

- PRINCIPLES OF WINNING DECLARER PLAY -

- USE A.R.C.H.
- GET THE TRUMPS OUT IF YOU CAN
- MAINTAIN CONTROL
- MANAGE YOUR ENTRIES
- PLAY YOUR OWN STUFF
- PLAY THE CARD YOU ARE KNOWN TO HOLD
- REVEAL AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE
- GIVE THE OPPONENTS EVERY CHANCE TO GO WRONG
- AVOID BREAKING KEY SUITS
- FORCE THE DEFENDERS TO MAKE EARLY DECISIONS
- GO WITH THE ODDS
- KNOW YOUR CARD COMBINATIONS
- DON'T BE TOO GREEDY
- DON'T TAKE UNNECESSARY RISKS
- ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS
- LEAD THE LAST TRUMP

- TIPS -

- ASSUME THAT YOUR AVERAGE OPPONENT IS FALSECARDING
- ASSUME THAT THE AVERAGE OPPONENT WILL GRAB NEARLY ANY OPPORTUNITY TO WIN A TRICK
- ASSUME THAT ALL OPPONENTS MAKE MISTAKES, BUT THAT THEY ARE NOT MORONS
- PLAY OUT YOUR SUITS IN AN UNUSUAL ORDER
- WHEN DISCARDING, PLAY THE HIGHEST OF EQUAL CARDS
- PLAY SECOND-HAND-HIGH AT TRICK ONE, WHEN APPLICABLE
- TRY TO PAINT A FALSE PICTURE OF YOUR HAND
- FEIGN DISINTEREST IN A KEY SUIT

ARCH

That acronym represents the four important tools that declarer needs to apply as soon as the opening lead is made, and possibly later as well.

Analyze the opening lead

- What are the opponents' lead conventions?
 - Standard (4th-best from four or more)
 - Third and Fifth (3rd from even, low from odd)
 - Lower of touching honors (rusinow)
 - Zero or Two Higher (jack denies)
- What honors are in the suit?
 - Does a low card promise an honor?
- Was the lead in partner's suit? Why not?
- Why was a lead in the unbid suit not made?

Review the bidding

- Is a 1-Diamond opener always 4+ length?
- Do they play 4-card majors?
- Could a weak-two bid be 5-card length?
- What is any bidder's expected HCP range?

Count winners and losers

- How many top winners do you have?
- How many more winners can be set up?
- How many top losers?
- How many more losers for sure?

How might I achieve the desired result?

- What is the actual objective?
 - Do you need to make the contract, or is it their hand?
 - If competing or sacrificing, you must hold the losses to less than the value of the opponents' contract: -50 or -100 against a part-score
 - When sacrificing, and assuming that you are doubled:
 - down one at unfavorable vulnerability (-200)
 - down two at equal vulnerability (-500)
 - down three at favorable vulnerability (-500)
 - If your objective cannot be achieved, then just do the best you can; perhaps another pair or two will have bid the same as you.

- FINESSESS -

Did you think that finessing was simple? In fact, there are more than a dozen different types of finesses available.

RUFFING FINESSE

<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>
AQJxx	x

If all you need are two tricks, and there is a side entry to the long suit then guess who has the king. If you need more than that, then playing low to the Queen offers the potential for as many as four tricks. Playing Ace, then Queen limits you to three tricks at most, and an additional side entry is required in that case.

DOUBLE FINESSE - DEEP FINESSE

Dummy:	AQT	AQ9	AJ9	AJx	AQx	AJx
Hand:	xxx	xxx	xxx	K9x	Txx	9xx

In each case, playing the lowest card in dummy at trick one offers the chance of an extra trick.

TWO-WAY FINESSE

Dummy:	KJxx
Hand:	ATxx

Barry Crane's Rule: The Queen lies under the Jack in a major suit, but over the Jack in a minor suit.

This superstitious ploy is not recommended; but at least it would succeed about half the time. Absent any other clues, a much better strategy is to guess which opponent is longer in the suit, and play that hand for the missing honor.

BACKWARD FINESSE

This one traps an off-side honor.

Dummy:	Axx	If you decide that the Queen is to the left, lead the Jack;
Hand:	KJ9	if that is covered, then finesse the Nine on the way back.

FINESSE OBLIGATOIRE

The hope is that an opponent is obliged to play a key honor because it is his only remaining card in the suit.

Dummy Hand Cash the Ace, then lead toward the Queen. If you judge that
Qxxx Axxx the King is to the right, play low from dummy.

INTRA-FINESSE

This one is a bit complicated, and even some better players don't know it.

Dummy: A9xx If the bidding suggests that LHO holds the King and three or
Hand: Q8xx more of the suit, there is a chance to hold the losers to one.
Lead from dummy and insert the Eight. When next in hand,
lead the Queen, hoping to smother the Ten or Jack on your right.

The suits could be 5-3 or 3-5 as well, or even 3-3, if LHO holds five or more.

OPEN FINESSE

The lead is toward an honor that can be beaten.

	<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
1.	Axxx	Qx	Lead toward the Queen
2.	Axxx	QT(x)	Lead low toward the Ten
3.	AQxx	Jx	Lead toward the Jack
4.	AQxx	J9	Lead toward the Nine

In cases 2 and 4, assume that RHO would have won the king if he had it.
In cases 1,3, and 4, the open finesse is the only legitimate play (see below).

CHINESE FINESSE

The lead of an unsupported honor is one of the most common errors in bridge play.

<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
AKxx	Jx(x)	Leading the Jack cannot win against a conscious opponent.
AQxxx	Jxx	Low to the Queen is the best play in the suit.
AJ9xx	Qxx	Lead the Queen here only if intending to take two finesses.

PRACTICE FINESSE

It makes no sense to take a finesse for an extra trick if it is unneeded; yet many players do just that, risking an unnecessary loss. Count your winners.

- CARD COMBINATIONS -

Going with the odds and making percentage plays will yield the best results in the long run. Here are a few for study:

<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
KJxx	Axxx	Play Ace, then finesse the Jack.
AJxx	KTxx	Decide which way to finesse, then do it.
Qxxx	Jxxxx	Play low from both hands.
Q9xx	J8xxx	Plan to play low, but try to lead through the short hand.
xx	AKJxxx	Ace, then finesse the Jack.
xx	AKJTxx	Finesse the Ten immediately.
Axxxx	QJTxx	Take the finesse.
ATxx	Qxx	Low toward the Queen, then finesse the Ten.

<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
1. AJxx	Txxx	Many players are unaware that certain card combinations can be approached in more than one way.
2. Jxx	ATx	

(1) The best play for the most tricks is low to the Jack, winning three tricks whenever LHO has Kx, Qx, or KQx. It works almost as well, however, to lead low from dummy or the Ten from hand if you judge RHO to have the shortness in the suit.

(2) If RHO has five or more in the suit, leading toward the Jack works as well as anything and requires fewer dummy entries. If LHO has an honor, he will grab it.

FROZEN SUITS

A frozen suit is one that at least one player cannot lead without giving up a trick. Those holdings are the ones that you want the opponents to lead. Some examples:

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ATx	Kxx	K8x	Qxx
Kxx J9x	QT8 Axx	J7x A9x	K9x ATx
Qxx	J9x	QTx	Jxx

In cases #1 and #3, N-S can win only one trick without help; in cases #2 and #4, N-S cannot win any trick without help.

TED'S TIP: A competent defender knows about frozen suits, and is aware of the danger of breaking any suit when there is a meaningful card to his right. So when you have something such as Kxx opposite Jx in dummy, and a good player on your right leads low, consider playing the King. RHO will not have the Queen unless he is desperate.

SAFETY PLAYS

	<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
1.	A9xxx	KQTx	Cash the King or Queen, picking up Jxxx on either side.
2.	A9xxx	KQ8x	Cash the Ace, picking up RHO's JTxx.
3.	xxx	AKTxx	Cash the Ace, then later lead toward the Ten.
4.	KTxx	A9xxx	At total-point scoring, take a first-round finesse!

Some combination are pretty obvious. Most players understand the situation in examples #1 and #3; most go wrong, however, on #2 and #4.

Because some safety plays risk giving up a trick that might not have to be lost (such as #3 and #4), care must be taken in their usage. In a Swiss Team game, every effort must be taken to ensure a plus score; whereas at matchpoints, it might be best to go with the field.

Some other safety plays:

	<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
	KJxx	Axx	The best chance for three tricks is King, Ace, low to the Jack.
	AJxx	Txxx	Two tricks can be guaranteed by cashing the Ace.
	K8x	AJ9xxx	Ace first guards against losing two tricks.
	KJxx	A9xx	Guarantee three winners with King, then low toward the Nine.

That last one is my favorite safety play, because a lot of "better" players don't know it. Similar to it are these plays that guarantee four winners unless the suit splits 5-0:

	<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
	K9x	AJxxx	Cash the Ace, then lead toward the Nine.
	A9xxx	KJx	Cash the King, then lead toward the Jack.
	AK9xx	Jxx	Cash the Ace or King, then lead toward the Jack.

HONOR PROMOTION

Every opponent has heard the old saw, "Cover an honor with an honor"; yet fewer than that understand why. The whole idea is to promote the value of one or more lesser cards. Covering an honor or an important spot-card takes out two of the opponents' high cards for the price of one.

(1)	(2)
AKx	AJx
QTx ??	Kxx ??
J??	T??

(1) As defender, you cover the lead of the Jack in hopes of promoting the value of your Ten. If you are not looking at the Ten, you are hoping that partner has it.

(2) The Ten is covered in case partner has Q9x.

That is as far as many defenders' thinking takes them. They also might foolishly cover with Qx when the offense has a 9-card fit. What long card is being promoted there? They also might be unaware that in certain cases, lesser cards might need to be covered as well.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
96	84	85	73
A832 J54	KT76 Q53	QJ74 K32	AQT6 J42
KQT7	AJ92	AJ96	K985

In all four examples, the lead of dummy's high card must be covered to avoid the loss of a trick. Most defenders routinely play low in these situations. Declarers can capitalize upon those errors by playing on such suits.

Note that in all the examples, if RHO has just a doubleton honor, it doesn't matter which other hand has the 5-card length; dummy's higher spot-card still must be covered. Note: When declarer has five or more of the suit, only Tx or better might be profitably covered.

Here is another common situation where most defenders can be caught napping:

AJ54
Q862 93
KT7

If you lead the Ten from hand, LHO might well duck, blowing a trick. If you cash the King first, though, the defender is more likely to cover the Ten subsequently.

- OTHER PLAY ISSUES -

SAVE ENTRIES TO BOTH HANDS IF ABLE

This should not have to be said; yet lots of entries, especially in the trump suit, are squandered by failing to think ahead.

Dummy: T8x Do not run the Ten and underplay the deuce; run the Eight
Hand: AQJ92 instead to keep the lead in dummy.

Maintain entries in both hands if possible, just in case:

Dummy: QJ43 Cash one high honor in each hand, maintaining flexibility
Hand: AK62

GET THE TRUMPS OUT

On most hands, it is best to draw some trumps as quickly as possible. The weaker the trump suit, the more important it might be to lead them, taking out two for one. Many tricks are lost because a declarer declines to lead trumps with a holding of, say, J9xxxx opposite a small singleton. The inevitable result is that the defenders rake in five or six trump tricks.

TRY TO AVOID LOSING CONTROL

- | | <u>Dummy</u> | <u>Hand</u> | |
|----|--------------|-------------|--|
| 1. | xxxx | AKxx | Avoid cashing A-K right away unless the suit must break 3-2. |
| 2. | xxxx | AQxx | The best play is low from hand, then finesse later. |
| 3. | xxxx | Axxx | Duck the first round of the suit, keeping some control. |

(1) If the suit splits 4-1 and you give up control, an opponent might be able to draw all your remaining trumps. Get a side suit or a crossruff set up first, so that an opponent will be able to obtain the lead only by ruffing.

(2) If you finesse the Queen early and it loses to KJT9, that probably will cost you at least one trick and possibly more.

COUNTING TRUMPS THE EASY WAY

TED'S TIP: Sometimes the play is complicated enough that a player might lose track of how many rounds of trumps have been played and how many the opponents still have. Make your counting easier by keeping track, not of the number of trumps played, but of the number of trumps that remain outstanding. That way you won't have to remember how the play went – only how many trumps the opponents still hold.

BEWARE THE DANGER HAND

The dangerous hand is the one that you don't want in the lead at an inopportune time. That defender might be able to run his long suit in Notrump, or give partner a ruff, or lead through your unsupported king, for example.

If LHO has led his long suit against notrump, try to eliminate his entries before the suit is established. If you have a two-way finesse in trumps and someone has led a singleton, play into the hand with the shortness so as to prevent a ruff.

There are many more possibilities.

TRUE RESTRICTED CHOICE

The well-publicized principle of Restricted Choice is a useful guide; yet not only is it nonsensically named, but going with the mathematical odds accomplishes the same effect. The following is a situation of true restricted choice:

TED'S TIP: When a trump lead is strongly suggested by the bidding, yet is not forthcoming from a reasonable opponent, play the opening leader for the key trump honor. Expect that that hand was restricted from leading a trump due to the nature of his holding – Qxx or Kx, for example.

Note that this does not apply if you are missing just three trumps including the Queen. No one ever would lead a trump unless the suit were breaking 2-1 anyway.

WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAD YOUR HIGHEST CARD

Say that you are playing in Notrump. Your last two cards are the J9 of clubs. The opponents still have three clubs including the King and the Ten. Dummy's cards all are losers. What card should you play?

Answer: It cannot be wrong to lead your highest card. The only hope for a trick is to lead the Jack and smother the singleton Ten; otherwise, whoever wins the trick automatically will have another winner to cash. Note that this ploy does not apply if key suit is trump, for in that case declarer has a choice.

PLAY OFF THE LAST TRUMP

Most players were taught by their mamas when they were little babies not to squander their trumps. Doing so at a safe time, however, can generate a lot of extra tricks in the long run. The play is especially useful when you can cash all the tricks but one.

TED'S TIP: Just do it, and at the first reasonable opportunity. Occasionally, something mysterious yet wonderful will happen.

LEAD THE HIGHEST CARD ONLY IF YOU WANT IT TO BE COVERED

Most players are aware of this one. The lead of a King is more likely to be captured than the lead of a Queen or Jack, because the hand with the Ace might be leery of crashing an honor in partner's hand. If you want to "sneak a trick through", such as when trying to get the trumps drawn, lead a lesser honor first. There are other applicable situations as well:

<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
Kxx	JTxxx	Lead the Ten, hoping that it is not covered by Qx.
Axx	JTx	Lead the Jack, hoping for LHO to cover with his only honor.
Axx	QJ9x	Lead the Queen. If it is covered, finesse the Nine. You might not lose any trick at all!

PLAY SECOND-HAND HIGH !

This is one of my favorite "secrets", because it is little-known even by a lot of better players and is most likely to succeed against them. Occasionally, this tactic can conceal information about declarer's holding for at least one trick. Avoid this play if it would jeopardize the holding in your hand, such as by compromising a needed stopper.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Jx	9xxx	Qx	Qx
Kxxxx	Kxx	any	Jxxx
QTx	QJTx	any	KTxxx
Axx	A8	A	AJ

(1) Play the Jack. LHO will not know where the Ten is. If you play low and take the Ten with the Ace, LHO will know that he can safely underlead his King later.

(2) In this situation, LHO will learn that partner has QJT no matter what you do. If you play low from dummy, LHO also will learn that another trick can be cashed by either defender. Why? Because if RHO had the Eight, he would have played it at trick one. Call for the Nine immediately, then grab the Ace. LHO will not yet know whether you hold another card in the suit. Similarly, playing high from Txxx or even Jxxx in dummy can temporarily hide one or more of RHO's cards from his partner.

(3) Play the Queen. If it is covered, at least one opponent cannot tell whether you have a singleton.

(4) Play the Queen. If it is covered, LHO cannot know who has the Jack; and RHO might not either, depending upon their lead agreements. Failure to make this play will tell the opponents immediately that declarer has no loser in this suit.

TED'S TIP: Just do it. Don't worry about analyzing all the special situations. When a defender later asks why you made that play, just smile and say that a little bird told you.

WATCH THE SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

What are the opponents' carding methods? You might need to know.

- Standard American
- Odd-Even
- Lavinthal
- Upside-down Count and/or Attitude
- Other

If you ask, and an opponent answers, say, "Lavinthal", and you don't know what that is, get an explanation. Sometimes the other opponent will indicate by an inadvertent mannerism that he never heard of Lavinthal either, even though it might be marked on the convention card. Use that information – at your own risk, of course.

TED'S TIP: If you ask about carding and the response is "Standard", don't believe it. Get clarification. Millions of bridge players worldwide, including many at your own local club, believe that making their first discard in the suit that they want led is Standard. Not only is that a really poor defensive method, but announcing it as Standard is both incorrect and, because it is a private understanding, illegal. In Standard American, a high card is encouraging in the suit of the discard, and a low card is discouraging. As declarer, you may need to root out the facts.

PLAY YOUR OWN STUFF !

This could be the most important tip of all, and I cannot stress the point strongly enough. Setting up a side suit, for example, is more important than trying to win a single trick in the opponents' suit. Getting your own tricks going usually is more important than trying to ruff losers. It also can help to maintain control of a hand. You can bet that the defenders are playing their own stuff when they can; you need to do the same.

COUNT EVERYTHING !

Trying to get a picture of the entire deal is a hugely important task; yet is largely ignored by the majority of declarers. Counting the opponents' distribution and determining where the missing honors are is relatively easy in some cases, but difficult in others. Many declarers count little other than the suit currently being played.

During the play of the hand, new clues regularly become available. Declarer's job is to add each discovery to the accumulated database of information. Whether that knowledge is acquired in time, and whether it actually might be used to earn an extra trick or two, depends upon the actual situation; but the successful declarer routinely goes through the motions regardless.

Count, Count, Count. Train yourself to do it.

DON'T BE GREEDY

At the top level, players take many risks trying to get ahead. When their gambits all work out on a particular day, they have a chance to win. No one ever won a national event by "sitting in the boat" all day. You can do just fine with more normal plays, however.

TED'S TIP: Play safe for your contract. If someone else gambles for an overtrick, and it works, so be it. The next time they try it, they might get a zero. You want to avoid incurring those demoralizing zeros.

DON'T BE CARELESS

Example: Dummy: AJTx
Hand: Kxxxx

It is okay to lead the Jack here, hoping to induce a cover. Be aware of the risk, however, of overtaking with the king. If LHO shows out, you have generated an extra loser from nowhere. If you also have the Nine, then you can afford to do that.

Don't play around trying to sneak a trick in a side suit unless you can afford it.
Play your own stuff.

Don't mark time by throwing the opponents in, hoping that they will lead something to help you, in situations where it is clear that they will not. If they have a suit of their own, they probably will play it instead.

RIGHT-SIDE THE PLAY IN YOUR HEAD

Many players go wrong when the long trumps are in the dummy as the result of a transfer bid. Declarer needs to envision the play from the "right side"; that is, how it should go if the long trumps were in his hand.

Example: With Axxx in hand opposite a small singleton, declarer wins the opening lead with the Ace and immediately ruffs a "loser" in that suit with dummy's long trump, when in fact there are no losers at all. When played from the "right side", the last thing declarer would sensibly do is to shorten the long trump suit unnecessarily.

AVOID PLAYS PREDICATED UPON THE ASSUMPTION OF HORRIBLE DEFENSE

Example: When an entire suit is fully revealed to a defender, assume that even a novice probably will know what to do with it.

- STRATEGIES -

Some bridge players take the game quite seriously, others attend the club more for its social aspects, and some are there just to pass the time of day. All players are creatures of habit, and the less skilled ones can be counted on to do their normal thing day in and day out, hand after hand. Savvy declarers can capitalize upon this knowledge to win a lot of extra tricks.

Automatic falsecarding by a defender is an utter waste of time; yet that is perhaps the most self-destructive behavior at the bridge table. Not only do players give themselves away by this strategy, but much of the time the only person to be fooled is the defender's partner.

HANDLING THE QUEEN-JACK OF TRUMP

TED'S TIP: If Average Joe defender plays the Jack of trump on the first lead, play it for a singleton; it nearly always will be. With Q-J doubleton, that player invariably falsecards with the Queen first. Similarly, if you take a finesse with an AJT combination and Average Jane wins the Queen, assume that the King is onside; for it nearly always will be.

How and where so many players have gotten the idea that routine falsecarding is a good strategy is one of life's great mysteries; yet it is so ingrained in their thinking that most probably never will change their ways – even after reading this text!

GIVE THE OPPONENTS OPPORTUNITIES TO GO WRONG

TED'S TIP: Assume that Average Jane will grab nearly every opportunity to win a trick or break a new suit, being afraid that a trick might somehow disappear. If you lead early toward that KJxxx in dummy, Average Jane to the left will grab her Ace most of the time. On the other hand, a skilled defender already will have decided what to do when that suit is led, so as not to give herself away by a hesitation. Similarly,

<u>Dummy</u>	<u>Hand</u>	
QTx	Axx	Lead low from hand; LHO probably will grab the King if able.
AQx	xxx	Lead low from dummy; if the King is offside, RHO might grab it.
Kxx	Qxx	Lead toward one of the honors; defender might grab the Ace.
Kxxxx	J	If you think that the Ace is offside, lead low from dummy; RHO might grab the Ace, being fearful of losing to your singleton Queen. If that defender goes up with the Queen, then she surely has the Ace as well.

REVEAL NOTHING UNTIL YOU MUST !

Every lead of a suit allows the defenders to communicate something to each other, either about that suit or something else. That is the nature of the game, and that is why you want to avoid playing on any key suit until you have no choice. With a side suit of Kxx in dummy and AQxx in hand, for example, avoid playing on that suit as long as possible; that makes it more difficult to count your distribution and place the honors.

PLAY THE CARD YOU ARE KNOWN TO HOLD

In general, winning a trick with the highest of equal cards in hand is best. From declarer's perspective, falsecarding is good!

Example: If playing in Notrump with xxx in dummy and KQx in hand, and a low card is led to the Jack, win the King. LHO will not yet know where the Queen is. If you win the Queen instead, he will know that you also have the King; otherwise, RHO would have played it instead of the Jack. Similarly, with AKx in your hand, tend to win the first trick with Ace; otherwise, the defenders might know that you hold both honors.

PLAY THE CARD YOU ARE NOT KNOWN TO HOLD

Occasionally, this is a winning tactic. Holding AKx in hand opposite xx in dummy, playing off both top honors will show the defenders that there is no future for them in that suit. This might stampede one of them into leading something else, which is what you wanted all along.

AVOID UNNECESSARY RISKS

When you are in a normal contract, don't try to be a hero. Go for a plus. Much of the time, one simply makes the normal play and accepts a normal result. Deceptive measures or offbeat plays should be attempted only when no risk is involved, or if you are having a mediocre game and are willing to gamble to improve it.

Making a contract also is great for partnership morale. Your partner might not realize that you blew two tricks, in which case it really doesn't matter. She's just happy that she doesn't have to press the 'minus' key on the scoring pad.

DO TAKE NECESSARY RISKS

When you are in an unusual contract in a matchpoint game, in which case you must beat the other pairs. If Four Spades is cold on a 4-4 fit, but somehow you have landed in Three Notrump, making only three will earn you close to a zero on the board. If there is any chance to make an overtrick, take it no matter what the risk. Your matchpoint score will be about the same even if it fails and you go down. In a team game, conversely, play safe for the plus that will lose you only one Imp in the final scoring.

Similarly, if your contract is doubled, then by all means take every precaution either to make it or avoid going down more than the value of the opponents' game.

- DECEPTIVE PLAYS -

Deception and other tricky plays are all well and good; yet one must remember that tournaments are not won by the occasional spectacular result, but by doing the right stuff on the countless more ordinary hands, day in and day out. There are certain things that any declarer can do, however, that don't require a great deal of skill – merely the application of a few insights.

PLAY YOUR SEQUENCES IN AN UNEXPECTED ORDER !

This is perhaps my greatest “secret”. The Creatures of Habit invariably play their sequences either in top-down or bottom-up order. From KQJT, they either will play K-Q-J, etcetera, or their first ruff in this suit will be either with the King or the Ten. Virtually no one leads low from dummy and puts in the Jack! Even a lot of good players don't realize that they are being helpful to the defense.

On occasion, knowledge of this bad habit can prove useful. For example, if declarer ruffs a card with the Seven and LHO cannot overruff, his partner may now know exactly what that trump suit looks like. Should declarer lead low from Axxx and win the Ten, it is very likely that he does not hold the Nine! Play partner for it; he will have it, unless declarer knows the “secret”.

PLAY ALL LONG SUITS IN AN UNEXPECTED ORDER

One of the most difficult aspects of defense is making discards on the run of a long suit. It is incumbent upon both defenders to know how many discards must be made, and to plan accordingly. Many players who do not bother to count the suit length simply make discards, then breathe a sigh of relief when declarer's lowest card finally is played, assuming it to be the last one. But what if it isn't? That defender might already have discarded to his disadvantage. Example:

Dummy: Qx
Hand: AK9632

Instead of playing the deuce under the queen followed by the rest from the top down, play 3-A-K-9-2. Believe it or not, many defenders will think that that suit is finished. Then when the Six subsequently appears, someone might already have discarded to his disadvantage. Note: Don't keep the Nine; lower-ranking cards are easier to forget.

PLAY THE ENTIRE HAND IN NON-STANDARD ORDER

Instead of simply drawing three rounds of trumps, include plays in another suit or two. This can throw off even thinking opponents, who will be wondering why the play went that way. With spades trump, play S-H-S-D-S-H. They might be thoroughly confused by now. They might not even remember what the contract is!

Making a play that either seemingly makes no sense, or conveys a false message about the nature of your hand, is the best way to cause a good defender to make an error.

PAINT A FALSE PICTURE

- Lead a short suit, suggesting that you are trying to set up that suit or get a ruff.
- Pretend to be taking a finesse, hiding the location of the missing honor.
- Play high spot-cards instead of low ones. Tend to play the higher of equals.
- Feign disinterest in a key suit by discarding in that suit.
- Lead from xx toward Jx, making it look as if you wish to ruff one in dummy; this might beget a switch to trumps, which is what you wanted.

TRY TO INDUCE A CONTINUATION

Dummy: 8xxx When the King is led, consider following with the Ten. If the suit
Hand: AT9 is continued, you have gained a tempo toward setting up the
 Eight and doing other things as well.

TRY TO INDUCE A COSTLY COVER

- Lead the Ten from Txxx opposite A9xxx; RHO might split his honors.
- Lead the Jack from Jxxx toward A9xxx for the same reason, but not if RHO is short in the suit.
- Lead the Ten from AT8 toward K9xxx; LHO might cover with Jx, Qx, Jxx, Qxx.
- With Jxxxx in hand and Qxxxx in dummy, lead toward dummy, hoping that LHO will play the King from Kx. This never should work, but occasionally it does.

MAKE A NONSENSE PLAY

Lead the Jack from Jxx in dummy. By the time a defender figures out that you have but a singleton in your hand, it might be too late.

- ONLINE REFERENCES -

Just in case you might like to study some issues in greater detail or at least get some laughs, I have listed a few links.

This site shows the best-percentage play for every possible card-combination:

http://www.bridgehands.com/S/Suit_Combination.htm

Long ago, George Coffin published a group of 5-card double-dummy end-positions that became known as Coffin's-88. They are great exercises in learning the way that the card work. One site has a printable version and a PDF file. Don't bother with Hand #83, though, because Mr. Coffin screwed up; there is no solution:

<http://www.rpbridge.net/9p01.htm>

<http://houstoncardschool.com/coffin/coffin.htm>

<http://houstoncardschool.com/coffin/George%20S%20Coffin's%20Great%2088.pdf>

If you still are looking for something to read, try some of the stuff on my own website. Send me an email and tell me what you think:

<http://tedmuller.us/Bridge/TipsAndTricks.htm> (more on declarer play)

<http://tedmuller.us/Bridge/Dante.htm> (general merriment)

<http://tedmuller.us/Bridge/Puzzles.htm> (test your double-dummy skills)

Thanks, Ted