

BRIDGE – BEGINNER’S LESSONS III - 16

Planning the Play of the Hand - Trick Development

The development of tricks by a Declarer refers to the work that must be done in any particular suit in order to win the tricks that are potentially available. Some suits are already fully developed and require no additional effort. Examples would include **AKQJ** opposite **xxxx**, **AQx** opposite **Kxx**, and **Kxx** opposite **Qxx** (after the Ace is played). Most suits, however, require some work and must be developed, to some extent, before the maximum number of tricks can be achieved.

1. By Cashing Existing or Established Winners, that is, by playing the highest-ranked cards that exist in a suit.

- a. No other card beats the Ace when a suit is first led.
- b. No other card beats the Queen once the Ace and the King have been played.

2. By Promotion, that is, by driving out any higher-ranking cards, thereby elevating the lower-ranking ones. Giving up one's high card(s), especially when a sequence of high cards is present, is one of the most certain methods of developing additional tricks. One must consider losing such a promotional trick to the Opponents as early as is possible in the play of the cards before controls are expended in the other suits.

- a. Holding the KQJ of a suit: Lead the King in order to drive out the Ace, thereby promoting the Queen and the Jack as winners.
- b. Holding the QJT9 opposite xx: Play the Queen, then the Jack, in order to force out the Ace and the King, thereby promoting the Ten and 9 as winners.

3. By Establishing Long-Suit Winners, that is, by outlasting your Opponents in a suit so that when you play your remaining cards, the Opponents are no longer able to follow. In order to have some meaningful basis to play the hand, Declarer must use some basis with a moderate degree of statistical certainty as to how the division of missing cards within any suit is likely to be distributed between the Opponents. The most likely distribution is as follows:

(A) If there are an even number of cards outstanding in a suit (2, 4, or 6) - then the cards tend to be divided oddly. For example, if there are 6 cards held by the opposition, they would most likely be divided 4-2 rather than 3-3.

(B) If there are an odd number of cards outstanding in a suit (3, 5, or 7) - then the cards tend to be divided evenly. For example, if there are 5 cards held by the opposition, they would most likely be divided 3-2 rather than 4-1.

(1). Holding the AKQ45 opposite xxx: If you were to play the AKQ and your Opponents were then void, the two spot cards would become long-suit winners. The 4 and the 5 now contain the same trick-taking capacity as did the Ace, King, and Queen, originally.

(2). Holding the 65432 opposite the 987: By continued play in this suit, Declarer can develop two long tricks, provided neither Opponent initially held more than three cards in the suit.

4. By Ducking, that is, by first giving up at least one trick to the Opponents. The ducking of tricks can be very useful when trying to establish a long suit. When you have a limited number of winners in the Dummy, it is often necessary to take your losses early in the suit so that you have enough cards left in Declarer's hand to enable you to get to the winners you worked so hard to establish.

a. Holding AKxxx in one hand and xxx in the other, and assuming a 3-2 split in the Opponent's holdings, Declarer can establish 4 tricks by "ducking" once.

b. Holding AKxxxx in one hand and xx in the other, and again assuming a 3-2 split with the outstanding cards held by the Opponents, Declarer can establish 5 tricks by "ducking" once.

5. By Finessing, that is, by attempting to gain power for lower-ranking cards by taking advantage of a presumed favorable position of higher-ranking cards held by the Opponents. The process is based upon the idea of leading toward the card, or cards, you hope will take a trick, and that the higher-ranking card(s) missing lie(s) in front of, not behind, the card you desire to win the trick with. Finessing will, therefore, be successful **50%** of the time.

a. Holding the AQJT opposite xxx: (1) Declarer can win 3 tricks simply by leading the Ace and then the Queen in order to promote the Jack and the Ten, but (2) alternatively, Declarer might make 4 tricks by finessing successfully against the King three times.

b. Holding the AQT opposite xxx: If Declarer were to lead a spot card to the Ten and later another to the Queen, he/she might win 1, 2, or even possibly 3 tricks, depending on the location of the King and the Jack.

c. Holding the AKTx opposite xxx: Declarer might lead twice towards the AKTx hoping for split honors (QJ) thereby making 3 tricks in the suit.

d. Holding the Axxx opposite QJTx: Declarer would lead the Queen towards the Ace setting up what is called, a "continuing finesse."

6. By Trumping, that is, by playing a card of the Trump suit when you are no longer able to follow to the suit being led.

a. If the Opponents were to lead the Ace of a suit in which Declarer were void, and if Declarer still retained some Trump cards, he/she could play one of them in order to win what would otherwise be a losing trick.

b. If Declarer were to hold the AKx opposite xx in a side suit: In a Trump (suit) contract, Declarer could cash the Ace and the King, thereby creating a void in the other hand, subsequently trumping ("ruffing") the remaining spot card.

7. By Combining Several Means of Trick Development

a. Holding the AQxxx opposite xx: Declarer might finesse the Queen, cash the Ace, and then trump the third lead of the suit. If the Opponents' cards divide 3-3, the remaining two spot cards will be long suit winners, and if not, Declarer could continue to ruff them.

b. Holding the KJxx opposite Qxx: Declarer might lead the King in order to force out the Ace. Then later play the Queen and the Jack which have been promoted, planning to trump the last spot card, unless it becomes a long-suit winner.