

DECLARER PLAY - WEEK 3
PLAYING NO TRUMP CONTRACTS - PART 2
(Developing Long Suits)

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The basic strategy that should be followed to make your no trump contract is:

1. Listen to opponents' bids.
2. Observe the opening lead.
3. Plan your offense:
 - a. Consider the number of tricks you must win.
 - b. Count *sure winners* in the combined hands.
 - c. **Analyze ways to develop needed winners:**
 - ✓ Promote high cards.
 - ✓ **Develop long suits.**
4. Execute the plan.
5. Watch defenders play.
6. Keep track of cards played.

DEVELOPING LONG SUITS

In no trump a long suit has the potential to take extra tricks. The more cards your partnership holds the fewer the opponents hold and after the suit is played several times opponents might not have any cards left. Your remaining cards, whether high or low, become winners.

Successful development of a long suit often depends on how the missing cards are distributed between the opponents. The distribution table on the right can be summarized by:

Most of the time, missing cards will divide unevenly but as close to even as possible.

MISSING CARD DISTRIBUTION

MISS	MOST LIKELY		NEXT LIKELY	
	SPLIT	PERC	SPLIT	PERC
3	2-1	78%	3-0	22%
4	3-1	50%	2-2	41%
5	3-2	68%	4-1	28%
6	4-2	48%	3-3	35%
7	4-3	62%	5-2	31%
8	5-3	47%	4-4	33%
9	5-4	59%	6-3	31%

For example five missing cards will most often be divided 3-2 (68%) with the next most probable split being 4-1 (28%) while six missing cards will most often be divided 4-2 (49%) with the next most probable split being 3-3 (35%).

3 SURE TRICKS • MOST LIKELY 1 EXTRA TRICK	
Opponents have five cards in this suit. Since the most likely split is 3-2 (68%), this suit will probably take one extra trick. But, if the split is 4-1 (28%) or 5-0 (4%) you will not have an extra winner.	A K Q 4 <hr style="width: 100px; margin: 5px auto;"/> 7 6 3 2
2 SURE TRICKS • MOST LIKELY 1 EXTRA TRICK	
Since opponents five cards are most likely split 3-2 (68%), this suit will probably take one extra trick. But, you will have to lose one trick to develop the extra winner. Plan to lose that trick early while you still have control of the suits.	A K 5 4 <hr style="width: 100px; margin: 5px auto;"/> 7 6 3 2
2 SURE TRICKS • MOST LIKELY 2 EXTRA TRICKS	
Opponents five cards are most likely split 3-2 (68%). Your 5-3 split gives you a good chance to take two extra tricks and a very good chance to take at least one extra trick. But you will have to lose one or two tricks so take your losses early.	A 9 7 5 4 <hr style="width: 100px; margin: 5px auto;"/> K 6 3
3 SURE TRICKS • MOST LIKELY NO EXTRA TRICKS	
Since opponents six cards are most likely split 4-2 (48%), you will probably not take any extra tricks. But the missing cards might be split 3-3 (36%) so an extra trick is possible if there is no other way to take a needed winner.	A Q 3 2 <hr style="width: 100px; margin: 5px auto;"/> K 6 4

Remember that the defense is probably trying to develop their long suit and the opening lead will often give you a clue about the distribution of the lead suit. Developing your long suit is often a race between you and the defense. If you must lose a trick to develop a suit, be sure that you lose it before the defense has established their suit.

LENGTH REQUIREMENTS

If you need to develop a long suit, focus on the suit(s) with the longest combined length and/or the biggest uneven split. For example, your chances of developing extra tricks are:

- better for a combined length of eight with a 5-3 split than for a combined length of eight with a 4-4 split.
- better for a combined length of seven with a 5-2 split than for a combined length of eight with a 4-4 split.
- zero for a combined length of six with a 3-3 split but greater than zero for a combined length of six with a 5-1 split.

COUNTING WINNERS • DEVELOPING A LONG SUIT

OPENING LEAD: ♣7

Listen: The bidding is no help.

Observe: The ♣7 is probably fourth highest in longest and strongest suit. West should have at least three more clubs including the ♣Q or the ♣J. By the rule of eleven, East should have one club higher than the seven. Defenders will probably try to establish their club suit.

Pause: You must take 9 tricks.

Look: You have 7 sure winners (2 ♠ + 1 ♥ + 2 ♦ + 2 ♣).

Analyze: Your only hope is that the missing diamonds are split 3-2 (68%) so that you can develop two extra diamond winners. But, you must lose one diamond to develop the suit.

Execute: Take the first trick. Then lead a low diamond and play low (take your loss early). When you regain the lead, cash the ♦K. If there are four diamonds on this trick you will make your contract.

NORTH - DUMMY

♠ A 4 3 2
♥ J 9 2
♦ K 5 2
♣ A 8 4

East	South	West	North
------	-------	------	-------

Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

SOUTH - DECLARER

♠ K 6
♥ A 8 5
♦ A 7 6 4 3
♣ K 6 3

PLAYING SAFE

If opponents have five cards in a suit, there is a 68% probability that they are split 3-2. But there is a 28% probability that they are split 4-1. A *safety play* occurs when you play a suit in a manner that guards against a bad distribution of the missing cards.

In the example to the right, suppose that you must take at least four tricks in the suit to make the contract. Also suppose that there are no other entries into the North hand. If the missing cards are split 3-2, you can take five tricks in the suit. If the missing cards are split 4-1 you can still take four tricks in the suit. But, you must be able to get to the North hand to take the fourth trick. If you lead two of the honors and discover a 4-1 split, you will only be able to take three tricks in the suit.

SAFETY PLAY

A Q 5 3 2		
	N	
W		E
	S	
K 8 4		

To guard against the possibility of the bad split, lead a low card and lose the first trick in the suit. In other words, play it safe! Then when you regain the lead you can safely draw opponents remaining cards and end up in the dummy to take the fourth trick.

COUNTING WINNERS • DEVELOPING LONG SUITS • SAFETY PLAY

OPENING LEAD: ♥Q

Listen: The bidding is no help.

Observe: The ♥Q is probably top of connecting honors in a three card, possibly broken, sequence. West should have the ♥J and either the ♥T or the ♥9 or both. Opponents will probably try to establish their hearts.

Pause: You must take 9 tricks.

Look: You have 7 sure winners (2 ♠ + 2 ♥ + 3 ♦ + 0 ♣).

Analyze: You can only promote one winner in clubs. If the missing diamonds are split 3-2 (68%) you can develop three extra diamond winners. If diamonds are split 4-1 (28%) you can develop two extra diamond winners but you must play it safely to preserve an entry to the dummy. Given two heart stoppers, you can afford the safety play loss. If diamonds are split 5-0 (4%) you will be set.

Execute: After taking the first trick, lead a diamond and play low from the dummy (the safety play). If there are four diamonds on the trick you make your contract.

NORTH - DUMMY

♠ 6 4 3
♥ 6 4
♦ AKQ 7 5 4
♣ 4 3

East	South	West	North
------	-------	------	-------

Pass	1NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

SOUTH - DECLARER

♠ AK 5 2
♥ AK 3
♦ 6 3
♣ Q J T 7

DUPLICATE SCORING --- PLAY SAFE OR GAMBLE ON THE SPLIT?

If you are not vulnerable playing 3NT, the safety play gives you a:

- 96% chance of making 400 points.
- 4% chance of losing 100 points.

If you decide to play for the 3-2 split, you have a:

- 68% chance of making 430 points.
- 28% chance of losing 50 points.
- 4% chance of losing 100 points.

LOSING TRICKS

Note the common theme to these no trump tactics. If you must lose one or more tricks to make your contract, take your losses early while you still have stoppers in the other suits.

TAKE YOUR LOSSES EARLY!
TAKE YOUR WINNERS LATE!

PRESERVING ENTRIES

In the previous example, the safety play guarded against the loss of an entry to the long side of the suit. An **entry** is a card that allows you to shift the lead from one hand to another. When you are playing no trump, it is essential that you preserve an entry into the weak hand if you plan to promote high cards or establish a long suit in that hand. To help preserve entries you should:

- Play the high card(s) from the short side first
- Take your losses early

COUNTING WINNERS • PROMOTING HIGH CARDS • PRESERVING ENTRIES

OPENING LEAD: ♦ Q

Listen: The bidding is no help.

Observe: The ♦ Q is probably top of connecting honors in a three card, possibly broken, sequence. West should have the ♦ J and ♦ T (you have the ♦ 9). Defenders will probably try to establish diamonds.

Pause: You must take 9 tricks.

Look: You have 5 sure winners (1 ♠ + 2 ♥ + 2 ♦ + 0 ♣).

Analyze: Your only hope is to promote clubs and take four club tricks. Given two diamond stoppers, you can afford the loss to promote the clubs. Because opponents may hold up their ♣ A to thwart your plan you must preserve dummy's ♦ A to gain entry to the dummy.

Execute: Take the first trick with the ♦ K in your hand. Then lead the ♣ Q (lead the high card from the short side first). Continue leading clubs until the ♣ A falls. When you regain the lead, you have the ♦ A to gain entry to the dummy.

NORTH - DUMMY

♠ J 4 3
♥ T 3
♦ A 9 6
♣ K J T 6 4

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

SOUTH - DECLARER

♠ A 8 6 2
♥ A K 7 2
♦ K 7 3
♣ Q 3

If the clubs are split 5-1 or 6-0, the contract will go down one. But the missing clubs should be split 4-2 (49%) or 3-3 (35%) so you have an excellent chance to make the contract.

PLAYING SOLID SUITS

You should usually run a long solid or developed suit early to force opponents to discard from other suits. But you should be sure that your plan will allow you to run the suit. You may have to delay running a long suit to:

- ✓ Preserve entries in the long suit to guarantee later access to winners in other suits.
- ✓ Preserve stoppers in the long suit when a bad missing card split is detected.

COUNTING WINNERS • PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING LONG SUITS • PRESERVING ENTRIES

OPENING LEAD: ♠J

Listen: The bidding is no help.

Observe: The ♠J is probably top of connecting honors in a three card, possibly broken, sequence. West should have the ♠T and either the ♠9 or the ♠8 (or both). West might also have the ♠K. East should have the ♠Q. Opponents will probably try to establish their spades.

Pause: You must take 9 tricks.

Look: You have 6 sure winners (1 ♠ + 0 ♥ + 0 ♦ + 5 ♣).

Analyze: You can promote one winner in hearts by losing one trick. You can promote two winners in diamonds by losing one trick. If the missing diamonds are split 3-2 (68%) you can develop three extra diamond winners.

Execute: You have several problems:

✓ **Problem:** You can not afford the losers if West has either missing Ace or East can return a spade after cashing one of the Aces.

Solution: Apply the *Guideline of 7* which suggests holding the ♠A until the third trick to try to exhaust East's ability to return a spade.

✓ **Problem:** Because smart defenders may hold up the ♦A to thwart your plans, you must preserve an entry to the dummy to run the diamonds.

Solution: While it is tempting to run the solid clubs to force defenders to discard from other suits, delay running clubs to preserve entries to the dummy.

✓ **Problem:** If the diamond split is 4-1 or worse (32%) and the ♦T9 do not fall on the first three tricks, you will only take the two promoted diamond tricks.

Solution: If you discover a bad diamond split delay finishing the diamond promotion to preserve a stopper in diamonds.

NORTH - DUMMY

♠ 8 3
♥ T 8
♦ Q J 8 6 5 3
♣ A J 9

VULNERABLE

East	South	West	North
Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

SOUTH - DECLARER

♠ A 7 6
♥ K Q 3
♦ K 4
♣ K Q T 6 5

VULNERABLE