

LESSON 4

Eliminating Losers – Ruffing and Discarding



General Concepts



General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals

GENERAL CONCEPTS

Play of the Hand

Ruffing losers in the dummy

- Conditions necessary to successfully ruff losers in the dummy
 - More cards in the suit in your hand than in the dummy
 - Enough trumps in the dummy to take care of the losers
 - A way of getting to your hand so that you can lead the suit you want to ruff
- The crossruff

Discarding losers

- Quick losers and slow losers
- Developing extra winners

Guidelines for Defense

Third hand high

Bidding

Review of takeout doubles

Review of advances after takeout doubles

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“We’ll look at two ways of eliminating losers that are used exclusively in trump contracts. They take advantage of the power of the trump suit. After all, even an ace in another suit can fall to the lowliest trump card.

“In order to make use of these trump cards, the side suits (suits other than the trump suit) have to be unevenly divided with the potential of creating a void on one side of the table or the other. When the void is created in the dummy, declarer can ruff losers with dummy’s trumps. If dummy has extra winners in another side suit, declarer can eliminate losers by throwing them on the extra winners in dummy.

“Let’s start by looking at ruffing losers in the dummy.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: Ruffing Losers in the Dummy

Introduction

Before students can understand the concept of ruffing losers in dummy, they have to recognize the patterns that are required. The first is that the side suit has to be unevenly divided. The second is that there have to be more cards in the suit with losers in declarer’s hand than in the dummy.

“Clubs are trumps. Spades and hearts are side suits. North can be the dummy. Give dummy three small spades and declarer the ♠A. Give the dummy the ♥A and declarer three small hearts.

DUMMY

♠ x x x

♥ A



DECLARER

♠ A

♥ x x x

“In each case, the suits are unevenly divided between the dummy and the declarer. Remember, when you are counting losers, you focus on declarer’s hand. There are no spade losers and two heart losers. You can eliminate your heart losers by ruffing them in the dummy. On the other hand, you don’t have to get rid of the spade losers by ruffing them in declarer’s hand because declarer doesn’t have any spade losers.

“Declarer can ruff losers in the dummy when the declarer has more cards in the suit than dummy and there is the potential for dummy to become void in the suit.”

Instructions

“Exercise One shows holdings in various side suits in a trump contract. Does the suit provide an opportunity to ruff losers in the dummy?”

DUMMY:	1) 8	2) 10 9 8 7	3) 4 2	4) —	5) A K 6
DECLARER:	A 4 2	A K	Q J	9 6 5	5
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>

Follow-up

Have the students report on which suits each group thought provided the opportunity to ruff losers in the dummy.

Conclusion

“Side suits that are equally divided between declarer’s hand and the dummy do not provide an opportunity to ruff losers. The cards in a side suit have to be unevenly divided with the declarer having more cards than the dummy to allow losers to be ruffed in the dummy.”

EXERCISE TWO: Managing Trumps

Introduction

The first thing students need to recognize is that there has to be the potential of creating a void in the dummy in order to eliminate losers in declarer’s hand by ruffing them. Then there have to be enough trumps to take care of these losers. Trump management is discussed in more detail in Lesson 7. This exercise focuses on how many trumps are needed in dummy to take care of the losers in declarer’s hand. Once this is determined, declarer knows how many trumps to draw and still have enough in the dummy to ruff losers.

“Managing the trump suit is a very important part of the PLAN. It’s especially important when you decide you want to ruff losers in the dummy. You have to have trumps in the dummy to do this.

“There is a dilemma. On the one hand, it’s generally a good idea to draw the opponents’ trumps because they might be used to turn some of your winners into unexpected losers. On the other hand, you don’t want to play your own trumps, so that you don’t have any in the dummy when you need them. The first thing to consider is how many trumps you are going to need in the dummy to take care of declarer’s losers.”

Instructions

“How many trumps does declarer need to keep in the dummy in order to take care of the losers in declarer’s hand in each of the layouts in Exercise Two?”

DUMMY:	1) K 4	2) —	3) A	4) Q 2	5) Q J
DECLARER:	A 8 5	10 5 3	7 5 4	A K 4	5 4 2
	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>

Follow-up

Have a student report on the discussion from each group.

Conclusion

“When declarer decides the best way to eliminate a loser is to ruff it in the dummy, declarer has to calculate how many trumps will be needed to do the job. Declarer can draw some of the outstanding trumps as long as enough remain in the dummy to ruff declarer’s losers.”

EXERCISE THREE: Preparing to Ruff Losers**Introduction**

Students find it easy to understand ruffing in the dummy when they don't have to give up the lead in order to set the stage. This exercise is designed to get them to recognize that it's often necessary to give up the lead once or twice.

“Sometimes the declarer can start to ruff losers in the dummy without giving up the lead to the opponents. At other times, it's necessary to give up the lead once or twice before the conditions are right.”

Instructions

“How many times does declarer have to give up the lead before the situation is right to ruff losers in the dummy in each of the layouts in Exercise Three?”

DUMMY:	1) A 4	2) J	3) 7 4	4) —	5) 5
DECLARER:	9 8 3	10 9 8	9 8 3	6 4 3	A 4 2
	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

Follow-up

Have a student report the results of the group discussion.

Conclusion

“Sometimes, before you can ruff a loser in the dummy, you have to give up the lead to the opponents once or even twice. This can be nerve-wracking, since you wonder what the opponents will do when they get the lead. You'll have to learn to live with this, because it's often the only way to get the extra trick you need to make the contract.”

EXERCISE FOUR: Discarding Losers

Introduction

The focus for discarding losers is still on the dummy. There has to be a suit that has the potential to give declarer a chance to throw way a loser from declarer’s hand. Students need to get the idea that instead of ruffing a loser in the dummy, declarer is throwing away a loser on one of dummy’s extra winners. The pattern to recognize this situation is that dummy has more cards in a side suit than the declarer has.

“Take the heart suit and put the following cards on the table:

N — A K Q

S — 9 8

“There isn’t an opportunity to ruff a loser in the dummy because the dummy has more cards than the declarer. Declarer has two losers and both are taken care of by dummy’s high cards. When there are more cards in the dummy than in declarer’s hand and the cards are winners, as in this example, the opportunity exists to throw away a loser in another suit. When dummy plays hearts for the third time, declarer will be void and can discard a loser on a winner.

N — K Q J

S — 9 8

“Take away the ♥A and put the ♥J in the dummy:

“This time, one of declarer’s losers is taken care of by the high cards in the dummy. Once the ♥A is driven out, the ♥Q and ♥J are winners and dummy has an extra winner on which declarer can throw a loser.

N — A Q J

S — 9 8

“Take away the ♥K in the dummy and put in the ♥A:

“This suit may offer the same potential as a suit with the ace, king and queen in the dummy, depending on where the ♥K is. If West has the king, then declarer can finesse for it, not lose any tricks in the suit and have an extra winner in the dummy if declarer repeats the finesse. If the king is held by East, declarer loses a trick, but then the dummy still has an extra winner.”

Instructions

“Each of the side suits in Exercise Four provides an opportunity for declarer to discard losers by throwing them on extra winners in the dummy. How many losers could be discarded? What does declarer have to do to get the side suit ready for discarding losers?”

DUMMY:	1) A K Q	2) K Q J	3) A K 7 6 4	4) A Q J	5) Q J 10 9
DECLARER:	9 8	7 4	9 8 3	8 3	6 5
	1	1	2	1	2
	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>Promote</u>	<u>Duck trick</u>	<u>Finesse</u>	<u>Promote</u>

Follow-up

Have the students report to the class what they decided in each example.

Conclusion

“When you are looking at alternative ways of disposing of losers in a trump contract, look to see if dummy has additional winners in a side suit — a suit other than the trump suit — on which to throw your losers. It often happens that when you have weakness in one area, it’s compensated for by extra strength somewhere else.”

EXERCISE SIX: Review of Takeout Doubles

Introduction

The bidding is not the focus of the *Play of the Hand* course, and the takeout double has been discussed in the *Bidding* course. It's important not to spend too much time on this exercise. If the students need to review, they can do so by reading the text. Rather than the students discussing the answers in this quiz on their own, you could do it with the class as a whole.

“When the opponent on your right opens the bidding, you can do one of three things. You can pass if you feel your hand is too weak to compete. You can overcall in a suit or notrump or you can double. The double of a partscore contract at your first opportunity to bid is called a takeout double. A takeout double means that you want to compete and are asking your partner to choose the suit.

“You need two things to make a takeout double: support in the suits that your opponents didn't bid and 13 to 17 points — counting dummy points (*i.e.*, points for shortness in the opponent's suit) — or any hand with 18 or more total points. Count dummy points because you are planning to be the dummy — you've asked your partner to pick the suit.”

Instructions

“The opponent on your right opens the bidding 1♦. What do you bid with each of the hands in Exercise Six?”

1) ♠ A J 6 3
♥ A J 7 5
♦ 4
♣ K 9 4 2

Double

2) ♠ A K 7
♥ 9 3
♦ A J 7 3
♣ J 9 7 2

Pass

3) ♠ A Q J 8 3
♥ A 7
♦ 3 2
♣ K 8 5 2

1♠

4) ♠ K 10 9 3
♥ Q J 8 2
♦ —
♣ A 10 7 6 2

Double

5) ♠ K J 10
♥ A Q 3
♦ A Q J
♣ 10 9 7 2

1NT

6) ♠ J 8 3
♥ 5 2
♦ A K J 9 8
♣ A 7 3

Pass

Follow-up

Discuss each hand with the class as a whole. You might say something like this:

“On the first hand, there are 13 HCPs and 3 points for the singleton diamond, a total of 16 points. You have support in spades, hearts and clubs. What would you bid? (Double.)

“On the second hand, you have enough points to open the bidding. On this hand, however, you have to pass. Why? (No five-card suit for an overcall and no support for all the unbid suits for a takeout double.)

“On the third hand, there are enough points to bid something. Why is a double not a good idea on this hand? (No support for hearts.) What would you bid? (1 ♠.)

“On the fourth hand, there are only 10 HCPs and yet you have enough points to make a bid. Why? (Count 5 dummy points for the void.) What are your choices? (Overcalling 2 ♣ or making a takeout double.) What is the best bid? (Double is more flexible.)

“On the fifth hand, you have a balanced hand and 16 HCP. What bid would you make? (1NT.) On the last hand, you might feel like bidding diamonds, too, or making a penalty double. Why can't you do either of these things? (No point in bidding the opponent's suit — you are happy to defend 1 ♦. A double would be for takeout.) What would you do? (Pass.)”

Conclusion

“The takeout double requires an opening bid (counting dummy points) and support for the unbid suits or a hand strong enough to stand on its own. It's a good way to get into the bidding when an opponent has opened the bidding.”

EXERCISE SEVEN: Review of Advances After Takout Doubles**Introduction**

It's a good idea to talk about each example with the whole class. Otherwise, too much time is spent on reviewing a bidding concept when this is a course on the play of the hand.

“When your partner makes a takeout double, partner is asking you to bid your best suit — regardless of the strength of your hand. Even with zero points, you are being asked to bid. The only time you don't have to bid is when the opponent on your right does something other than “pass.” That relieves you of the obligation to respond. However, you still should try to say something with at least 8 points. Partner has invited you to compete.

“On the other hand, if you have some extra strength, 9 to 11 points, you know the partnership is close to having enough combined strength for a game contract. You can show this by bidding one level higher than you would need to, inviting partner to go on to game with anything other than a bare minimum of 13 or 14 points.

“If you have 12 or more points, you, as the advancer, know there are enough points for a game.

“When choosing the suit to bid, focus on the unbid major(s). If you don't have a four-card major to bid, bid a minor suit. Only bid notrump when you have some strength in the opponent's suit. Remember that partner is likely to be very short in the opponent's suit.”

Instructions

“The opponent on your left opens the bidding 1♦. Your partner says double and the opponent on your right passes. How do you advance the bidding with each of the hands in Exercise Seven?”

1) ♠ 7 6 4
♥ J 9 8 3
♦ J 8 7 2
♣ 10 8

1♥

2) ♠ A 9 8 4
♥ 10 2
♦ 9 4 3
♣ Q J 8 5

1♠

3) ♠ 7 4
♥ A Q 10 9 7
♦ 10 6 3
♣ K J 4

2♥

4) ♠ K 10 8
♥ 8 5
♦ K 8 2
♣ K Q 10 9 7

2NT

5) ♠ J 10 8
♥ J 9 4
♦ K Q 10 8
♣ A J 2

2NT

6) ♠ A 10
♥ Q J 8 6 3
♦ 9 4 2
♣ A Q 4

4♥

Follow-up

Since you want the bidding to be only a quick review, once again you should give the students enough information about each hand to lead them to a quick answer.

“On the first hand, you don’t have many points, but your partner has forced you to bid. You don’t want to mention the suit bid by the opponents, so what suit would you choose? (1♥.)

“On the second hand, remember that partner is eager to hear if you have a major suit. Which suit would you choose to bid? (1♠.)

“The third hand has more strength than the first two hands. How would you show this to your partner? (2♥.)

“On the fourth hand, your hand is worth 12 points, and you have one stopper in the opponent’s suit. You would like to show this to your partner. What would you bid? (2NT.)

“The fifth hand has 12 HCP. You would like to bid something, but your best suit is diamonds, the suit bid by the opponents. What would you bid? (2NT.)

“On the last hand, you have 14 points. You know that you should be in game, since partner has an opening bid and so do you. What bid would you make to get the partnership there? (4♥.)”

Conclusion

“The takeout double is forcing and advancer must reply unless the opponent on the right does not pass. In this exercise, since there wasn’t an intervening bid, advancer couldn’t pass. With a minimum hand, 0 to 10 points, advancer makes a bid as cheaply as possible. With a medium hand, 11 to 12 points, advancer jumps one level. With a maximum hand, 13 or more points, advancer makes sure that the partnership ends up in a game.”

EXERCISE EIGHT: Review of Rebids by the Takeout Doubler

Introduction

Students need to be reminded that the takeout doubler is very much like the opener and can have 13 to 21 points. The rebid identifies how strong the hand is.

“You can make a takeout double with 13 to 21 (or more) points. You’ll usually have another chance to be more specific about the strength of your double. If it was made with a minimum hand of 13 to 15 points, then your rebid will be ‘pass’ if partner makes a minimum response. Remember that partner might not have any points since you forced partner to bid something.

“If you have a medium hand of 16 to 18 points, you can raise partner’s response one level higher on the Bidding Scale. Partner could have made a minimum response with as many as 8 points.

“If you have a maximum hand of 19 to 21 points, you can jump a level on the Bidding Scale. Again, remember that partner might not have any points — and is likely to have very few when you are that strong and your opponent was able to open the bidding.

“It’s the same idea as the opening bidder’s rebid — *the more you have, the more you bid.*”

Instructions

There are only three hands in this exercise. Work with the students and guide them to the answers.

“The opponent on your right opens the bidding 1♥ and you say double. The opponent on your left passes, partner, the advancer, says 1♠ and opener passes. What do you rebid with the hands in Exercise Eight?”

1) ♠ K J 9 3
♥ 4
♦ K Q 8 2
♣ K 9 6 2

Pass

2) ♠ A K 10 8
♥ 9 5
♦ K Q J
♣ A 10 8 2

2♠

3) ♠ K Q 9 5
♥ 2
♦ A K J 3
♣ K J 10 9

3♠

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise with the class, giving them enough information to come up with a quick answer.

“In the first hand, you have only a minimum double. You’ve found your fit and partner hasn’t shown any extra strength. What’s your rebid? (Pass.)

“The second hand has 18 dummy points. You want to show this medium hand by moving up the Bidding Scale. What’s your rebid? (2♠.)

“The last hand is worth 20 dummy points. Partner could have a very weak hand. You don’t want to jump right to game and yet you want to jump the bidding to show the strength of the hand. What is the rebid? (3♠.)”

Conclusion

“The doubler can have a minimum, medium or maximum hand and needs to show which it is on the rebid.”

SAMPLE DEALS

EXERCISE NINE: Discarding a Loser

Introduction

“In this lesson, we’ve looked at methods of making a contract. One of these methods takes advantage of the unique power of the trump suit. The methods are to ruff a loser in the dummy or to throw away a loser on one of dummy’s winners. Both require a side suit that is unevenly divided with more cards on one side than the other.”

Instructions

“Turn up all of the cards in the first pre-dealt hand. Put them dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards: #4, Deal 1)

Dealer: North	♠ Q 10 9 7 6 3		
	♥ A K		
	♦ Q 3		
	♣ A 8 2		
♠ K 5		N	♠ A
♥ 8 7 5 2		W E	♥ Q 9 6 3
♦ 10 9 8 4		S	♦ J 7 5 2
♣ 10 4 3			♣ K Q J 6
	♠ J 8 4 2		
	♥ J 10 4		
	♦ A K 6		
	♣ 9 7 5		

The Bidding

“What does North open the bidding? (1♠.)

“With an opening bid and support for all of the unbid suits, what call does East make? (Double.)

“Can South support partner’s major suit? (Yes.) What does South respond? (2♠.)

“Does West have to advance partner’s takeout double when South bids? (No.) What does West bid? (Pass.)

“With a medium strength hand, what rebid does North make to invite partner to carry on to game? (3♠.)

“East passes. Does South accept North’s invitation? (Yes.) What would the contract be? (4♠.) Who would be the declarer? (North.)”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (East.) What would the opening lead be? (♣K)”

This is the first deal of the night, so you can go over the four steps of the PLAN. The students may forget from one week to the next.

“Let’s go over declarer’s PLAN:

1. *Pause to consider your objective* (Declarer can afford three losers.)
2. *Look at your winners and losers* (Declarer has four losers.)
3. *Analyze your alternatives* (Declarer can discard a club loser on the extra diamond winner in dummy.)
4. *Now put it all together*”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“Often when there is weakness in one suit, there is compensating strength in another. In this deal, the extra strength in diamonds provided an opportunity to eliminate a club loser. In putting it all together, declarer couldn’t draw trumps first, since the opponents would get the lead and take their club winners before declarer had discarded a loser.”

The Play

In the first exercise, the four steps of the PLAN were reviewed more formally. This time, questions can be asked that lead students to a decision about how to play the hand.

“Which player makes the opening lead? (South.) Assuming South chooses to lead a heart, which heart would South lead? (♥5.) When dummy plays a small card, which card will North play? (♥Q.) Why? (Third hand high.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. How can declarer eliminate an extra loser? (Discard a heart loser on the extra club winner.)

“Should declarer draw trumps first? (No.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“Declarer has to eliminate the heart loser before letting the opponents have the lead. On this deal, that means trumps can’t be played (because the opponents would get the lead) until declarer gets rid of the ♥J on the extra club winner.”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (West.) What would the opening lead be? (♦ A.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. Assuming the missing trumps are divided 3–2, how many losers does declarer have? (Six.) How can declarer eliminate one of the diamond losers? (Ruffing it in dummy.) How does declarer plan to play the trump suit? (Give up two tricks to the opponents.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“Declarer can eliminate losers in hand by ruffing them in the dummy. Declarer often has to manage the trump suit carefully in order to both ruff losers and draw the missing trumps.”

EXERCISE TWELVE: More Losers to Ruff**Introduction**

“Let’s look at another deal which illustrates how the trump suit can be used to help declarer make the contract.”

Instructions

“Turn up all of the cards in the fourth pre-dealt hand. Put them dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards: #4, Deal 4)

Dealer: West	♠ Q J 5 4	
	♥ Q J 3	
	♦ A 10 6	
	♣ K 6 3	
♠ 9 7 2	N W E S	♠ A 8 6 3
♥ 9 8 6 2		♥ A K 7 5
♦ K J 8		♦ Q 9 2
♣ A 9 2		♣ 10 7
	♠ K 10	
	♥ 10 4	
	♦ 7 5 4 3	
	♣ Q J 8 5 4	

The Bidding

“West doesn’t have enough to open the bidding. Does North have enough to open the bidding? (Yes.) Which suit would North choose to bid first? (1♣, lower of two three-card minor suits.)

“How can East compete in the auction? (Double.)

“What does South respond to North’s opening bid? (2♣.)

“Once South bids, West is no longer obliged to respond to partner’s takeout double. However, with 8 points, West should bid, if possible, since partner has issued an invitation to compete. What does West bid? (2♥.)

“With a minimum opening bid, North passes. Does East have a minimum, medium or maximum hand? (Minimum.) What does East rebid? (Pass.) What would the contract be? (2♥.) Who would be the declarer? (West.)”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (North.) What would the opening lead be? (♣3.) Assuming North leads a small club, which card would South play to the first trick? (♣J.) Why? (Third hand as high as necessary.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. Assuming the missing trumps are divided 3–2, how many losers does declarer have? (Six.)

“How can one of the losers be eliminated? (Declarer can ruff a club in the dummy.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“Declarer can eliminate a loser in hand by ruffing it in the dummy.”