 NT opening bid.

Puppet Stayman allows all major suit contracts to be played with the opener as the declarer when they hold either four or five cards in either or both major suits. This often produces an extra trick.

The opener's answers to the 3 ♣ Puppet Stayman asks are;

- i. 3 ♦ – the opener shows a holding of one or both four cards majors,

After the 3 ♦ bid the responder can reply;

a) 3 NT – denying a four cards major,

b) 3 ♥ or 3 ♠ – showing four cards in the other major suit, or

This allows the opener (the stronger hand) to either bid 3 NT without an eight cards major suit fit or the major suit at the four-level with an eight cards fit.

This places the contract with the stronger hand as the declarer.

c) 4 ♦ - showing four cards in both the major suits.

This asks the opener to bid their four cards major suit.

This also places the contract with the stronger hand as the declarer.

- ii. 3 ♥ or 3 ♠ - the opener shows five cards in that major suit, or

iii. 3 NT – the opener denies holding either a four or five cards major suit.

3. Major Suit Opening Responses

a. Constructive Raises

If the responder has not previously passed, a constructive raise may be used as a response to a major suit opening.

Using constructive raises, a single level raise is used to show an eight to ten point hand with three cards support. With other hands which contain three cards support, the responder first goes through the 1 NT forcing bid prior to showing support. This may be either a single raise with 6 or 7 points, or a jump invitational raise with 11 or 12 points.

The main advantage of this is that it reduces the need and use of a help suit game try. This reduces the risk of playing the contract at the three-level, when the two-level is more likely to make.

A second advantage is that when the help suit game try response is used the game requirement is narrowed. It asks the responder to raise to game with nine or ten points, rather than with the wider eight to ten point range. This results in a more precise game bidding decisions.

b. Bergen Raises

Bergen raises are used to show four cards support a major suit opening bid. Bergen raises are based on enabling the opener to compete at the three-level with a nine cards fit.

These raises accommodate and distinguish between a preemptive (less than 7 HCP), competitive (7 to 10 HCP) and invitational (11 or 12 HCP) hand with four cards support.

Responses, with four cards support for the major suit opened are;

- i. 3 ♣ – 7 to 10 points,
- ii. 3 ♦ – 11 or 12 points, or
- iii. the suit opened at the three-level – fewer than seven points (at least three points when vulnerable).

The advantages of using Bergen raises are;

- i. they differentiate hands with three card support from those with four,

This provides the opener with additional information which is often helpful in either bidding decisions or on defence.

- ii. they interfere with the opponents' bidding,

After a Bergen raise, the opponents would need to bid at the three level. This makes it difficult or risky for the opponents to enter the bidding or to provide lead directing information.

Entering at the three level is often risky. The responder's 3 ♣ bid indicates that the opener's side has nearly half or more of the HCP. The 3 ♦ bid shows that the opener's side holds the balance of points. Either of these bids indicate that a three level bid is likely to be set and more likely to be doubled.

- iii. having a nine cards fit is an important factor in determining the likelihood of a game or slam contract making, and

These can usually be made on slightly less points with a nine card fit than with an eight cards one.

- iv. provide more room for control bidding.

To accommodate Bergen raises, invitational (11 or 12 point) raises with three cards support use the 1 NT forcing bid followed by a three-level bid of the major suit (i.e.: 1 ♥, 1 NT, 2 ♣, 3 ♥).

c. Splinters Bids by the Responder

These are another way of showing four card support for the opener's suit. Splinter bids use a double jump raise, such as 1 ♥ – 4 ♦, to show a hand with;

- i. four card support for the opener's suit,
- ii. a singleton or void in the suit bid, and
- iii. opening points – 13 or more high card points.

It's main purpose is to invite a slam contract.

If the opener still has opening points after subtracting their points in the splintered suit (the responder's short suit), they should look for a slam because;

- i. the opponents trumps will usually fall in two or three rounds, with two rounds being slightly more likely, and

This will leave one or two trumps in dummy to trump their short suit, if needed.

- ii. Outside of the splintered suit, there are only thirty HCP remaining.

Any extra points, long suits, the splintered suit being a void, or the opponents points being low cards, will make a slam likely to achieve.

Looking for a slam, if space is available, the opener should start with bidding first and second round controls. After this, they should ask for keycards. If the responder holds a void in their short suit, they will respond to the keycard ask with either:

- i. 5 NT showing a void and two or four keycards,
- ii. a six-level suit showing a void and the king of that suit will no kings in lower ranking suits, or
- iii. the agreed suit at the six-level with a void, one or three keycards and no kings in the suits lower ranking than the opener's suit.

If making the slam relies on the king being on the right side, it is better not to take the risk in a Matchpoints game. It is risky but usually worth the risk of bidding slam if not-vulnerable in an IMPs game. It is worth the risk in an IMPs game when vulnerable.

d. Two-Way Reverse Drury

When a major suit is opened in the third seat, two-way reverse Drury is used to differentiate the responses with invitational hands which contain three cards support to those which contain four.

Third seat opening bids may be a bit weaker than those made in the other seat positions. When the opening is a one-level bid of a major suit, this may create the following problems;

- i. if the partner has an invitational hand, the combined strength may not be sufficient to make a contract at the three-level, and
- ii. a 1 NT response is no longer forcing.

With a weak hand, the opener will usually pass a 1 NT response. Therefore, the 1 NT response should not be used when the responder has three or more cards support for the opener's suit.

To solve these problems;

- i. constructive raises should not be used,

A single level raise is used for all three or four cards support hands with 6 to 10 points.

- ii. Bergen raises should not be used, and

The invitational support hands are replaced by either Drury or two-way reverse Drury.

- iii. playing two-way reverse Drury.

Using this convention, a 2 ♣ response which is used to show an invitational hand with three cards support and a 2 ♦ response if used to show an invitational hand with four cards support.

The main advantage of this differentiation is that, the opener knows whether there is a nine cards fit. This is an important factor when the opener has a strong hand and may be considering whether to explore a slam contract.

Another advantage is that the opener can bid game with slightly fewer points with a nine cards fit than they can with only an eight cards fit.

A third advantage is that when both players hold at least four cards in the trump suit there is a potential for an extra trick through either cross-ruffing or a strip and endplay techniques.

When using this convention, a rebid of a new suit by the opener is a cuebid of the suit which shows interest in either a game or slam contract. It asks the responder to continue cue bidding until the opener signs off.

4. Special Doubles

a. Maximal Doubles

Maximum doubles are used during a competitive auction to show an invitation to game. This allows a rebid of the suit to be used as a competitive bid.

In a competitive auction when the opponents bid the suit directly below the other side's suit at the three-level (i.e.: 1 ♥, 2 ♦, 2 ♥, 3 ♦, a double shows extra strength. A simple rebid of the suit is only to compete.

The double is alertable, meaning that the doubler's partner must alert the opponents. If asked, that person must explain what it means.

The advantage of the maximum double is that it allows a player to both invite game with a double and to use a suit raise as competing in the bidding without inviting game.

A more complete disclosure of how to use the maximal double, and how to bid when the opponent's suit is not directly below your suit, is described in the Bidding: Other section or this part.

b. Re-Opening Doubles

It is usually better to not allow the opponents to play in a contract at the one-level and often the two-level. The re-opening double provides a solution for a player in the third seat after their opponents' last bid. It is used when they are unable to make an overcall or re-bid a suit.

After two consecutive passes, the re-opening double is used when the doubler has previously opened and was overcalled by their

LHO. Often, the doubler has extra points and wants to either sacrifice or force the opponents to a higher level, where they may be set. It is also used after two passes after the opening bid.

The requirements for a re-opening double are that the doubler;

- i. does not have a suit to overcall or rebid.

If the doubler opened with a five cards suit and have a lower ranking four cards suit, they could bid the lower ranking suit next.

- ii. has two or fewer cards in the opponent's suit,

- iii. has at least three cards in each of the other suits, and

- iv. believes that they can score better if they play the contract in a different suit.

The advantages of the re-opening double are:

- i. it allows the doubler's partner, the advancer, to make a sacrifice bid, which may make,

Making or not, it will likely score better than the opponent playing their contract at a low level.

- ii. it often results in the opponents playing the contract at a higher level, and

If the higher level contract makes, it will score the same. However, it is more likely to be set than their previous bid was.

- iii. it allows the doubler's partner to pass for penalty.

This often occurs when the advancer had sufficient points to open, or overcall, but their long suit was the same suit which their opponent opened. This is referred to as a “trap pass”.

5. Notrump Overcalls

a. Sandwich Notrump

This is used by a passed hand. It is a competitive bid which, after the opponents have bid two suits at the one level, a 1 NT overcall shows at least five cards in both of the two unbid suits and less than opening points.

With only one five cards suit, it would be bid as an overcall if the suit ranked higher than the responder's suit. (i.e.: after a 1 ♣, p, 1 ♠ sequence the defender could overcall with a major suit. But, after a 1 ♣, p, 1 ♠ sequence the defender may have insufficient strength in their hand and/or their suit to overcall at the two-level).

This distinguishing it from a double which shows at least four cards in each unbid suit.

The advantage of this bid is that it often finds a contract that either;

- i. makes, or.

They are likely to find a fit in one of the two suits. Tricks may be obtained in the second long suit through trumping in the shorter trump hand. They can often set up one or more winners with the extra length in that suit.

- ii. Is a good sacrifice.

Both of these provide good scores.

6. Defensive Bids

a. Modified DONT

Some players upgrade the DONT convention by using a 2 NT bid to show both minor suits. The advantages of this are;

- i. the 2 NT overcall prevents the responder from using either Stayman or Jacoby transfers, and

The 2 ♣ overcall does not.

When the overcaller has length in both minor suits, the responder is more likely to hold length in one or both of the major suits. The 2 NT bid interferes with the responder's use of both Stayman and Jacoby transfer bids.

- ii. The 2 NT bid can also be used to show a strong hand with both majors by bidding 3 ♥ after the advancer bids their longest minor suit.

That bid is invitational to game.

If using this treatment, the advancer must announce the 2 NT bid as showing either both minor suits or a strong hand with both major suits.

With this change, the 2 ♣ bid shows clubs and a major suit. When both of their major suits are as long, or longer, than their club holding, the advancer responds with a 2 ♥ bid to show a preference to play in the overcaller's major suit.

b. Modified Cappelletti

This is a modification of the Cappelletti, also referred to as Hamilton or Pottage, convention.

The Cappelletti or Modified Cappelletti convention is best used over the opponents weak (13 to 15 HCP or weaker) 1 NT opening bid, where a penalty double is needed.

The overcalls directly after the opponents' weak 1 NT opening bid are;

- i. Double is penalty oriented,

It is used to show a balanced hand with more points than the opponents' 1 No trump range.

Systems are on after the double. This means that the advancer may use Stayman and Jacoby transfer bids in the same way as if the double had been a 1 NT opening bid

- ii. 2 ♣ – is a relay, or puppet, to 2 ♦,

After the 2 ♦ relay, if the opener passes, the overcaller may either:

- a) pass with a long diamond suit,
 - b) bid a major suit showing five cards in that major and four or more cards in a minor suit, or
 - c) bid 3 ♣ to show a long club suit that has more strength than one which would have been overcalled with a 3 ♣ bid.
- iii. 2 ♦ – shows length, usually five cards, in both majors,
 - iv. 2 ♥ or 2 ♠ – shows six card or more cards in the suit bid,

- v. 2 NT – shows a weak hand with at least five cards in each minor suit,
- vi. 3 ♣ – weaker six cards or longer club suit, or
- vii. A three-level bid showing a weak seven cards suit.

c. **Mathe**

Mathe is a convention used against the opener's strong 1 ♣ opening bid.

A defense against the strong 1 ♣ opening bids often allows the opener's opponents to either;

- i. disrupt the bidding,

This is useful in preventing the opener and the responder from finding their best fit and contract level.

- ii. provide the advancer with information on the overcaller's suit distribution and likely location of honors, or

This information will help in the interference bidding and when defending.

- iii. steal the contract.

The bids directly after the opponents' strong 1 ♣ opening are either;

- i. a double to show both major suits,

These are usually 5 - 5 vulnerable, but may be 5 - 4 not vulnerable.

ii. 1 NT – both minor suits, 5 - 5 or better, or

iii. a suit bid to show a six cards suit.

The strong 1 ♣ opening bid is often a hand that would have been opened with a 1 NT bid by those using either Standard American or Two-Over-One Game Force.

Mathe allows for contracts to be played at a lower level than those used over a 1 NT opening bid. Therefore, it is less risky than bidding over 1 NT opening bids.

How to play **Expert Bridge** *discloses a more complex convention which enables lower level bids to show all six double suit combinations and all four long suits.*

7. Slam Bidding

a. Minorwood

This convention is also called 1430 Gerber or RKC Gerber, depending on which keycard ask the partnership plays.

Minorwood is used to investigate a possible slam contract in a minor suit. Once a minor suit fit has been found, a four-level bid of a minor suit is used as a keycard asking bid.

Unlike using the 4 NT bid, Minorwood allows the pair to sign off in the five-level of a minor suit should slam not be feasible.

The usual method is to use the same keycard sequence as used in the 4 NT keycard asks, whether Blackwood, 1430 or RKC. This changes the Gerber ask from aces to keycards. It also makes it easier to remember the sequence responses.

Response Level	Minorwood 4 ♣ Ask	Minorwood 4 ♦ Ask	Blackwood 4 NT Ask
first	4 ♦	4 ♥	5 ♣
second	4 ♥	4 ♠	5 ♦
third	4 ♠	4 NT	5 ♥
fourth	4 NT	5 ♣	5 ♠

While some players use a four-level bid of the agreed suit for the keycard ask, it is better to use the other minor suit for it (i.e.: 4 ♦ as a keycard ask if clubs are the agreed suit and 4 ♣ as the keycard ask if diamonds are the agreed suit). The advantages of this are that it;

- i. makes it easier to sign off in the agreed minor suit, and
- ii. allows the four-level bid of the agreed minor suit to be a game invitational bid.

b. DOPI

DOPI (Double 0, Pass 1) is a convention used when the direct seat overcalls a keycard ask bid.

If the opponents overcall a player's keycard ask;

- i. a double shows zero or three keycards,
- ii. a pass shows one or four keycards,
- iii. the next available bid above the overcalled suit bid shows two keycards without the queen, and
- iv. two steps above the overcall shows two keycards with the queen.

These are the same steps as the RKC keycard asks. This makes it easier to remember.

The advantage of this convention is that it minimizes the space required to show the number of keycards. This is important since

the overcall took some of the bidding space which normally would have been available.

c. ROPI

ROPI (Redouble 0, Pass 1) is a convention used when the direct seat doubles a keycard ask bid.

It works the same as DOPI when opponents double. The ROPI bids are;

- i. a redouble shows zero or three keycards.,
- ii. a pass shows one or four keycards.,
- iii. the next suit the queen., and
- iv. two steps above shows two keycards with the queen.

8. Other Conventions

a. Anti-Michaels

Anti-Michaels is used by the responder to counter an opponent's Michaels Cuebid overcall.

This counter defence is used in the two different uses of the Michaels Cuebid:

i. Against both majors (i.e.: 1 ♣, 2 ♣ or 1 ♦, 2 ♦ (showing both major suits)):

a) 2 ♥ - invitational hand with clubs,

These are either:

1) if the opening bid was 1 ♣ - invitational (11 – 12 point) raise with four or more card support for clubs, or

2) if the opening bid was 1 ♦ – ten or more HCP with five or more clubs,

b) 2 ♠ - invitational hand with diamonds,

These are either:

1) if the opening bid was 1 ♣ – ten or more HCP with five or more diamonds, or

2) if the opening bid was 1 ♦ – invitational (11 – 12 point) raise with four or more card support for the diamond suit.

c) 2 NT - natural and invitational to 3 NT,

This shows stoppers in the major suits.

d) the opener's suit at the three-level - competitive, 6 to 9 HCP and four or greater cards support for the opener's suit, or

e) double – 10 or more HCP and stoppers in one of the major suits.

Once the double is made and their RHO bids a suit, the opener either doubles for penalties or passes and leaves the decision to the responder.

ii. Against a Major/Minor showing (i.e.: 2♥, 2♥ - showing spades and a minor suit):

a) a raise of the opener's suit shows 6 to 9 points and at least three cards support for the opener's suit,

b) a bid of the opponent's major suit is a cue bid invitational raise,

It shows an invitational or better (11 or more HCP) hand with three or more card support for the opener's suit.

c) double - at least one of the opponent's suits stopped,

The double asks the opener to double the advancer's bid if they have stoppers in that suit.

If not, the opener should pass and leave the bidding decision to the responder.

- d) the opener's suit at the four-level - five cards support, less than 11 HCP,
- e) a minor suit at the three-level - natural, forcing,
- f) 3 NT - to play, or
- g) a suit at the four-level - splinter bid, slam try.

This shows a singleton or void in the suit bid, four cards support for the opener's suit and thirteen or more HCP.

b. Unusual Over Unusual Notrump

This is a defense used by the responder against the opponents Unusual 2 NT overcall. Using this the responder's bids are either;

- i. double - interest in penalizing with stoppers in one of the overcaller's suits,
- ii. 3 ♣ - game forcing in the unbid major suit,
- iii. 3 ♦ - game forcing in the opener's major suit, or
- iv. the opener's suit at the three-level - constructive (7 to 10 point) raise with three or more cards support.

With an invitational hand, the responder originally passes. If the opener does not double the advancer's bid for penalties, the

responder shows their invitational hand by bidding the opener's suit at the three-level. This allows for the distinction between an invitational and a game force hand.

c. Lebensohl After a Reverse

Lebensohl may be used by a weak responder after their partner bypasses their first bid suit with their second bid (i.e.: 1 ♣, p, 1 ♠, p, 2 ♥). This sequence by the opener is known as a reverse, or reverse bid. The reverse bid sequence shows a 17 or more point two suited hand with more length in their first bid suit than their second bid one.

After the opener makes a reverse bid the responder may show a weak hand using Lebensohl. Their 2 NT bid relays to a 3 ♣ bid by the opener. The responder then either;

- i. passes with a six cards or longer club suit, or
- ii. places the contract.

9. Alternative Conventions

A player should know other conventions in case a partner or potential partner prefers to play them. Knowing them also provides the player with a better understanding of the opponents' possible bids.

a. Ogust

This is an optional game try response to a weak 2 ♥ or 2 ♠ opening bid.

With interest in playing the suit at game level, the responder may use an Ogust 2 Notrump inquiry bid. When used, it replaces the 2 Notrump feature ask.

The opener's responses to the responder's query are either;

- i. 3 ♣ – showing a hand with a weak trump suit and at the bottom of their point range,
- ii. 3 ♦ – showing a good trump suit but at the bottom of their point range,
- iii. 3 ♥ – showing a hand at the top of their point range but a weak holding in the trump suit,
- iv. 3 ♠ – showing a good suit at the top of their point range, or
- v. 3 NT – showing AKQxxx in the opening suit.

If playing that a two-level opener promises AQxxxx, KJ10xxx, AKxxxx or a poorer seven cards suit, then the weak suit would likely be the seven cards suit.

b. Bidding “Up-the-Line”

Bidding “up-the-line” or “up the ladder” is a method where a 1 ♦ response to a 1 ♣ opening bid promises four or more diamonds but does not deny four cards in either, or both, major suits.

This enables the opener to bid their four cards major suit next, if they have one. If there is a fit in that suit, it places the opening hand, which is usually the stronger hand, as the declarer.

This method has an advantage in that it usually places the stronger suit, usually the opener, as the declarer.

It also prevents the responder’s RHO from showing a four cards major suit holding. That opponent may double with four cards in both of the major suits. They may overcall with a five cards major suit. However, with only one four cards major suit, they would not have a bid to show it.

The disadvantage of using this method occurs when the 1 ♦ bid is overcalled. If that happens, the partnership may have difficulty finding a 4 – 4 major suit fit.

The advantages of bidding “up-the-line” greatly outweigh any disadvantages. Therefore, it is a suggested upgrade that a player should use.

Bidding: Other

1. Losing Trick Count

Losing Trick Count is used to determine the likely number of tricks in a contract. After a suit fit is found, Losing Trick Count indicates the level that the contract will likely make. This is helpful in determining whether to bid game or explore for a slam contract. It may also help in competitive bidding situations.

Calculating the likely level is a three step process:

a. Step One – Determine a Player’s Losers

Count the number of losers in the player’s four suits. The number of losers in each suit is:

- i. Zero losers – a void, A, AK, or AKQ,
- ii. One loser – a singleton, Ax, Kx, KQ, KQx, AKx, or AQx,
- iii. Two losers – a doubleton, Axx, Kxx, or Qxx, or
- iv. Three losers – xxx.

b. Step Two – Estimate Partner’s Losers

Use the following assumptions to estimate their partner’s losers;

- i. A one level opening suit bid in first or second seat is assumed to be a seven loser, or less, hand,

- ii. A one level opening bid suit in third seat should be a seven loser hand, but may be an eight loser hand,
- iii. A 1 Notrump opening bid is usually a seven loser hand, but could be a six loser hand,
- iv. A minimal response to an opening bid is usually a nine loser hand, and
- v. A game invitational response to an opening bid is usually an eight loser hand.

c. Step Three – Determine the Level of Play

A player then adds the number of their own losers to those estimated for their partner's hand. Then they subtract that number from 24. This tells the likely number of tricks that their partnership should obtain in the contract. (*Rule of 24*).

If the resulting number is;

- i. nine, 3 Notrump is likely to make,
- ii. ten – A major suit game is likely to make,
- iii. eleven – Game is likely to make in a minor suit contract,
- iv. twelve – A small slam is likely to make, or
- v. thirteen – a grand slam is likely to make.

Once the player knows the likely level, they should confirm it through cue bidding or through keycard asks.

Most experienced players switch from point count to Losing Trick Count once they have found a fit. At a minimum, it is a good second opinion to use before determining the appropriate level.

2. Matchpoints vs. IMPs Games

Many players bid the same whether playing in a Matchpoints game or in an International Matchpoints (IMPs) game.

Most players would likely improve their results if they read the comments below.

The main differences are:

a. Overtricks Play a Different Role

- i. Safety plays are more important than overtricks in IMPs games.
- ii. In Matchpoints, if game is likely to make, overtricks are important.

b. Different Breakeven Points in Close Decisions

- i. In IMPs games, the breakeven is making around 40 percent of the vulnerable games, and 45 percent of the non-vulnerable games bid.
- ii. Breakeven in Matchpoints is making 50 percent of games bid.

c. Bidding Game After a 1 Notrump Opening Bid

- i. In IMPs, game invitations should be with 8 HCP and games bid with 9.
- ii. In Matchpoints, game invitations should be with 9 HCP and games bid with 10.

If the responder invites game, the opener is likely to bid game with either 16 or 17 HCP. They are more likely to have 16 HCP than 17.

Inviting with 8 HCP will result in most games being played with a combined 24 HCP if the opener has only 16 HCP. Therefore, the 8 HCP game invitations should be eliminated when playing in Matchpoints games. In IMPs games, the opener should only accept the 8 HCP invitation when holding 17 HCP, or 16 HCP with a five card suit.

d. 27 to 31 HCP Contracts

Partnership holdings of 27 to 31 HCP usually take the same number of tricks in a notrump contract as they take in a suit contract. With 27 or 28 points, they usually take ten tricks. With 29 to 31, they usually take eleven tricks.

- i. In IMPs games, the safer route of playing in a four-level suit contract is the clear choice since;
 - a) the extra ten points for a notrump contract will usually not affect the number of IMPs assigned,
 - b) making no extra tricks, a notrump contract will score at most one IMPs less, and usually the same as making a four-level major suit contract, and
 - c) the risk of being set in a notrump contest, however, stands to lose 10 IMPs if not vulnerable and 12 if vulnerable.

A small, or even slight, chance of this occurring outweighs the advantages, or lack thereof, of playing in a notrump contract.

ii. In a Matchpoint game the extra ten points is material.

The extra ten points will improve the players ranking and assigned percentage of the hand. Playing in a notrump contract instead of a major suit contract is usually the better choice.

3. Competitive Bidding

- a. The five-level belongs to the opponents.

If the opponents bid to the five-level, it is often a sacrifice. Whether a sacrifice, or not, overbidding the opponents at the five-level usually produces poor results.

- b. On freak hands, or a double fit, bid one more. On these hands, it is usually preferable to bid at the five-level if necessary. Some use the maxim “with six and four, bid one more” or “five and five, come alive” to remember this.

- c. When in doubt, bid 4 ♠ over their 4 ♥ bid.

If unsure if the opponents can make their contract, a 4 ♠ bid will often make. It may go down when their 4 ♥ contract would make.

Sometimes, the opponents are also unsure if 4 ♠ makes and either don't double, or bid 5 ♥, which has a greater likelihood of being set.

- d. Holding four trumps in the opponents suit, a player should consider doubling.

Having a long suit in the defense's partnership holding can often force the declarer to trump and lose trump control. The declarer will usually have difficulty making their contract when one of their opponents also has a four card trump holding that includes the ace.

e. The number of tricks that the combined partnerships can take is often the same their combined trump length of the partnerships.
(Law of Total Tricks)

Using this “law”:

- i. with both sides having an eight card fit, a player should not outbid the opponents if they have to bid at the three-level,
- ii. with a combined 18 trumps (both having a nine card fit) a player should outbid the opponents if they have to bid at the three-level,
- iii. with a combined 17 trumps (having an eight card fit and the opponents having a nine card fit) it is usually better to outbid the opponents at the three-level if not vulnerable, and
- iv. if necessary, a player should bid to the level equal to the number of trumps held.

Examples are;

a) with an eight cards trump fit, a player should bid to the two- level,

b) with a nine cards trump fit, a player should bid to the three-level, and

c) with a ten cards trump fit, a player should bid to the four- level.

f. The partnership may bid at a higher level when they have fits in two suits.

g. The points revealed by the opponents will likely indicate the level to safely bid. This is especially important when being vulnerable and wanting to avoid a minus 200 or minus 500 score.

h. A save against a part-score should not be attempted if:

i. vulnerable, unless a player is reasonably certain of making the contract, or

ii. the player has a balanced hand.

4. Nine Card Suit Fits

Many of the new conventions in this part are based on showing nine cards fits.

This is important since;

- a. nine card fits are recommended for suit slam contracts,
- b. in game contracts, both the declarer's and dummy's hands usually still hold trump cards after the opponents trumps have been removed, and

This often provides more tricks by allowing the short trump side to trump third or often fourth rounds of a side suit.

Nine card fits are also helpful for using an elimination and endplay. Those provide either a ruff and sluff or protection of a side suit.

- c. They enable the partnership to bid at the three-level which will either:
 - i. make the contract,
 - ii. make a successful sacrifice, or
 - iii. force the opponents to bid at a higher level making it easier to set their contract.

Because of the strength of nine cards fits, a player should be alert when they arise.

There is often a convention to use once a 5 – 4 fit is found.

5. Bidding Against a Strong Club Opening

Most players have a convention for bidding over the opponents' 1 NT opening bids, but few do against strong club opening bids.

The strong 1 ♣ opening arises more often when a greater proportion of the field is playing a strong 1 ♣ system such as Precision or Polish Club.

The strong 1 ♣ opening bid is often the same sixteen or seventeen point hand that would be opened with a strong 1 NT by players Standard American or 2/1 Game Force.*

With these hands, the auction starts at 1 ♣ rather than 1 NT. This provides an overcaller with less risk than they would have had overcalling the 1 NT opening bid. Overcalling may be done one level lower. For this reason players should have a system for bidding over the strong 1 ♣ opening bid.

Most of these hands opened with a strong club bid are unbalanced. In those case, their opponents also often hold unbalanced hands. Unbalanced hands will usually take more tricks than balanced ones. This increases the advantage of bidding over the opponents' strong club opening bid.

Aside from the probability of making, or obtaining a good score with a sacrifice bid, bidding against the opponents' strong club opening bid also interferes with their bidding and ability to find the appropriate contract.

A good, simple system to start is Mathe, described in the Bidding: Conventions and Understandings in this part. It uses the double to show the two major suits and a 1 NT bid to show both minor suits. A suit overcall is also used with a good five card suit or any six cards suit.

* 58 percent of the hands with over sixteen high card points are in the 16 to 17 HCP range. 47.6 percent of hands have either a 4 – 4 – 3 – 2, a 4 – 3 – 3 – 3 or a 5 – 3 – 3 – 2 distribution pattern.

6. Splinter Bids by the Opener

Splinter bids by the opener are made after the responder bids a major suit at the one-level. They may also be made when the responder makes a two level response to an opening bid.

The splinter bid is a double jump shift in an unbid suit and shows:

- a. four card support for the responder's suit,
- b. a singleton or void in the new suit bid, and
- c. at least eighteen HCP.

The splinter bid is forcing to game in the major suit and invites the responder to search for slam should they have a more than minimum hand and their points are outside of the splintered suit.

Splinter bids by the opener are either;

- a. after a 1 ♥ response to a minor suit opening bid, a bid of either 3 ♠ or the other minor suit at the four-level is a splinter bid,
- b. after a 1 ♠ response to a minor suit opening, a bid of either hearts or the other minor suit at the four-level is a splinter bid, or
- c. after a 2 ♥ response to a 1 ♠ opening, a four-level bid of a minor suit is a splinter bid.

7. Responding to Splinter Bids

As the splinter bid has already shown sufficient points for game, there is a possibility that a slam contract may make. A player's hand is worth more when their points lie outside their partner's short suit.

The chance of their partner holding a singleton in that suit is six times as likely as a void. The ace in the short suit is, therefore, usually valuable. The other honors in that suit are seldom of value.

There are 30 points in the three other suits. Instead of needing 33 points for a small slam and 37 for a grand slam, the other six points (king, queen and jack) in the short suit should be subtracted. Then, there are only 27 relative points required to seek a small slam and 31 to seek a grand slam.

Once a splinter bid is made, their partner should reevaluate their hand. If, after subtracting the points attributed to the king, queen and jack in the splintered short suit;

- a. the hand still retains sufficient points for their opening or response, they should pursue a slam, or

They may start with making a cuebid in the first available suit in which they have either the ace or king. This shows an interest in a slam contact.

- b. their hand no longer contains the points indicated by their prior bid, they should sign off in game in the agreed suit.

Before embarking on a slam contract a player should consider that;

- a. to trump the splintered suit, the player will require at least two entries to the opposite hand,

These will need to be outside the trump suit in order to preserve trumps.

- b. making a slam contract will likely require good declarer play skills,
- c. the chance of both opponents holding two cards in the trump suit is only 40.7 percent, the chance of a 3-1 split is 49.7 percent and the chance of a 4 – 0 trump split is 9.6 percent.,
- d. if the opener made the splinter bid, the responder should consider forgoing a slam contract if they hold only four cards in the trump suit and they are playing in a Matchpoints game, and

There is a good chance that making the contract requires a 3 – 2 split in both the trump suit and a second suit. The chance of both suits splitting 3 – 2 is only 46 percent $((.678 \times .678) \times 100 \text{ percent})$.

- e. with all of the above factors, the risk of being set in a slam is significant.

This risk is better justified for an IMPs game where a lesser chance of success is needed.

8. Rebids after Splinter Responses to 1 Notrump

The splinter responses to a 1 NT opening bid use a three-level major suit response to show;

- a. a singleton or void in the bid suit,
- b. three cards in the other major suit,

This allows that suit to be played with the declarer as the opener if they have a five card holding in that suit.

- c. at least four cards in both minor suits, and

This enables a possible minor suit game or slam contract.

- d. ten or more HCP.

These splinter responses to a 1 NT opening bid are either:

- a. 3 ♥ – shows 10 HCP, three spades, a singleton or void in hearts and at least four cards in each minor suit, or
- b. 3 ♠ – shows 10 HCP, three hearts, a singleton or void in spades and at least four cards in each minor suit.

These are powerful, descriptive hands because they;

- a. avoid playing in a 3 NT contract without sufficient stoppers in the splintered (short) suit,
- b. enable the opener to bid game in the other major with a five cards suit matching the responder's three cards holding, and

- c. Provide information about the responder's points and distribution.

This enables the opener to find a possible game in a minor suit.

After the splinter response, the opener is able to place the contract by bidding:

- a. the non-splintered major suit with a four cards suit, a minimum hand for their 1 NT opening bid, and no more than three cards in each minor suit,

This indicates a misfit and willingness to play in a 4 3 major suit.

- b. 3 NT with the splintered suit headed by AQ, KJ10 or better,

- c. the non-splintered major suit at the four-level with five cards in that suit,

- d. a four cards suit at the four-level with some, but insufficient high cards in the splintered suit.

A four-level bid of a minor suit shows at least an eight cards fit.

- e. with less than 2 HCP in the splintered suit and four cards in each of the minor suits, a cuebid of the splintered suit, or

This shows four cards in each minor suit and asks the responder to bid their longest minor suit.

- f. With less than 2 HCP in the splintered suit and only one four cards minor suit, that minor suit at the five-level.

If the responder has extra points, once the opener has rebid they may either;

a. invite a slam in the opener's five cards major suit with 15 HCP,

They do so by bidding five of the major suit.

This enables the opener to bid the slam with 14 or more HCP outside of the splintered suit.

b. look for slam in the opener's five cards major suit with if they hold 16 or more HCP, or

This done by asking for keycards. If the responder signs off in the major suit at the five-level, the opener may raise to the six-level with 13 or more HCP outside of the splintered suit.

c. raise the opener's four level bid in a minor suit to game level with five cards support and 12 to 15 HCP outside their short suit.

9. Bidding Using Maximal Doubles

The conditions for a maximal double are;

- the side has opened, followed by a two-level overcall, a two-level raise by the responder and a raise of the overcalled suit, by either the advancer or the overcaller, to the three-level of the overcalled suit,
- the overcall bid is the next lower ranking suit to the opener's suit, such as hearts over spades or diamonds over hearts, and
- the doubling hand is sufficiently strong enough to invite their partner to bid game.

In these circumstances, there is insufficient bidding space for both a penalty double and an invitation to game. The double is used for the game invitation.

In this case:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>Opener</u>
			1 ♠
2 ♥	2 ♠	3 ♥	?

- A double must be alerted and shows extra points and is game invitational,
- A pass says that the opener has already described their hand and has no more information to give, or
- A bid of 3 ♠ would show a hand that does not want to defend.

10. Bidding After a Redouble

After a bid is made and doubled by the direct seat, a redouble by the responder shows ten or more points. Therefore, the opener's side holds the balance of points, meaning that they hold the majority of points.

The opponents are not likely to leave the redouble in since;

- a. making a one-level minor suit contract, when redoubled, will score 180, or
- b. making a one-level major suit contract, when redoubled, will score either 520 not-vulnerable or 720 vulnerable, or
- c. making a redoubled 1 NT contract will score either 560 not-vulnerable or 760 vulnerable, and
- d. overtricks will score either 200 per trick not-vulnerable or 400 per trick vulnerable.

The doubler is unlikely to hold a five card suit. If they had one and doubled instead of bidding the suit, they would need to have either a five card minor suit or a hand strong enough to double and rebid.

It is unlikely that the doubler has a strong hand. If they did, their partner would have few, if any, points. This would create problems transferring the lead to the dummy's hand to enable the doubler to take a finesse.

The doubler is therefore expected to hold a 4-4-3-2 distribution hand or possibly a 4-4-4-1 hand.

a. The Advancer

The advancer should be searching for an eight cards fit. Preferably it would be at the one-level since it has a better chance of making. If set, a one-level contract will likely concede less undertricks than

a two level contract would. It would also be less likely to be doubled.

The advancer should either;

- i. bid a five cards or longer unbid suit,
- ii. with two or more four card unbid suits, pass and leave the decision to the doubler,

This will usually ensure an eight cards fit.

- iii. with only one four cards suit, bid the suit unless the suit lacks honors and high spot cards, or

- iv. with none of the above, pass and leave the decision to the doubler.

This would ensure that they do not land in a 3 – 3 suit fit.

b. The Opener

The opener should double the advancer's bid if they hold four cards, or three including top honors in the suit. This is a penalty double.

Otherwise, the opener should pass and leave the decision to the responder.

c. The Doubler

The doubler should pass any suit bid by the advancer unless they hold a five cards suit and only two cards in the advancer's suit.

If the advancer has passed, the doubler should bid either their five cards or longer suit or their next available four cards suit.

d. The Responder

Holding four cards in the suit bid by the advancer or the doubler, the responder should consider doubling if their holding includes stoppers or length in that suit.

The consideration of whether to double should be based on vulnerability and extra points.

If the doubler is vulnerable, down one is worth 200 points and should be made regardless of points. Setting their contract by more than one yields another 400 points per trick.

If the opener is not vulnerable, a game bid and made is worth 400 or 420 which is less than setting the opponents two tricks not-vulnerable. However, if the responder does not have enough points for game, a part score will only yield more points than the opponents would lose down one not-vulnerable.

Since the doubler did not bid 1 NT, they are likely to have less than 16 HCP unless they have a singleton or void in the opened suit.

If the advancer has passed and left the bidding to the doubler, the responder should either;

- i. pass and leave the decision to the opener, who must either double or bid, or
- ii. double for penalty.

If the advancer has bid, the doubler has passed, and the responder cannot double, they should bid a new suit. This bid is forcing.

11. Summary of Additional Jump Responses

a. Jump Responses to a 1 ♣ Opening Bid

- 3 ♦ - Splinter, 13+ points, 5+ clubs
 - Singleton or void in diamonds
 - Forcing to game

- 3 ♥ - Splinter, 13+ points, 5+ clubs
 - Singleton or void in hearts
 - Forcing to game

- 3 ♠ - Splinter, 13+ points, 5+ clubs
 - Singleton or void in spades
 - Forcing to game

b. Jump Responses to a 1 ♦ Opening Bid

- 3 ♥ - Splinter, 13+ HCP, 4+ diamonds
 - Singleton or void in hearts
 - Forcing to game

- 3 ♠ - Splinter, 13+ HCP, 4+ diamonds
 - Singleton or void in spades
 - Forcing to game

- 4 ♣ - Splinter, 13+ HCP, 4+ diamonds
 - Singleton or void in clubs
 - Forcing to game

c. Jump Responses to a 1 ♥ Opening Bid

- 3 ♣ - Bergen – 4+ hearts, 8 to 10 points
- Forcing to 3 ♥
- 3 ♦ - Bergen - 4+ hearts, 11 or 12 points
- Forcing to 3 ♥
- 3 ♥ - Bergen – 4+ hearts, 0 to 5 points
- Not forcing
- 3 ♠ - Splinter, 13+ points, 4+ hearts
- Singleton or void in spades
- Forcing to 4
- 3 NT - 13 to 16 HCP
- 4 ♣ - Splinter, 13+ points, 4+ hearts
- Singleton or void in clubs
- Forcing to 4 ♥
- 4 ♦ - Splinter, 13+ points, 4+ hearts
- Singleton or void in diamonds
- Forcing to 4 ♥

d. Jump Responses to a 1 ♠ Opening Bid

- 3 ♣ - Bergen – 4+ spades, 8 to 10 points
- Forcing to 3 ♠

- 3 ♦ - Bergen – 4+ spades, 11 or 12 points
- Forcing to 3 ♠
- 3 ♠ - Bergen – 4+ spades, 0 – 5 points
- Not forcing
- 3 NT - 13 to 16 HCP
- 2 spades, 4-4-3 in other suits
- 4 ♣ - Splinter, 13+ points, 4+ spades, forcing
- Singleton or void in clubs
- Forcing to 4 ♠
- 4 ♦ - Splinter, 13+ points, 4+ spades
- Singleton or void in diamonds
- Forcing to 4 ♠
- 4 ♥ - Splinter, 13+ points, 4+ spades
- Singleton or void in hearts
- Forcing to 4 ♠

e. Jump Responses to a 1 NT Opening Bid

- 3 ♥ - Splinter, 10+ HCP
- Singleton in hearts, three cards in spades
- 5 - 4, or 4 - 5, in the minor suits
- 3 ♠ - Splinter, 10+ HCP

- Singleton in spades, three cards in hearts
- 5 - 4, or 4 - 5, in the minor suits

12. Other Bidding Tips

a. Raising Partner's Pre-emptive Opening Bid

When suspecting that the opponents can make a game contract, a player should immediately raise their partner's pre-emptive opening bid to the level of their fit (i.e.: with a nine cards fit raise to the three-level).

This interferes with the opponents' bidding and ability to find a fit.

Many opponents will be reluctant to bid because of uncertainty about the strength of the responder's hand.

b. Rebidding with a Six Card Major Suit

After opening with a six cards major suit, the opener should rebid that suit unless the opener has a lower ranking four cards suit which contains more HCP than the suit opened. In that case, the four cards suit should be bid. (*Rule of 64*)

c. Five Card Support for Major Suit Opening

With Bergen raises, the responder should not immediately raise a major suit opening bid to game with five cards support.

After the Bergen raise, the opener will have an opportunity to cuebid to show either an invitational or game forcing hand. The opponents will have an opportunity to overcall.

Depending on the result of those two possible events, the responder can better determine whether a raise to game is warranted or needed.

Declarer Play

1. Overtaking to Maintain Entries

Sometimes overtaking in dummy is needed to develop dummy's long suit and preserve entries.

Here is an example:

Dummy	♠ 53
	♥ K87
	♦ AJ10932
	♣ 62
Declarer	♠ AQ84
	♥ A752
	♦ K
	♣ AQJ4

The declarer opened with a 1 ♣ bid and their partner responded 1 ♦. The declarer then bid 1 ♥ and the responder bid 2 ♦. After a 2 NT bid by the opener, the responder raised the contract to game in notrump.

The queen of hearts was led.

There were two tricks in diamonds and hearts and one in each of the other two suits. The declarer would have needed three more tricks to make their contract. Since there are not enough entries to dummy to take three finesses in clubs and spades, diamonds appeared to be the only source.

The declarer correctly ducked the first round of hearts hoping to block a potential entry to their RHO. The declarer preferred that either the spade or club suit be led from their LHO.

Their LHO continued with the ten of hearts. The declarer won in hand preserving their entry to dummy.

If the declarer played the king of diamonds and crossed to dummy with the king of hearts, they would be unable to take any more diamond tricks unless the queen fell on the second round of the suit.

The declarer chose the best line. They overtook the king of diamonds with dummy's ace and start playing diamonds from the top down. Once the diamonds were developed, the declarer still had the king of hearts as an entry in dummy to take their diamond tricks.

If the diamonds split 5 – 1, the declarer would still have other options to make their contract.

Another example is:

Dummy	♠ 53
	♥ QJ5
	♦ AJ10932
	♣ 62
Declarer	♠ AQ84
	♥ A102
	♦ Q
	♣ AQ754

The declarer opened with a 1 ♣ bid and their partner responded with 1 Diamond. The declarer then bid 1 ♠. The responder bid 1 NT which was the declarer raised to the two-level as an invitation to game. The responder accepted the invitation by raising the contract to 3 NT.

The small heart was led.

Similar to above, the declarer realized that they were going to have to overtake their queen of diamonds and use the hearts as an entry to dummy. They realized that their RHO is likely to have the king of diamonds. If they played the queen and it is not covered, they will be blocked.

On the opening lead, the declarer played the five of hearts from dummy and their RHO played the nine.

If the declarer had unthinkingly played the ten, they would have blocked themselves from getting to dummy's hand once the diamonds were established. The declarer, therefore, played the ace of hearts on the lead round to unblock the suit prior to setting up the diamond suit.

They then overtook the queen of diamonds with the ace and played the diamonds starting at the nine. If the diamonds split 3 – 3 or 4 – 2, the remaining diamonds can be run once the king is removed. The queen and jack or hearts provided an entry to dummy to cash the diamond winners.

2. Unblocking

Sometimes there is only one source of entries to the other hand and the declarer must unblock one side in order to enable further tricks in the suit.

An example is:

Dummy	♠ 63
	♥ 532
	♦ 75
	♣ AKQ532
Declarer	♠ AQ7
	♥ AK8
	♦ KJ3
	♣ 8742

The declarer opened with a 1 NT bid. Their partner responded with a 2 ♠ bid as a transfer to clubs. With four clubs, the opener bid 2 NT as a superaccept bid for clubs. With a good club suit and without any singletons, the responder bid 3 NT, which became the final contract.

When the declarer played the ace, king and queen of clubs, they unblocked their hand by playing the eight and seven. Otherwise, on the fourth round of clubs they would have ended up in the declarer's hand without a way to get to the good clubs in dummy.

3. Playing in a Moysian (4 – 3) Trump Fit

Playing in a 4 – 3 trump fit is fairly common. Some of the situations which cause these are;

- a. after a major suit response to a minor suit opening bid,

If the opener has three card support and only two cards in the other major suit, they will usually raise the major suit rather than bid 1 NT.

The opener's hand may be able to trump a third round of their short major suit. In this case, they are making use of an otherwise redundant trump card.

- b. when an opponent doubles or overcalls the responder's major suit bid and the opener makes a support double or redouble showing three card support,

In these situations the responder is often placed in an uncomfortable position of either passing a doubled contract or rebidding their suit. Their RHO pass of the double indicates probable length in the suit. However, playing in a Moysian fit is usually better than leaving the double in.

- c. after a takeout double where the doubler has a three cards holding in one of the unbid suits, and

The advancer often bids their four cards suit which is more likely to be the doubler's three cards suit.

- d. after a takeout double where the advancer holds five cards in the opener's suit and a 5-3-3-2 pattern hand.

Since their long suit is not long enough to leave the double in, they are often forced to bid their three cards suit. This is fairly common

when the heart suit is opened and the responder can escape to the spade suit at the one-level.

Playing in a 4 – 3 trump fit usually requires retaining control.

When playing in the 4 – 3 trump fit the declarer should;

- a. play for a 4 – 2 split among the opponents,

A 4 – 2 fit is much more likely than a 3 – 3 split. If the trumps split 5 – 1, the declarer is likely to have trouble making their contract regardless of how they play it.

- b. avoid trumping in the longer trump hand,

This often requires tossing losers in other suits until the shorter trump holding can trump that suit.

- c. try to ruff in the shorter hand,

Often the shorter hand has a doubleton in another suit. It is better that the hand with the shorter trump holding uses their trump to take tricks than having the trump drop while either the declarer or the opponents are pulling trump.

- d. look for the possibility of removing the trump suit and playing the hand as a notrump contract,

This usually requires stoppers or length in all the other suits.

- e. look for a possible cross-ruff situation where extra tricks may be taken by ruffing in both hands,

Before embarking on this, the declarer should make sure that they take all of their winners in the non-trump suits prior to embarking

on a cross-ruff. This prevents an opponent from shortening their holding in that suit which may allow them to either ruff, or overruff.

f. set up and use another long suit to draw one of the opponent's trump,

It is usually best to play two rounds of trump prior to this. There is a possibility that an opponent cannot ruff because their trumps were pulled in the two rounds.

Once an opponent has trumped and the declarer regains the lead, they can remove the last trump cards held by the opponents leaving the declarer with the only remaining trump card,

g. try to keep the highest remaining trump card, and/or

After playing two rounds of trump, often ducking the first round, if the declarer can force one opponent to trump, they can regain the lead by trumping with their lower trump card and remove opponents' last one with the declarer's highest remaining trump.

h. use hold-up plays.

With Ax in dummy's short suit, if they play the ace on the first round, when the opponents regain the lead they will usually lead the trump suit. This reduces the declarer's ability to trump that suit in dummy.

If the declarer holds up the opponents will still attack the trump suit. However, the declarer will still retain the ace as a stopper in that suit. This often gives the declarer time to set up tricks in the other side suits while the doubleton is still stopped.

The declarer may also use the doubleton as a third round ruff or to toss a loser in another suit.

4. Morton's Fork

Morton's Fork is a technique to force one defender to make a playing decision where whichever choice they make creates an extra trick for the declarer. It usually involves leading towards an honor.

Here's an example which arose at the table in Beijing's Xinyuang Cup. David Bird and Tim Bourke used it in their book "*15 Winning Cardplay Techniques*":

	♠ K62	
	♥ AK7	
	♦ Q976	
	♣ Q86	
♠ Q103		♠ J
♥ QJ102		♥ 98643
♦ J5		♦ A102
♣ J954		♣ A1032
	♠ A98754	
	♥ 5	
	♦ K843	
	♣ K7	

In a 4 ♠ contract, the queen of hearts was led. The declarer won the trick and immediately led a low club. If the RHO rose with the ace, the declarer could toss two potential diamond losers on a club and a heart. If the RHO played low, the declarer could discard a club on the high heart.

To find a Morton's Fork opportunity, a declarer should look for a suit with a doubleton king or queen in one hand and the other high honor in the other hand. By leading towards the doubleton, if the king or queen wins

the first round, the other card in the doubleton may be discarded on a winner in the other hand.

5. Safety Play

When the priority is to make the contract, rather than play the odds and play for an overtrick, safety plays should be used. The situations to use safety plays are;

- a. all IMPs and rubber bridge games, or
- b. matchpoints and Board-a-Match games where the declarer is in a contract that will score high if it makes without making an overtrick.

Examples of such are;

- i. a doubled contract, or*
- ii. when playing in a game or slam contract when most of the field is likely playing at a lower level.*

A common safety play is when dummy has a long, likely running suit with no outside entries, such as:

Dummy	AKQxx
-------	-------

Declarer	xxx
----------	-----

or

Dummy	AKQxxx
-------	--------

Declarer	xx
----------	----

The percentage play is to play for a 3 - 2 split, which has an *a priori* chance of 67.8 percent.

However, ducking the first round guarantees the contract when the suit splits either 3 – 2 or 4 – 1 (*a priori* 28.3 percent). This brings the chance of success up from 67.8 percent to 96.1 percent. This also requires;

- a. having all other suits stopped in the declarer's hand, and
- b. needing more than three tricks in dummy's long suit to guarantee making the contract.

This second example comes from BridgeHands.com.

Bidding:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Declarer</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>Dummy</u>
	1 ♣	1 ♦	1 ♠
p	2 ♦	3 ♦	p
p	4 ♠	all pass	

Hands:

	♠ AQ109 ♥ AJxx ♦ Axx ♣ AJx	
♠ xx ♥ 10xxx ♦ x ♣ xxxxxx		♠ KJx ♥ xx ♦ K109xxxx ♣ x
	♠ xxxx ♥ KQx ♦ QJx ♣ KQ10	

After a small diamond was led, if the declarer took the finesse and played low from dummy, their RHO would win, return a diamond for a ruff and the declarer would still lose two spade tricks.

Instead, the declarer played the ace of diamonds and the ace of spades. They returned to their hand with a club and took the spade finesse into the Q109.

Either their LHO had a spade honor, and they made the contract, or their RHO held both. In the latter case, their LHO was out of trump and could not trump a diamond return.

6. Hold Up Play

Usually it is better to delay taking the trick on the first round of the suit.

Some of the times that a hold up is the best option are:

a. Notrump Contracts

When playing in a notrump contract, with only one stopper in the suit, the declarer should usually hold up their ace.

The declarer should;

- i. add the number of cards held between their hand and dummy,
- ii. subtract that number from seven, and
- iii. the resultant number is the number of times that they should hold up playing the ace. (i.e.: if holding Axx and dummy holding xx, the declarer should hold up playing the ace twice $[7 - (3+2)]$). (*Rule of 7*)

b. Preventing a Trump

It may be advantageous to hold up to eliminate an entry to the danger hand when a doubleton is led.

An example of this is:

Dummy	♠ J109
	♥ J85
	♦ KJ3
	♣ QJ4
Declarer	♠ AQ853
	♥ A1063

♦ A7

♣ A9

The declarer opened 1 ♠ and their partner made a constructive 2 ♠ bid. The declarer bid a Kokish help suit game try with a 2 NT bid and their partner, with a maximum hand, raised the contract to game in spades.

The nine of hearts was led and the declarer suspected that it may have been a doubleton. If they took the first round and the spade finesse lost, their LHO could cross to their partner's high heart for a heart ruff. The declarer would then be hoping for one of their other finesses to work.

The declarer, needing only one of two finesses to work, would make their contract 75 percent of the time. The declarer increased their odds by holding up one round. Now, if the spade finesse lost, the declarer could still safely make their contract as the entry to the declarer's RHO was removed.

c. Avoiding a Threat

Holding Ax in the suit led and Kxx in a different side suit in the declarer's hand, it is often better for the declarer to hold up one round.

This example shows why:

Dummy ♠ J1092

♥ 85

♦ 843

♣ AKJ4

Declarer ♠ AQ853

♥ A6

♦ K74

♣ Q65

In a competitive auction, the declarer ended up playing in a 3 ♠ contract. The queen of hearts was led and their partner signaled encouragement.

If the declarer played the ace on the first round and the spade finesse lost, they stood to lose a spade, a heart and three diamond tricks.

The declarer held up one round. If the spade finesse lost, the declarer would be able to draw the remaining trump and toss a diamond loser on a club.

d. Bath Coup

In a notrump contract, if the lead is a king, and holding either

- i. xxx facing AJx, or
- ii. Axx facing Jxx,

The declarer should hold up. The lead is likely from KQ10xx. A holdup will force the lead of a second suit.

With the holdup, if their LHO continues the suit, the declarer will take two tricks in it.

If their LHO leads a different suit, the opponents will have to win the lead a further two or three times to set up the suit. The declarer should have made their game before then.

7. Playing Suit Combinations

Some suit combinations that a player should familiarize themselves with are:

a. AQ10x facing Kxxx

With all these combinations of holding the A, K, Q and 10, but not the jack or nine, it is best to protect against a bad split.

The declarer should be in a position to finesse the 10 on the last round if the long holding in that suit precedes the hand holding the ten.

The correct way is to play the ace, then cross to the king. If the suit splits 4 - 1 with the long suit preceding the hand holding the queen and ten, the declarer can successfully finesse the third round.

b. AQ9x facing Kxxx

This is essentially the same as the one above, except missing both the jack and ten. With all holdings missing the jack and ten, the declarer should play for the best result if they encounter a bad break.

The correct way is to play the ace first. Then cross to the king. If the suit splits 4 - 1, and the long suit precedes the nine, then there is a 40 percent chance (two of the five outstanding cards) that the jack or ten will be in the short hand and will drop under the ace. The declarer can then finesse the other honor.

c. K9xx facing AJ10x

The declarer should lead the jack. If their LHO does not hesitate, they likely do not have the queen. In that case, the declarer should go up with the king and finesse on the way back.

d. Qxx(x) (in Dummy) facing Ax

The best way is to play low to the queen first. Their LHO may think that their partner has the ace and hold up their king.

e. Axx(x) facing Qx

Again, the declarer should play low to the queen. If the king lies in the hand preceding the queen, it will promote the queen. This may allow a loser to be tossed on the ace later in the play of the hand.

f. AQTx facing Jx (in the Declarer's Hand)

Unless the declarer is in a suit contract and places the king with their RHO, they should lead the jack.

If, in a suit contract, the declarer places the king with their RHO, they should play the ace, then lead small. Their RHO may be reluctant to play the king, fearing a ruffing finesse.

g. AQ9 facing xxx

The best way is to play low towards the ace and queen and cover with the lowest card. This caters to all combinations where the preceding hand holds the jack and ten.

h. AKxx facing J10

In a notrump contract, the declarer should start by playing the 10. If their LHO has the queen, they may duck, playing their partner for the jack.

i. Axx facing J10x

The correct way is to play low towards the jack. This caters to Qx or Kx holdings preceding the J10x.

j. Axx facing J9x

Similar to the previous holding, the best way is to start by playing low towards the 9.

k. AJ10 facing xxx

The correct way is to play low towards the jack. Then, once they regain the lead, the declarer should repeat the finesse.

The *a priori* odds of the queen and king both being in the hand following the AJ10 holding are 25 percent. This method, therefore, has a 75 percent of winning two tricks.

l. QJ853 facing A42

The declarer should play the ace first and lead to the QJ (twice if necessary). This approach may also allow the declarer to toss losers on the remaining cards in the suit.

m. A109x facing Q8xx

Leading low and finessing the ten is the best way to play this combination.

n. Ax facing xx

In a suit contract, the declarer should play the ace, then small.

If the opponents return a trump to cut down on ruffs, it may save a guess about an honor in the trump suit. If a trump is not returned, that opponent may be protecting their Kx(x), Qx(x) or Jx(x) holding.

o. Kxx facing Q10x

The best way is to play towards the king first. Then finesse the Q10.

p. J10xxxx facing Axxxx

If the suit splits 2 – 1, the declarer will lose one trick whether they start with a low card or the ace.

In the 3 – 0 splits, if they lead the ace, the declarer will always lose two tricks.

The best way is to start by leading small to dummy. Later, the declarer can capture the outstanding honor by playing the ace if the suit splits 2 – 1.

If that suit splits 3 – 0, the declarer can possibly later reduce their loss to one trick by endplaying the opponent with the longer trump holding.

8. Loser-on-Loser Play

A loser-on-loser play involves the declarer tossing a loser in either their hand or in dummy on a loser, in another suit, in the other hand.

When the declarer has a sure loser in one side suit, it is usually best for them to toss that loser rather than trump a loser from the other side.

Tossing a loser will not cost a trick. If not tossed, the trick will be lost later in the play of the hand.

Situations where the loser-on-loser play are most likely to gain a trick are;

- a. in retaining control of the trump suit,

This is especially important when;

- i. playing in a Moysian (4 – 3) trump fit,*

Trumping in the side with the longer trump holding is dangerous.

If they trump, the declarer will remain with a 3 – 3 holding in the trump suit. The declarer will lose control of the trump suit if the opponents hold either;

a) any split other than a 3 – 3 trump split. The 3 – 3 split is only expected 35.5 percent of the time, so control of the trump suit is expected to be lost 64.5 percent of the time, or

b) the ace of trump.

Even with a 3 – 3 trump split, the opponents control the trump suit. They can either hold up until the last round, or regain the lead, play their ace, and eliminate the declarer's last trump cards.

ii. *playing in a 5 – 3 trump fit when the opponents have a long suit,*

Trumping in the longer trump suit will shorten their trump holding in that hand. Once trumps are drawn and the opponents gain the lead, they can return their long suit and eliminate the declarer's last trump. Then, unless the declarer can run the remaining tricks, they face a possibility of the opponents running tricks in their long suit once they regain the lead.

In either of these cases, it is best for the declarer to toss a loser and wait until they can trump in the hand with the shorter trump holding.

b. when playing a trump is likely to result in either it being overtrumped or in promoting a trump in an opponent's hand,

As above, it is usually better for the declarer to toss a loser and allow their shorter trump holding side to trump the next round of the suit.

c. in avoidance play situations, and

It is usually better to toss a loser than to allow the danger hand to gain the lead.

Placing the non-danger hand on lead may result in a free finesse. If the non-danger hand will gain the lead, tossing a loser may prevent the danger hand from gaining the lead.

d. when the declarer can run most of the remaining tricks.

There may be a potential to squeeze one of the opponents into discarding one of their honors later in the hand.

To execute a squeeze play, the declarer needs to be in a position where they can run all but the last remaining trick. If they are currently one trick short of this position, the declarer should toss a loser on a loser. This is referred to as “rectifying the count” for a squeeze play.

9. Other Declarer Play Tips

a. Remembering the Outstanding Cards

The declarer should ensure that they don't lose a hand by either;

- i. leading a card that they incorrectly think was the highest remaining card in that suit, or
- ii. not realizing that they hold the highest remaining card in a suit that they fail to take.

To prevent this from happening, the declarer should try to remember the outstanding cards.

The declarer should start with the trump suit. Once they determine how many cards are outstanding among the opponents, they should determine which of them are higher than those which they hold. The declarer will likely only need to remember the top two cards held by the opponents.

Once the declarer has developed the habit in the trump suit, they should add one or more side suits.

Often at first glance the declarer can see whether there is any potential for an extra trick in a side suit. This is often the longest holding in a side suit, especially when it holds a high intermediate card such as a seven, eight, nine or ten.

The declarer should concentrate on that suit. Usually the declarer needs only to determine the top two or three cards held by the opponents. Once one of the cards are played, the declarer can eliminate it from their memory.

b. Principle of Restricted Choice

While a bit complex to read and understand, this is a simple axiom to use when missing the queen and jack in a suit.

The *Principle of Restricted Choice* simply states that if one of the opponents drops an honor on the first round of the suit, it is more likely to be a singleton.

The theory states that with either the Qx or Jx the opponent is more likely to play the low card. If they held the queen and jack, they would play one honor half the time and the other the other half of the time. Therefore, the honor is more likely a singleton.

Defense

1. Opening Leads Against Notrump Contracts

These are more enhanced additions to the basic opening leads mentioned in the preceding part.

a. Which Suit to Lead

i. With a weak hand, it is often better for a player to help their partner take tricks than to try to develop their own hand.

High card points are usually needed to score tricks. They are also needed as entries to set up or take tricks in a long suit.

When a 3 NT contract was bid after a game invitation, the declarer's side usually holds twenty-five or twenty-six high card points, leaving fourteen or fifteen high card points among their opponents. Holding less than seven points indicates that the hand is weaker than their partner's is. In those cases, it is often better to attempt to set up tricks in the stronger hand than the weaker one. A lead of their partner's long suit is usually best from the weak hand.,

ii. It is usually best to lead fourth highest from the longest suit of the player on lead. With two suits of equal length, the stronger of the two is usually best.

With two equal suits to chose from, it is usually best to lead the one that does not have the ace. This will provide a sure entry if the other suit is developed.

If the four card suit does not contain at least two honors it is usually better to lead a different suit., and

iii. Even if the opponents bid notrump after their partner has bid, leading their partner's suit is usually the best lead.

b. Which Card to Lead

i. A good lead agreement is playing Coded Nines and Tens.

Playing coded nines and tens, the lead of a ten indicates it is either the highest or the third highest (from a suit headed by AJ10 or KJ10). The nine indicates it is either the highest or the third highest (from suit headed by A109, K109 or Q109) and the jack indicates that it is the highest card held in the suit.

This is often remembered with the expression “jack denies, nine or ten implies”.,

ii. With a five card suit, where the fourth highest is a seven or eight, leading the fifth highest card in that suit may deceive the declarer about the length of the suit led,

iii. If one of the opponents has shown four card length in the best suit of the player on lead, the fifth highest is usually the better lead unless the player on lead holds AKQJx,

iv. With the weaker hand, when trying to set up their partner's long suit, an honor in that suit is usually a good lead.

This helps promote their partner's suit while saving entries in their partner's hand., or

v. Against a Gambling 3 Notrump, the lead of an ace is usually best in order to see where dummy's weakness is.

2. Opening Leads Against Suit Contracts

Again, these are more enhanced additions to the basic opening leads mentioned in the preceding part.

When considering the opening lead, a defender should take a three-step thought process;

- a. the first step is to decide whether to lead a trump, make an attacking lead or make a passive lead,
- b. the second step is which suit to lead, and
- c. the third step is to determine which card to lead in that suit.

Passive leads are the common ones that most players are familiar with. However, there are times when a better lead is either an attacking lead or a trump suit.

a. Attacking Leads

A player should usually make an attacking lead of an unbid suit when;

- i. dummy has shown a long strong side suit and trump support,

This indicates that the declarer may be able to use dummy's long suit to toss losers in other suits once trump have been drawn.

- ii. the opponents have elected to play in a minor suit contract rather than in a notrump contract, or

This indicates the lack of sufficient stoppers in at least one suit, usually a major one.

iii. dummy has opened with a minor suit and jump raises the declarer's major suit response (i.e.: 1 ♣, p, 1 ♥, p, 3 ♥).

This indicates that the dummy likely has a strong five card minor suit to go with their four card major suit support.

Good attacking methods leads include;

i. an unsupported ace from a side suit,

Once the player leads and views dummy, and their partner's signal, they know whether to continue with that suit or switch to a different suit lead.

ii. the lower honor from a three-card suit headed by two honors (ie: 10 from A10x, or Q from KQx), or

These allow the player to unblock the suit for a possible later ruff.

iii. an honor from a doubleton honor.

If the honors are consecutive, the player should play them in the opposite order that they would have done if holding a three card suit headed by an honor. This will alert their partner of a potential ruff of the third round of the suit.

b. Trump Leads

Trump leads are usually the best option when;

i. the player on lead has doubled for takeout and their partner left the double in for penalty,

This indicates that their partner has a longer trump holding than the declarer does.

A trump lead may result in the declarer's trumps being eliminated or reducing their ability to ruff.

- ii. the player on lead has winners, especially tenaces, in the other three suits,

A trump lead reduces the declarer's ruffing ability. It also prevents the lead from giving the declarer a free finesse.

- iii. either the declarer or dummy has shown shortness in other suits through the bidding, often through a splinter bid,

A trump lead reduces the declarer's ruffing ability in that short suit.

- iv. dummy has reluctantly given a preference to the declarer's first bid suit,

A trump lead may reduce the times that dummy can trump cards in the declarer's other long suit.

- v. the declarer has shown a two suited hand and the player on lead is strong in the declarer's other suit,

A trump lead will cut down on ruffs by dummy.

- vi. the defenders have the majority of HCP, or

This often occurs when the opponents make a sacrifice bid.

A trump lead will cut down on the declarer's ruffing tricks.

- vii. against a grand slam.

This prevents a free finesse.

There is no need to set up a trick since gaining the lead will set the contract.

Which card to lead:

- i. When leading a trump, the player on lead should give count; high for an even number of cards and low for an odd number.

- ii. A player should be cautious of leading trumps holding Jx(x) or Qx(x).

c. Passive Leads

These are the leads that most players already have been making.

These will occur most of the time after determining that an attacking lead or a trump lead is not to be more appropriate.

Passive leads are best against 2 NT contracts.

3. Playing an Honor in Third Seat

If a low card is led, indicating an honor in that suit, the defender should think before automatically playing an honor.

A couple of examples are:

Dummy J93 Declarer's RHO K102

In a suit contract a low card is led. The defender on lead likely holds the queen.

If the declarer plays low from dummy, the ten will force out the declarer's ace and the defense side still holds the king and queen. If the king is played without thinking, the declarer can take the trick with their ace and lead towards dummy to set up dummy's jack.

Dummy J53 Declarer's RHO K92

Here the lead may have been low from either the queen or ten.

Many players will lead the ten from Q103 to spare their partner from wondering if they have the ten. However, the lead is much more likely to be from the queen. If the declarer has the ten and ace, it does not matter whether their RHO plays the king or nine. But, if the lead is from the queen and ten, then the nine is the better choice.

Dummy A103 Declarer's RHO J72

The two is led and dummy plays low. The lead is likely from a three or four card suit headed by an honor.

If the defender on lead held both the king and queen they would have led the king. Therefore, the declarer likely holds three or four cards with either the king or the queen. Playing the jack, the declarer can finesse the player originally on lead for the king or queen of the suit. The seven is the better

card to play, saving the jack as a potential stopper if the player on lead held the eight and nine.

4. Uppercut

The uppercut is another way of promoting a trick. It involves playing a high card to force out a top card from either the declarer or dummy.

Here is an example of how it works.

♠ 10865
♥ Q873
♦ 95
♣ AQJ

♠ Q2
♥ AK652
♦ 873
♣ 954

♠ J3
♥ 94
♦ Q10532
♣ K873

♠ AK973
♥ J10
♦ AK9
♣ 1062

In a 4 ♠ contract, the ace, then king of hearts was led. Now, when a small heart is led, the defender is asking their partner to trump high. When their partner trumps with the jack, the queen of trumps becomes good for the setting trick.

In these situations, the uppercut is effective when holding the Qx or Jx and partner's play of the jack or queen will promote the honor. It is also effective when holding the Jxx where partner's play of the ten will promote the jack. These usually require that the LHO does not hold a high card in that suit.

The uppercut is also effective in a notrump or suit contract when their partner signals a suit lead.

Here is an example.

Declarer's LHO ♥ J82 Dummy ♥ K93

In a notrump contract, if their partner signals for a heart lead, the jack should be played to force out the king.

If their partner has the AQ107, they will cover the king. If the king is not played, their partner will play low and allow the player to lead the eight next round.

5. Negating Declarer's Transportation

Often, when the declarer has limited or no transportation between their hand and dummy's, it is best for the defenders to destroy the declarer's transportation by placing the lead in the hand which cannot reach the other.

a. Forcing the Declarer to Lead Away from a Tenace

If the declarer has lost their transportation to dummy's hand, the defense does not want to lead dummy's suit. That will give the declarer a trick that they are otherwise unable to get.

If possible, the best defense is to force the declarer to ruff in their own hand and lead away from their tenace(s).

b. Preventing an Entry to Dummy

If there are no entries to dummy outside of their long suit, a defender should hold up winning in that suit until they are assured that the declarer is out of cards in it.

Their defensive partner should be signalling count so that their partner can determine the number of cards in the declarer's hand. The player holding the honor can then determine when the declarer has no further entry to dummy and it is safe to win their trick in dummy's long suit.

These hold up plays include holding up the ace, or refusing to cover a finesse.

If the declarer's RHO is left with a blank king as their last card and the declarer has only one last card left in the suit, the declarer will usually return to their hand and take a finesse which worked the last time.

c. Merrimac Coup

This technique is also known as Hobson's Choice or Hobson's Coup.

If the declarer has limited entries to dummy, it is often advisable for the defenders to sacrifice a high card to knock out their entry.

An example from Wikipedia is:

♠ 854
♥ 103
♦ KQJ985
♣ A3

♠ J10963
♥ K98
♦ 63
♣ 963

♠ A7
♥ Q742
♦ A104
♣ K1072

♠ KQ2
♥ AJ65
♦ 72
♣ QJ84

In a 3 NT contract, the jack of spades was led.

Their partner won with the ace and led the king of clubs. If it is ducked, they would lead another club.

The declarer could no longer set up dummy's long diamond suit.

6. Other Defense Tips

a. Odd/Even Discard Signals

This signalling method has an advantage in that it indicates preference among all of the other three suits.

Discarding an odd numbered spot card shows a preference for a lead of that suit.

Discarding an even numbered spot card indicates a preference for another suit to be led. A high even numbered spot card suggests a preference for the higher ranking among the other suits. A low even numbered spot card suggests a preference for the lower ranking remaining suit.

b. Breaking New Suits

It is usually better for the defenders to not break a new suit.

Unless the declarer is likely to run the suit which they have led, either in their hand or in dummy, it is usually best to return that suit. Often, the declarer was trying to put the defense on lead to break a new suit for the declarer.

c. Promoting Trump Tricks

Sometimes it is better for a defender to refuse to overtrump to promote a trump trick.

An example of this is:

Defender's LHO ♥ A103 Dummy ♥ 975

With hearts as trump, if the declarer ruffs a trick high, their LHO should refuse to overtrump. Now, they hold the A103 over the

declarer's likely remaining KQxx(x). If the declarer tries to pull trumps, the LHO should play low the first round. The defender will then hold the A10 sitting over the declarer's Kx(x) or Qx(x). This will allow them to win two tricks if the declarer leads the suit.

d. Rule of Eleven

When a small card is led in a notrump contract, it is usually the fourth highest card in that suit. If so, by subtracting that card number from eleven, their partner will arrive at the number of cards in the other three hands that are higher than that card.

By using the *Rule of Eleven*, a player can determine how many cards the declarer holds in that suit which are higher than the one led. They may then play accordingly.

e. Discards

When taking a trick will set the contract, signalling a suit preference is not as important as retaining the right card to set the contract.

In those circumstances, the declarer's RHO should keep equal length to what is remaining in dummy, if the declarer retains transportation to that hand. The declarer's RHO should retain length parity with the declarer's hand if the declarer cannot reach dummy's hand.

The declarer's LHO should usually keep parity with the declarer's hand.

If dummy has a short suit and the declarer does not use dummy's hand to trump losers in that suit, the losers likely don't exist. As such, it is likely safer to discard cards in that suit than in other suits.

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