

DECLARER PLAY - WEEK 7
PLAYING SUIT CONTRACTS - PART 3
(Discarding Losers)

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The basic strategy that should be followed to make your trump suit contract is:

1. Listen to opponents' bids.
2. Observe the opening lead.
3. Plan your offense:
 - a. Consider the number of tricks you can afford to lose.
 - b. Count **losers in the hand with the longest trump suit, the master hand.**
 - ✓ Include losses needed to promote high cards.
 - c. **Analyze ways to eliminate extra losers.**
 - ✓ Ruff losers from the master hand using trump in the supporting hand.
 - ✓ Finesse opponent's high cards.
 - ✓ **Discard losers from the master hand on extra winners in the supporting hand created by:**
 - **Promoting high cards in the supporting hand.**
 - **Developing a long suit in the supporting hand.**
4. Execute the plan.
5. Watch defenders play.
6. Keep track of cards played.

DISCARDING LOSERS

Sometimes you can eliminate a loser in the master hand by discarding it on an extra winner in the supporting hand. If the supporting hand does not have an extra winner, you may be able to create one through promotion or by developing a long suit. But care must be taken to ensure that defenders do not destroy your plan with a ruff.

Consider the example on the right where the trump suit is spades. The master hand, South, has three diamond losers. But, the dummy has two extra heart winners. If you draw trump and play the hearts, you can discard two of the diamond losers on the extra heart winners.

DISCARDING

♠ 8 4 3 2
♥ AKQ
♦ 5 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ AKQJT
♥ 3
♦ AT94

To discard losers from the master hand you must:

- ✓ have a side suit with more cards in the supporting hand than in the master hand
- ✓ have or must be able to develop extra winners in the side suit
- ✓ ensure opponents can not ruff your plan

If you can not afford to draw trump before you discard your losers, be sure that any missing card splits are in your favor.

Consider the example on the right. You can afford three losers. But you have at least four South (master hand) losers:

1 slow ♠ + 0 ♥ + 2 fast ♦ + 1 slow ♣

If the missing trump is split 4-0 you will also have a slow loser in hearts but the probability is only nine percent.

You need to eliminate at least one loser. You can not ruff any of the losers in the dummy. But, if you lose the two fast diamonds, you can promote two diamonds in the dummy into extra winners. You can then discard the spade loser or the club loser on a diamond in the dummy. But, good defenders will not give you the chance to discard both of them.

Care must be taken to draw trump first to prevent defenders from ruffing your plan. You must also preserve an entry in the dummy so that you can get to the extra winners.

Take the first trick with the ♣A and draw trump. Then lead a diamond to start the promotion. If the defense leads another club, take it with the ♣K and lead another diamond. The defense will now win a club trick. But the ♠A gives you an entry to the dummy so that you can lead a diamond for the discard of the losing spade.

If defenders switch to spades after taking the first diamond, cash the ♠A. Then lead a diamond to finish the promotion. You will lose the second spade but the ♣K gives you an entry to the dummy so that you can lead a diamond and discard the losing club.

DISCARDING LOSERS			
NORTH - DUMMY			
♠ A 6 2			
♥ 8 7 5			
♦ Q J T 9			
♣ K 5 3			
South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
SOUTH - DECLARER			
♠ 9 4			
♥ A K Q 6 4 3			
♦ 8 5			
♣ A 9 7			
Opening Lead ♣Q			

MAKING DUMMY THE MASTER HAND

When the dummy has trumps that are as long or longer than declarer's, it may be better to make the dummy the master hand.

Declarer's hand has four club losers. You can discard one club loser on dummy's ♥K and ruff two club losers in the dummy. But, you must lose a club to implement this plan. Since your combined hands have eight diamonds with the top four honors, it is likely that West led a singleton ♦7. If East takes the first club trick and returns a diamond, West might get a ruff to defeat the contract.

Suppose you make dummy the master hand. The dummy has two losing hearts and one losing club. But, as long as one of the opponents is not void in hearts, you can cash the ♥K and ruff the losing hearts in declarer's hand. Since you have all of the high spades, you can afford to use the ♠KJ for the ruffs to guard against a bad heart split.

Take the first trick with the ♦J, lead the ♥7 and cash the ♥K. Now lead the ♥2 and ruff in your hand with the ♠K. Lead a low spade to draw trump and return to the dummy. Lead the ♥J and ruff in your hand with the ♠J. Lead the remaining spade to draw trump and return to the dummy to finish drawing trump. Now your only loser is the club and you make the contract.

In the unlikely event that the missing trump are split 5-0 (4%), you will not make the contract no matter what you do!

DUMMY AS MASTER			
NORTH - DUMMY			
♠ A Q T 9			
♥ A K J 2			
♦ Q 8 6 3			
♣ 7			
East	South	West	North
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
SOUTH - DECLARER			
♠ K J 4 3			
♥ 7			
♦ A K J 5			
♣ Q J 6 2			
Opening Lead ♦7			

About the Bidding

North has 19 dummy points (16 HCP + 3 ♣ SSP) and knows four spades is a lock. But North also knows that South has at least four diamonds and exactly four spades. That means that South's opening points should all be high card points and South must be short in hearts or clubs. So the partnership has at least 29 (16+13) HCP and at least 3 SSP which is slam territory. After finding out the partnership is missing an Ace, there is no point in asking for Kings because that commits the partnership to 6♠. North could stop at 5♠ which should also be a lock, but North decides to risk 6♠ to try for a top board.

The fact that South took the Willow Valley Bridge Academy course on declarer play also influenced North's decision!

CHOOSING THE BEST ALTERNATIVE

When you have two or more ways to eliminate a loser, you may be able to try them both. Suppose you need to eliminate one loser and have identified two possible finesses. Each finesse by itself has a 50% probability of success. But, if you can afford to try both, you have a 75% probability of success.

When you have several options and can not afford to try all of them, pick the option that has the greatest chance of success.

Consider the example on the right. You can afford to lose three tricks. But you have four South (master hand) losers, one slow spade and three fast hearts. You have the following possible ways to eliminate one of the losers:

- **Finesse against the Queen of spades.**
This has a 50% probability of success.
- **Establish the fourth diamond in dummy and discard a heart on the diamond.**

This assumes that the missing diamonds are split 3-3 which only has a 35% probability of success.

- **Ruff a heart in dummy.**

You need to lose two hearts but if you lose them before the enemy draws the dummy trump, there is a 100% chance of success. (If hearts are split 6-2 or worse (10%), the dummy ♠9 will either overruff defender's ruff or force defender to play the ♠Q which covers two losers for the price of one!).

The last alternative is the sure thing. Take the first club trick and lead a heart. A smart defender will take the trick and lead a spade to reduce your ruffing power. If East leads the spade, you must take the trick with the ♠K. Then lead another heart.

If you start with the spade finesse and it fails, your opponents can draw the dummy trump as you get rid of dummy's hearts leaving you without a trump to ruff the third heart.

CHOOSE AN ALTERNATIVE

NORTH - DUMMY

♠ 9 8 6

♥ 6 3

♦ K 7 6 2

♣ K 8 4 3

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

SOUTH - DECLARER

♠ A K J T 7

♥ J 7 4

♦ A Q 5

♣ A 5

Opening Lead ♣Q