

General Card Play Thoughts for Declarer

Declarer considerations in Magenta, Card Play Considerations are overleaf

A. Why did my LHO make that opening lead? What does it tell me about his hand?



B In Suit Contracts, Declarer has only 3 key strategies.

- Ruffing losers in dummy
- Establishing a long side suit (to play once trumps drawn)
- Relying on Finesses, Endplays, or Defensive errors!

So the task for defenders is to thwart declarer's strategy!

C Count your losers

- Have I too many?
- How can I reduce them?

Count your winners

- Have I enough?
- If not, where/how can I get more?

D How can I deal with losers?

- Sure losers e.g. Trump Ace – nothing! You will always lose this!
- Potential losers (these become losers if you don't ruff them)
- Possible losers e.g. AQJ in suit – try Finesse
- Avoidable losers e.g. xxx opposite a longer solid suit - discard them on this solid 'outside' suit
- Loser on loser play – discard one suit loser on another suit loser

E To draw trumps or not to draw trumps?

- Always draw trumps UNLESS you need to ruff losers in the short trump hand.
- But STOP once the Defenders Trumps are gone or if you find that the Defence hold the "Boss" trump. i.e. don't waste two of your trumps to draw what the opponents will always win!

B In NT play is about tricks:

- It's a race between declarer and dummy to establish their long suits and claim their winners!

C Count your Top Tricks

- How many top tricks between the partnership hands?
- How many more do I need?
- Where can I get them from?

D Identify your work suit

ALWAYS establish winners in your work suit before playing your winners from your other suits

E Use the rule of 11 if you think Defender's have led the 4th highest from their long suit. ie subtract the spot number led from 11, to get the number of cards that can beat it in the other 3 hands!

Remember in a NT contract Defenders and Declarer are in a race to establish long suit winners!

Card play for both declarer or defender regardless of contract

A. What does the opening lead tell me about this defender's hand?

- Top of a sequence?
- Low from an honour – 4th highest? Use rule of 11
- Top of rubbish?
- How does this influence how you play this suit?

Make a plan

- Declarer (and defenders) should make a plan!
- Defenders should aim to thwart declarer's plan!

B Count your suits – your hand and dummy – especially trumps. How many are outstanding? Declarer should count down as the Defenders' play them.

C Lead a low card up toward honours

D Always consider taking a finesse rather than playing your high cards off the top

E But when playing solid honour cards, play them from the hand with fewer honours first to avoid blocking the suit

F Risk Vs Reward? Is there a 'Danger Hand'? Do not risk taking a finesse into the danger hand unless it's your only hope!

Defenders may use 'Signals' on partner's lead of a new suit.

e.g. High for 'Aye': No for Nae, OR the opposite, Low for Like: High for Hate. There are several others but as Declarer, you are always free to ask questions of the defence.