

LESSON 6

Developing Defensive Tricks



General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



GENERAL CONCEPTS

Defense

How the defenders cooperate to take their tricks

- Taking sure tricks
- Promoting tricks
- Establishing long suits
- Finessing
- Trumping

Bidding

Competitive bidding

- Overcalls
 - Making an overcall
 - Responding to an overcall
- Takeout doubles
 - Making a takeout double
 - Responding to a takeout double

Play of the Hand

Watching entries

- Preserving an entry
- Creating an entry

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The first five lessons focused on play by one defender to a specific trick: making the opening lead, playing third hand, playing second hand. In lesson five, the focus began to widen. With signaling, the card played to one trick influenced what would happen on subsequent tricks.

Lessons six, seven and eight take a broader look at defense. Lesson six looks at the ways the defenders cooperate to take all of their tricks in a suit. Lesson seven will look at how the defenders work together to try to prevent the declarer from taking tricks. The last lesson puts it all together and focuses on how the defenders make choices when there are two or more possible ways to defeat declarer's contract. Students can be told that we are now considering not a single trick, but moving toward the broader picture.

“So far, we have been considering which card to play to a specific trick. We looked at the best card to choose when we are making the opening lead. Then we went across the table and looked at which card to play as third hand. We considered which card to play when we are second hand and declarer is leading the suit. In the last lesson, we looked at which card to play to give a message to partner about a specific suit.

“We're going to broaden our scope. We'll start by looking at how the defenders work together to take all of the tricks in a suit to which they are entitled. The defenders get their tricks in the same way as declarer: they take their sure tricks, promote winners, establish long suits, finesse high cards and ruff the opponents' winners. The defenders need much more imagination than declarer because they can't see their combined holding in the suit. Instead, they have to visualize what partner has from the bidding, the play and partner's signals. Let's see how challenging that can be, starting with what the defenders have to do just to take their sure tricks.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: Taking Sure Tricks

Introduction

“When declarer is faced with taking sure tricks, even though the suit may be unevenly divided between the two hands, there is no problem. Let’s look at an example. Lay out the following cards in the spade suit:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 4 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ K Q J 6 5 2		♠ A 7
	DECLARER	
	♠ 10 9 8	

“Declarer, by following that familiar maxim, ‘play the high card from the short side first,’ would have no difficulty taking six sure tricks by playing a low spade to the ace and returning the ♠7 to the rest of the winners.

“It’s not as easy for the defenders. First of all, let’s suppose that partner has the lead. What card does partner choose? (The ♠K, top of a sequence.) What will happen if you let partner’s ♠K win the trick? (The suit becomes blocked.) Unless partner has an outside entry in another suit, the defenders end up with only two tricks in the suit instead of the six to which they are entitled.

“Why is it more difficult for the defenders to start by playing the high card from the short side than it is for the declarer? (The defenders often lead the top of a sequence and a high card is already played from the long side.) What has to happen next if the high card is going to be played from the short side? (You have to put the ♠A on the ♠K.) By overtaking partner’s ♠K with the ♠A, you have a low spade left to lead to partner’s winners. The defenders get the six tricks to which they are entitled.

“Of course, the defenders will not always have enough high cards to play two on one trick. Let’s make a change to the layout. Give partner’s ♠6 to declarer and partner’s ♠2 to you:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 4 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ K Q J 5		♠ A 7 2
	DECLARER	
	♠ 10 9 8 6	

“This is a good example of how it can cost a trick to play your ace on partner’s king. How many tricks would the defenders take if you overtook partner’s lead of the ♠K? (Three tricks: the ♠A, the ♠Q and the ♠J.)

How many tricks would declarer get? (One, the ♠10.) There is no need, however, in this particular layout, to waste a trick by playing your ace on partner's king. When you have two low cards along with the ace, there is no need to unblock on the first trick.

“What should you do instead? (Play the ♠7, an encouraging signal.) By giving an encouraging signal rather than playing the ♠A, you avoid wasting the partnership's combined assets, and you give partner the information necessary to take all of the tricks in the suit.

“But before we assume that the defense has no further problem taking their tricks, let's look at things from partner's point of view. When the ♠K wins the first trick, what happens if partner continues by playing the ♠Q or the ♠J? (The suit becomes blocked.) What does partner have to do to avoid blocking the suit? (Play the ♠5 to the ♠A.) By playing a low spade to your ♠A on the second round of the suit, the defenders can untangle the suit and take all four tricks without giving a trick to declarer. How does partner know to play a low spade at trick two? (From the ♠7, an encouraging signal.) By combining the use of an attitude signal with the knowledge that the defenders also want to take the high card from the short side first, it is possible for the defenders to overcome their disadvantage and take their tricks.

“Let's give the ♠7 to dummy:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 7 4 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ K Q J 5		♠ A 2
	DECLARER	
	♠ 10 9 8 6	

“Is there anything the defenders can do in this situation to take their four sure tricks against a notrump contract once the opening lead is the ♠K? (No.) In this situation, the suit is hopelessly blocked. If you play the ♠2, you can win the second spade, but partner's remaining two spade winners are stranded. You will need to find an outside entry to partner's hand. If you overtake the first spade, declarer ends up getting a trick.”

If the students ask what they should do at the table, point out that they will not be able to see partner's hand. If they think it is unlikely that partner has an entry in another suit, they should overtake, hoping partner has the ♠10 (or the ♠9). If partner is likely to have another entry, they can win the second trick and lead back the suit in which they think partner has an entry.

“Would it make a difference if you were defending with hearts as trump when partner led the ♠K in this situation? (Yes.) You could afford to overtake with the ♠A, since you will be able to ruff declarer's winner in the suit after your side takes the first three spade tricks.

“Let's look at how the defenders work as a team to take their sure tricks.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise One, which card would your partner lead against a notrump contract? How would you work with partner to take all of your sure tricks?”

1)

	DUMMY	
	7 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
Q J 10 4		A K 2
	DECLARER	
	9 8 6 5	

2)

	DUMMY	
	6 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
K Q 10 5		A 7 2
	DECLARER	
	J 9 8 3	

3)

	DUMMY	
	8 7	
PARTNER	■	YOU
A Q J 9 2		K 4
	DECLARER	
	10 6 5 3	

1) Q; overtake with A or K and lead other honor followed by the 2

2) K; encourage with 7

3) Q; overtake with K and lead back the 4

Follow-up

Since this is the first time the play of the entire suit has been considered, have the students report their thoughts, not only on the card led and played to the first trick, but how the whole suit would be played by the defenders. The discussion might proceed like this:

“On the first layout, partner would lead the queen, top of a sequence. If you play a low card, the suit will be blocked. Instead, you must overtake partner’s queen with the king (or ace), take your other high card and return your carefully preserved 2 to partner’s remaining winners.

“In the second layout, partner would lead the king, top of a broken sequence. With two low cards, there is no need to overtake partner’s king. Instead, play the 7, an encouraging signal. Partner must now cooperate by playing the 5 to your ace. You can then lead the 2. Declarer’s jack is trapped by partner’s queen and 10, and the defenders take all four tricks in the suit.

“In the final layout, partner would lead the queen, top of an interior sequence. You must overtake with the king to avoid blocking the suit. When you lead back the 4, declarer’s 10 is trapped and the defenders take the first five tricks.”

Conclusion

“The defenders have to work carefully together to take their sure tricks. They can’t see each other’s cards, so they must work as a team to try to take the high card from the short side whenever possible to avoid blocking the suit. This may mean overtaking partner’s honor or giving an encouraging signal, so one partner can lead a low card to the other partner’s high card.”

EXERCISE TWO: Promoting Tricks

Introduction

“Usually the defenders do not have enough sure tricks to defeat the contract right away and have to develop extra tricks. One of the best ways is through promotion. Lay out the following cards in the heart suit:

	DUMMY	
	♥ A 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ K Q 10 8		♥ J 7 4
	DECLARER	
	♥ 9 6 5 2	

“What would partner lead against a notrump contract? (The ♥K, top of a broken sequence.) If declarer plays the ♥A from dummy, which card should you play? (The ♥7, an encouraging card.) Partner has shown the ♥Q by leading the ♥K, and likely the ♥10 as well — with only a two-card sequence partner would probably lead a low card. The ♥J is therefore a useful card and you want to give an encouraging signal. Suppose you win the next trick for the defense. Can you return the suit without giving up a trick? (Yes.) Which card should you return? (The ♥J, the top of your remaining doubleton.) When the ♥J holds the trick, you can lead the ♥4 to partner’s promoted winners. You have taken your promoted winners by starting with the high card from the short side. What if partner wins the next trick for the defense? Can the suit be led without giving up a trick? (Yes.) Partner takes into consideration the encouraging signal you gave on the first trick and leads the ♥8 to your assumed ♥J, making sure the high card is taken from the short side first. You finish things off by leading the ♥4 to partner’s remaining winners.

“Let’s change the example slightly. Exchange the ♥J and the ♥9:

	DUMMY	
	♥ A 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ K Q 10 8		♥ 9 7 4
	DECLARER	
	♥ J 6 5 2	

“The lead is the same, the ♥K, and declarer again plays the ♥A from the dummy. With that slight change of cards, the defenders will have to play the suit differently. Which card do you play to the first trick? (The ♥4, a discouraging signal.) If you get the lead, should you return the suit? (Yes, returning partner’s lead.) Which card do you lead back? (The ♥9, top of a doubleton.) Since declarer’s ♥J is trapped, the defense can take their three promoted tricks.

“What if partner is the first defender to regain the lead? Can the suit be led safely again? (No, declarer would get a trick with the ♥J.) Partner, having seen your discouraging signal on the first heart trick, can visualize that declarer must hold the ♥J and must wait until you can lead the suit. Instead of leading a heart, partner should try to find an entry to your hand in another suit. If you regain the lead in another suit, you will have to realize partner’s problem and lead the suit to trap declarer’s ♥J.

“Now rearrange the heart layout as follows:

	DUMMY	
	♥ 6 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ K 8 7 4 2		♥ Q J 5
	DECLARER	
	♥ A 10 9	

“Which card would partner lead against a notrump contract? (The ♥4, fourth highest.) When a low card is played from dummy, which card do you play? (The ♥J, lower of touching cards.) Suppose declarer decides not to hold up and wins the first trick with the ♥A. If partner regains the lead, should the ♥K or a low heart be led? (A low heart.) Why? (Partner knows you have the ♥Q. Declarer would win the first trick with the ♥Q when holding that card. Partner wants to ensure that the defense wins the next trick in the suit from the short side, not the long side.)

“Let’s look at some more examples of how the defenders cooperate to promote their winners and take their tricks.”

Instructions

“You are defending a notrump contract and lead the indicated card in Exercise Two. Which card will partner play on the first trick? If declarer wins the first trick with the ace, which card in the suit will you lead next when you regain the lead? Why?”

1)

YOU	DUMMY	PARTNER
Q J 9 3	5 4	10 7 2
	■	
	DECLARER	
	A K 8 6	

2)

YOU	DUMMY	PARTNER
Q J 10 6 5	A 3 2	K 7
	■	
	DECLARER	
	9 8 4	

3)

YOU	DUMMY	PARTNER
Q 9 8 3 2	7 5	J 10 4
	■	
	DECLARER	
	A K 6	

1) 7; 3 2) K; J (or 10) 3) 10; 2 (low)

Follow-up

Again, help the students follow not just the play to the first trick, but how the defenders work together to take all of their tricks in the suit. A student may be able to give a complete analysis as a result of the group's discussion. If not, you may have to use a series of quick questions to cover the pertinent points. The questions might be:

“What would you lead in the first layout? (The queen, top of a broken sequence.) When a low card is played from dummy, which card would partner play? (The 7 to encourage, since partner holds the 10.) After South wins the first trick, which card would you lead when you regain the lead? (The 3.) Why? (Based on partner's encouraging signal, you want the high card played from the short side next, keeping the high cards on your side.) What will happen eventually? (The defenders will promote two tricks.) What might happen if you played the jack rather than a low card to the second trick in the suit? (If declarer wins the trick, the suit would be blocked.)

“In the second layout, when you lead the queen and the ace is played from dummy, which card would partner play? (The king.) Why? (To unblock. Partner wants to have a low card left as the last card in the suit.) When you regain the lead, which card would you play next? (The queen or jack.) Don't play a low card to partner. Partner is playing the king either because it is a singleton or to unblock, letting you take the winners from your side.

“On the last layout, which card does partner play when you lead a low card? (The 10, lower of touching cards.) When declarer wins the first trick with the ace or king, which card do you know your partner holds? (The jack.) Why? (Declarer would win the first trick with the jack if declarer held it, together with the ace and the king.) Which card do you lead when you regain the lead? (A low card.) Why? (You want partner's high card to be played next, from the short side.)”

Conclusion

“The defenders work together. Each has to imagine what partner holds from the cards played and the signals given in order to help them promote their winners.”

EXERCISE THREE: Establishing Long Suits

Introduction

“Long suits are a wonderful source of tricks for both declarer and the defenders, especially in a notrump contract. When defending against a notrump contract, the defenders are usually trying to find their longest combined suit. They have to make an effort to be consistent. For example, put out the following cards in the diamond suit:

	DUMMY	
	♦ J 10 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♦ A Q 6 4 2		♦ 7 5
	DECLARER	
	♦ K 9 8	

“Partner leads the ♦4 against a notrump contract, declarer plays the ♦3 from dummy, you play the ♦7 — third-hand high — and declarer wins the first trick with the ♦8. Remember, when you are actually defending, you can’t see partner’s cards, and you might be very disappointed at the outcome of the first trick. It doesn’t look like a good start for the defense, when partner leads a suit in which you have a low doubleton, and declarer wins the first trick with the ♦8. But you have to think beyond the first trick. After all, partner did choose to lead the suit.

“Suppose you next gain the lead for the defense. Unless you can clearly see something better to do, you should return partner’s suit, leading back your remaining ♦5. Can you see why? (Partner can take four diamond tricks, since declarer’s ♦K is trapped.) You need to be consistent and work together with partner. If you go about trying to develop your own suit, partner may never take the diamond tricks.

“Notice what would happen if partner has to lead diamonds next for your side. Declarer can’t be stopped from getting a second trick in the suit. Worse than that, if partner leads diamonds, giving declarer a second trick and establishing partner’s remaining diamonds as tricks, you have no low diamonds left to lead back. Partner’s winners are stranded unless there is yet another entry to partner’s hand.

“The defenders have to be very careful to keep an entry to the long suit they are trying to establish. They want to maintain communication between their two hands so that, if either partner next gains the lead, they can continue leading the suit. To see this, rearrange the diamonds as follows:

	DUMMY	
	♦ Q J 10	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♦ 4 2		♦ A K 7 5 3
	DECLARER	
	♦ 9 8 6	

“Suppose you bid diamonds during the auction and partner dutifully leads one against declarer’s notrump contract. Look at the diamond suit and consider how you would plan to establish it, if you were declarer and had no outside entries to the long diamond suit. What would you do? (Duck a diamond.) By giving up the first diamond trick, you would leave a low diamond in the other hand to get to the established winners.

“You have to visualize the layout when you are defending and approach the suit in exactly the same way. Unless you have lots of entries in other suits, you should not win the first diamond trick, even though it may be tempting to do so. Which card should you play? (The ♦7, an encouraging signal.) By ducking the first diamond, your side is in a position to take all of the remaining diamond tricks, whichever defender next gains the lead.

“If you had played the ♦A, the ♦K and another diamond to establish the suit, your winners would be stranded if partner next gained the lead. Just as declarer often takes losses early, the defenders must be equally willing to give up a trick at the right time to keep the line of communication open between the two hands. Let’s look at some examples.”

Instructions

“In Exercise Three, you are defending a notrump contract, and partner leads the indicated card in a suit you have bid. If you have no entries in any outside suit, which card do you play on the first trick? Which card do you play the second time the suit is led?”

1)

PARTNER	DUMMY	
9 4	Q J 10	YOU
	■	A K 8 6 3 2
	DECLARER	
	7 5	

2)

PARTNER	DUMMY	
A 5 3	Q J 10	YOU
	■	K 9 6 4 2
	DECLARER	
	8 7	

3)

PARTNER	DUMMY	
10 8 2	K Q J	YOU
	■	A 9 4 3
	DECLARER	
	7 6 5	

1) 8; K (or A) 2) 9; low (2, 4, or 6) 3) 9; low (3 or 4)

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. The discussion might go like this:

“In the first layout, you duck the first trick, so that partner will still have a low card left to lead to your winners once they are established. Play the 8, an encouraging card, to tell partner that you really do like the suit that was led. Whether you or partner next gain the lead, you can take the remaining tricks in the suit, starting with your two high cards.

“In the second layout, you play the 9 on the first trick to encourage partner to lead the suit again. When partner does lead the suit again, however, you should play one of your low cards, rather than the king, to keep the communication link open to partner. You have to give declarer one trick in the suit in order to establish it. It is usually best to take your losses early.

“In the last layout, assuming you can see no better option for the defenders, you can encourage partner to keep leading the suit by playing the 9 on the first trick. Whether you or partner next gains the lead, you should continue by playing another low card, giving declarer a second trick in the suit. If partner is the next defender to win a trick, partner still will have a low card left to lead. This time, you can take the ace and your established low card in the suit.”

Conclusion

“Long suits provide a good source of tricks for the defenders, if the defenders are persistent. They will have to visualize the complete layout of the suit in order to see how best to establish their tricks. The defenders want to play the suit in the same fashion as declarer would. Like declarer, they need to watch their entries between the two hands. This often means ducking one or more tricks — taking their losses early — to keep the line of communication open.”

EXERCISE FOUR: The Defensive Finesse

Introduction

“Taking finesses can be just as great a thrill for the defenders as for declarer. As a defender, you have to be a bit of an optimist and imagine how you and your partner will go about trapping some of declarer’s high cards. Both you and your partner have to be detectives, watching each other’s signals and looking for other clues to guide you. You then have to cooperate, putting the information to work. For example, put out the following cards in the club suit:

	Dummy	
	♣ 10 6 3	
You	■	Partner
♣ A K J		♣ 9 7 5 2
	Declarer	
	♣ Q 8 4	

“Let’s see how the defenders would go about taking their tricks in this suit. Suppose you are on lead. This time you are leading against a suit contract. Which card would you lead? (♣A, top of touching high cards.) When you lead the ♣A, what are you thinking about when you see the dummy? (Who has the ♣Q?) If partner has it, then you can continue taking your tricks in the suit. If declarer has that card, it would be better to trap it. How does your partner help you on the first trick? (By playing the ♣2.) By giving a discouraging signal, partner tells you there is no help in the suit. What now?”

There is no need to discuss the more exotic variations such as the possibility of either partner or declarer holding a doubleton ♣Q. Keep the focus on the basic topic of trapping declarer’s high cards.

“One choice is to take the ♣K anyway — a bird in the hand. If you can see that two tricks in the club suit will defeat the contract, that may be the best approach. But, if it looks as though you will need three club tricks, you will have to give the matter some more thought. Assuming declarer has the ♣Q, which defender should be leading the suit next? (Partner.) Here is where you need a little optimism. Visualizing the layout of the club suit, you have to hope partner has an entry in another suit in order to get in and lead a club.

“Suppose you decide to bide your time and lead another suit. Let’s look at the problem from partner’s perspective. If partner subsequently wins a trick, what should partner do? After all, you stopped playing the club suit. Partner also will have to visualize the possible layout of the club suit and realize that the reason you did not continue leading the suit was that you wanted to trap declarer’s ♣Q. Coming to this conclusion, partner can lead the suit back, trapping declarer’s ♣Q and giving the defense the tricks to which they are entitled. A lot of cooperation is required by the defenders.

“Look at how much easier it is for declarer, who can see immediately that it’s necessary to take a finesse in the club suit. The defenders have to recognize the possibility and then work together to take their tricks. Let’s look at more examples of trapping declarer’s high cards.”

Instructions

“Which card would you lead against a suit contract in each of the layouts in Exercise Four? Which card would partner play to the first trick, if a low card is played from dummy? Which defender must lead the suit next, if the defenders are to take all of the tricks to which they are entitled?”

1)

YOU	DUMMY	PARTNER
K Q 10	A 5 4	8 7 6 2
	■	
	DECLARER	
	J 9 3	

2)

YOU	DUMMY	PARTNER
Q J 9 5	7 3 2	8 6 4
	■	
	DECLARER	
	A K 10	

3)

YOU	DUMMY	PARTNER
Q J 10 7	K 6 5	A 8 3
	■	
	DECLARER	
	9 4 2	

1) K; 2; Partner 2) Q; 4; Partner 3) Q; 8; You

Follow-up

The students should be familiar enough with the idea of finesses that one person from each group can give a report of the group's discussion. The following points should be covered.

“In the first layout, you would lead the king, top of touching high cards. If a low card is played from dummy, partner would play the 2, a discouraging card, since partner doesn't have the jack. You must wait for partner to lead the suit next, trapping declarer's jack and giving two tricks to the defenders.

“On the second layout, you would lead the queen, top of your broken sequence. Again, partner would play a discouraging card, the 4, since partner doesn't hold either the king or the 10. If the defenders are to get their trick in the suit, you want the suit led from partner's side next, trapping declarer's 10.

“On the last layout, you lead from the top of your sequence, the queen. If declarer plays a low card from dummy, partner can play the 8, an encouraging card. You can lead the suit again from your side, trapping dummy's king and giving the defense three tricks.”

Conclusion

“The defenders can use the finesse just as effectively as declarer. They need to be alert to each other's signals and try to imagine what cards partner might have that would prevent partner from leading a suit — even though partner wants the suit to be led.”

EXERCISE FIVE: Leading through Strength**Introduction**

“To help the defenders visualize finessing opportunities, a useful guideline is to *lead through strength and lead up to weakness*. To see where this comes from, lay out the following cards in the heart suit:

	NORTH (Dummy)	
	♥ A Q 10	
WEST	■	EAST
♥ 9 8 3		♥ K J 4 2
	SOUTH (Declarer)	
	♥ 7 6 5	

“If the defenders want to get all of their tricks in this suit, which defender has to lead the suit? (West.) Even though East has both the length and strength in this suit, East needs West to lead the suit so that dummy’s high cards will be trapped. Essentially, West must lead through dummy’s strength and up to declarer’s weakness in order to help partner out. If East is on lead, East would be leading through declarer’s weakness and up to the strength in the dummy, not at all the best way to capture declarer’s high cards.

“Notice that West must lead the suit for partner more than one time. Suppose West leads the suit initially and declarer finesses dummy’s ♥10, losing to East’s ♥J. East can’t lead the suit again without giving up a trick. It’s necessary to wait until West is on lead again and can lead through the strength in the dummy. What does East do in the meantime? (East should be looking for ways to help partner by leading through declarer’s strength in another suit, up to weakness in the dummy.) Let’s look at other examples which show how the defenders help each other out.”

Follow-up

The discussion should cover the following points:

“On the first layout, your partner needs to lead the suit in order to trap declarer’s queen and take all of the tricks to which the defenders are entitled.”

If you have the time and the students are following along well enough, you might delve into the consideration of what happens after partner leads the jack. The defenders will have to react differently depending on whether declarer plays the 6, the queen or the ace on the first trick.

“In the second layout, you will need to lead the suit through the strength in dummy. If declarer wins the first trick with dummy’s ace, you will need to lead the suit only once for partner. If declarer finesses the 10 or the jack on the first round, losing to partner’s queen, you will need to lead the suit again later to establish another trick for the defense.

“On the last layout, partner will need to lead the suit if the defenders are to take all of their tricks. Partner will need to lead the suit twice through declarer’s strength.”

Conclusion

“To help visualize finessing situations on defense, it helps to keep the guideline *lead through strength and up to weakness* in mind. Each partner wants to help the other out by leading the suit their partner can’t lead from their side of the table.”

EXERCISE SIX: Ruffing Declarer's Winners**Introduction**

“Another way the defenders can take tricks is by ruffing declarer's winners. This also requires cooperation between the partners, one player trying to get the ruff and the other trying to give it. To get more than one ruff, you may need entries to partner's hand. This also requires cooperation, and the suit preference signal often comes in handy. Let's look at the next exercise to review how it works.”

Instructions

“On each deal in Exercise Six, how will the defenders cooperate to defeat declarer's 4♠ contract after the opening lead of the ♦ 3?”

- 1) Contract: 4 ♠ DUMMY
Lead: ♦ 3
- ♠ 10 9 6 2
♥ K 6 3
♦ K Q J
♣ K J 7
- YOU
♠ J 8 5
♥ 10 7 5 2
♦ 3
♣ Q 9 8 6 5
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |
- PARTNER
♠ 3
♥ J 8 4
♦ A 10 9 6 2
♣ A 4 3 2
- DECLARER
♠ A K Q 7 4
♥ A Q 9
♦ 8 7 5 4
♣ 10
- 2) Contract: 4 ♠ DUMMY
Lead: ♦ 3
- ♠ 10 9 6 2
♥ K 6 3
♦ A K Q
♣ K 10 7
- YOU
♠ A 8 5
♥ 10 7 5 2
♦ 3
♣ Q 9 8 6 5
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |
- PARTNER
♠ 3
♥ A Q 4
♦ 10 9 7 6 4 2
♣ J 4 2
- DECLARER
♠ K Q J 7 4
♥ J 9 8
♦ J 8 5
♣ A 3

Follow-up

Give the students some time to look at both deals and then discuss the key points with them to see that they understand how the defenders cooperate.

“On the first deal, why would West lead a singleton diamond? (Hoping East can give West a ruff.) Does East know for certain that partner has a singleton diamond? (No, West could be leading low from three or four diamonds.) How does East know for sure that partner does not have a doubleton diamond? (West would have led the top card from a doubleton.) Why might East hope that West’s lead is a singleton? (There doesn’t appear to be a much better chance of defeating the contract.) If East decides that partner’s lead is a singleton, what does East lead back? (The $\spadesuit 2$, suit preference for clubs.) On ruffing the diamond, what does West do next? (Leads a club, based on East’s suit preference signal.) What does East do? (Wins the $\clubsuit A$ and gives partner another diamond ruff.)

“It looks easy enough to defeat the contract when all four hands are in front of you. Notice, however, how the defenders must cooperate carefully in order to defeat the contract when they can’t actually see each other’s hands.

“The defenders must also be on their toes on the second deal. Why does West lead a singleton diamond? (Again, it looks like the best chance to defeat the contract. Even if partner can't win the first diamond trick, West has the $\spadesuit A$. Declarer can't draw trumps before the defenders get another chance to get their ruff.) Would East suspect that partner’s lead was a singleton? (Yes, looking at East’s length.) Which card should East play to the first trick? (The $\spadesuit 10$.) Why? (East obviously does not like diamonds and this is not a count situation, so this must be a suit preference signal for hearts.) After winning a trick with the $\spadesuit A$, which suit does West lead? (Hearts, based on East’s suit preference signal.) After winning a heart trick, what does East do? (Returns a diamond for West to ruff.) After ruffing, what does West do? (Leads another heart.) After winning a second heart trick, what does East do? (Returns another diamond to give West a second ruff.) By defending perfectly, the defenders defeat the contract by two tricks. If they slip along the way, declarer might end up making the contract.”

Conclusion

“The defenders must cooperate when trying to ruff declarer’s winners. Both need to be aware of what is going on, and they must work together to effectively use any entries available between the two hands.”

EXERCISE SEVEN: Review of Competitive Bidding

Introduction

“When the opponents have opened the bidding, there are two ways in which you can compete. With a five-card or longer suit, you can make an overcall. When making a vulnerable overcall, or if the overcall has to be made at the two level, you need approximately the same strength as for an opening bid. When the overcall is made at the one level in a suit, you do not need quite as strong a hand (8 to 16 HCP or 10 to 17 total points). The better your suit, the safer it is to overcall, since it is unlikely that the opponents will be able to double you for penalty. You can overcall 1NT with a balanced hand and the same strength as for an opening 1NT bid. Since the opponents are likely to lead the suit they bid, however, it is usually a good idea to have some of your strength (stoppers) in that suit.

“When partner makes an overcall, you can bid with 8 or 9 total points, and you need 10 or more to bid a new suit at the two level. With support for partner’s suit, you can raise to the two level with 8 or 9 points. With a limit raise (10 or 11 points) or better hand, begin with a cuebid of the opponent’s suit. You can bid game, if you have enough points opposite a minimum overcall from partner.”

Keep the discussion as simple as possible. You might point out that you tend to give partner a little more leeway when overcalling at the one level, especially non vulnerable, but the guidelines should serve for now. You might suggest that your students review the material in the “Learn to Play Bridge” program.

“If your hand is not suited for an overcall, you can consider making a takeout double to get partner to choose the suit. To make a takeout double, you need support for the unbid suits (those not bid by the opponents) and approximately the values for an opening bid. Since partner is being asked to choose the suit, you probably will be the dummy and can, therefore, value your hand using dummy points, rather than length points. You count 5 for a void, 3 for a singleton and 1 for a doubleton.

“In addition, there is one other type of hand with which you can make a takeout double – a hand with 18+ total points, making it too strong for a simple overcall.

“Partner will recognize your double is for takeout, rather than penalty, under these circumstances: (1) if it is a double of a partgame contract, and (2) neither you nor partner has made a call other than pass. A penalty double usually occurs when you (1) double a game contract or (2) double after partner has opened the bidding or made an overcall and the opponents continue to compete. This tells partner that the opponents have overreached themselves.

“Following a takeout double, the advancer must bid unless the opponent on the right takes the advancer off the hook by bidding first. With a minimum

hand of anywhere from 0 to 8 points, bid a suit at the cheapest available level. You should prefer to bid a four-card major suit rather than a minor suit. The partnership is still looking for a Golden Fit in a major suit. With 9 to 11 points, you want to tell partner you have some interest in game. (Partner may have a bare minimum of 13 or 14 points for the takeout double.) To invite partner, you jump one level in your best suit, again preferring a major suit to a minor suit. With 12 or more points, you want to make certain the partnership gets to game. You also can cuebid the opponent's suit to ask the doubler for assistance in finding the best game contract.

“The takeout doubler has to exercise caution when the advancer takes minimum action. Remember that the advancer is forced to bid and could have a hand with no points. The takeout doubler would pass with a minimum hand (13 to 15 points), raise one level with a medium hand (16 to 18 points) and jump raise with a maximum hand (19 to 21 points).

“Advancing partner's overcall or takeout double into a notrump contract is subject to specific ranges. Please review them in the text or the “Learn to Play Bridge” computer program.

“If your hand is not suitable for either an overcall or a takeout double, you should pass. You do not have to bid just because you have the strength for an opening bid. If the opponents have bid your best suit, pass and await further developments. Remember that partner always can enter the auction, or you may get another opportunity at a later point in the auction.”

Instructions

“The opponent on your right opens the bidding 1♥. What do you do with each of the hands in Exercise Seven?”

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1) ♠ K Q 10 8 6 2
♥ J 3
♦ A J 4
♣ 9 2 | 2) ♠ Q 10 8 3
♥ 2
♦ A Q 10 3
♣ K Q 7 5 | 3) ♠ 5 4
♥ 7
♦ A J 10 6 3
♣ A K J 7 5 |
| 1) <u>1♠</u> | 2) <u>Double</u> | 3) <u>2♦</u> |
| 4) ♠ J 3
♥ K Q 5
♦ K Q J 9
♣ A J 9 2 | 5) ♠ K 7 6 3
♥ —
♦ A 9 7 5 2
♣ K J 9 3 | 6) ♠ 8 3
♥ A Q J 9 3
♦ 8 5 2
♣ A K 5 |
| 4) <u>1NT</u> | 5) <u>Double</u> | 6) <u>Pass</u> |

7)	♠ Q 9 3 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ J 8 7 4 3 ♣ A 7	8)	♠ A J 9 2 ♥ 8 3 ♦ A 8 5 4 ♣ A 6 5	9)	♠ J 4 ♥ A J 10 ♦ Q J 10 8 3 ♣ A Q J
7)	<u>Pass</u>	8)	<u>Double</u>	9)	<u>1NT</u>

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. The discussion can be kept fairly brief.

“In the first hand, overcall 1 ♠, your six-card suit.

“The second hand is a classic takeout double, asking partner to pick a suit other than hearts.

“In the third hand, you would overcall 2 ♦. With a choice of five-card suits, bid the higher ranking.

“The fourth hand is a 1NT overcall.

“On the fifth hand, you can make a takeout double. Even though you have only 11 HCPs, don’t forget to count dummy points when considering a takeout double. Give yourself 5 points for your heart void and you have more than enough to double.

“Pass with hand number six. The opponents have bid your best suit. You can’t double, since that would be a takeout double, not a penalty double.

“Pass with hand number seven. You are not strong enough to overcall in diamonds, especially since you would have to bid the suit at the two level.

“The eighth hand is another takeout double. It is the most descriptive bid, even though you would prefer to have an extra club. You hope partner will bid hearts or diamonds. If partner bids clubs, partner may well have five or more of them.

“The last hand is a 1NT overcall. Don’t forget to check to see if you have a balanced hand before overcalling your five-card suit.”

Conclusion

“When the opponents open the bidding, the two most popular ways of competing in the auction are with an overcall or a takeout double. When you overcall, you show partner a five-card or longer suit. When you make a takeout double, you ask partner to pick the suit.”

EXERCISE EIGHT: Watching Your Entries**Introduction**

“As we have seen in this lesson, the defenders must be careful to use their entries wisely. Of course, declarer also must be careful with entries. Declarer preserves entries by playing the high card from the short side first and by ducking tricks to the opponents when necessary. At times, it will be necessary to create an entry to the opposite hand, either by promoting a winner, leading toward a high card or using long suits. Let’s review, with a few examples, how declarer creates entries.”

Instructions

“How many sure entries to the dummy can you get from each of the suits in Exercise Eight? How many entries might you get if the missing cards are favorably placed?”

DUMMY: A K J A Q J Q 7 6 3 9 7 4 2 A Q 9 3

DECLARER: Q 7 3 4 3 2 A K A K Q 3 8 7 4 2

1) 3; 3 2) 2; 3 3) 0; 0 4) 0; 1 5) 1; 3

Follow-up

This is a quick review. Make sure that the basic methods of creating entries are understood.

“In the first layout, there are three sure entries to the dummy, the ace, the king and the jack, since you hold the queen. In the second layout, there are two sure entries, the ace and one from promotion, using the queen and the jack. If the king is on your left, however, you will end up with three entries to the dummy. On the third layout, there are no entries. Even though dummy has the queen, you have no low card in your hand to cross to it. On the fourth layout, you will get one entry to the dummy if the missing cards divide 3–2. You will be able to use your 3 to get to dummy, provided you kept a higher card in the dummy. The last layout could provide three entries. The ace is a sure entry. The queen may be an entry if the king is on your left. If the suit divides 3–2, your length will provide an entry as well, provided you keep a higher card in dummy than the last low card in your hand.”

Conclusion

“Both declarer and the defenders must be careful with their entries, and use them wisely.”

SAMPLE DEALS

EXERCISE NINE: Taking Tricks

Introduction

“Once the defenders have established tricks in a suit, they must still be careful when taking them. They need to play the high card from the short side first and must sometimes lead the suit from the appropriate side in order to trap declarer’s high cards. We’ll see how all of this applies in the following deal.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the first pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #6, Deal 1)

Dealer: North	♠ K 10 7 5 3				
	♥ J 6 4				
	♦ K Q 9				
	♣ A 8				
♠ J 9 6 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A
N					
W E					
S					
♥ A K 7		♥ Q 8 5			
♦ A J 8		♦ 5 4 2			
♣ 6 4 2		♣ K Q J 10 7 5			
	♠ Q 8 2				
	♥ 10 9 3 2				
	♦ 10 7 6 3				
	♣ 9 3				

The Bidding

“What would North open the bidding? (1♠.) How can East compete in the auction? (Overcall 2♣.) South passes. West knows that partner has the values for an opening bid to overcall at the two level. At what level does the partnership belong? (Game.) What Golden Game does West bid? (3NT.) How does the auction proceed from there? (Pass, pass, pass.) Who is the declarer? (West.)”

You will probably need to go over the bidding with the students to ensure that they reach a contract of 3NT played by West. Otherwise, the defensive point of the hand will be missed. West should be able to find the 3NT response to partner’s 2♣ overcall. You may have to guide them to make that bid, pointing out that it will usually be easier to take nine tricks in notrump than 11 tricks in clubs. West’s spade holding would be sufficient to stop North from running the spade suit on most layouts (e.g., if North held both the ♠K and the ♠Q or South the ♠10). Declarer is a little unfortunate in the actual layout. A contract of 5♣ can’t be made either (provided North is careful).

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (North.) What would the opening lead be? (The ♠5, fourth highest.) Which card would South play on the first trick? (♠8.) Why? (Holding the ♠Q, South wants to give an encouraging signal.) How will this help North? (After regaining the lead, North can lead a low spade to South’s ♠Q.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer needs nine tricks and starts with five sure tricks: one in spades, three in hearts and one in diamonds. Five more tricks can be developed in the club suit through promotion. Declarer can’t hold up the ♠A, however, and will have to hope that the opponents can’t take too many spade tricks when they gain the lead with the ♣A.)”

Conclusion

“When developing tricks, the defenders can combine the use of an attitude signal with the necessity for taking the high card from the short side first. It is also important for South to be able to lead a spade to trap declarer’s ♠J.”

EXERCISE TEN: Maintaining Communications

Introduction

“The defenders must be careful to keep the lines of communication open between their hands whenever possible. They can do this by being careful with their entries.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the second pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #6, Deal 2)

Dealer: East	♠ A Q 8										
	♥ K Q 7										
	♦ Q J 10										
	♣ Q 10 7 3										
♠ K J 6	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 4 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9 8		♥ 6 5 4 3 2									
♦ A K 8 7 5 2		♦ 9 3									
♣ 8 4		♣ A 6									
	♠ 10 7 5										
	♥ A J 10										
	♦ 6 4										
	♣ K J 9 5 2										

The Bidding

“East and South pass. What would West open the bidding? (1♦.) How can North describe this hand? (Overcall 1NT.) East passes. How does South advance following partner’s overcall? (3NT.) How does the bidding proceed? (Pass, pass, pass.) What is the contract? (3NT.) Who is the declarer? (North.)”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (East.) What would the opening lead be? (♦9, top of a doubleton in partner’s suit.) Which diamonds does West know that partner does not hold? (the ♦Q, the ♦J and the ♦10. East leads the top card when holding a doubleton and a low card with three or more.) Which card would West play? (♦8.) Why? (West has to duck a trick to keep an entry to the winners if East later wins a trick. West also wants to play an encouraging card, so that East will lead the suit again if East gets the lead.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer needs nine tricks and has one sure trick in spades and three in hearts. Declarer will get one trick through promotion from the diamond suit and could get an extra trick in the spade suit using a finesse if West holds the ♠K. Declarer will need to promote tricks in the club suit, however, in order to make the contract. The club suit can produce four winners, provided the opponents can’t take too many winners when they get the lead with the ♣A.)”

Conclusion

“The defenders need to give up tricks to declarer when establishing their long suits in the same way that declarer has to give up tricks to the defenders. Like declarer, it is usually best for the defenders to take their losses early, whenever possible, preserving the entries they need.”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (South.) What would the opening lead be? (♠A, top of touching high cards.) Which card does North play on the first trick? (♠3.) Why? (North wants to give a discouraging signal since North does not hold the ♠Q.) What does South do next? (Switches to another suit. Leading a diamond through the strength in dummy is probably a better choice than leading a trump or a club away from the ♣K.) If North wins a trick, which suit should North lead? (Spades.) Why? (It looks as though South discontinued leading the spade suit, because South knows that the suit must be led from the other side of the table.)”

You may need to direct the defense a little. The opening lead of the ♠A is not clear-cut (since West has indicated spade length with the takeout double), but it has the advantage of letting South look at the dummy before deciding what to lead next. It does not matter which suit South shifts to after North’s discouraging signal, as long as South does switch.

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer can afford three losers. There are three spade losers, one diamond loser and two club losers. The two club losers can be ruffed in the dummy. The diamond loser may be eliminated with the help of a successful finesse. Even if the diamond finesse fails, declarer may be able to discard one or more of the spade losers on dummy’s extra diamond winners after the ♦K has been driven out.)”

Conclusion

“When trying to trap declarer’s high cards, the defenders must work together. By using signals, they can often get the clues they need to determine which partner can safely lead the suit and which partner can’t. They must then try to get the suit led from the appropriate side of the table.”

EXERCISE TWELVE: Putting Signals to Work

Introduction

“The defenders often need to use signals when trying to determine what to do next. Here is an example when they are trying to get enough trump tricks to defeat declarer’s contract.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the fourth pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #6, Deal 4)

Dealer: West	♠ K Q J 5	
	♥ K 9 6 3	
	♦ 10 6	
	♣ K 10 7	
♠ 2		♠ A 10 7 6 4 3
♥ Q 10 4		♥ 7 2
♦ A Q 8 5 3		♦ K 9
♣ A 9 8 2		♣ 6 5 4
	♠ 9 8	
	♥ A J 8 5	
	♦ J 7 4 2	
	♣ Q J 3	

The Bidding

“What is West’s opening bid? (1♦.) Can North compete in the auction? (Yes.) How? (By making a takeout double. North has 13 dummy points.) What does East respond to partner’s opening bid? (1♠.) Does South have to bid? (No, because East bid.) Should South bid? (Yes, if possible, since North wants to compete in the auction. With 9 HCP, South doesn’t want to let the opponents buy the contract too cheaply.) What does South do? (Bids 2♥.) How does the auction proceed from there? (Pass, pass, pass.) What is the contract? (2♥.) Who is the declarer? (South.)”

As with all competitive auctions, the bidding could actually go a number of ways at the table. You may have to steer the students to the appropriate contract in order to pose the defensive problem. West has just enough strength to open the bidding and North has just enough for a takeout double. What to do when partner’s opening bid has been doubled for takeout has not really been discussed, but the students can bid as though nothing happened. East can make the natural response of 1♠. The students may be reluctant to bid with South’s hand. Point out that North and South may well have the majority of points, and they don’t want to let East and West buy the contract too cheaply. West should have been planning to rebid 2♣, but after South’s 2♥ bid, point out that West no longer has to rebid and can pass. With a minimum hand for a takeout double, North should pass. It is now up to East. Have East pass at the table. East has only a minimum hand, and with partner showing a

minimum hand by passing, it looks as though the hand belongs in partscore. East might want to try for a partscore in spades, but North is likely to have four of them for the takeout double, making that contract unattractive. East can pass and defend 2♥.

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (West.) What would the opening lead be? (♠2.) Why? (Spades is partner’s suit and there is the possibility of ruffing some of declarer’s winners by leading the singleton.) How does East know partner’s lead is a singleton? (The ♠2 is the lowest missing spade. Partner would lead the top card from a doubleton.) After winning the first trick, which card does East play to the second trick? (The ♠10, showing a preference for diamonds, partner’s suit, rather than clubs.) Why? (East knows that partner can ruff this trick and wants to tell West where the entry is likely to be.) What does West do next? (West ruffs the spade and leads the ♦A and another diamond, based on partner’s suit preference signal.)”

The defenders will need to do everything right to defeat the contract. After a spade to the ♠A and a spade ruff, the ♦A and a diamond to the ♦K, East will need to lead another spade to allow West to take a trick with the ♥Q. The ♣A then defeats the contract. Another diamond lead may actually defeat the contract by two tricks if declarer does not ruff high at some point. If the defenders give declarer an opportunity to draw trumps, declarer may make the contract.

You can point out that this type of hand often occurs during a bridge game. The competitive auction may result in a variety of contracts, and the way the defense and the play go could result in a different number of tricks being made. This is part of what makes the game exciting.

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer can afford five losers. There is one spade loser, one heart loser, four diamond losers and one club loser. Declarer may be able to avoid a trump loser with a successful finesse if the suit divides 3–2. Declarer normally plans to finesse with eight cards in the combined hands, but the bidding indicates that the finesse is likely to lose. Declarer may choose to play the ♥A and the ♥K, hoping the ♥Q is doubleton. Two of declarer’s diamond losers can be ruffed in dummy, or one can be ruffed in dummy and one discarded on the extra spade winner in dummy after the ♠A is driven out.)

“The defenders will likely remove most of the options before declarer ever wins a trick. Declarer should still be planning ways to make the contract as the play progresses.”

Conclusion

“The more the defenders start to work together and use their signals wisely, the more frequently they will be able to defeat declarer’s contract when the opportunity arises.”

