



## LESSON 2 – STUDENT NOTES

# DECLARER PLAY IN NO TRUMPS CONTRACTS

As in the previous lesson, you will need your copies of **Assess Your Hand Lessons 1-3** and **When You Are Responder Lessons 1-3** bidding crib sheets plus a third crib sheet on **Leading against a NT contract**.

### THE CONTRACT

Declarer agrees to play in a contract. That means, before play starts, he sets his target (his contract). If declarer achieves his contract his side scores points. If he fails (goes down), then the defenders receive points.

### BIDDING

We are using the bidding crib.

- 1 Add up your HCP (High Card Points). If you have 12 or more HCP you can open the bidding
- 2 Decide if your hand is balanced or unbalanced.

### WHAT IS A BALANCED HAND?

A balanced hand is one where you have

- 1 No void (a suit in which you hold no cards at all)
- 2 No singleton (a suit in which you hold only 1 card)
- 3 No more than one doubleton (a suit in which you only have 2 cards)

This means you will have one of 3 shapes – 4 3 3 3, 4 4 3 2, or 5 3 3 2.

### PLAY IN NO TRUMPS

In NT only a card of the **led suit** can win the trick. Every player must follow suit if they can. If a player is unable to follow suit, they discard from another suit.

If you hold ♠K Q J it is only possible to win 2 tricks (assuming that your partner does not hold the ♠A). When you play the suit you can force out the enemy ♠A and are now guaranteed 2 tricks in the suit.

Similarly, with this holding

Dummy	♠ J T 9 8
Declarer	♠ 7 6 5 4

If you have time (before the enemy take too many high cards in other suits) you can force out the enemy's ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q and you will eventually establish one trick in the suit. If you are very lucky, more than one of the defenders' high cards might crash on the same trick! Notice that you have an unbroken sequence – the ♠4 is of the same value as the ♠J.

Suppose I add another small spade.

Dummy	♠ J T 9 8
Declarer	♠ 7 6 5 4 3

Now the situation is even better. There are now 9 cards between your 2 hands and the enemy only hold ♠A K Q 2.

If one defender holds all 4 of those cards you are still guaranteed 2 ♠ tricks. The situation might be even better. If those 4 enemy cards are divided equally between the 2 defenders' hands, each defender holding 2 of them, then high cards will crash together and you will make 3 ♠ tricks. Long suits are powerful.

You need to practise **counting** how many cards in a suit have been played noticing if a player fails to follow suit. You also need to **keep track of which high cards** have been played so you know whether your cards are good (are now the highest card outstanding in the suit).

When playing in NT you are in a **race** with your opponents to **establish** your long suit and then to be able to regain the lead in order to cash winners before they do the same with their “work suit”.

## MAKING A PLAN IN NO TRUMPS

When you are declarer in a NT contract the first thing you do is to count how many **top tricks** you have available between the two hands – your own and dummy's. Top tricks are tricks that you can win **without losing the lead**.

### Example 1

You (declarer) hold	♠ K75	♥ K73	♦ AQ	♣ KJ43
Your dummy holds	♠ 9842	♥ QT82	♦ KJ	♣ AQ65
Your Top Tricks are	0 spades,	0 hearts,	2 diamonds,	4 clubs

**Total 6**

Note that in **diamonds** you hold A K Q and J but with only 2 cards in the suit in both hands you can only win 2 tricks. HCP values are wasted through duplication.

### Example 2

You hold	♠ AK7	♥ K7	♦ KQJ	♣ KJ432
Your dummy holds	♠ Q63	♥ AQ82	♦ A765	♣ Q6
Your top tricks are	3 spades,	3 hearts,	4 diamonds	0 clubs

**Total 10**

## ESTABLISH EXTRA TRICKS BY FORCING OUT DEFENDER'S HIGH CARDS.

### Example

Here is a hand. You (West) are Declarer. Remember that you have the combined resource of both hands available to you: -

♠ K 5 3	♠ A 6
♥ A 5 3	♥ K 4 2
♦ K J T 8 3	♦ Q 9 7
♣ 5 3	♣ A J 8 4 2
You	Dummy

You are playing in a NT game contract – that is 3NT when you need to **take 9** tricks (**make 3**)

Declarer starts by making a **Plan**

Count your top tricks – 2 **spades**, 2 **hearts**, 0 **diamonds**, 1 **club**      Total **5**

If you are in 3NT how many tricks are needed?      **9**

How many additional tricks are needed?      **4 (9 – 5)**

Where are you going to find those extra tricks?      **Diamonds**

**Diamonds** are therefore your **work suit**

Get to work playing your work suit immediately. **DO NOT CASH YOUR TOP TRICKS IN OUTSIDE SUITS UNTIL YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED THE EXTRA TRICKS YOU NEED.** Do the work first.

How can you develop extra tricks in the work suit? In this case force out the Ace. Once the **♦A** has been played you will have 4 extra tricks in diamonds.

This is the number of extra tricks you are looking for. **The diamond suit is established.** You have **forced** out the defender's high card. Now you can cash all your winners – you have made your contract.

### **ESTABLISH TRICKS BY USING THE POWER OF LENGTH IN A SUIT.**

Look at this Diamond suit

**♦ K 8 5 4 3**

You

**♦ A 9 7**

Dummy

You have a total of 8 cards in the suit so the defenders hold 5. If those 5 cards are distributed 3 in one defender's hand and 2 in the other (3:2), you only have to lose one trick and then you can take a total of 4 tricks in the suit. The defenders' cards in the diamond suit will be exhausted. You will be able to win tricks with those tiny cards because the defenders have no diamonds left after the third round.

### **CASHING WINNING TRICKS**

Cash your established winners in a suit **in the correct order.** Play the high cards from your **short** hand (hand in which you hold the fewer number of

cards) first and then go to the hand in which you have a greater number of cards (the long hand).

## Examples

### West

♠ Q J T 7

### East

♠ A K 3 2

Here it does not matter which order you cash your winners.

### But here...

♠ A Q J T 5 4

♠ K 8

Cash the ♠ K first, then ♠8 to West hand.

♠ Q J T 7 6 3

♠ A K 2

Cash A and K then play 2 to get to the hand in which you have the remaining high cards.

In both these latter two cases, if you cash cards in the wrong order you will be stuck in the wrong hand. Try it.

“Play the high cards from your **shorthand** first”. The “shorthand” is the hand in which you hold the fewer cards.

## FINESSE

Look at this suit

♦ A Q 8 7 4 2

? K West

East ? K

♦ 9 6 3

You, North or South, are declaring. You don't know where the King is. It could be in either the East or the West hand. Play a small card from South and play the Queen from North (if West has not played the King). You have a 50% chance of making the Queen depending on where the King is. If West has the King the Queen will win, if East has it your queen will be overtaken.

Examples of finesse positions:-

1     ♥ **A Q 6 5** (West)   ♥ **7 4 3** (East)

Lead a small card from East hoping that the King is in the South hand.

2     ♥ **A K J 5** (West)   ♥ **7 4 3** (East)

Lead a small card from East. Here you are looking for the Queen, so if no Queen appears from the South hand, play the Jack from West hoping that the Queen is in the South hand.

3     ♥ **A J 9** (West)     ♥ **K T 8** (East)

Here you could take the finesse either way looking for the Queen

4     ♥ **K 6 5** (West)     ♥ **7 4** (East)

Slightly different but the principle is the same. Lead a small card from East towards your king. If the Ace is in the South hand you will be able to make your King. If the Ace is in the North hand your king will fall to the Ace. Once again, you have a 50 % chance of success depending on where the Ace is.

However, if you just led out your King you will lose it 100% of the time

5     ♥ **K Q 5** (West)     ♥ **7 4** (East)

Same idea, if you have this holding try to lead towards your high cards twice. If the Ace is in the South hand you can make both your King and your Queen. If North holds the Ace you will only make one of your top cards.

In these two last examples, the important point is that you **lead towards your honours** and don't just lead them out.

6     ♥ A 6 5 (West)     ♥ Q 7 4 (East)

In this final example, there is no point in leading the Queen. Lead from West towards your Queen hoping that the King is in the North hand. You could cash the Ace first if you wish.

### **THERE ARE THREE WAYS TO ESTABLISH EXTRA TRICKS IN A SUIT.**

- 1     **Force** out defenders' high cards
- 2     Use the power of the **Length** of a suit
- 3     Use the position of defender's high card/s – **Finesse**

### **A WORD FOR DEFENDERS**

Choose an opening lead using the crib to communicate information about your hand to partner.

Remember you have a partner when declarer leads a suit. He may have a winning card. Generally, when declarer leads a suit, second defender plays a low card in case your partner holds a winning card! Hence the saying 'Second hand plays low: third hand does what he can'! (i.e. to win the trick!)

## **SUMMARY** - We have covered

- 1 Basic bidding using the bidding crib. Assess your hand first by counting High Card Points (HCP) and then decide if your hand has a balanced or unbalanced shape.
- 2 Declarer, always make a plan.
- 3 Count top tricks – how many tricks are available to start with?
- 4 How many more tricks are needed in order to make the contract?
- 5 Where are the extra trick coming from – choose a work suit.
- 6 Do the ‘work’ before cashing top tricks in other suits.
- 7 Cash winners in the correct order – “high cards from short hand first”
- 8 The finesse.
- 9 Defender’s Play:
  - a) choosing and interpreting an opening lead in a NT contract
  - b) on declarer’s lead : Second hand plays Low: Third hand plays High.