



Memory Mishaps

A COMMON concern for less experienced players is the belief that you need an amazing memory to play bridge. It is clearly helpful to have confidence in your ability to remember the bids that were made during the auction, and the cards that have been seen as the play progresses, and these are skills that can be strengthened through practice. There are also little habits that one can develop to aid these memory processes . . .

Which Suit is Trumps?

For most regular players it probably seems relatively easy to remember which suit is trumps when declaring or defending a suit contract. However, it is worth noting that you are aided by the fact that dummy always places the trumps to his right when facing his cards. But it may seem less easy to remember when you are playing in a no-trump contract, since the dummy can now place his cards in any order he chooses.

**Mistakes People Make:
Forgetting to be Playing in a
No-trump Contract as Declarer**

If your partner occasionally forgets that he is playing in a no-trump contract, there is a chance that you have missed an opportunity to assist him when facing your cards as dummy.

Consider the hand below. You hold:

♠	8 5
♥	A J 10 7 5
♦	K 6 4
♣	A J 3

Your partner opens 1NT (12-14). Your opponents pass at each turn as you bid 2♦ (transfer to hearts), then raise the opener's

2♥ rebid to 3NT. Your partner passes and the opening lead is the queen of spades. In which order do you place your cards down as dummy?

This might sound like a strange question to ask since there are no trumps and you can choose to place the suits in any order that you see fit. You might, for example, place your hearts to your right hoping to hint to your partner that this represents a good suit to make tricks from! However, if you do this, you are forcing your partner to remember that hearts are not in fact trumps. A good way to reduce memory strain for partner is to place your hearts to your left-hand side (they cannot be trumps), and instead place the least likely trump suit to your right. Even the most forgetful of partners is much less likely to think that spades are trumps and will be 'reminded' that he is playing a no-trump contract.

Making Length Winners

**Mistakes People Make:
Forgetting Whether Your Small Cards
Have Become Winners**

In the last issue I considered ways in which one can count a suit when drawing trumps. While you can count every card played by each player in turn, then add those up to thirteen, for most people that is trickier than it needs to be. It is especially tough when declarer (or a defender) needs to keep track of more than one suit. A good way to ease the pressure on your memory is to count down the missing cards. This applies to any suit and not just the trump suit. For example, if the declarer wishes to count a suit, he can simply check how many cards he and dummy started with in that suit and subtract that number from thirteen. He only needs to keep count of the cards played by the opponents in that suit and

has no need to count his own cards again. Remembering relatively low numbers in more than one suit tends to be much easier than keeping track of every card that continues to be seen in those suits.

Winning with High Cards

**Mistakes People Make:
Forgetting that Your High Cards
Are Already Winners**

One other trap that can be avoided is to forget that your remaining cards are winners after a suit has not been played for several tricks.

Consider the layout below; you are South, the declarer in a 3NT contract:

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

West leads the six of hearts and you have to plan the play.

You start with five winners: three spades and two clubs, and can make two extra tricks in hearts and two (or three) tricks in diamonds. You plan to win the first trick (if West has the ace of hearts), then play on diamonds. This should allow you to make your contract no matter how the opponents defend. However, in the heat of the moment, it is possible to 'forget' whether some of your cards have become winners. Say you win trick one with the

king of hearts, then play the ♦Q. The defenders win and switch to spades, and you win your with ace of spades. You now lead the five of diamonds to the jack, and the opponents win and lead a second spade won by your king. At this point you have enough winners, but you have caused yourself to need to remember that several high cards have already been played (♠A-K, ♥K, ♦Q-J). Since declarer play is a solo venture, you can often make remembering which cards have been played easier – by playing the cheaper of touching cards. Had you played ♠K-Q, ♥J and ♦10-9, it would now be much easier to ‘remember’ that most of your remaining cards are winners.

It should be noted that declarer is much freer to do this when playing cards in the dummy (which can be seen by the defenders) than those in his own hand (declarer may prefer to hide his strength and cannot always afford to play the cheaper of touching cards without revealing too much to the opponents).

Tips to reduce the strain on your memory:

1. When facing your cards as dummy in a no-trump contract, consider placing the least likely trump suit on your right-hand side.
2. When counting suits, instead of counting up to thirteen, simply count down the missing cards.
3. Play the cheaper of touching cards when choosing which card to play from dummy. Playing the cheaper (lower) of touching cards makes it easier to remember that the remaining high cards are winners. □

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