

Duck, Hold Up, and Avoidance Plays

Duck: To lead low and deliberately play a low card from the other hand instead of a high card that might take a trick.

Reasons to duck a trick. (You are West)

1. To preserve an entry to a long suit.

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

Lead low and play low from dummy.
This preserves the entry to run the suit.

2. To maintain trump control.

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

You need to draw trumps. However, if you play the Ace and another, the defense can draw your trumps. Play low from both hands on the first trick and the Ace on the second trick.

3. To drop an enemy honor card.

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

You lead low to the Queen and it holds. Knowing the Ace is on your left, play low to the 5 hoping the Ace will drop.

4. To develop extra tricks in a suit

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

This is similar to Nr. 1. Duck once and you have 3 tricks if the suit splits.

Hold Up: Playing low to a trick led by the opponents.

Avoidance Play: Plan your play so the dangerous opponent can not gain the lead.

The hold up play in NT is used to maintain some control in a suit and hopefully cut communication between the opponents. It can be effective when they have more cards in the suit than you do and one of the opponents has 3 or less cards in the suit.

Example: You are in 3NT with Axx opposite xx in spades. The opening lead is a low spade. Hold up the ace until the third round hoping that the opponent that gets in won't have any more spades to lead.

Other holdings to hold up in NT

- | | | |
|----------|-----|---|
| 1. K x x | x x | If they can't get the lead and lead through you |
| 2. A K x | x x | |
| 3. K Q x | x x | |
| 4. K x x | Q x | When the king is lead on your left |
| 5. A J x | x x | |

When you should not hold up in NT

1. When the first trick is your only chance to stop the suit.
2. When another suit is more dangerous.
3. When you can promote a second stopper by taking the trick
4. When you can make all of the tricks required
5. When both opponents have more cards in the suit than you do.

When do you hold up in a suit contract

1. With A J x against the lead of K or Q
2. Holding A x x opposite x x
3. Holding A x opposite x x x to keep the dangerous hand out of the lead.

Sample Hands: Plan the play in the following hands:

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|--|---|--|
| 1. S K Q J 10 9
H A x x
D A K x
C x x | S A x x
H x x
D Q x x
C A x x x x | Contract: 4 spades
OL: king of hearts |
| 2. S A x x
H A x x
D J 10 x x
C A K x | S K Q x
H K x
D Q 9 x x x
C x x x | Contract: 3NT
OL: queen of hearts |
| 3. S A K 10 x x
H A 10
D x x x
C Q x x | S Q J x
H x x x
D K x
C A J 10 x x | Contract: 4 spades
OL: 5 of hearts |
| 4. S A J x
H A x x x
D A Q x
C A 10 x x | S Q x x
H x x
D K x x
C K J x x x | Contract: 3 no trump
OL: 4 of hearts |