



No-trump Play: Making a Plan

Sure Tricks

Sure Tricks are tricks you can cash whenever you like, without letting opponents on lead.

An ace is 1 Sure Trick; Ace and king in the same suit are 2 Sure Tricks

Ace, king, queen in the same suit are 3 sure tricks (assuming one hand has at least 3 cards in this suit!)

A suit like AKQ654 opposite J72 is 6 Sure Tricks

Declarer's Thought Processes in a No-trump Contract

When you declare a no-trump contract the first thing to do is *count your sure tricks*.

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|----------|--|--------|--|
| ♠ KJ3 | | ♠ 952 | West plays in 3NT. North leads ♠4 and South plays ♠Q |
| ♥ QJ3 | | ♥ AK10 | 1 Sure Trick in spades, since he can win ♠Q with ♠K |
| ♦ KJ1076 | | ♦ Q94 | 3 Sure Tricks in hearts, the ace, king and queen |
| ♣ AJ | | ♣ Q832 | (the jack would be a fourth if only one hand had 4 hearts) |
| | | | 0 Sure Tricks in diamonds, since the defenders hold ♦A |
| | | | 1 Sure Trick in clubs, since the defenders hold ♣K |
| | | | A total of 5 Sure Tricks. |

To make 3NT West must take 9 tricks so he examines each suit in turn for ways to develop 4 extra tricks.

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|-----------------|---|
| Spades | not promising: South would play ♠A if he had it, so North's ace lies over the jack |
| Hearts | there are already 3 tricks here, and it is impossible to take more |
| Diamonds | knocking out the ace will establish 4 extra diamond tricks. |
| Clubs | he has ace, queen, jack, so 1 extra trick can be established by knocking out ♣K. (If he finesses ♣J he may make 2 tricks without losing to the king) |

The Work Suits, where tricks can be *developed*, are clubs and diamonds.

By playing diamonds he can establish enough tricks for game, so West chooses diamonds as his Work Suit.

He plays a diamond to ♦Q: if it wins he continues by playing ♦9 (high cards from the shorter hand)

If South wins ♦A he will return a spade and if North has 4 spade tricks to cash you will go down.

If North has ♦A he cannot put South in for a spade through the jack and West will make at least 9 tricks.

Note that West does not cash his Sure Tricks before playing diamonds: that could only help the defenders

Sure Tricks Can Wait – Play the Work Suit First

Making a Plan

When dummy comes down you should follow these steps:

- 1 Count your sure tricks
- 2 Choose a Work Suit, a suit where you can develop the extra tricks you need
- 3 Establish the Work Suit

When you must give up the lead do so early while your Sure Tricks still control the other suits

The Defenders' Plan

This is basically the same as declarer's, but you have to choose the Work Suit without seeing partner's hand.

The defenders make the Opening Lead, which puts them ahead in the race to develop tricks.

The Opening Leader chooses a Work Suit, one where he hopes tricks can be developed.

He keeps his aces and kings as *entries* so he can get on lead to cash the tricks he has developed.

This is why in Lesson 2 we recommended ***a lead from your longest suit*** against no-trump contracts.

We emphasised that leading out unsupported aces and kings is a Bad Idea: ***only lead honours from sequences***

Sometimes the bidding can help you decide what to lead:

- If partner has bid a suit – lead that suit. (A low card from an honour, high with no honours)
- If an opponent has bid your longest suit – try something else