

# Basic Beginning Bridge Lesson 2 – Declarer Play

More information: <https://bridge.careytutor.com>

# Objective for Lesson 2

- Main objectives:
  - Learn how to plan and play the hand as Declarer
- Secondary objectives:
  - No Trump contracts: count **winners** and identify **stoppers**
  - Suit contracts: count **losers**, then winners
  - Practice methods for winning tricks

# Declarer Play – Setup

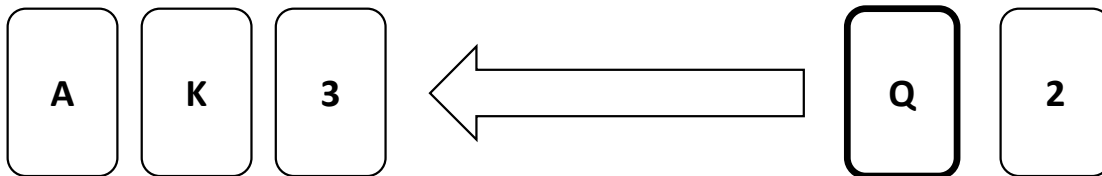
- Who becomes the Declarer?
  - Determine the final contract.
  - Determine who on the high-bidding team bid that suit (or No Trump) first.
- The defender to the Declarer's left makes the opening lead.
  - I recommend that the defender place the card face down before exposing.
- The **Dummy** hand is controlled by Declarer.
  - Declarer's partner displays their hand.
  - The partner is (mostly) silent during the play.
  - The partner will play a card only after Declarer calls for it.

# Plan the Play – No Trump Contract

- Plan the play before playing to the first trick. No Trump games are often a race – which pair sets up their tricks first.
- Count **winners** (primary importance).
  - **Immediate winners** are “sure things” – e.g., AK in a suit = two sure winners.
  - **Potential winners** may be “promoted” by driving out opponent’s high cards or playing a long suit.
  - **Stoppers** are high cards in a suit that stop the opponents from winning all.

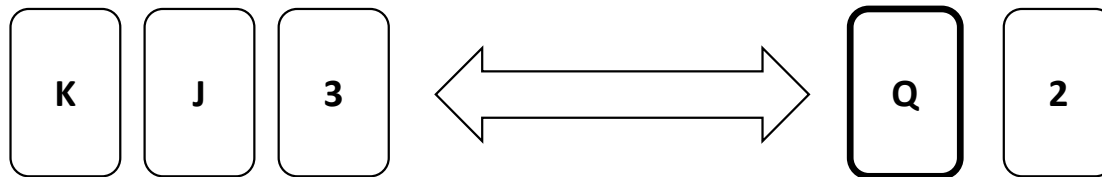
# Ways of Winning Tricks – High Cards

- Playing a top sequence of high cards (“immediate winners”).
  - With high cards in both hands, win tricks in the short hand first.

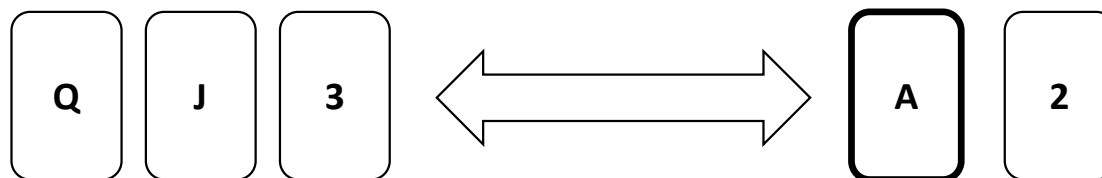


# Ways of Winning Tricks – Promotion

- Promoting an almost top sequence after losing to a higher card.
  - Play the Queen to drive out the Ace – win two tricks.

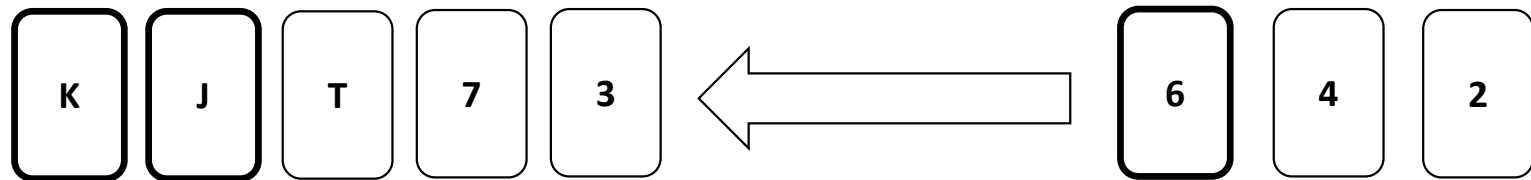


- Play the Ace, then the Queen (or Jack) to drive out the King – win two tricks.



## Ways of Winning Tricks – Long Suit

- Playing a long suit to promote tricks with smaller cards



After playing the K and J (and eventually driving out the A and Q), three additional tricks may be won.

# No Trump Contract - Count Your Winners

- 3 NT Contract

♠KJT2   ♥AK7   ♦A63   ♣K74

North

♦Q led by West

East

South

♠Q54   ♥432   ♦K4   ♣A6532

Plan:

- 6 immediate winners
- Drive out spade Ace
- Promote 3 winners

# Practice – Play in a No Trump Contract

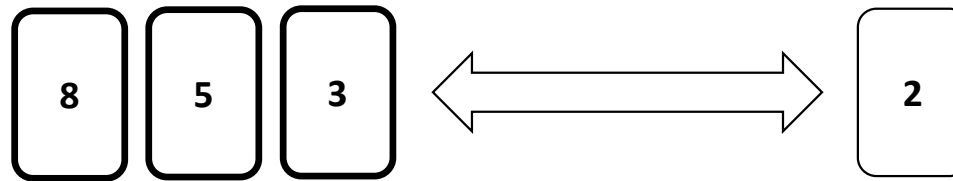
- How many sure winners? Enough to satisfy the contract?
- Where might you find additional winners?
- How do the defenders pose a threat?

# Plan the Play – Suit Contract

- Plan the play before playing to the first trick.
- Count **losers**, then winners.
  - **Quick losers** are immediately lost if defenders play Ace (or Ace-King, etc.).
  - **Slow losers** may be temporarily avoided if you hold a high card in the suit.
  - Eliminate losers by a) **discarding** when playing a long suit and b) **ruffing**.

# Ways of Winning Tricks – Ruffing

- **Ruffing** in a short suit



After playing the 8, the 5 and 3 may be ruffed in the short hand with trumps.

# When to Plan to Ruff?

- When is ruffing in a short suit useful?
  - In a suit contract where a losing low card in a long suit may be ruffed in the other hand.
- When is ruffing in a short suit not useful?
  - When the hand has no trumps with which to ruff.
  - When there is a risk that opponents may play trumps early, limiting your ruffs.
  - When there is a risk of an opponent over-ruffing.

# Trumps - To Draw or Not to Draw?

- When drawing trumps won't affect your ruffing, draw trumps early.
  - “When in doubt, draw trumps”, “Get the kids out”, “Get the children off the street”
- When setting up a long suit, generally draw trumps first – to avoid opponent ruffs.
- When ruffing is critical, draw only a round or two of trumps (or none).
  - Count your losers.
  - Plan your hand before playing to the first trick.
  - If you need ruffs, don't draw all the trumps early.

# Suit Contract - Count Your Losers

- 4 Spade Contract

♠KJT2   ♥AK7   ♦A63   ♣K74

North

♣8 led by West

East

South

♠Q543   ♥43   ♦K4   ♣A6532

Plan:

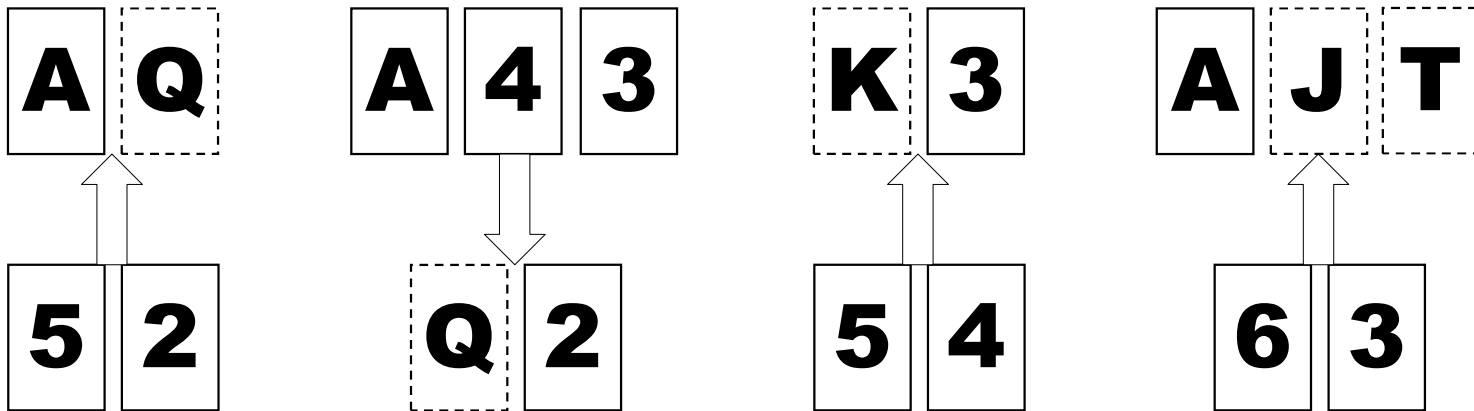
- 1 immediate loser
- 3 potential losers
- Win with the club Ace
- Draw trumps (if 3 – 2)
- Ruff the third heart (or diamond) to eliminate a loser

# Practice – Drawing Trumps Vs. Ruffing

- How many possible losers? Enough to fail the contract?
- Where might you eliminate some losers?
- What threats do defenders pose?

# What Are Finesses?

- Finesses are attempts to win a trick with a card when the opponents hold a higher card in that suit.
- Lead a low card toward the card you hope to make good—the card you are finessing.



## Practice – Finesses

- How many possible losers? Enough to fail the contract?
- Where might you eliminate some losers?
- What threats do defenders pose?

# Summary

- Declarer/Dummy/Opening Leader responsibilities
- Planning the play
  - Determine winners for NT contract, losers for suit contracts
- Playing
  - Immediate winners
  - Promotion of winners
  - Setting up a long suit
  - Ruffing losers
  - Drawing trumps
  - Finesses