

LESSON 7

Interfering with Declarer



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GENERAL CONCEPTS

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Making it difficult for declarer to take tricks

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson, the focus was on how the defenders work together to take their tricks through promotion, suit establishment, finessing and ruffing declarer's winners. This lesson has a different focus. The defenders also try to make it difficult for declarer to take tricks. They have to visualize what declarer is planning to do and then try to prevent declarer from carrying out the plan. This is much more adventuresome than automatically following the guidelines such as *second hand low* or *cover an honor with an honor*.

“In this lesson, we will take a look at how the defenders can make it difficult for declarer to take the tricks necessary to make the contract. The defenders have to imagine what declarer might be planning to do and then try to find an appropriate countermeasure. As when taking their own tricks, the defenders will have to work together as a partnership to prevent declarer from taking undeserved tricks. Let's look at some of the techniques that are available to the defenders.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: The Defensive Holdup

Introduction

“Declarer often needs to establish tricks in a suit. Having established winners in a suit, declarer needs an entry to get to them. The defenders can’t do anything about the cards declarer has been dealt, but they can try to prevent those cards from being used to declarer’s best advantage. Let’s look at an example. Lay out the following cards in the spade suit:

	DUMMY	
	♠ Q J 10 9 6	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ 7 3 2		♠ A 8 4
	DECLARER	
	♠ K 5	

“Suppose declarer has no other entries to the dummy and needs to develop extra tricks from the spade suit to make the contract. The defenders have to work as a team. This may seem surprising because your partner, at first glance, doesn’t seem to have anything to contribute. On the contrary, partner is a key player.

“Declarer leads the ♠K. Now partner has to be careful to give you the information that you need. Partner plays the ♠2, the start of a low-high signal to show an odd number of cards in the suit. You can see five spades in the dummy and three in your hand, a total of eight. By playing low, partner is starting to show an odd number of cards — one, three or five. It is impossible for partner to have five, since that would leave declarer with none. If partner has only one card, then declarer has four, you can’t prevent declarer from driving out your ♠A, using dummy’s spades. If partner has three, however, declarer has only two spades. You will be able to strand dummy’s winners by holding up your ♠A.

“You can’t be sure what the situation is yet, but you don’t have to take the ♠A on the first round of the suit. Instead, you hold up, letting declarer win the first trick. Declarer leads another spade and now partner plays the ♠3 (or the ♠7), confirming that partner started with three spades. You are now confident that declarer only has two spades and you can win the second trick with your ♠A, stranding the remaining winners in dummy.

“It is interesting to note that if you play your ♠A on the first round, declarer takes four spade tricks, since declarer still has an entry to dummy. If you wait until the third round, declarer takes two tricks. Only by playing the ♠A on exactly the second round can you limit declarer to the minimum of one trick in the suit.

“Let’s change the layout slightly. Give the ♠2 to declarer:

	DUMMY	
	♠ Q J 10 9 6	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ 7 3		♠ A 8 4
	DECLARER	
	♠ K 5 2	

“Declarer again plays the ♠K. This time partner plays the ♠7, starting a high-low to show an even number of cards in the suit. You can’t be certain at this point whether partner has two or four — or even a singleton. Again you can wait to find out — duck the first trick. When declarer leads another spade and partner contributes the ♠3, the layout becomes clear. If partner has two spades, declarer must have three. You can’t afford to take the ♠A on the second round because declarer will still have one left to get to dummy’s established winners. You hold up one more round, and declarer is limited to the minimum possible number of tricks, two, on this layout. If you take your ♠A on the first or second round, declarer will take four tricks.

“You might find that you need to hold up winning a trick even when you have two winners. Lay out both the spade and heart suits as follows:

	DUMMY	
	♠ Q J 10 9 6	
	♥ A 7 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ 8 3 2		♠ A K 4
♥ 9 8 5		♥ J 10 6 2
	DECLARER	
	♠ 7 5	
	♥ K Q 4	

“We know that in order for declarer to profit from the winners promoted in a long suit, declarer has to be able to get to them. Let’s assume that declarer has the ♥A as an outside entry to the dummy. Unless you help out, that still won’t be enough to establish all of the spade winners.

“Declarer starts by playing a low spade to dummy. It would seem reasonable for you to play one of your high cards, since you have two of them. Suppose that’s what you do, winning the first trick with the ♠K. Let’s see what is left:

	DUMMY	
	♠ J 10 9 6	
	♥ A 7 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ 8 3		♠ A 4
♥ 9 8 5		♥ J 10 6 2
	DECLARER	
	♠ 7	
	♥ K Q 4	

“You can lead a heart, but declarer wins in hand and leads another spade to dummy. It is too late to hold up. If you don’t win with the ♠A, declarer is in dummy and can lead another spade. The ♥A is still in dummy as an entry to the established winners. Declarer ends up with three tricks from the spade suit.

“Put back the original cards and let’s suppose you hold up with both the ♠A and the ♠K on the first round of the suit. Declarer leads a second spade, driving out your ♠K. Now this is the position:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 10 9 6	
	♥ A 7 3	
♠ 8	■	YOU
♥ 9 8 5		♠ A
		♥ J 10 6 2
	♠ —	
	♥ K Q 4	

“Suppose you lead a heart. Declarer is helpless. If the trick is won in declarer’s hand, another spade can’t be led to establish the suit. If declarer wins with dummy’s ♥A, another spade can be led to establish the suit, but there is no entry left to the spade winners. Instead of getting three tricks from the spade suit, you limit declarer to one trick by holding up on the first round.

“Before we try our first exercise, let’s consider one more example. Lay out the following cards in the spade suit:

	DUMMY	
	♠ A Q J 10 9 6	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ 7 3		♠ K 8 4
	DECLARER	
	♠ 5 2	

“Suppose declarer leads a low spade, partner plays the ♠7 to start showing an even number, and declarer finesses dummy’s ♠Q (or ♠J, etc.). If you take the first trick with your ♠K, declarer still has a low spade left to use as an entry to the five winners in dummy.

“Look what happens if you refuse to win the first trick. Declarer can take the ♠A and lead the suit again to drive out your ♠K, but unless declarer has an outside entry to the dummy, you have limited declarer to two tricks, rather than five.

“Since the finesse ‘worked’ the first time, declarer may well return to the hand in another suit and try a second finesse. When you take your ♠K, declarer is limited to only one trick in this suit!

“Now let’s try our first exercise.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise One, declarer has no entries to dummy other than the cards in the suit shown. To limit declarer to the minimum number of tricks, which cards would you and partner play on the first trick if declarer leads the 10? Which cards would you play on the second trick if declarer leads a low card to dummy’s queen?”

- 1)
- | | | |
|---------|-----------|-------|
| | DUMMY | |
| | K Q J 9 8 | |
| PARTNER | ■ | YOU |
| 7 3 | | A 4 2 |
| | DECLARER | |
| | 10 6 5 | |
- 2)
- | | | |
|---------|-----------|-------|
| | DUMMY | |
| | K Q J 9 8 | |
| PARTNER | ■ | YOU |
| A 4 2 | | 7 6 3 |
| | DECLARER | |
| | 10 5 | |
- 3)
- | | | |
|---------|-----------|---------|
| | DUMMY | |
| | A Q J 9 2 | |
| PARTNER | ■ | YOU |
| 8 6 | | K 7 4 3 |
| | DECLARER | |
| | 10 5 | |

- 1) 7 & 2; 3 & 4 2) 2 & 3; A & 6 (7) 3) 8 & low; 6 & K

Follow-up

Have a student report on the discussion in each group. Make sure that the cards played by both defenders are included. The discussion might go like this:

“In the first layout, partner starts by playing the 7, to show an even number. You play a low card, letting declarer win the trick. When declarer leads the suit again, partner plays the 2, confirming two cards in the suit. You play your remaining low card, holding up until the third round.

“In the second layout, partner plays the 2 on the first trick and you play the 3, to show an odd number. On the second trick, partner plays the ace and you play the 6 or 7. Partner can safely win the ace on the second trick knowing that you have an odd number of cards in the suit. If you have a singleton, it doesn’t matter when partner wins the trick. But if, as seems more likely, you have three, partner doesn’t need to hold up until the third trick.

“On the last layout, partner gives you a count signal by playing the 8 on the first trick. You play a low card, letting declarer win. If declarer leads a second card to dummy’s queen, repeating the finesse, partner plays the 6 and you win the king. Declarer’s winners are stranded. This is another advantage of ducking the first trick. Declarer may not know that you have the king and will end up with only one trick from the suit!”

Conclusion

“The defensive hold-up play is one technique that can be used to try to prevent declarer from getting any undeserved tricks. The basic idea is for the defenders to take their winner when declarer plays the last card in the suit. If there is no other entry to the dummy, the winners are stranded.”

EXERCISE TWO: Attacking Entries**Introduction**

“Declarer may have an entry in another suit which will serve as a means of transportation to get to the established winners. The defenders want to eliminate that entry before declarer is ready to use it. Let’s construct a complete deal on the table:

	DUMMY ♠ A 5 ♥ 7 4 2 ♦ J 5 4 ♣ K Q J 10 9	
PARTNER ♠ 10 6 4 ♥ J 10 9 8 ♦ 9 6 3 ♣ 8 6 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W E</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">S</div> </div>	YOU ♠ K Q 9 3 ♥ A 5 ♦ 10 8 7 2 ♣ A 7 5
	DECLARER ♠ J 8 7 2 ♥ K Q 6 3 ♦ A K Q ♣ 4 3	

“The contract is 3NT and your partner leads the ♥J. Let’s look at things from declarer’s point of view. Declarer has a sure trick in spades and three sure tricks in diamonds with at least one trick from the heart suit, especially now that your side has led hearts. The main source of tricks will be the club suit. Declarer plans to promote four tricks in the club suit by driving out the ♣A, and dummy has the ♠A as an entry to the clubs, even if you hold up the ♣A.

“Now let’s look at things from your point of view. Your partner has led the ♥J and a low heart is played from dummy. You take the first trick with the ♥A. After all, partner might be leading from an interior sequence, and you don’t want declarer to get a trick with the ♥Q if partner has the ♥K. Your natural inclination is to return partner’s lead and try to develop tricks in the heart suit for your side. But, looking at the long club suit in dummy, there is a more pressing task. Even without seeing declarer’s hand, you can visualize what declarer is planning to do.

“Your priority must be to get the ♠A off the dummy before the clubs are promoted. You can do that by leading the ♠K (or the ♠Q). Even if declarer refuses to win the first spade trick, you can lead another spade and get rid of dummy’s ♠A before declarer is ready to use it. Your primary objective is not to develop spade tricks when you lead the ♠K. You are trying to prevent declarer from taking club tricks.

“Your task is not completely finished after the ♠ A is removed. When declarer leads a club from dummy, you must hold up the ♣ A. On the first round of clubs, partner plays the ♣ 2, showing an odd number. Hoping that the ♣ 2 isn’t a singleton, in which case you can’t prevent declarer from establishing the club suit, you win the second round of clubs. Declarer is held to one trick in the club suit once you have removed the entry from dummy. No matter what, declarer can’t take more than eight tricks.

“Notice that it was very important for you to play a spade right away. If you returned a heart, partner’s suit, declarer would win with the ♥ K (or the ♥ Q) and play a club. Now holding up the ♣ A wouldn’t do any good. Suppose you take the second club trick and lead a spade. It is too late. The clubs have been promoted and the ♠ A is an effective entry to them.

“Partner cooperated on the defense by giving you a count signal in the club suit. The defenders would have to cooperate even more if the cards were distributed a little differently. If partner, rather than you, held the ♣ A, it would not be as easy to see that it was necessary to lead a spade. Nonetheless, that would be the winning defense. It would also be more difficult to lead a spade if you did not hold the ♠ Q as well as the ♠ K, or if partner held the ♠ K rather than you. However, the defenders would still need to cooperate in the same fashion to defeat the contract.

“Preventing declarer from getting to dummy is often an important defensive tactic. Let’s look at some more examples.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise Two, you are on lead. Which card would you lead to prevent declarer from later using this suit as an entry to the dummy?”

1)

	DUMMY	
	A 7	
PARTNER	■	YOU
10 8 3		K J 4 2
	DECLARER	
	Q 9 6 5	

2)

	DUMMY	
	K 7 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
10 9 8 4		A 6 2
	DECLARER	
	Q J 5	

3)

	DUMMY	
	K Q 2	
PARTNER	■	YOU
8 7 5		A J 10 4
	DECLARER	
	9 6 3	

1) King 2) 2 (or 6) 3) Jack

Follow-up

Discuss the answers, drawing attention to the key points. For example:

“On the first layout, lead the king to drive out dummy’s ace. You can see that declarer also gets a trick with the queen, since neither you nor partner holds that card. Sacrificing your king in this manner may be worthwhile if it prevents declarer from reaching dummy later. It may not even cost a trick. After all, declarer could always lead toward the queen to get a trick with it. Notice, also, that declarer can’t prevent you from driving out dummy’s ace prematurely. If declarer ducks the first trick, you can continue with a low card.

“In the second layout, you can’t drive out dummy’s king. If you want to prevent declarer from using it to get to dummy later, however, you can’t afford to play your ace right away. Play a low card (or a card in another suit), keeping the ace to play when declarer plays to dummy’s king.

“In the last layout, declarer doesn’t have an immediate entry to dummy but may be able to create one later by leading up to dummy’s queen (or king). You can’t afford to lead the ace, since dummy will now have two entries, but you can lead the jack (or 10). Declarer can win with one of dummy’s high cards, but now you have the remaining high card trapped. Declarer will not be able to use this suit to get to dummy at a later point in the play. You force declarer to use this entry prematurely.”

Conclusion

“When you can see that declarer is planning to develop a long suit and may have some entry problems, it is often a good idea to try to drive out any entries in the hand with the long suit before declarer has established the winners. You also must be careful not to create an entry to the long suit by playing your high cards prematurely.”

EXERCISE THREE: Watching Your Discards**Introduction**

“You may think your 2’s and 3’s in a suit are of no value, and you may tend to discard them without much thought, preferring to hold on to your higher cards in other suits. Those low cards, however, can sometimes make the difference between success and failure for the defenders. Let’s lay out the following cards in the diamond suit:

	DUMMY	
	♦ K 9	
YOU	■	PARTNER
♦ 7 4 3 2		♦ J 10 8
	DECLARER	
	♦ A Q 6 5	

“You may feel that your ♦ 2 is not an important card, and you may even want to discard it as an attitude signal to tell partner that you are not interested in the suit. If you discard the ♦ 2, however, it presents declarer with a trick on the actual layout. Declarer will play dummy’s ♦ K and then the ♦ 9 to the ♦ A and the ♦ Q. All of a sudden, the ♦ 6 will be left as a winner, since you no longer have a diamond left. You can’t afford to discard even one of your diamonds, no matter how low.

“Notice that your partner, who appears to have a stronger holding, could actually discard a diamond without presenting declarer with an extra trick. The example is a little extreme, perhaps, but the general idea is that at least one of the defenders must *guard* each suit, whenever possible, to prevent declarer from getting undeserved tricks. You and partner will usually have to share the responsibility, since it is difficult, if not impossible, for one defender to look after all of the suits.”

There is no need to go into the concept of squeezes at this point. The students will be pseudo-squeezed far more often than they will be legitimately squeezed. The concept of guarding a suit, however, is important. As they play more and more, the students will continually find themselves pressed to find discards. Even when they make mistakes, they will at least be able to see what they conceptually should have done.

“How do you know which suits you have to guard? Sometimes, it is obvious, when you can see the cards in dummy. For example, rearrange the diamonds as follows.

	DUMMY	
	♦ A K Q 3 2	
YOU	■	PARTNER
♦ J 10 7 4		♦ 9 5
	DECLARER	
	♦ 8 6	

“Looking at the diamonds in dummy, it becomes apparent that you can’t afford to discard one — otherwise declarer will be able to take all five tricks in the suit.

“The situation is more complicated when declarer holds the length in the suit. This is where your imagination has to come into play. You have to visualize the layout of the suit based on the clues you have from your own hand, the bidding, partner’s signals and the cards that have been played. For example, if declarer has bid diamonds during the auction, you can visualize at least four diamonds in declarer’s hand. If you and partner have bid and raised a suit, showing eight or more cards, and there are two or three cards in the dummy, declarer can’t have much length in the suit. There are usually enough clues.

“Let’s look at some examples to help you visualize the types of situations where you may have to hold on to all of your cards in a suit and those where you can afford to discard some of your low cards.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise Three, how many tricks does declarer take if you discard a low card in the suit? How many tricks does declarer take if you don’t discard any cards in the suit?”

1)

	DUMMY	
	A K 7 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
J 9		10 6 4 2
	DECLARER	
	Q 8 5	

2)

	DUMMY	
	A 9 7 2	
PARTNER	■	YOU
Q J		10 6 3
	DECLARER	
	K 8 5 4	

3)

	DUMMY	
	K Q 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
6 2		J 10 9 5 3
	DECLARER	
	A 8 7	

1) 4; 3

2) 4; 3

3) 3; 3

Follow-up

Discuss the layout, making sure the students have the basic idea. For example:

“In the first layout, declarer will take all four tricks if you discard a low card. If you hold on to all four of your cards, keeping the same length as dummy, declarer can take only three tricks.

“In the second layout, a discard will allow declarer to take all four tricks, because partner can’t protect the suit. You must hold on to your low cards to restrict declarer to only three tricks from the suit.

“In the last layout, it is safe for you to discard any of the cards in the suit. This is the type of suit you want to look for when you have to make a discard. The more cards you start with, the less likely discarding one will give declarer a trick.”

Conclusion

“A card as low as a 2 can have as much power as an ace. When discarding, try to keep the same length in a suit as you can see in the dummy or as you imagine or know from the bidding that declarer has in hand. The partners have to share the responsibility for guarding all of the suits. You don’t want to be left with all of your high cards in one suit while declarer is taking tricks with low cards in another suit in which you made discards.”

EXERCISE FOUR: Practicing Counting

Introduction

This exercise has to be carefully handled since there is the possibility that many of the students will find it too difficult. Watch your class. If you see blank faces, move on to the next exercise.

“In order to know which cards to keep and which cards to discard, you have to try to visualize how many cards are in the hidden hands, partner’s and declarer’s. Since you can see the number of cards in your hand and the dummy, and since there are only 13 cards in each suit, you can deduce how many cards are in one of the hidden hands once you know how many cards are in the other. Partner can help out by giving a count signal whenever possible. You get clues about declarer’s holding from the auction or when declarer shows out in a suit.

“It will take practice to keep track of more than one suit at a time. Let’s see the type of thinking you have to do. Lay out the following hands: one as dummy and one as your hand:

DUMMY

♠ 9 7 5
♥ A K 3
♦ K 6 5
♣ 9 5 4 2



YOU

♠ 8 4 3 2
♥ J 10 9 5
♦ J 8 7 3
♣ 8

“Suppose the bidding was opened 1NT on your left and responder bid 3NT. Do you have any clues about declarer’s distribution from the auction? (Yes. Declarer has a balanced hand and is unlikely to have a six-card suit.) Suppose that partner leads the ♠K. Does that tell you anything? (Yes. Partner is likely to have at least four spades since the lead usually comes from the longest suit.) After looking at dummy, how do you think the missing spades are distributed, given the clues so far? (Partner probably has four and declarer two.)”

It is a good idea to have the students distribute the cards face down in front of partner and declarer, with four spades for partner and two for declarer, to help visualize the distribution as it builds up.

“Suppose declarer ducks the first spade, holding up, and then wins the second round with the ♠A. Now declarer leads a low heart to dummy’s ♥K, on which partner plays the ♥2. What information does that give you about the heart suit? (Partner has played a low card, suggesting the start of a low-high to show an odd number.) Declarer now leads a club from dummy and plays the ♣Q. Partner wins with the ♣A. Does that tell you anything about the club suit? (Declarer likely holds the ♣K, since partner could have won the trick with that card if partner held it.) Partner now leads another high spade and declarer discards a club. What information does that give you?

(Partner definitely started with four spades and declarer with two. It looks as though declarer started with at least three clubs.) Partner now leads the last high spade and a club is discarded from dummy and declarer's hand. What does that tell you about declarer's distribution? (It looks as though declarer started with four clubs.) How many cards is declarer likely to have started with in hearts and diamonds? (Seven.) How might you expect them to be distributed? (Four in one suit and three in the other.)

“So far, you have been able to comfortably follow suit each time a card was led. Now partner leads back the ♣J. You have to find a discard from one of your remaining suits. Since you know that declarer must have four cards in one of them, it could be fatal for the defense if you pick the wrong card to discard. Do you have enough information to pick the right discard? (Yes. Partner's ♥2 indicated three hearts. That means declarer started with only three hearts and must have four diamonds. It is safe to discard a heart. You must hang on to all four of your precious diamonds.)

“You can see how much work you have to go through just to decide which low card to discard when you started with only two jacks. Your reward, however, will be defeating declarer's contract. You would be unhappy to have to discard your heart on the last trick while declarer wins the trick with a low diamond.

“Let's do another exercise to get used to counting out the missing hands.”

Instructions

“You can see the cards shown in Exercise Four in dummy and your own hand:”

DUMMY

♠ 10 7 5 3

♥ A 6 2

♦ K 9 6 2

♣ 7 5

YOU

♠ K 8 6

♥ J 8 7 3

♦ 10 3

♣ Q 9 6 2

- 1) How many spades does declarer have if partner shows out (discards) on the second round?
- 2) If partner is known to have one spade, five hearts and four diamonds, how many clubs does partner hold?
- 3) Given partner's distribution as above, what is declarer's exact distribution?
- 4) From the above information, which suit should you be careful not to discard from?

1) Five 2) Three 3) 5-1-3-4 4) Clubs

Follow-up

You hope that the students will be able to piece together the answers. Don't drag the exercise on if some of the students are having difficulty counting out the hands. Point out that it takes a lot of practice. Many experienced players have never learned the *secret*.

“If partner discards on the second round of the spade suit, partner must have started with a singleton, leaving five in declarer's hand.

“If it turns out that partner has one spade, five hearts and four diamonds, that leaves room for only three clubs.

“If partner has one spade, declarer has five. If partner has five hearts, declarer can have only one. If partner has four diamonds, declarer must have three. Declarer is left with exactly four clubs (5-1-3-4).

“If you have to discard, it looks as if you should be careful to hang on to your clubs. It should be safe to discard hearts, since partner can guard that suit.”

Conclusion

“Keeping track of the number of cards in each suit is hard work, but the effort will often pay off handsomely. You will learn which suits to hold on to and which cards you can discard. There will be a dramatic increase in the number of tricks you save and the number of contracts you defeat.”

EXERCISE FIVE: Defending against Finesses**Introduction**

“One of the ways declarer gets the extra needed tricks is by finessing. Declarer hopes to take a trick with a high card when you have a higher card — a card will usually be led toward the card declarer hopes will take a trick. You may think there is nothing you can do about this, but let’s look at some examples. Lay out the following cards in the club suit:

	DUMMY	
	♣ K J	
YOU	■	PARTNER
♣ A 10 7 4		♣ Q 9 5 3 2
	DECLARER	
	♣ 8 6	

“We have already seen this situation in the lesson on *second hand low*. Suppose declarer needs to take one trick with this combination and leads a low card toward the dummy. If you play your ♣A, then declarer plays the ♣J and is guaranteed to take a trick with the ♣K. Instead, you play a low club. It is true that declarer could play the ♣K and take the trick, but declarer might play the ♣J, ending up with no tricks. After all, declarer doesn’t know which of you holds the ♣A and which the ♣Q. If you held the ♣Q, declarer would be correct to finesse dummy’s ♣J. So this is one way you make life difficult for declarer when trying to take a finesse — leave declarer guessing!

“Suppose we exchange dummy’s ♣J for the ♣Q and the ♣2:

	DUMMY	
	♣ K Q 2	
YOU	■	PARTNER
♣ A 10 7 4		♣ J 9 5 3
	DECLARER	
	♣ 8 6	

“This time, declarer doesn’t have to guess. It is still best for you most of the time to play low, however, because it makes it more difficult for declarer to take two tricks in the suit. If you take the ♣A right away, dummy’s ♣K and ♣Q will both be winners, and declarer will have an entry to them. By ducking, you create a problem for declarer. To get a second trick from the suit, declarer will have to find an entry back in order to lead toward dummy again. Even then, you can win the second trick and the winner might be stranded in dummy. There are many angles involved in giving declarer a difficult time taking tricks.

“Now let’s give the ♣A to your partner and give partner’s ♣3 to the declarer:

	DUMMY	
	♣ K Q 2	
YOU	■	PARTNER
♣ 10 7 4		♣ A J 9 5
	DECLARER	
	♣ 8 6 3	

“This is a very interesting situation. When declarer leads a low club toward dummy, the finesse is destined to lose since partner has the ♣A. Partner is not forced to win the first trick, unless winning the trick will defeat the contract immediately. When dummy’s ♣Q (or ♣K) is played, partner can play a low club, ducking the ♣A. This doesn’t cost anything and may lead declarer astray. Thinking that you have the ♣A, declarer may take the trouble to come back and lead toward dummy’s remaining high card. This time it will be unsuccessful and a wasted effort. The entry to declarer’s hand might have been put to better use.

“You must sometimes duck to give declarer a legitimate problem. Let’s change the club layout again, giving you the ♣J and dummy the ♣10:

	DUMMY	
	♣ K Q 10 2	
YOU	■	PARTNER
♣ J 7 4		♣ A 9 5
	DECLARER	
	♣ 8 6 3	

“If declarer leads a low club toward dummy’s ♣Q and partner wins the ♣A, declarer may decide to finesse you for the ♣J the next time clubs are lead toward dummy. This time declarer will be successful. If partner plays a low card on the first round, however, declarer will be left with a guess later. When declarer comes back and leads another low club toward dummy, it will not be clear whether to play dummy’s ♣K or ♣10.

“The general idea is to look for opportunities to make declarer’s life as difficult as possible by not revealing the location of your high cards until you have to. Let’s look at some more examples.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise Five, you are defending a notrump contract and declarer leads a low card toward dummy’s jack. Which card should partner play and which card should you play to give declarer the most difficulty in the suit?”

1)

	DUMMY K Q J 7	
PARTNER A 9 4 3	■	YOU 10 6 2
	DECLARER 8 5	

2)

	DUMMY A Q J 2	
PARTNER 10 8 7	■	YOU K 6 3
	DECLARER 9 5 4	

3)

	DUMMY A J 10 9 4	
PARTNER 8 5	■	YOU K Q
	DECLARER 7 6 3 2	

1) 3; 2 2) 7; 3 3) 5; Q (or K)

Follow-up

Let the students work together to figure out what declarer is likely to do in each case and how the defenders can avoid giving declarer any help. Make sure the key points are covered. For example:

“In the first layout, declarer will get three tricks from the suit if partner plays the ace on the first round. Both you and your partner should therefore play low cards on the first trick. If declarer leads a high card from dummy, partner can take the ace and restrict declarer to two tricks. If declarer comes back and leads another card toward dummy, partner can play low again. Declarer is held to two tricks in the suit and is forced to use up an entry.

“In the second layout, partner can play a low card to show an odd number of cards in the suit. When declarer takes the finesse, you should play a low card, also. Declarer, thinking the finesse has been successful, may come back to repeat it. This time, you will give declarer a surprise.”

It would be a bit much to discuss the possibility of ducking a second time in this situation.

“In the last layout, partner should play a low card, and you can win with either card when declarer plays dummy’s jack. It may seem like a good idea to always win with the king to make declarer think you don’t have the queen. That might lull declarer into repeating the finesse. But if you make it a habit to always win with your higher card in this type of situation, declarer may expect you to have the queen as well when you win the first trick with the king. Instead, win with the queen some of the time. Keep declarer guessing.

“Note that partner should keep declarer guessing as well. If partner always plays high-low to show an even number of cards, declarer will probably figure out the situation and not repeat the finesse. By playing low-high, declarer may think that partner started with three cards and try a second finesse, losing two tricks in the suit.”

Conclusion

“Keep declarer guessing about how to play a suit. Don’t reveal any information that will help declarer decide how to play the cards in a particular suit unless you have to. The more guesses you create, the more opportunities for declarer to go wrong.”

EXERCISE SIX: Defending against Trump Suits**Introduction**

“One of the advantages declarer gets from playing in a trump suit is the opportunity to ruff your winners. Declarer often plans to ruff losers in the dummy. Naturally the defenders want to thwart declarer’s plans whenever possible. If it looks as though declarer is about to utilize dummy’s trumps, it may be a good time to remove some of dummy’s trumps. On the other hand, if declarer plans to draw your trumps, you may want to use them beforehand to ruff some of declarer’s winners.

“When declarer zigs, you want to zag, and vice versa. Let’s look at an example.”

Instructions

“On the deal in Exercise Six, how can the defenders defeat declarer’s 2♠ contract after West leads the ♥Q?”

Contract: 2♠	DUMMY										
Lead: ♥Q	♠ J 7 3										
	♥ 5 2										
	♦ K 9 7 2										
	♣ K 6 4 3										
YOU		PARTNER									
♠ K 9 5	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>S</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q J 10 8		♥ A K 6									
♦ Q 8 6		♦ J 10 5 3									
♣ J 9 7		♣ A 10 8 2									
	DECLARER										
	♠ A Q 10 8 2										
	♥ 9 7 4 3										
	♦ A 4										
	♣ Q 5										

Follow-up

Lead the students through the deal, covering the key points. For example:

“First let’s look at the deal from declarer’s perspective. How many losers are there? (Six — one spade, four hearts and one club.) How does declarer plan to eliminate some losers? (Declarer plans to ruff heart losers in the dummy.) How can the defender stop declarer from ruffing two heart losers in dummy? (By leading trumps.) When will they have to lead trumps? (Right away.) Which defender should lead trumps? (East, through declarer’s strength, so that West can take a trick with the ♠K.) How can the defenders arrange to have trumps led by East? (East will have to overtake the first heart and lead a spade.) If declarer takes the spade finesse, what will West do? (Win the ♠K and lead another spade.) If declarer wins the second spade in dummy and leads the remaining heart, what should East do? (Play low to let West win the trick and lead another trump.) With careful defense, the defenders end up with one trump trick, four heart tricks and the ♣A.”

Conclusion

“The defenders must try to visualize how declarer plans to use the trump suit. They must then work together to see if they can stop declarer from making the contract.”

EXERCISE SEVEN: Review of Slam Bidding

Introduction

“Let’s quickly review what we know about slam bidding. A small slam is a contract for 12 of the 13 tricks. A grand slam is a contract for all 13 tricks. Why do you want to bid a slam when you have enough strength? (There are large bonuses in the scoring for bidding and making a slam.) How many combined points are required for a small slam? (33 or more.) How many for a grand slam? (37 or more.) When there is enough combined strength for game, you prefer to play in one of the Golden Games — 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠, — rather than 5♣ or 5♦, because fewer tricks are required to make the contract. Is the same thing true of a slam contract? (No. No matter what the strain is, all slam contracts require the same number of tricks.) If you can find an eight-card or longer fit, you usually want to play with that suit as trump. If not, you can play the slam in notrump.

“If you know there is more than enough strength for game, but are not sure if there is enough combined strength for slam, how can you invite partner to bid slam? (By bidding one level beyond a Golden Game.) For example, to invite partner to a slam in notrump, you can raise to 4NT, one level beyond 3NT. What does partner do when you invite slam? (With a minimum hand for the point range already promised, partner passes, rejecting the invitation. With a maximum hand for the point range, partner accepts the invitation by bidding slam.)

“There are more sophisticated methods, but we will leave some of these until the next lesson series. For now, this ‘quantitative’ approach should suffice. Let’s try some examples.”

Instructions

“Your partner opens the bidding 2NT, showing a balanced hand of 20 to 21 HCP. What do you respond with each of the hands in Exercise Seven?”

1) ♠ 8 6 2
♥ K J 3
♦ A 8 4 2
♣ 9 6 2

2) ♠ A 10 8
♥ 9 6 2
♦ K 6 3
♣ K Q 7 5

3) ♠ A J 2
♥ J 7 3
♦ J 10 6 3
♣ A Q 5

1) 3NT

2) 4NT

3) 6NT

4) ♠ A Q 3
♥ K Q 5
♦ Q J 9
♣ K 10 9 2

5) ♠ 7 6 3
♥ Q
♦ A Q 9 7 5 2
♣ K 9 7

6) ♠ K 10 9 8 6 3 2
♥ 10 9
♦ 5 2
♣ Q 5

4) 7NT

5) 6♦

6) 3♥, a Jacoby transfer bid

7) ♠ K Q 9 3
♥ K 8
♦ J 8 7 4
♣ A 7 3

8) ♠ 9 2
♥ A Q J 4 3 2
♦ A 8
♣ 7 6 5

9) ♠ K J 8 4
♥ A J 10 3
♦ J 8 3
♣ Q 2

7) 3♣ (Stayman) 8) 3♦, a Jacoby transfer bid 9) 3♣ (Stayman)

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise with the class as a whole.

“On the first hand, you have 8 HCP. Even if partner has 21 HCP, there won’t be enough combined strength for slam. Settle for game by responding 3NT.

“On the second hand, you have 12 HCP. If partner has a minimum, there will be only 32 combined points. If partner has more than a minimum, there will be enough for slam. With no apparent eight-card fit, invite partner to slam by raising to 4NT.

“On the third hand, you have 13 HCP, enough to raise directly to 6NT.

“On hand number four, you have 17 HCP. Even if opener has only 20 points, there are at least 37 combined points, enough for a grand slam. Bid 7NT.

“On the fifth hand, you have 11 HCP plus 2 points for the six-card suit. That’s enough for a small slam. With a six-card suit, you know there is at least an eight-card fit. Jump to 6♦.

“On the sixth hand, you have 5 HCPs plus 3 points for the seven-card suit.

“On the seventh hand, you have 13 HCP, enough to bid slam. Before jumping right to slam, you should investigate whether or not you have a Golden Fit in a major suit. You can do that by bidding 3♣, the Stayman convention. If partner rebids 3♠, you can jump to 6♠; otherwise to 6NT.

“On the eighth hand, you again want to be in slam. Bid 3♦, a transfer to your six-card suit, and then raise to 6♥.

“On the ninth hand, you have 12 HCP, enough to invite opener to slam. Start off by bidding 3♣, Stayman, to find out if you have a Golden Fit. If partner rebids 3♦, you can invite slam by bidding 4NT. If partner bids 3♥ or 3♠, you can invite slam by raising that suit to the five level.”

Conclusion

“With 33 or more points, the partnership should reach the six level. With 37 or more points, the partnership should contract to take all of the tricks. Always decide the strain in which you are going to play before bidding a slam. If you are uncertain about whether there is enough strength for slam, you can make an invitational bid by bidding beyond the game level.”

EXERCISE EIGHT: Watching Out for the Opponents

Introduction

“The defenders try to make things difficult for declarer. When declarer makes a plan, it’s important to keep an eye on the damage the opponents can do if they get the lead. Declarer wants to avoid giving the lead to one opponent if that opponent is more dangerous than the other. For example, one opponent may be waiting with winners to take or be in a position to trap declarer’s high cards. If you have to lose the lead, you want to try to lose the trick to the non-dangerous opponent. Of course, sometimes both opponents are equally dangerous. Then you want to avoid giving up the lead unless you have to.

“Just as defenders can make things difficult for the declarer by using the holdup play, so declarer can try to neutralize one of the opponents by holding up. Let’s look at an example.”

Instructions

“You are declarer on the deal in Exercise Eight in a contract of 3NT. West leads the ♥5 and East plays the ♥K. Where are your extra tricks going to come from? What is the danger? Which card do you play on the first trick? Why?”

Contract: 3NT	DUMMY										
Lead: ♥ 5	♠ K Q J										
	♥ 10 8 4										
	♦ Q J 10 7										
	♣ A 9 6										
♠ 9 3		♠ 10 8 6 4 2									
♥ J 9 7 5 2	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>S</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		N		W		E		S		♥ K 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♦ A 6 3		♦ K 8									
♣ J 5 3		♣ Q 7 4 2									
	DECLARER (YOU)										
	♠ A 7 5										
	♥ A Q 3										
	♦ 9 5 4 2										
	♣ K 10 8										

Follow-up

Lead the students through the deal, covering the necessary points. Include the following ideas:

“You start with three spade tricks, two heart tricks (after the opening lead) and two club tricks. The extra two tricks can come from the diamond suit. The danger is that you will have to let the opponents in the lead twice while promoting your diamond winners. There is the possibility that they will be able to establish enough winners in the heart suit to defeat the contract. You should play your ♥3 on the first trick, letting East win the trick with the ♥K. You are holding up your winners in the suit to try to strand West’s winners. If you were to win the first trick and East won the first diamond trick, East would have a heart left to lead and would drive out your remaining heart winner while West still had the ♦A. The defenders would get three heart tricks to go with their two diamond tricks. If you hold up your winners on the first round, East will have no hearts left to lead, if they divide 5–2 after winning the first diamond trick.

“If East had a heart left to lead, then the suit would have been divided 4–3, and the defenders could take only two heart tricks, not enough to defeat the contract.”

Conclusion

“Declarer must watch out for the opponents. One way to do this is by using the hold-up play to try to strand one defender’s winners. That defender then becomes the dangerous opponent. If a trick must be lost, you try to make it the non-dangerous opponent who gains the lead.”

SAMPLE DEALS

EXERCISE NINE: The Defensive Holdup

Introduction

“Let’s move on to the practice deals. On this first deal, we’ll see if the defenders can use the hold-up play to their advantage.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the first pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #7, Deal 1)

Dealer: North	♠ J 6 2	
	♥ A K 7 5	
	♦ Q 4	
	♣ A K 6 3	
♠ Q 9 5		♠ K 10 7 4
♥ Q 9 4		♥ J 8 3 2
♦ K 6 5		♦ 8 3
♣ Q 10 8 2		♣ J 7 5
	♠ A 8 3	
	♥ 10 6	
	♦ A J 10 9 7 2	
	♣ 9 4	

The Bidding

“What would North open the bidding? (1NT.) East and West pass throughout the auction. At what level does South know the partnership belongs? (Game.) Is there a Golden Fit in a major suit? (No.) What does South respond? (3NT.) How does the auction proceed? (Pass, pass, pass.) Who is the declarer? (North.)”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (East.) What would the opening lead be? (♠4, fourth highest.) Which card would West play on the first trick if a low card is played from dummy? (♠Q, third hand high.) What would West do next? (Return the ♠9, top of the remaining doubleton in partner’s suit.) Which card would West play if the first trick is won in dummy? (♠9, encouraging.) Which suit must the defenders try to stop declarer from establishing? (Diamonds.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer has one spade trick, two heart tricks, one diamond trick and two club tricks. The remaining three tricks needed must come from the diamond suit. Declarer plans to lead the ♦Q, taking a finesse. If East has the ♦K, declarer may be able to take all six diamond tricks. Even if the finesse loses on the first round, five diamond tricks will be established in dummy. One danger is that the opponents may be able to take too many spades if they win a diamond trick. Declarer should duck the first spade trick, holding up. The second danger is that the diamond winners could be stranded if West is able to hold up the ♦K after dummy’s ♠A has been driven out.)”

Conclusion

“There was the danger that declarer would be able to establish a long suit in the dummy. The defenders first had to remove the sure entry to dummy and then use the hold-up play to prevent declarer from capitalizing on dummy’s long suit.”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (South.) What would the opening lead be? (♥10.) Which suit must South guard? (Diamonds.) Which suits can North guard? (Spades and clubs.) How can North get clues as to which cards to discard and which cards to keep? (By watching the cards partner and declarer play.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (After the ♥A is driven out, declarer has three sure spade tricks, two heart tricks, three diamond tricks and three club tricks. The 12th trick can come from either the spade suit or the diamond suit, if either suit divides 3–3 or the defense errs while discarding.)”

Conclusion

“Each defender had to take responsibility for guarding one suit in order to prevent declarer from making the contract. One defender had to be especially careful to guard the right suit by watching the cards that were played.”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (West.) What would the opening lead be? (♦J.) Holding the ♥A, what possibilities can East see for a second defensive trick? (Partner might have a heart trick or a club trick.) What does East plan to do if a heart is led to dummy’s ♥K or ♥Q? (Duck, if it appears that declarer doesn’t have a singleton.) Why? (Declarer might have a guess in the heart suit as to which opponent holds the ♥A.) Which suit must West avoid discarding? (Hearts. West must keep the ♥J guarded.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer can afford only one loser. The only two possible losers are in the heart suit. Declarer plans to lead toward dummy’s hearts, hoping that West has the ♥A. If East has the ♥A, declarer can hope that West has the ♥J and lead the ♥10 for a finesse.)”

Conclusion

“The defenders often want to conceal the location of their high cards in order to lead declarer astray. Declarer will not always go wrong, but the defenders can at least provide that opportunity.”

EXERCISE TWELVE: A Trump in Time

Introduction

“Sometimes listening to the auction warns the defenders that declarer is about to use dummy’s trumps to ruff losers. At other times, the defenders don’t find out until after the dummy comes down. Even then, it may not be too late to interfere with declarer’s plan.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the fourth pre-dealt hand. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #7, Deal 4)

Dealer: West	♠ 7 4 3										
	♥ Q J 7 5										
	♦ K Q 10 6										
	♣ K 9										
♠ K J 9 5 2	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 10 8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 8		♥ K 9 6 3									
♦ 9 8 2		♦ J 5									
♣ A 7 5		♣ J 6 4 2									
	♠ A 6										
	♥ 10 4 2										
	♦ A 7 4 3										
	♣ Q 10 8 3										

The Bidding

“What is West’s opening bid? (1♠.) North and South pass throughout the auction. Can East support partner’s suit? (Yes.) What does East respond? (2♠.) How does the auction proceed from there? (Pass, pass, pass.) What is the contract? (2♠.) Who is the declarer? (West.)”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (North.) What would the opening lead be? (♦K, top of touching high cards.) Which card would South play on the first trick? (♦7.) Why? (An encouraging signal.) After seeing the dummy, what does North do next? (Leads a trump.) Why? (To stop declarer from ruffing a diamond in the dummy.) How can South cooperate? (By winning the ♠A and leading another spade.) What must South be careful to do if declarer leads a second diamond from dummy? (Play a low diamond, not the ♦A.) Why? (South wants North to be able to win the trick and lead another trump. South has no trumps left to lead.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer can afford five losers and has one spade loser, three diamond losers and two club losers. Declarer may be able to eliminate a diamond loser by ruffing one in dummy. Declarer plans to give up two diamond tricks before drawing trumps.)”

Conclusion

“The defenders must work together to prevent declarer from getting any undeserved tricks. They will have to visualize how declarer is planning to make the contract and do their best to disrupt those efforts.”

