

Bridge Booklet #2

Declarer Play

- *Winning tricks by Force*
- *Establishing a Suit*
- *The Finesse*
- *Playing in NT*
- *Using Trumps*
- *Counting Losers*

Name

Date Started.....



Winning tricks by Force

It's easy to win tricks with Aces – the skill in bridge is **developing** extra tricks
There are four main ways to do this:

- 1) By force
- 2) Establishing a long suit
- 3) The finesse
- 4) Using trumps

This section focuses on winning tricks by **force**

Sequences

A **sequence** of cards is a run in one suit like ♥KQJ, or even just ♥KQ
These cards all have the same value to the person who has them

With a sequence like ♥KQJ you can play the ♥K to **deliberately lose a trick**
Now your ♥Q and ♥J are **masters** (highest left in that suit) and can win the next two rounds

Use partner

The two defenders can combine to make a trick, or declarer and dummy can

With ♠Kx in one hand and ♠Qx in the other you can make one trick
With ♠Qxx in one hand and ♠JTx in the other you can eventually make one trick

Dummy: ♠KQ ♥Kxx ♦QJx ♣KQJxx
Your hand: ♠xx ♥QJx ♦Tx ♣Txxxx

In the example above, you have no Aces
But by force, you can win one Spade, two Hearts, one Diamond and four Clubs

Cashing winners

Dummy: ♠AQ ♥K2 ♦KQJT ♣65432
Your hand: ♠K2 ♥AQ32 ♦A ♣KQJT98

Once you have developed tricks, you can **cash** them (win them)
You must be careful to cash them in the correct order

In the Spade suit above although you have ♠AKQ you can win only two tricks

In the Heart suit you can win three tricks, but you must start with the ♥K
In general, you should start with the **short** hand (fewer cards), else the suit gets **blocked**
(What happens if you win the first trick with the ♥A? or ♥Q?)

Diamonds has four winners, but you must **unblock** the ♦A first, then get to dummy in another suit

Quiz

1. How many tricks can you **cash** in each suit?

(a) ♥A3
♥K2 _____

(b) ♥A54
♥K32 _____

(c) ♥AK4
♥QJ3 _____

(d) ♥A543
♥KQJ2 _____

2. How many tricks can you **develop** in each suit?

(a) ♥K3
♥Q2 _____

(b) ♥J54
♥KQ2 _____

(c) ♥QJT9
♥53 _____

(d) ♥KJ53
♥QT2 _____

3. You declare 3NT:

Dummy: ♠732 ♥KQ2 ♦9832 ♣AT6
Your hand: ♠A54 ♥J43 ♦AK ♣KQJ42

- (a) How many points do you have in each hand and in total? _____
- (b) How many tricks do you need in total for 3NT? _____
- (c) How many tricks can you **cash** in each suit? _____
- (d) What suit can you develop tricks in, and how many? _____
- (e) How many tricks can you get in total? _____

4. You are defending 1NT, and have ♠J52 in Spades

How many tricks can your team win in Spades if partner has:

- (a) ♠QT3 _____ (b) ♠KQ4 _____ (c) ♠A _____ (d) ♠AKQ43 _____

5. The following suits are all ready to cash, but need careful management

In each case, what card should you start with?

(a) ♥AK3
♥Q2 _____

(b) ♥A2
♥KQJ6 _____

(c) ♥AKQ2
♥J3 _____

(d) ♥AQ
♥KJT2 _____

Score

/25

Establishing a Suit

A suit is **established** when no one else has any left
Then you can win tricks with the last remaining cards
This works especially well in No Trumps

The key thing to remember is that there are **13 cards in every suit**

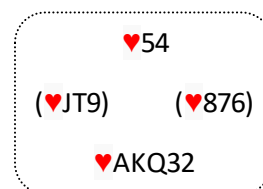
Long suit

A **long suit** is five or more of that suit in one hand
To **establish** this long suit may involve **deliberately losing tricks**, to get tricks later
This is a hard lesson to learn – beginners hate deliberately losing tricks!

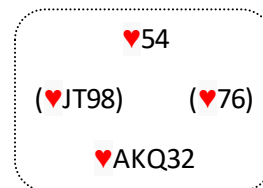
Example

You have ♥AKQ32 in your hand and ♥54 in dummy
You have seven Hearts in total the defence has exactly six

In this first example the missing 6 Hearts are divided 3-3
After three rounds no one has any left, so your ♥3 and ♥2 are now winners
You win five tricks in total



In this second example the missing 6 Hearts are divided 4-2
After three rounds you deliberately lose a trick. Your ♥2 is now a winner
You win four tricks in total

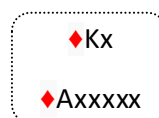


Use your partner

Any suit where you and partner have seven or more cards (the majority) has potential for extra tricks



You have eight Spades, missing five
If they divide 3-2 the fourth Spade is a winner



You have eight Diamonds, missing five
If they divide 3-2 you get five tricks



You have seven Hearts, missing six
If they divide 3-3 your fourth Heart is a winner



You have nine Clubs, missing four
If they divide 2-2 you get six tricks
If they divide 3-1 you still get five tricks

Quiz

1. How many tricks do you get?

Assume that the opposition cards split **evenly**

(so if you are missing four cards they split 2-2, five cards split 3-2, six cards split 3-3)

<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♠AK843</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♠7652</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♠AKQ4</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♠7652</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♠AK42</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♠Q53</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♠AK543</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♠872</div>
(a) _____	(b) _____	(c) _____	(d) _____

2. How many tricks do you get?

Assume that the opposition cards split **badly**

(so if you are missing four cards they split 3-1, five cards split 4-1, six cards split 4-2)

<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♥AK843</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♥7652</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♥AKQ4</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♥7652</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♥AK42</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♥Q53</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♥AK543</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♥872</div>
(a) _____	(b) _____	(c) _____	(d) _____

3. You are playing 1NT. If you are lucky how many tricks could you get in each suit?

Dummy: ♠AKxxxx ♥Kxx ♦Axx ♣x
 Your hand: ♠xx ♥Axxxxx ♦Kxxx ♣x

Spades _____ Hearts _____ Diamonds _____ Clubs _____

4. How many tricks can you get?

Assume that you the opposition cards split **evenly**

<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♦KQJ</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♦8762</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♦9753</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♦8642</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♦</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♦AK5432</div>	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♦K85432</div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">♦Q7</div>
(a) _____	(b) _____	(c) _____	(d) _____

5. You are playing 3NT

Dummy: ♠32 ♥AK7653 ♦753 ♣65
 Your hand: ♠AK654 ♥82 ♦AK2 ♣AK3

(a) How many tricks can you **cash** in each suit? _____

(b) How many tricks do you need in Hearts to make your contract? _____

(c) How should you play the Heart suit (be careful)? _____

(d) How many tricks can you win in total? _____

(e) What other suit could give your ninth trick? _____

Score

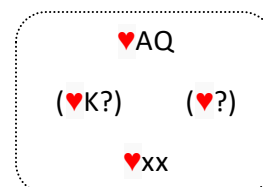
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The Finesse

A **finesse** is when you try and win a trick with a card that is not the highest card left in that suit
This will sometimes lose, but normally leads to **more tricks in total**

Finessing with Ace-Queen

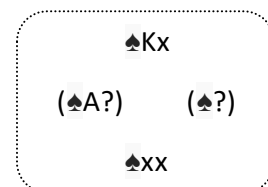
If your only high cards are the Ace and Queen, you are guaranteed one trick
Your best chance for a second trick is to lead low towards the ♥Q
If West has the ♥K you will get two tricks



Note that if East was dealt the ♥K you only get one trick (but it's still worth a try)

Finessing the King

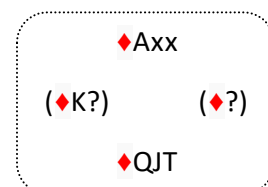
In this example your only high card is the King
If you lead a low card towards the King you will make a trick whenever West has the Ace
(if you start from the North hand you will never make a trick)



Other finesses

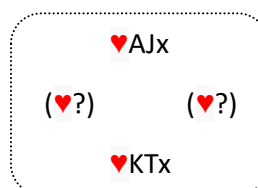
The general principle is to **lead towards your high cards**

- Here if West has the Queen, starting from South hand you make three tricks
- Here if West has the King, starting from the South hand you make three tricks
You have enough high cards to start with the ♦Q (and repeat with ♦J if it works)



Two way-finesse

If you think West has the Queen, lead low to the Jack
If you think East has the Queen, lead low to the Ten



Playing for the drop

If you have enough cards in the suit it's best not to finesse
Instead you cash your high cards and hope the missing high card **drops**

Missing the King

With 10 or fewer cards finesse
With 11 or more play for the drop



Missing the Queen

With 8 or fewer cards finesse
With 9 or more play for the drop



Quiz

1.

	Which key honour is missing?	Who do you hope has it?	How will you play the first trick	How many tricks could you win?
♠AQ ♠xx	King	West	Low to the Queen	2
♥Kx ♥xx				
♣AKJT ♣xx				
♦KQx ♦xx				
♠AJx ♠Kxx				
♥AJxx ♥Kxx				

2. You are declarer. How many tricks could you win in each suit?

Dummy: ♠KQT ♥Qxx ♦Axxxx ♣x
Your hand: ♠Axx ♥xxx ♦QJxxx ♣Qx

Spades: Max tricks _____ How to play it _____

Hearts: Max tricks _____ How to play it _____

Diamonds: Max tricks _____ How to play it _____

Clubs: Max tricks _____ How to play it _____

3. Consider the following suit combinations:

(a) ♥AJT
♥xxx On the first trick you play low to the ♥T, which loses to the ♥Q
How should you play Trick 2? _____
How many tricks could you win in total? _____

(b) ♥AJ9
♥xxx On the first trick you play low to the ♥9, which loses to the ♥K
How should you play Trick 2? _____
How many tricks could you win in total? _____

4. ♥AJxx
♥Kxx (a) You are missing the ♥Q. Should you finesse or play for the drop? _____
(b) How about if East opened the bidding with 1♥? _____

Score

/25

Playing in NT

In a NT contract the first thing to do when you see dummy is count your **sure winners**
Then find a **work suit** to develop extra winners in

Sure winners

Sure winners are tricks ready to cash

Dummy: ♠AKQ ♥xxx ♦KQJx ♣xxx
Your hand: ♠xxx ♥AKQ ♦Txxx ♣Axx

You have only seven sure winners (3♠ + 3♥ + 0♦ + 1♣)

To make 3NT you need at least two extra tricks

Choose your work suit

Have a look at each suit, and see how many extra tricks you can get out of it

You can extra tricks by **force**, by **establishing a long suit**, or **finessing**
Whichever suit has most potential is your **work suit**

In the example above the suit to play for extra tricks is Diamonds

Avoid the danger suit

In the deal above the danger suit is Clubs, as you only have the Ace

If you cash the ♣A, once you lose the ♦A you could lose lots of Club tricks

You should just concentrate on your work suit – don't be tempted to cash any other winners!

Another 3NT

Dummy: ♠AKJ ♥AJ ♦AQxxx ♣QJx
Your hand: ♠xxx ♥xxx ♦xxxx ♣Axx

You have only five sure winners (2♠ + 1♥ + 1♦ + 1♣)

You can get one extra trick in Spades or Clubs, but potentially four extra in Diamonds

Make Diamonds your work suit – starting with a finesse of the ♦Q

Race against time

In No Trumps the defence will also be trying to establish their long suit (which is your short suit)
The defence have the opening lead, so can beat declarer if they can find their best suit quickly

In the example above Hearts is the danger suit

If the defence keep playing Hearts they can get five tricks in total before declarer gets his nine tricks

Quiz

1. You are playing 1NT

Dummy: ♠Qx ♥Axxx ♦xxx ♣Kxxx
Your hand: ♠KJxxxx ♥Kxx ♦x ♣Axx

- (a) How many sure winners do you have? _____
- (b) How many tricks could you win in each suit? _____
- (c) Which is your work suit and how should you play it?

- (d) What's the danger suit? _____
- (e) How many tricks do you expect to lose in the danger suit? _____

2. You are playing 3NT

Dummy: ♠AQxxx ♥Kx ♦Axx ♣AJx
Your hand: ♠xxx ♥AQx ♦xxx ♣Kxxx

- (a) How many sure winners do you have? _____
- (b) How many tricks could you win in each suit? _____
- (c) Which is your work suit and how should you play it?

- (d) Which is the danger suit, and how many tricks could you lose in it? _____

3. You are playing 6NT

Dummy: ♠AJx ♥Kx ♦Axxxx ♣Kx
Your hand: ♠KTx ♥AQx ♦Kx ♣AJxx

- (a) How many sure winners do you have? _____
- (b) How many tricks could you win in each suit? _____
- (c) Which is your work suit and how should you play it?

Score

/25

Using Trumps

Drawing trumps

Drawing trumps is when declarer plays trumps until the defence have none left
He can then win his tricks in other suits

In this example you have eight trumps, so the defence have exactly five
If they are divided 3-2, as shown, you can draw them in three rounds

Only draw trumps until the opposition have run out, then stop
This means you have to watch what cards they play and count the trumps

♥5432	
(♥JT9)	(♥87)
♥AKQ6	

Not Drawing Trumps

Sometimes you want to delay drawing trumps so you can ruff some losers and get extra tricks
In the example below you are declarer in 7♠ (you need all the tricks)

Dummy:	♠876	♥2	♦6543	♣65432
Your hand:	♠AKQJT9	♥A53	♦AKQ	♣

You have nine trumps in total, so are missing four. But this time, don't draw trumps!

You need the ♠876 in dummy to ruff Hearts

Once you've got those ruffs, then you can draw trumps

You make 13 tricks – 6 spades (your ♠AKQJT9), 3 Hearts (♥A and two ruffs), 4 Diamonds and 0 Clubs

Note, ruffing a Club in your hand gains you nothing, as it just takes away from your 6 spade tricks

In general, **you don't gain a trick from ruffing in your hand**

Advantage of having a trump suit

With a trump suit you can make extra tricks

You also have **control**, and can stop the opponents winning tricks in your weak suit

Dummy:	♠T9xx	♥xxx	♦x	♣Axxxx
Your hand:	♠AKQJxx	♥x	♦Axxxx	♣x

Imagine playing this hand in 3NT

You have eight winners (6♠, 1♦, 1♣) and not much hope of a ninth

Another way of looking at it – the defence get at least five Heart tricks, so you are doomed

Now imagine playing the hand in 4♠

Now you can get up to four extra tricks from Spades, by ruffing Diamonds in dummy

And with Spades as trumps, you will lose only one Heart trick instead of five in NT

Quiz

1.

	How many trumps you have	How many missing	Minimum rounds to draw trumps	Way to play first trick
♠A6 ♠KQJT432	9	4	2 (they split 2-2)	Low to Ace
♥Q4 ♥AKJ653				
♣AQ62 ♣7543				
♦AJT6 ♦5432				
♠AKJ62 ♠75				

2. You are declarer in 4♥

Dummy: ♠Axx ♥JTx ♦KQxxx ♣xx
 Your hand: ♠KQx ♥KQxxx ♦AJx ♣xx

- (a) If the missing trumps split 3-2, how many rounds do you need to draw? _____
- (b) How many Diamond tricks can you win? _____
- (c) What could go wrong if you play Diamonds before drawing trumps? _____
- (d) Assuming you get a Spade lead, how should you play the hand?
- _____

3. You are declarer in 4♠

Dummy: ♠Kxx ♥Kxxxx ♦♣Jxxxx
 Your hand: ♠AQxxx ♥Ax ♦xxx ♣KQx

- (a) If the missing trumps split 3-2, how many rounds do you need to draw? _____
- (b) If you draw trumps, how many tricks do you lose in Diamonds? _____ In total? _____
- (c) Assuming you get a Heart lead, how should you play the hand?
- _____

4. You are declarer in 2♦

Dummy: ♠♥xxxx ♦QJxx ♣xxxxx
 Your hand: ♠xxxxx ♥xxxx ♦AKxx ♣

Assume trumps split 4-1. How many tricks can you win if you:

- (a) Draw trumps? (b) Draw no trumps? (c) Get a trump opening lead?

Score

/25

Counting Losers

In a NT contract you should count **winners**

In a suit contract you should count winners, and also count **losers**

Just like counting winners, go suit by suit

Look at your own hand and then also look at dummy

Remember with a suit contract you can **ruff**

Dummy: ♠Kx ♥QJT ♦Qxxx ♣Kxxx
 Your hand: ♠Axx ♥Kxx ♦AKx ♣Axxx

- Spades: 0 losers (you win the ♠A and ♠K then can ruff the last Spade in dummy)
- Hearts: 1 loser (you must lose the ♥A, but nothing after that)
- Diamonds: 0 losers (you have the ♦AKQ and can ruff the fourth round)
- Clubs: 1 loser (after ♣AK you lose one trick, but expect to win the fourth round)

You need to have plenty of trumps to be able to count losers like this, as you are assuming that you have enough spare trumps to ruff any losers

You want at least eight trumps between the two hands

How many losers?

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
Dummy	♥xxx	♥Axx	♥Axx	♥AKx	♥x	♥Axx	♥Axxxx	♥Axxx	♥AQ	♥AQx	♥Kx	♥Axxx	♥KQJ
You	♥xxx	♥xxx	♥Kxx	♥Qxx	♥xxx	♥x	♥Kxxxx	♥xxxxx	♥xx	♥xxx	♥Qx	♥Kx	♥xxx
Losers	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	½	1½	1	0	1

a/b/c/d – With three cards in your hand and in dummy you need all of the ♥AKQ to have no losers

e/f – With only one card in a hand you only need the ♥A – any extra rounds can be ruffed

g/h – With lots of cards you expect your small cards to win tricks once the defenders are out

i/j – With a **finesse position** you have ½ losers, as there are tricks you expect to lose half the time

Getting rid of losers

In a trump contract, when you see dummy the first thing to do is to count your losers

Here the contract is 5♣ – so you can only afford two losers

Dummy: ♠x ♥AQxx ♦xxx ♣QJxxx
 Your hand: ♠Axx ♥Kx ♦xxx ♣AKxxx

You have three losers in Diamonds, so if the defence start with Diamonds you'll fail

If the defence don't play Diamonds, you should draw trumps

Then you can use your extra Heart winner in dummy to discard a losing Diamond in your hand

You will have only two Diamond losers and can make the contract

Quiz

1. How many losers are there in each combination?

♥Kx ♥Axxx	♥Kx ♥Qxx	♥A ♥Kxx	♥AKx ♥xxx	♥QJxx ♥Kxxx	♥AQJxx ♥xxx	♥Axxx ♥QJxx	♥Kx ♥xx

2. You are declarer in 4♠

Dummy: ♠A43 ♥32 ♦QJ9 ♣J9432
 Your hand: ♠KQJ52 ♥A54 ♦KJT2 ♣5

- (a) How many **losers** in each suit? _____ Total _____
- (b) How many **winners** in each suit? _____ Total _____
- (c) Assume you get a trump lead. How should you play the hand?
- _____

3. You are declarer in 4♥

Dummy: ♠A32 ♥KQ6 ♦QJT ♣A532
 Your hand: ♠K54 ♥JT543 ♦K2 ♣K64

- (a) How many **losers** in each suit? _____ Total _____
- (b) How many **winners** in each suit? _____ Total _____
- (c) Assume you get a Spade lead. How should you play the hand?
- _____

4. You are declarer in 5♦

Dummy: ♠♥643 ♦QJT2 ♣AQJT32
 Your hand: ♠9752 ♥A7 ♦AK543 ♣76

- (a) How many **losers** in each suit? _____ Total _____
- (b) How many **winners** in each suit? _____ Total _____
- (c) Assume you get a Heart lead. How should you play the hand?
- _____

Score

/25

Glossary

Blocked – a suit where it's impossible to cash all the winners, such as $\heartsuit Q32$ opposite $\heartsuit AK$

Cash – win your top tricks, for example taking the Ace and King from $\heartsuit AK2$ for two tricks

Established – a suit is established if you are the last one with any left

Finesse – an attempt to win a trick with a lower card, for example the $\heartsuit Q$ from $\heartsuit AQ2$

Losers – tricks you expect to lose, for example in $\heartsuit A32$ opposite $\heartsuit K54$ you have one loser

Playing for the drop – for example cashing Ace and King from $\heartsuit AKJ2$ and hoping the $\heartsuit Q$ drops

Sure winner – certain winners, for example $\heartsuit AK52$ $\heartsuit A7$ $\heartsuit KQ54$ $\heartsuit KJT$ has $2+1+0+0 = 3$ sure winners

Unblock – cash winners in one hand to free up the other, for example cashing $\heartsuit A$ opposite $\heartsuit KQ2$

Work suit – your chosen suit to play on, where you hope to develop extra tricks

Notes

