

Term 1 - Week 15

PLAYING THE HANDS; DEFENCE

Defensive Tools

- a) The Opening Lead
- b) Counting the points
- c) Signals
- d) Discards

Lets look at these in turn :

Opening Leads

Opening leads are split into two types : -

- a) Passive leads; when you are attempting not to help declarer or give anything away at trick one
- b) Attacking leads; when you are trying to take early tricks or set tricks up for the defence

The difficult thing is deciding which one to do on any particular occasion; this will depend on the auction and on your hand but don't worry if you get it wrong no one gets it right all the time; as you gain more experience the number of times you get it right will improve as time goes on

The important thing and what we are focussing on right now is leading the correct card from the holding in the suit you have selected to lead

We will concentrate on Standard Leads so you can work out what partner may have : -

- a) Ask yourself why partner chose that lead ?
- b) Why that suit ?
- c) Why that card ?
- d) Was it the lead you expected ?
- e) If not, why not ?

Partner leads top of a sequence

This is a strong attacking lead; partner hopes you will return that suit when you get the lead; remember Ace promises King, King promises Queen (and Jack or 10 if against NT), Queen promises Jack, etc.

Partner leads a small card of an unbid suit

This is also an attacking lead and he is looking for you to lead this suit back; against NT this will be his best and longest suit

Partner leads a high'ish (9 or lower) or middle card

This suggests a passive lead; it will be either 2nd highest from a poor suit or MUD which is an acronym standing for middle, up, down in a 3 card suit (for example from 9,8,6 the 8 would be led followed next time the suit is played with the 9 indicating a 3 card suit); don't expect partner to lead this suit back, he may have a better suit to lead

From a four card or longer suit (e.g. from 9,8,6,4 the 8 would be led, the 2nd highest from a poor suit) the next time the suit is played you would play your original third highest card in this case the 6 indicating a poor 4 card or longer suit; again don't expect partner to lead this suit back, he may have a better suit to lead

Partner leads a Trump

This could suggest that partner has no other sensible lead OR partner has a good holding in Declarer's second suit and wishes to stop Declarer using Dummy's short trumps; if Dummy has a short suit you should continue leading trumps if you have the opportunity

Term 1 - Week 15

Partner leads the unbid suit

Be cautious; partner could be leading from a long or short suit; partner may not necessarily have wanted to lead this suit but cannot lead their own suit because it has already been bid by the opposition; look at Dummy, remember the bidding and try to work out the best defence

Other Leads

When you have competed in the Auction and agreed a Suit, but the opposition have won the contract, if Partner does not lead the suit you have agreed then the card he leads is usually a singleton and he is hoping for a Ruff before trumps are drawn by Declarer

Counting the Points

You have listened to the bidding and the lead has been made; dummy goes down on the table :

- Count the points and try and work out how many points Partner has or could have; for example; the bidding is 1NT - Pass - 2NT - All Pass; dummy appears on the table with 11 HCP; declarer did not accept the invitation to bid 3NT so he has 12HCP (or a poor 13); you have 7 HCP therefore partner must have 9 or 10 HCP
- Where are the honour cards in the suit partner has led; if Partner leads a small card some of these points will be in that suit; look if dummy has any high cards in that suit; does declarer win the trick with a high card; all of this information should help you determine where partners points are and hopefully help in finding the best defence

Signals

Signals are an important tool for the Defence; as you progress there will be many ways you can use a card to signal to your partner; initially we are just going to look at some basic standard signal methods

Encouraging and Discouraging Signals

These are most useful on Partner's lead of an honour card; Partner leads the Ace promising the King; you need to signal whether or not he should continue; a high card from you says "Yes, continue"; a low card says "I have no interest in that suit, only continue if you wish to do so"; for example :

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ 4	♠ 9 8 3
♥ Q J 3	♥ 10 9 7 5
♦ A K 7 5 3	♦ 9 2
♣ A 8 7 4	♣ 10 9 3 2

Contract 4♠ by South

West leads A♦ (from AK); East plays 9♦ to encourage; West continues with K♦; West realises East has either Q92 or a doubleton; West cashes A♣ and then plays a diamond; East ruffs the diamond and the defence have made 4 tricks to defeat the contract

Against a NT contract : partner needs to know whether it is safe to continue leading the suit; for example :

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ 4	♠ 9 8 3
♥ Q J 6	♥ 10 9 7 5
♦ K Q 10 9 6	♦ J 5 3
♣ A 8 7 4	♣ 10 9 3

Contract 3NT by South

West leads K♦ (promising Q and either J or 10); East **must** play the Jack; a high card telling partner to continue if Declarer does not play the A; if East only plays 3♦ then West will not continue with the suit
Note: continuing the suit is vital to defeat the contract (the defence takes 4 diamonds & A of clubs)

Term 1 - Week 15

Encouraging and Discouraging Signals (Continued)

Against the same 3NT contract conversely partner may need to know it is not safe to continue; for example :

West	East	
♠ 4	♠ 9 8 3	On the King ♦ lead East should play the 3 which West should take as a discouraging signal; South ducks and plays the 7 from ♦ A J 7; if West ignores this signal and continues with diamonds declarer will make both the Ace and the Jack
♥ Q J 6	♥ 10 9 7 5	
♦ K Q 10 9 6	♦ 8 3	
♣ A 8 7 4	♣ 10 9 3 2	

Discards

The first card you make as a discard should always be a signal to your Partner; there are many different discarding systems; one of the most common and the one we will start with is **HELD**, yet another acronym : HE = High Encouraging & LD = Low Discouraging; this is a very similar principle to the signals we have just discussed; a note of caution with this and other systems **do not throw a card that could potentially cost the defence a trick**; for example if dummy has a four card suit and you also have four in this suit try to keep it; do not discard one just to give partner a signal (trust partner to work things out for himself)

HELD (HE = High Encouraging & LD = Low Discouraging)

- If you discard a high card in a suit, it is saying to partner you hold high card(s) in that suit
- If you discard a low card in a suit, it is saying to partner that you have no interest in that suit
- Discard signals usually only apply to the first discard; afterwards throw away any card you can afford

Example :

North	
♠ 9 8 4 3	
♥ A K 10 9 8	
♦ 10 3	
♣ 9 2	
West	East
♠ K Q J 2	♠ 7 6
♥ J 4 3	♥ Q 7 5
♦ 8 6 5	♦ A K Q J 2
♣ 10 8 4	♣ K J 7
South	
♠ A 10 5	
♥ 6 2	
♦ 9 7 4	
♣ A Q 6 5 3	

Dealer East

The Bidding : 1D – P – 1S – P – 1NT - ALL PASS
Lead: 5♣ (4th highest)

The Play

East wins with the Jack and plays 5 rounds of diamonds; North's 1st discard is the 10♥; when East plays a spade, South plays A♠ and then plays the 6♥ to North's K♥; North returns a club and the contract goes 1 down, the defence making one spade, two hearts and four clubs