

MANAGING YOUR ENTRIES MORE EFFECTIVELY

Many declarer play errors occur because we forget to make a plan for the hand.

That plan should include

- Counting your winners (in a NT contract) or identifying losers (in a suit contract)
 - Working out whether you need to finesse and, if so, how many entries you need for your finesses
 - Working out whether you need to create extra winners and, if so, which suit you will utilise and whether you need to think about entries to the hand with that long suit
- If you plan to use dummy's long suit, then you need to keep entries to dummy.
 - If you plan to use your long suit, then you need to keep entries to your hand.
 - You may need to defer leading trumps if your trump suit is your source of entries.
 - If the opening lead is removing an important entry immediately, you may need to make use of that entry before leading trumps.
 - When one hand is very strong and the other is very weak, thinking about entries is critical.

Let's look at some examples:

7 6 5	A Q
K 3 2	A Q J 10 9 8 7
A 4 3 2	7 6
9 8 7	K 6

You are playing in 4H and receive the lead of DK. Remember to plan.

1. One of your entries to dummy is being removed by the lead. How many entries will you need (plan)?
2. Possible losers: 1 diamond (always), 1 spade (finesse), 1-2 clubs (depending on finesse for CA). That means you need TWO finesses – SK and CA = 2 entries.
3. There are two entries to dummy but one is being used at trick 1. So make sure you make use of that entry which means deferring leading trumps:
4. Take the spade finesse – if it works, you can draw trumps ending in dummy and try for CA onside for 11 tricks – but it fails.
5. Leader wins SK, cashes DQ and tries DJ which you trump. Count HCP – SK, DK, DQ, DJ... with the CA they would have made a takeout double (or overcall).
6. Now you draw trumps but ending in dummy so you can lead a club towards your CK to make your contract.

9 3	A 10 5 4
10 5 4	A J 7 6
J 10 9 8 7	A K
K J 4	A Q 5

You are playing in 3NT on a club lead. Remember to plan.

1. Count your winners: 1 spade, 1 heart, 2 diamonds, 3 clubs = 7. Extra tricks should come from the diamond suit.
2. To make the diamonds into winners will involve 3 steps: cash DA and DK, then go to dummy to remove the DQ (assuming it hasn't come down), and then be able to go back to dummy to cash the diamonds = you need 2 entries, which are the CK and CJ.
3. That means you need to win trick 1 with the CA – to keep both the entries alive (if you win the CQ you only have an entry with the CK).
4. Now you win the CA, cash DA and DK, go to dummy to lead the DJ etc.

J 10 5 4	A K Q 3 2
K 5 4	3 2
Q 3 2	K J 7
6 5 4	A Q J

You are playing in 4S on the lead of HQ through the HK. HQ, HJ and another heart and you trump.

1. You have lost 2 hearts and will always lose the DA. That means you need the CK onside (finesse).
2. That means you need TWO entries for 2 finesses. There's no guarantee that DQ is an entry (and clever defenders will make sure it isn't). That means that you need SJ and S10 as entries.
3. You should trump HIGH when you trumped the heart, to keep the 2 trump entries.
4. As you draw trumps, each time you enter dummy you need to take a finesse.

NOTE: When dummy is weak and short of entries AND you have lots of high trumps, you should always consider trumping high to preserve entries!

EXAMPLES:

4 3 2	A Q J 10
Q 10 9 5	A K J 8 2
K 7 4	9
J 4 3	K 5 2

Play 4H (East) on DQ lead.

K 3	A 4 2
Q 9 3 2	A K
K J 4 2	A Q
9 8 7	J 10 6 5 4

Play 3NT on SQ lead.

5 3 2	A 8 6
7 6 2	A K 4
9 2	A 10 4
A K Q 4 2	10 9 7 3

Play 3NT on SQ lead.

Q J x	opposite	A x x	<i>You may need to win the ACE to keep the QJ as an entry.</i>
A x x	opposite	K J x	<i>You may need to win the ACE to keep K and J as entries.</i>
K J x	opposite	A Q 9	<i>You may need to win the ACE to keep K and J as entries.</i>
A Q 10 8	opposite	K J 9 7	<i>How many entries can you create to each hand?</i>