

LESSON 7

Managing the Trump Suit

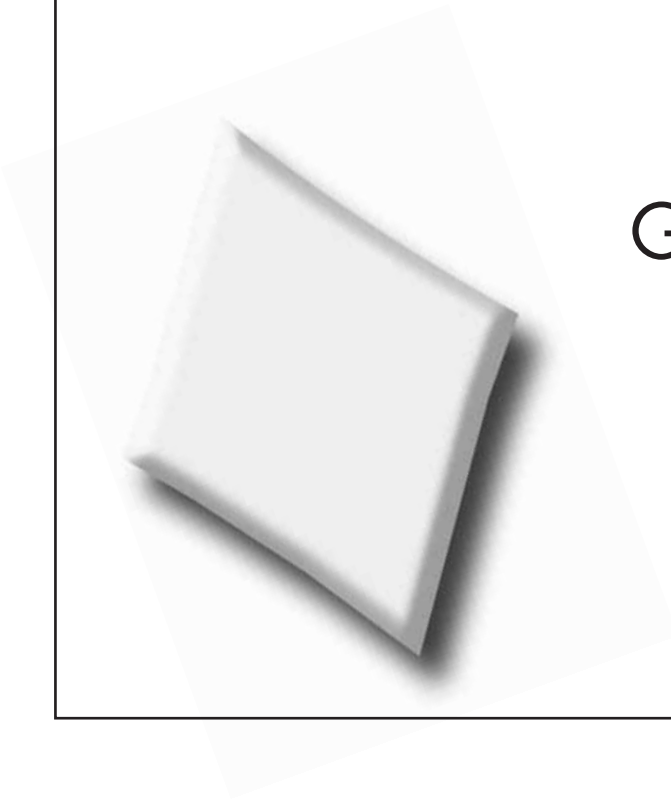


General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



GENERAL CONCEPTS

Play of the Hand

Drawing trumps

- Playing the trump suit
- When to draw trumps
 - Drawing trumps when you have all the tricks you need
 - Drawing trumps when you don't have to give up the lead
 - Drawing trumps when some of your losers are slow

Delaying drawing trumps

- When you have too many quick losers
- When you need to ruff losers
- When you need the trump suit for entries
- When you need a finesse in the trump suit

Maintaining control

- When the opponents have the outstanding high trump
- Ducking to maintain control
- When to draw the outstanding high trump

Developing long suits

- Establishing declarer's side suit
- Establishing dummy's side suit

Guidelines for Defense

Attitude signals

A ruff for the defense

Bidding

Slam bidding

Inviting a slam

Slam conventions

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“If you are playing in a suit (trump) contract, managing the trump suit is your most important task. After all, the smallest trump card can have the same value as an ace in another suit. The trumps give you control of the opponents’ long suits. They also help you get the extra tricks you need.

“There are maxims in countries around the world that advise players to draw trumps. In Pakistan, they say *‘pull the opponents’ teeth out.’* In Canada, they say *‘get the kiddies off the street.’* In London, they tell stories about bridge players who, because they failed to draw trumps, are left *‘penniless begging for money for a cup of coffee.’*

“It would be nice if it were that simple. Although the general guideline is to draw the opponents’ trumps at the first opportunity, there are exceptions. Sometimes, it’s best to delay drawing trumps altogether or to draw some, play another suit and then go back to drawing trumps.

“In this lesson, we’ll see how to better manage our trump suit.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: Playing the Trump Suit

Introduction

“In many respects, the trump suit is like any other suit. Winners can be developed through promotion, length or the finesse. Since your side has named the trump suit, you probably have more than the opponents. Most of the time, you have at least eight cards in the trump suit. That means that the opponents have five or fewer. Drawing trumps can be handled in a variety of ways. Let’s look at some of them. Assume spades are trumps and lay out the following cards in the spade suit:

N — A J 8 3

S — K Q 7 4 2

“In a trump contract, you count losers. You have nine cards and the opponents have only four. Since you have the four highest cards in the suit, you won’t have to lose any tricks, even if the missing trumps are divided 4–0. You just need to take your winners.

“How many times (rounds) you must play the trump suit before all the opponents’ trumps are drawn depends on how the missing cards are divided. If they are 2–2, you’ll need to play the suit twice. If they are 3–1, you’ll have to play three rounds to get them all out. If they are 4–0, you’ll have to play the suit four times, leaving no trumps in dummy.

“Now replace dummy’s ♠A with the ♠10:

N — J 10 8 3

S — K Q 7 4 2

“The only high card missing is the ace, so you would expect to lose one trick in the trump suit. You draw trumps by promotion, driving out the opponents’ ♠A.

“To draw trumps, you have to give up the lead to the opponents. This is a common occurrence and you should not be worried about losing a trick. Your basic aim is to extract the opponents’ small trumps so they can’t harm you. As we shall see later, however, there are some further considerations, if you are going to have to give up the lead in order to draw trumps.

“Take away dummy’s ♠J and replace declarer’s ♠K and ♠Q with the ♠A and ♠6:

N — 10 8 3

S — A 7 6 4 2

“You have one sure winner, but how many losers you have depends on how the missing trumps are divided. With five cards out, you would expect them to be divided as evenly as possible, 3–2. In this case, you can establish the suit through length, giving up two tricks to the opponents and ending up with three winners.

“Now replace the ♠7 and ♠6 with the ♠Q and ♠J:

N — 10 8 3 “Now the suit can be developed using the finesse. If the missing cards are divided 3–2 and your right hand opponent has the ♠K, you won’t lose any tricks in the suit if you lead the ♠10 from dummy and take a finesse. If the king is on your left, you’ll have to lose a trick in the suit. This is a case where you don’t know whether or not you’ll have to give up the lead while drawing trumps.”

S — A Q J 4 2

Instructions

“If you decide the best plan is to draw all of the missing trumps, how would you proceed with each of the trump suits in Exercise One (high cards, promotion, length, finesse)? How many tricks would you have to lose if the missing high cards were favorably located and the suit divided as you might expect? How many times would you have to play the trump suit to draw all of the missing trumps?”

DUMMY: 1) K Q 6 2) J 9 8 5 3) A 9 5 4) Q J 10 5) K 9 6 3
 DECLARER: A J 9 5 4 2 Q 10 7 4 8 7 6 4 2 A 9 8 7 6 A 7 5 2

Method:	<u>High cards</u>	<u>Promotion</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Finesse</u>	<u>Length</u>
# of Losers:	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
# Rounds:	<u>3 (3–1)</u>	<u>3 (3–2)</u>	<u>3 (3–2)</u>	<u>3 (3–2)</u>	<u>3 (3–2)</u>

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. If the students have any difficulty understanding the concepts, go back to the “drawing board.” Have them put the suit out on the table the way they did in the introduction. It will clarify things for the students to see the problems. For instance, suppose they had trouble with the last example. You might say:

“Take the heart suit and put out declarer’s cards and dummy’s cards from the last example:

NORTH (DUMMY)

K 9 6 3



SOUTH (DECLARER)

A 7 5 2

“Randomly deal the rest of the hearts as evenly as possible between the defenders’ hands. You’ll see that one opponent has two and the other three. Now play the trump suit. How many tricks did you take? (♥A, ♥K and a small heart trick.) How many did the opponents take? (One.)”

Conclusion

“When drawing trumps, you can set up trump winners through promotion, long suits or the finesse. Don’t play more rounds of the suit than necessary. There are 13 trumps in total. If you have eight, the opponents have only five ($13 - 8 = 5$). Keep track of their trumps. When they don’t have any left, don’t lead any more.”

EXERCISE TWO: Looking at Quick Losers and Slow Losers**Introduction**

“Before you decide whether or not to draw trumps, consult your PLAN. In the following exercise, you’re in a contract of 4♠ and can afford three losers. You’ll need to determine how many *quick losers* and how many *slow losers* you have.

“Remember that a quick loser is one that the opponents can take as soon as they get the lead. A slow loser is one that they can’t take before they give the lead back to you. Lay out the following diamond suit:

♦ A 5 4



♦ K 7 3

“How many losers are there? (One.) Is it quick or slow? (Slow. You get the lead with the ace and king, before the opponents are entitled to their winner.)

“Replace the ♦ A and ♦ 5 with the ♦ Q and ♦ J:

♦ Q J 4



♦ K 7 3

“How many losers are there? (One.) Is it quick or slow? (Quick. The opponents can win a trick with the ace as soon as they get the lead.)”

Instructions

“The opening lead is the ♥Q against your contract of 4♠. How many losers do you have in each of the examples in Exercise Two after winning the first trick with the ♥A? Are they quick or slow?”

1) DUMMY

♠ A Q 8 6
♥ A 9 5
♦ 7 4 2
♣ K 5 4



DECLARER

♠ K J 7 5 4
♥ 10 8 3
♦ Q
♣ A Q J 2

2) DUMMY

♠ Q 10 8 2
♥ A K 3
♦ J 8
♣ K Q J 5



DECLARER

♠ K J 9 7 6
♥ 9 8 4
♦ Q 10
♣ A 8 2

3) DUMMY

♠ J 9 6 4
♥ A 8 4
♦ A Q 3
♣ Q 7 4



DECLARER

♠ Q 10 8 7 3
♥ 7 6 2
♦ K 5
♣ A K 8

Quick losers: 3Quick losers: 3Quick losers: 4Slow losers: 0Slow losers: 1Slow losers: 0Total losers: 3Total losers: 4Total losers: 4**Follow-up**

Discuss the exercise.

Conclusion

“Before making a decision as to whether or not to draw trumps right away, declarer has to know how many quick losers and slow losers there are.”

EXERCISE THREE: Drawing Trumps

Introduction

“Deciding whether or not you can afford to draw trumps right away involves three considerations. The first consideration is whether or not you need some of your trumps for other purposes. For example, if you’re planning to ruff losers in the dummy, you can’t afford to leave fewer trumps in dummy than you need to ruff your losers.

“Assuming you don’t need your trumps for any other purpose, you must then consider whether or not you’ll have to give up the lead to the opponents while drawing trumps. If you don’t have to give up the lead, you can go ahead and draw trumps and then go about your other business.

“If you do have to give up the lead, there is a third consideration. Do you have too many quick losers? If you have too many quick losers, you can’t afford to give up the lead, until you have reduced the number of quick losers to a number you can afford. On the other hand, if you don’t have too many quick losers — some of your losers are slow — you can start drawing trumps right away. The opponents can’t defeat your contract when they get the lead.

“This sounds a little complicated. Let’s try an exercise to give you a feeling of when you draw trumps and when you delay drawing trumps.”

Instructions

“The opening lead is the ♥Q against your contract of 4♠. In each of the following examples, will declarer have to lose the lead to draw trumps? Should declarer start by drawing the trumps? Give a reason for your answer.”

1) DUMMY

♠ A Q 8 6
♥ A 9 5
♦ 7 4 2
♣ K 5 4



DECLARER

♠ K J 7 5 4
♥ 10 8 3
♦ Q
♣ A Q J 2

2) DUMMY

♠ Q 10 8 2
♥ A K 3
♦ J 8
♣ K Q J 5



DECLARER

♠ K J 9 7 6
♥ 9 8 4
♦ Q 10
♣ A 8 2

3) DUMMY

♠ J 9 6 4
♥ A 8 4
♦ A Q 3
♣ Q 7 4



DECLARER

♠ Q 10 8 7 3
♥ 7 6 2
♦ K 5
♣ A K 8

Draw Trumps? Yes

Draw Trumps? Yes

Draw Trumps? No

Reason: Only 3 losers

Reason: One loser is slow

Reason: Quick losers

Follow-up

Discuss this exercise with the class as a whole. Discussions within smaller groups might get too complicated. Say something like this:

“In the first example, do you draw trumps right away? (Yes.) Why? (You don’t need the trumps for any other purpose and you have only three losers, which you can afford. You want to *get the kiddies off the street* as fast as possible since they represent the only danger to your contract.

“Do you draw trumps right away on the second example? (Yes.) Why? (You have four losers, but only three of them are quick. Your heart loser is slow. When you give up the lead, the opponents will have to give it back before they can take a heart trick. You can finish drawing trumps and then safely discard your heart loser on dummy’s extra club trick.)

“In the third example, should you play trumps right away? (No.) Why not? (There are four quick losers, one too many. You’ll have to dispose of one of your quick losers before giving up the lead. You must delay drawing trumps and, instead, discard one of your heart losers on dummy’s extra diamond winner. You are down to three losers and can safely start to draw trumps.)”

Conclusion

“It’s difficult to have hard and fast rules about when to draw the trumps. The key is to take the various considerations into account when making your PLAN: Do you need the trumps for more pressing purposes? Would you have to give up the lead while drawing trumps? Do you have too many quick losers to be able to give up the lead?”

EXERCISE FOUR: Side Suit Establishment

Introduction

“If you’re playing in notrump, you often have to give up the lead to the opponents in order to establish a suit. In a trump contract, you can sometimes establish a side suit without losing the lead because you can utilize the trump suit.

“Suppose you’re playing with hearts as the trump suit and you have lots of entries to the dummy. Take the diamonds and lay out the following side suit:

NORTH (DUMMY)

A 8 6 4 2



SOUTH (DECLARER)

K 7

“Playing in a notrump contract, you may develop extra tricks from length in such a suit. You play the \spadesuit K, \spadesuit A and another diamond. If the six missing diamonds are divided 3–3, dummy’s two remaining cards are winners. If the suit breaks 4–2, you can go back to dummy and lead the suit again, giving up another trick to the opponents. Now your remaining diamond is a winner.

“In a suit contract, you can do better. If you need to develop a couple of extra winners on which to discard losers, you can use the trump suit to help you out. After playing the \spadesuit K and \spadesuit A, you can lead the suit again, but instead of giving the trick to the opponents, you can ruff it. If the missing cards are 3–3, you will have established two extra winners. If the suit breaks 4–2, you can go back over to dummy and lead the suit again and ruff it. Now you have one extra winner without giving up a trick to the opponents.”

Instructions

“How would you expect the missing cards to be divided in each of the side suits in Exercise Four? How many trumps would you need to establish the side suit if the missing cards were divided as you would expect?”

DUMMY:	1) A K 8 6 4	2) A K 9 6 4	3) A 9 7 6 3 2	4) A K 9 8 4 2	5) A Q 7 4 2
DECLARER:	3 2	2	5	5 3	K 5
Division:	<u>4–2</u>	<u>4–3</u>	<u>4–2</u>	<u>3–2</u>	<u>4–2</u>
Trumps required:	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

Remember, you don't have to do every example in the exercise. You could say that the first example is essentially identical to the one already discussed and skip over it. Or you could leave the last couple of examples for homework.

Conclusion

“The trump cards can work well with a side suit to help establish winners without giving up the lead to the opponents.”

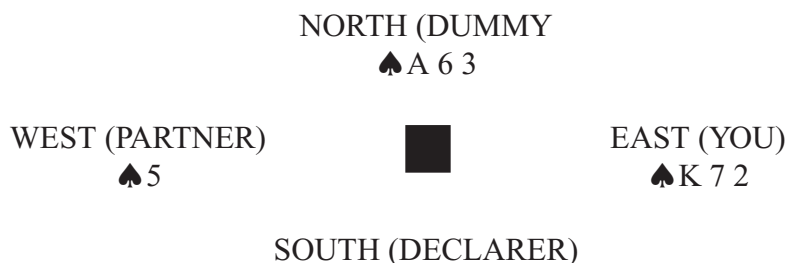
EXERCISE FIVE: Attitude Signals**Introduction**

“When you’re defending a contract, it’s important to try to communicate with your partner — to tell what suits you like and don’t like. You can’t do this by kicking partner under the table or through a raised eyebrow or any other gesture. You can do it only with the cards you play.

“Those small cards can be useful because some are smaller than others. For example, suppose you have the 8–4–2 in a suit, three small cards. The two is smaller than the eight. This is the basis for signaling to your partner. When you are going to play a small card to a trick, if you play a very small one, such as the two, you tell your partner you aren’t interested in the suit. You send a discouraging signal. On the other hand, if you play the eight, one of the larger small cards, you tell your partner you like the suit. You send an encouraging signal.

“Such attitude signals are very important throughout the play. In general, a high card (seven or higher) is encouraging. A low card (five or smaller) is discouraging. Of course, you will not always have the luxury of sending such clear-cut signals. Your only small cards in a suit may be the 3 and 2. If you like the suit, the best you can do is play an “encouraging 3” (maybe partner will notice that the 2 is missing). Similarly, if you were dealt the 8 and 9, it’s going to be difficult to send a discouraging signal.

“Let’s look at an example. Lay out the following spades for yourself (East) and dummy, with your partner leading the ♠5:



“Suppose the ♠A is played from the dummy. You can’t win the trick, but you do have a choice of playing either the 7 or the 2. The 7 would say you like the suit, and the 2 would say you don’t. Which card would you choose? (The 7, because you have the ♠K and can win the next spade trick.)

“Let’s look at an example in the exercises.”

Instructions

“You are defending a contract of 3NT, and your partner leads the ♠5. Declarer plays the ♠A from dummy. Circle the spade you would play in each of the examples in Exercise Five.”

1) DUMMY

♠ A 6
♥ K Q 10 5
♦ 8 6 4
♣ Q 9 7 3

2) DUMMY

♠ A 6
♥ K Q 10 5
♦ 8 6 4
♣ Q 9 7 3

PARTNER
♠ 5



YOU
♠ K(8)2
♥ J 4 3
♦ Q 9 7 3
♣ 10 4 2

PARTNER
♠ 5



YOU
♠ 8 4(2)
♥ J 4 3
♦ A Q 9 7
♣ 10 4 2

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise.

Conclusion

“Sometimes you can give your partner an attitude signal to tell partner whether or not you like a particular suit. A high card is generally encouraging. A low card is discouraging. Of course, such signals will only be useful if partner is watching for them!”

EXERCISE SIX: Bidding Slams

Introduction

“The decision on what level to play the contract is usually between partscore and game. With fewer than 25 combined points, the partnership steers toward the best partscore. With 25 or more points, the partnership heads for game.

“There is a large bonus for bidding a slam, however, in addition to the game bonus in the scoring. A small slam is a contract to take 12 tricks and a grand slam is a contract to take all 13. To get to a small slam, the partnership should have somewhere between 33 and 36 combined points. To bid a grand slam requires 37 or more points.

“How does the partnership know when to bid a slam? When one of the partners has clearly described the strength of the hand, the other partner will be able to add up the combined points. For example, if opener bids 1NT showing 15 to 17 HCP and responder has 17 points, opener knows the partnership has somewhere between 32 and 34 points and probably belongs at the slam level. Similarly, if opener has 20 points and bids 1♠, and responder bids 2NT showing at least 13 HCP, opener knows the partnership belongs in slam. Remember, whenever you are suggesting as responder either 2NT or 3NT as a final contract, you value your hand with HCP.

“In which strain should the partnership play? Unlike game level contracts, all slam level contracts require the same number of tricks. There’s no priority given to the major suits or to notrump. You can bid a slam in any Golden Fit of eight or more cards.”

Instructions

“Your partner opens the bidding 1NT. What do you respond with each of the hands in Exercise Six?”

1) ♠ K J 9
♥ A Q 3
♦ Q 9 4
♣ K Q J 2

2) ♠ A
♥ 10 8 2
♦ K Q J 8 6 3
♣ A Q 5

3) ♠ A K Q
♥ A 7 2
♦ Q J 10 7
♣ K Q J

Opener’s
range: 15 to 17

Responder’s
points: 18

Combined
range: 33 to 35

Response: 6NT

Opener’s
range: 15 to 17

Responder’s
points: 18

Combined
range: 33 to 35

Response: 6♦

Opener’s
range: 15 to 17

Responder’s
points: 22

Combined
range: 37 to 39

Response: 7NT

Follow-up

“In the first hand, responder has 18 HCP. Even if opener has the minimum, 15, the total is 33 ($15 + 18 = 33$). It’s interesting to note that if opener has 17 points, the total is 35 — not enough for a grand slam. With no apparent Golden Fit, responder would jump directly to 6NT.

“In the second hand, responder has 18 points and again knows that the partnership should be playing at the slam level. Since opener is showing a balanced hand, opener must have at least two diamonds, so there is a Golden Fit. Knowing both the level and strain, responder can jump right to 6♦.

“The last hand looks too good to believe. Partner starts with 1NT and you have a monstrous 22 HCP hand. Even if opener has only 15 points, there’s a total of 37. That’s enough for a grand slam. A grand slam doesn’t come up that often, so when it does, you want to be sure to bid it. Responder should jump to 7NT.”

Conclusion

“If you know that there are 33 to 36 combined points, you should strive to make sure the partnership gets to the slam level. If you can see that there are more than 36 combined points, you should bid a grand slam. Look for a Golden Fit. If you cannot find one, play the slam in notrump.”

EXERCISE SEVEN: Inviting Slam

Introduction

“Sometimes you know a slam is possible, but it depends on whether partner is at the top or bottom of the range promised. You need more information. You want to invite partner to bid a slam if partner is at the top of the range. If not, partner can decline the invitation and pass.

“This is similar to the situation where you invite partner to game by raising 1NT to 2NT. You go beyond the normal partscore of 1NT, but you don’t go all the way to game. To invite partner to bid a slam, you bid one level beyond the safe game contract. For example, if partner opens the bidding 1NT, you can invite him to slam by bidding 4NT, one level beyond the game contract of 3NT.

“Let’s look at a couple of examples.”

Instructions

“Your partner opens the bidding 1NT. What do you respond with each of the hands in Exercise Seven?”

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

2) ♠ K J 10 8 7 3
♥ Q 3
♦ A Q 8
♣ Q 5

Opener’s
range: 15 to 17

Opener’s
range: 15 to 17

Responder’s
points: 16 HCP

Responder’s
points: 16 total points

Combined
range: 32 to 34

Combined
range: 32 to 34

Response: 4NT

Response: 5♠

Follow-up

“In the first hand, responder has 16 HCP and knows that the combined range is somewhere between 31 and 33 points. With a minimum, opener doesn’t want to be in slam. If opener has a maximum, there should be a slam. With no apparent Golden Fit, responder bids 4NT to invite opener to bid a slam. Opener will accept with 17 HCP, by bidding 6NT, and decline with 15 HCP, by passing. With 16 HCP — opener will flip a coin.

“On the second hand, responder has 16 total points, counting 2 points for the six-card suit. Responder uses total points, because responder does not expect the final contract to be notrump. Responder knows there is a Golden Fit in spades and can invite opener to slam by going one level beyond game and bidding 5♠.”

Conclusion

“If responder knows there is a possibility for a slam, responder can invite opener by bidding one level beyond game.”

Naturally, there are many more considerations for bidding slams, but this quantitative method works well for the students. More sophisticated methods can wait until they are more experienced.

EXERCISE EIGHT: Responding to Blackwood

Introduction

“Sometimes you have enough points for a slam but are missing two key cards, such as two aces or the ace and king in one suit. Given the chance, you might be able to develop the 12 tricks you need. Since the opponents get to make the opening lead, however, they get the first opportunity to take their two tricks.

“To help out in such a situation, Easley Blackwood invented the Blackwood convention, so you can find out how many aces your partner has. Combining this knowledge with the number of aces in your hand, you quickly learn if you are missing too many.

“The Blackwood convention is used only after the partnership has agreed on a trump suit. It works this way. Once a trump suit has been agreed upon, a bid of 4NT is artificial (conventional) and asks partner how many aces there are in the hand. Partner responds by bidding as cheaply as possible, 5♣ with no aces. Another step up, 5♦ with one ace. One more step, 5♥ with two aces and 5♠ with three aces. With all four, partner responds 5♣ as though there weren’t any aces in the hand. Presumably you can tell whether partner has none or all four.

“Let’s see how it all works.”

Instructions

“You open the bidding 1♠, and your partner responds 4NT, the Blackwood convention (agreeing spades are trumps by inference). What do you rebid with each of the hands in Exercise Eight?”

1) ♠ A K 9 7 3
♥ J 7 4
♦ 8 4
♣ A 5 4

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

3) ♠ Q 10 8 6 2
♥ A 2
♦ K Q 6 4
♣ J 2

of aces: 2

of aces: 0

of aces: 1

Response: 5♥

Response: 5♣

Response: 5♦

4) ♠ A 10 8 7 4
♥ J 2
♦ A 6 3
♣ A 8 6

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

of aces: 3

of aces: 4

Response: 5♠

Response: 5♣

Follow-up

“In the first hand, there are two aces. What would you respond? (5♥.) This will tell partner what partner needs to know. Missing two aces, partner can stay out of slam by signing off in 5♠. If only one ace is missing, partner can bid 6♠.

“In the second hand, what do you bid without any aces? (5♣.) Notice how this has nothing to do with clubs. It’s an artificial response, similar to the 2♦ response to Stayman or the 2NT response to a strong two-bid when you have a weak hand. Partner won’t leave you in 5♣. Partner will return to the agreed trump suit at the appropriate level.

“In the third hand, what do you bid to show one ace? (5♦.)

“In the fourth hand, how do you show three aces? (5♠.)

“In the last hand, how do you show all four aces? (5♣.) The reason you use 5♣ rather than the next step after 5♠, 5NT, is that if the partnership has all the aces, your partner can ask about kings by bidding 5NT. This is an extension of the Blackwood convention. It would only be used if you were interested in a grand slam, since any response will put you at the six level. You show kings in a similar fashion to aces — 6♣ for none, 6♦ for one, etc.”

Conclusion

“The Blackwood convention is a way of finding out how many aces the partnership has. It can be used when this information will be helpful in deciding whether or not to bid a slam.”

The Gerber convention is also mentioned in the text. You can ask the students to read about it rather than risk confusing them with too many artificial bids. You also might tell them that they will probably do well in their slam bidding, even if they don’t use the Blackwood convention. It’s mentioned in order for them to have an answer next time someone asks, “Do you play Blackwood?”

SAMPLE DEALS

EXERCISE NINE: Delaying Drawing Trumps

Introduction

“It’s a good idea to draw the opponents’ trumps as soon as possible. Sometimes, though, other things take priority. In this deal, the contract is very high, and the opener can’t afford too many losers. There is one more loser than declarer can afford, and so it’s necessary to eliminate one. Before you can decide when the trumps should be drawn, consider whether or not you would lose the lead if you draw trumps and what the opponents would do if they got in the lead.”

Instructions

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

(E–Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 1)

Dealer: North	♠ 10 8 3 2 ♥ K 8 4 2 ♦ 8 ♣ 9 7 5 2				
♠ K J 5 ♥ A 6 ♦ Q 9 7 5 2 ♣ J 10 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A Q ♥ 9 7 ♦ K J 10 6 4 3 ♣ A K Q
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 9 7 6 4 ♥ Q J 10 5 3 ♦ A ♣ 8 6 4				

The Bidding

“North passes. What does East open the bidding? (1♦.)

“South passes. West has 12 total points and support for opener’s suit. What does West respond? (3♦. This is the best bid available. This is a tough decision because no bid we have discussed to date covers the situation.)

“North passes. How many points does East have? (21 — 19 HCPs plus 2 for the six-card suit.) How many points is West showing? (13 to 15). At what level does the partnership belong? (Slam.) Is there a Golden Fit? (Yes — diamonds.) What does East rebid? (6♦.)”

The students might want to use Blackwood at this point, which is fine. West will show one ace, and East will bid the slam. You can point out that Blackwood is not particularly helpful here, since it only tells you how many aces partner has, not which aces. The partnership could still be missing the ♥A and ♥K, for example. Without adding the complexity of cuebids, students are better off using quantitative slam bidding than trying to figure out when Blackwood would be helpful.

“How does the auction proceed? (Pass, pass, pass.) What is the contract? (6♦.) Who is the declarer? (East.)”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (South.) What would the opening lead be? (♥Q.) Assuming dummy wins the first trick, which card would North play? (♥8, encouraging.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN:

1. *Pause to consider your objective*
2. *Look at your winners and losers*
3. *Analyze your alternatives*
4. *Now put it all together*

“How can declarer eliminate a loser? (Discard a heart on the extra spade winner in dummy, playing the ♠A and then overtaking the ♠Q with the ♠K.) Should declarer draw trumps first? (No.) If not, why not? (Too many quick losers.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“Before you can decide whether or not to draw the trumps, consult your PLAN. With too many losers, make certain you eliminate any you can’t afford before giving up the lead to the opponents. You may have to delay drawing trumps if doing so gives the opponents the lead.”

“East passes. Does South accept partner’s invitation? (No.) Why not? (South has a minimum, 13 points.) What would be the contract? (5 ♠.) Who would be the declarer? (South.)”

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? (West.) With the opponents having bid three suits, what might be a good suit to lead? (Hearts.) If West leads the ♥A, which card should East play? (♥10 or ♥8.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. How does declarer plan to eliminate the club losers? (Discard one on the diamonds and ruff one in dummy.) If the opponents start by playing three rounds of hearts, why must declarer be careful? (Declarer must play as high a trump as declarer can afford to avoid an overruff.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“Declarer may not be the only player who can ruff a card. When an opponent could compete to win a trick by ruffing, declarer has to be sure to play as high a trump as declarer can afford.”

EXERCISE ELEVEN: Maintaining Control

Introduction

“If declarer draws the final trump when an opponent holds a higher one, it uses two of declarer’s trumps for only one of the opponent’s, and declarer still loses the trick. In most cases, declarer should let the opponent take the outstanding high trump when the opponent wants to.

“There’s another reason for doing this. Declarer uses the trumps to control the opponents’ long suits. If declarer runs out of trumps, the hand is played as if it were notrump, and the opponents could take too many tricks in a side suit.”

Instructions

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

(E–Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 3)

Dealer: South	♠ Q 10 3		
	♥ 10 8 6 4		
	♦ K Q 8 7		
	♣ 8 5		
♠ A 9 7 6 2		♠ K 8 5	
♥ A K Q		♥ J 9 3 2	
♦ 4		♦ J 10 3	
♣ K Q 6 3		♣ J 10 7	
	♠ J 4		
	♥ 7 5		
	♦ A 9 6 5 2		
	♣ A 9 4 2		

The Bidding

“South passes. What is West’s opening bid? (1♠.)

“North passes. With 6 points and support for partner’s five-card suit, what does East respond? (2♠.)

“South passes. Does West have a minimum, medium or maximum hand? (Maximum.) What does West rebid? (4♠.)

“How does the auction proceed from there? (Pass, pass, pass.) What would the contract be? (4♠.) Who would be the declarer? (West.)”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (North.) What would the opening lead be? (♦K.) What is South’s attitude toward the opening lead? (Encouraging.) Which card does South play? (♦9.)

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. How many losers can declarer afford? (Three.) How many losers does declarer have? (Three.) How must the missing trumps divide in order for declarer to have only one trump loser? (3–2.) Should declarer draw any trumps before playing any winners? (Yes.) Why? (So the opponents can’t play their small trumps on declarer’s winners.) Should declarer draw the last outstanding trump? (No.) Why not? (Declarer will lose control if the opponents continue leading diamonds.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal. You also may want to demonstrate what happens if declarer plays three rounds of trumps and the opponents lead more diamonds.

Conclusion

“When there is one trump card outstanding that is higher than anything held by the declarer, it’s generally a good idea not to draw that trump.”

The Play

“Which player makes the opening lead? (East.) Assuming that the opening lead is the ♦ A (you shouldn’t lead away from an ace against a suit contract), which card will partner play? (♦ 2.) Why? (Discouraging signal.)”

You may want to direct the lead as the ♦ A without any discussion. Whether or not to lead an ace against a slam is a complex subject. It’s certainly a reasonable lead against this particular auction.

“Declarer starts by making a PLAN. How many losers can declarer afford? (One.) How many losers does declarer have? (Two.) How does declarer plan to eliminate the extra loser? (Discard a club on dummy’s heart suit after establishing it.)

“How many entries to the dummy will declarer need to establish the heart suit, if it breaks as expected? (Three. One in the heart suit itself. One outside entry to ruff another heart. One more to get to the established winner.) Can declarer afford to draw trumps first? (Yes. Declarer doesn’t have to give up the lead.)”

Follow-up

Have the students bid and play the deal.

Conclusion

“With the help of the trump suit, an extra winner in the dummy was created. Now there was a winner on which to discard a loser from declarer’s hand.”