

## Teams tactics

**Overtricks** are relatively unimportant. So, as a defender, be prepared to concede an overtrick in the hope of defeating the contract. As declarer never risk the contract for the sake of an overtrick.

**Safety.** If 5D is safer than 3NT, then that should be your contract even though 3NT might score 430. Always play in the safest slam. Imagine going one off in 6NT when 6D makes and your opponents stopped in 3NT. Your greed cost 22imps.

**Never try to improve a partscore.** e.g. Partner is in 2D which **will** make and so **should** 2NT. 2D will do.

The reward for **bidding games** is considerable. If game has a 30% chance of making, you should bid it.

Don't expose yourself to **big penalties**. They lose matches, if teammates bring back -800, don't ask, just let them sort it out, we all know what -800 means.

Be wary of doubling contracts from 2H to 3S. If they make the contract, they get the game bonus. 2HX making is -670. Undoubled it is -110.

**Defend carefully.** Don't end up letting a contract make because you thought you could beat it by 2 tricks by waiting.

**Know your system.** Always have a completed convention card for you and partner, and don't play a convention either you or partner might forget.

**Don't play 'catch up'** at teams. If you've had a disaster, don't make it worse with crazy decisions. You don't know what's going on at the other table. Your teammates might have already saved you.

**Plus scores** are hard to beat. Keep setting their contracts and making your partscores can win matches when boards are 'flat'.

## Declarer Play

**RULE OF 7.** - This rule concerns the number of times you should withhold your high card when a suit you are worried about is led against your NT contract. The purpose of a hold-up in NTs is to attempt to exhaust one opponent (usually the partner of the leader) of his supply of the suit, so that he, at least, cannot return the danger suit. In other words, you are trying to cut communications between your opponents. In general, this action is only necessary when the danger suit is splitting badly for, if it is behaving, it often can't produce enough tricks to defeat you. The Rule of 7 helps you to judge how many times you should hold up to achieve your objective.

Below are two examples showing a suit led in isolation to demonstrate the point.

a)

♠KJ853      ♠97  
♠A62      ♠Q104

b)

♥QJ1093      ♥642  
♥K87      ♥A5

In (a) 5♠ is led and RHO plays Q♠. How many times should you up you're A♠? The rule of 7 states that you should add up the number of cards in the danger suit held by you and dummy, and subtract this total from seven. The result is the number of times you should not play your Ace. Here the rule suggests that, with five cards between you, you should not play your A♠ twice (7-5=2), winning only on the final round. As you see, that would serve to exhaust RHO of his supply of the suit. If the division had been 4-4, it would have been impossible to sever communications.

In (b) RHO overtakes Q♥ with A♥, and returns 5♥. With six cards in the suit, the rule suggests withholding your high card only one time, which you have already done by losing the first trick. You therefore win the second trick with K♥. Again this exhausts RHO of hearts. If the suit had divided 4-3, RHO would still hold a heart but, usually an even break does not threaten you. If, on a particular hand, you judge that it will, you can hold up for a further round.

An opponent, once exhausted of the suit, can be allowed on lead safely whilst the player with remaining cards can be kept off the lead. This increases your chances to make difficult contracts.

It is just as dangerous to hold up for too long as it is not to hold up at all. Once opponents have made a couple of tricks in a suit, they may switch to another. By this time, you may have lost the vital 'tempo' required to win the race setting up your extra tricks.

**AVOIDANCE – KEEP THE DANGER HAND OFF LEAD** - The Art of identifying a dangerous opponent and keeping him off lead is known as 'avoidance' and can provide you with a huge edge over the opposition. The need for avoidance is usually at its greatest when playing in No Trumps.

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
Pass	3NT	Pass	INT
Pass			Pass
	<b>NORTH</b>		<b>EAST</b>
	♠ A K Q		♠ 8 7 6
	♥ 6 4		♥ 7 3 2
	♦ A 7 3 2		♦ Q J 10 5
<b>WEST</b>			
♠ 10 9 5 4			♣ Q 6 2
♥ A J 10 9 5			
♦ 9 4	<b>SOUTH</b>		
♣ 7 3	♠ J 3 2		
	♥ K Q 8		
	♦ K 8 6		
	♣ A 10 9 4		

In the hand left West leads J♥, North and East play small, and you win with K♥. You now have six tricks outside clubs, so your target is a third trick there. Which opponent must be kept off lead? It's East as if he wins a trick, he will return 7♥ through you Q♥ and into West's ♥A109x, and you will lose the next four tricks. So, when finessing in clubs, lead J from dummy and if East covers, win; if East plays low, you play low also. Even if West wins, your ♥K8 is safe from attack from West.

What you may ask, if East holds A♥? In that case, your K♥ is quite safe anyway, so your care may go unrewarded, but you still make your contract. In fact East won't hold A♥ because, if he had held it, he would have played it at trick 1, in case his partner's J♥ lead was from ♥KJ109x.

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
Pass	3NT	Pass	INT
Pass			Pass
	<b>NORTH</b>		<b>EAST</b>
	♠ A K 9 8		♠ Q 10 6 2
	♥ 7 3		♥ Q 10 4
	♦ 6 4 3 2		♦ Q 9
	♣ A K J		♣ 7 6 4 3
<b>WEST</b>			
♠ J 5	<b>SOUTH</b>		
♥ K J 9 5 2	♠ 7 4 3		
♦ J 10 8	♥ A 8 6		
♣ 9 5 2	♦ A K 7 5		
	♣ Q 10 8		

The hand left demonstrates the type of contract that only a good declarer would make. West leads J♥. With six tricks outside diamonds, you must develop three tricks from that suit. However, once you hold up A♥ twice, you know from the play of the cards that East holds no further hearts and is your safe hand, and West is dangerous. How can you establish the extra diamond trick without letting West gain the lead?

If you cash A♦ and/or K♦, East should throw Q♦ – trying to promote an entry in his partner's hand. If you play ♦AK5, West wins the third round. In fact there is no way to keep West off lead, but there is a way to keep East on lead!

Cross to dummy with a club and lead 2♦. When East plays small, win with A♦, and cross back to dummy. Now, lead 3♦; when East plays Q♦, duck, stranding him – the safe hand – on lead. West cannot be got on lead in any other suit, so you have now established your fourth diamond into a winner, and the ninth trick for your contract.