



Lesson 22 Teacher's Notes

The Play in No-trump Contracts

Aims

- To encourage the class to plan the play of a complete hand at Trick 1
- To train them in the correct approach to the play of a hand in no-trump

Content

- 1 It is natural to want to become as good a player as you can, to makes as many tricks as possible. To do this you must develop certain skills, and the chief of these is **counting**. We have already learned how to count High Card Points and Playing Tricks for bidding. It is time to practice **counting tricks** in the play.
- 2 Introduce the concept of Sure Tricks.
The first thing to do as declarer at no-trump is to count your Sure Tricks.
These are tricks that you can cash any time, without letting the opponents on lead.
Practise good habits: *as declarer in a NT contract always count your Sure Tricks as soon as dummy goes down.*
Now you know how many more tricks you need to make your contract. These extra tricks have to be **developed**. The second step is to look for suits where you can develop extra winners.
- 3 **Avoid bad habits: do not cash your Sure Tricks first.**
To think "a trick is a trick" is short-sighted. **Sure Tricks can wait.**
The basic plan in NT play is to start with a suit where you need to develop tricks – **The Work Suit**. It is usually a suit where declarer and dummy have a lot of cards between them, but are missing one or more high cards.
The wrong thing to do is to cash aces and kings in suits where declarer and dummy do not have much length – that is establishing the defenders' Work Suit for them!
- 4 When playing a no-trump contract we follow these steps:
 - a. Count the Sure Tricks
 - b. Choose the Work Suit
 - c. Establish Tricks in the Work Suit
 - d. Give up the lead early while the Sure Tricks control the other suits
- 5 Note that the aims of the defenders and declarer are much the same.
If declarer is in 3NT he tries to make 9 tricks: to defeat him the defenders try to take 5
If declarer is in 1NT he tries to make 7 tricks: to defeat him the defenders try to take 7 also.
No-trump contracts can be seen as a duel between declarer and defence: or as a race to take the required number of tricks first.
At Trick 1 the defenders have the initiative, since they make the opening lead
However, they have the disadvantage of not always knowing which is their best Work Suit.
With no indication from the bidding the defender on lead will lead his longest suit, hoping partner has some length or strength in it.
Sometimes the bidding will give you a clue which suit to lead:
Do not lead a suit that has been bid by the declaring side (unless there is nothing better to try)
Do lead a suit partner has bid – you *know* he has length in it, and if he has bid he has a better hand than you and should have some entries which will allow him to cash his established winners.