

ESTABLISHING A LONG SUIT in a trump contract

Anytime a five-card or longer suit appears in the dummy, declarer should at least consider the possibility of creating extra tricks from it.

While long suits are extremely useful in both Notrump and Suit contracts, the techniques involved in establishing tricks are usually different. This lesson focuses on suit establishment in trump contracts. Specifically, we will focus on *dummy's* long suit; however, the same techniques may be applied when declarer has a side suit in her hand.

When examining a long suit the following procedure is recommended. **Follow this planning procedure methodically each and every time, so as to keep your thoughts organized.**

- 1) **Add your cards to dummy's and determine how many are missing.**
- 2) **Decide how the opponent's cards are likely to divide.** For this purpose, it is useful to be familiar with the "Odd - Even Rule". When you are missing an odd number of cards they tend to divide as evenly as possible. When you are missing an even number of cards they tend to divide unevenly. Specifically:

Missing 4 cards:	3-1 = 50%	2-2 = 40%	4-0 = 10%
Missing 5 cards:	3-2 = 68%	4-1 = 28%	5-0 = 4%
Missing 6 cards:	4-2 = 48%	3-3 = 36%	5-1 = 15%
Missing 7 cards:	4-3 = 62%	5-2 = 31%	6-1 = 7%

It is not necessary to memorize these exact (rounded off) percentages, but it is worthwhile to have a general idea of the most likely division of the missing cards.

- 3) **Analyze what must be done to get rid of the opponents' cards.** That is, "How many tricks can I win, how many must I lose, and how many can I trump?" Then ask yourself how many cards you will have left in the given suit, after the opponents' cards are gone. This is the number of extra tricks which may be available in this suit.
- 4) **Determine how many entries will be required to carry out your plan.** An entry is required for each time you need to ruff (trump) plus one to get back to your extra trick(s), once your suit establishment is completed. Often the trump suit provides necessary entries, and you need to delay the drawing of trumps. All the opponents low trumps must, however, be drawn before attempting to cash any established winners. For those who like formulas, something you don't get a whole lot of in bridge, the number of entries required to set up a long suit might be thought of as follows:

$$\text{Entries required} = R + 1 \quad R \text{ is the number of times you need to ruff}$$

On the following page, this procedure is applied to some specific suit combinations. After studying that, be sure to review the full deals, most of which were played in class, in order to put it all together. Please take the extra time to actually lay the deals out with cards when studying, if doing so helps you understand more clearly.

In each example, the bottom holding represents declarer, and the top represents dummy.

A6543 ----- K82	We have eight, they have five. Their five are most likely to split 3-2. We can win two, must lose one, and therefore won't need to trump any. Play this one just like Notrump. Draw trump, then lose the first round of the suit, planning on later playing the King, then low to the Ace, and cashing the other two.
-----------------------	--

A65432 ----- K8	They have the same five as above, but this time we don't have a sure loser. Our plan should be to win two, lose <u>none</u> , and ruff one . (R=1) Assuming the suit divides 3-2 we will now have three extra tricks. We need 2 entries total (R+1). The Ace in dummy counts as one, and a side entry will be required to get back to the established winners.
-----------------------	---

A7654 ----- 3	We have six, they have seven. Their seven are most likely to split 4-3. We can win one, then ruff three to make an extra trick. All this will require <u>four</u> entries(the Ace of the suit plus three others). The average player would usually ignore this suit, and that would be fine if you were sure you didn't have the needed entries; however, you sometimes will (particularly in a slam contract) have enough entries and this may be your only way to discard a loser, so be sure to at least consider the possibility.
---------------------	---

AK843 ----- 72	We have seven, they have six. Their six are most likely to split 4-2. We can win two, and must ruff two in order to create an extra trick.* For this plan to work, a total of three entries will be required (2+1). <small>*If the suit splits 3-3, just one ruff will create two extra tricks.</small> The suit itself can never be counted on for more than one entry , as you must use up all your low cards in that suit before you can begin ruffing. An entry to dummy requires not only a high card in dummy, but a low card in your hand to get there with.
----------------------	--

65432 ----- VOID	Just to prove that any five-card or longer suit is worth considering We have five, they have eight. Their eight are more likely to split 5 - 3, but could split 4-4. If we are desperate for an extra trick, or have nothing to lose by trying, we should assume the best. Ruff four times, and hope the fifth one will be a winner. All this will require five entries, and bountiful trumps, but in a game or slam contract you may well have them.
------------------------	---

SUIT ESTABLISHMENT PRACTICE DEALS

In your effort to start setting up long suits, don't ignore the basics of playing suit contracts. Once you have mastered the technique of setting up a long suit, don't forget this:

If you do all the hard work to set up a long suit, but then find you have already lost all your potential losers and have nothing left to discard, you will have wasted your efforts. So don't neglect to count and to identify your losers, and to plan exactly which loser(s) you intend to throw on the winner(s) you establish.

When setting up a long suit, you often need to *delay* drawing trump, in order to use the trumps as entries. But when you are ready to cash in the precious trick(s) that you have established, make sure you have drawn all the opponent's low trumps (it's fine if they ruff with one they were always entitled to).

Note: Diagrams are rotated from the way they were played in class, so that South is always declarer. Here is the first deal examined in class:

CONTRACT 4♠ by South

Lead - ♣ J

♠ 6
♥ J974
♦ K86
♣ KJT83

♠ J97
♥ AK632
♦ 974
♣ Q5

♠ AKQT32
♥ 85
♦ A53
♣ 94

♠ 854
♥ QT
♦ QJT2
♣ A762

Declarer has two club losers, and two diamond losers possible. Her best (only) plan is to establish one or more heart tricks in dummy. If the hearts were splitting 3-3, all declarer would need to do is ruff one heart, and she would have two extra tricks. On the more likely 4-2 split, declarer needs to ruff two hearts, in order to set up one extra trick.

Does declarer have the three dummy entries needed to ruff twice, and still get back to dummy to cash the last heart? Yes, but just barely. **The ♥A and ♥K can't be counted as two entries, as they must both be played before declarer can ruff any hearts.** Remember that an entry requires not only a high card in one hand, but a lower card in the other hand to play to it. Therefore declarer has only one entry in the heart suit, and needs to carefully use both her ♠J and ♠9 as entries.

Presumably the defense takes either one or two club tricks, then shift to diamonds. Declarer should win the ♦A, and can afford to draw one high trump from her hand, therefore should do so. Now she must play ♥A, ♥K, and ruff a heart high. Then a low spade to the ♠9, to ruff another heart high. The ♥6 is now a winner, and a low spade to the ♠J simultaneously draws the last trump, and gets declarer to dummy. She sluffs a diamond loser on that well earned heart winner.

The following four deals were played in class; diagrams rotated to make South declarer:

1)		♠ A9854 ♥ AJ9 ♦ A54 ♣ Q8	
	Lead - ♣J ♠ KJT7 ♥ 5 ♦ K83 ♣ JT964	----- ----- -----	♠ Q32 ♥ 32 ♦ QJT6 ♣ AK72
		<u>DEALER</u>	
	<u>Suggested Auction</u> 3♥ P 4♥ P	♠ 6 ♥ KQT8764 ♦ 972 ♣ 53	

The defense starts by taking two club tricks, and declarer still has two possible diamond losers. She must hope that the spades split 4-3 so that she can establish the fifth spade. In order to do so, she will need a total of four entries; three for ruffing spades, and one to get back to the good trick. East will switch to the ♦Q after taking two club tricks, so that entry will be useless. Declarer still has just enough entries, with the ♠A and the three hearts, but must use them carefully. Win the ♦A, and play the ♠A and ruff a spade. Then a heart to the ♥9, and ruff another spade. Now a heart to the ♥J, and ruff a third spade. Finally, the fifth spade is a winner, and declarer can still get to dummy with the ♥A to cash it in, discarding a losing diamond.

2)		♠ 65 ♥ QT5 ♦ AKQ63 ♣ J32	
	Lead - ♣A ♠ J8 ♥ 862 ♦ 875 ♣ AKT65	----- ----- -----	♠ KQT74 ♥ 74 ♦ JT94 ♣ 94
		<u>DEALER</u>	
	<u>Suggested Auction</u> 1♥ P 2♦ P 2♠ P 3♥ P 4♥ P P P	♠ A932 ♥ AKJ93 ♦ 2 ♣ Q87	

The defense should start with ♣A, ♣K, and a club ruff, with E having encouraged on the first club. Now E switches to a spade. Declarer must win the ♠A (the defense already has three tricks), and hope she can dispose of all three of her remaining spades on diamonds. Two can clearly be discarded; the third will take some luck. Declarer should draw only two rounds of trump, making sure to leave an entry to the dummy. Now she plays ♦K, ♦A, and ruffs a diamond high. Now a trump back to the board draws the last trump, and declarer can cash the ♦Q, dropping East's last diamond. The ♦7 now takes care of declarer's other spade loser.

3)

Lead - ♥6

♠ Q2
♥ KT765
♦ JT9
♣ 962

♠ AK854
♥ 42
♦ A53
♣ QJ8

♠ JT73
♥ AJ93
♦ Q864
♣ 4

DEALER

♠ 96
♥ Q8
♦ K72
♣ AKT753

Suggested Auction

1♣	P	1♠	P
2♣	P	2♦	P
3♣	P	5♣	P
P	P		

Note that responder's second bid is not defined as artificial; neither NMF nor 4th suit forcing is applicable. However, it is still necessary sometimes, as here, to "lie" with a new suit, in order to force partner. When opener fails to bid Notrump, or to show delayed spade support, responder should deem that this is one of those infrequent occasion when it is best to play in 5 of a minor.

The defense should cash the first two tricks in hearts, then switch to a diamond.

Declarer must plan to establish an extra trick from dummy's five-card spade suit, in order to sluff a diamond. Declarer can win two spades, needs to ruff two spades, and still be able to return to the good spade in dummy. How many entries does this plan require?

The answer is a total of three entries – 2 for ruffing + 1 to get back to dummy.

Remember that the spade suit itself can be counted on for only one entry. As long as declarer won the ♦K in hand, the ♦Ace is still there as an entry. Therefore declarer needs only one trump entry. He can afford to draw two rounds of trump, saving a high one in dummy.

Now declarer must start on spades. Plays ♠A, ♠K and ruff a spade high. Now return to the last trump, and ruff another spade, finishing drawing trump in the process. Now the fifth spade is good, and declarer gets to the board with a high diamond to cash it in and sluff the losing diamond.

This is another fairly basic example of suit establishment. Note the technique of using the trump entry before the side suit entry. Didn't matter this time, but it's a prudent move.

4)

Lead - ♦ A

♠ T82
♥ KQT97
♦ AKQ
♣ 43

♠ AK43
♥ 8
♦ JT8
♣ AKQ97

♠ J9
♥ J52
♦ 9432
♣ JT86

DEALER

♠ Q765
♥ A643
♦ 765
♣ 52

Suggested Auction

P	1♥	X	P
1♠	P	3♠	P
4♠	P	P	P

The defense cashes three diamond tricks, and shifts to the ♥K. This is the simplest hand yet, as long as declarer approaches it correctly. Rather than attempting to ruff heart losers in dummy, declarer should plan to establish the club suit, and make dummy high. **It may help here to look at dummy as the master hand.**

As long as trumps are splitting 3-2 (necessary assumption), and clubs no worse than 4-2, the hand makes easily. Declarer simply wins the ♥A, draws three rounds of trump, then plays clubs. When they don't split 3-3, declarer ruffs one in her hand in order to establish the last club in dummy as a winner. Now declarer gets back to dummy by ruffing a heart, to cash the winning club at trick thirteen.

If declarer had erroneously ruffed a heart in dummy early in the hand, she would not have this crucial entry, and on this deal, couldn't make the contract. Also, if declarer had tried to play on clubs *before* drawing trump she would fail. **Delay drawing trump only when necessary.**

Leaving some of the opponents' trumps outstanding is often, but NOT ALWAYS, a component of suit establishment technique.

Remember to calculate precisely how many entries you need, and draw as many rounds of trump as you can afford. Sometimes that will mean all the opponents' trumps.

While setting up a long suit was the best line of play with all the deals in this lesson, in "real life" it will not be so automatic. To be a competent bridge player, suit establishment is a technique you must have in your bag of tricks, but you also must be ready to analyze all the possibilities, and then decide if suit establishment is the way to go. There is far more to learn on the subject of suit establishment, but this lesson should give you a good foundation to build on.

Always make a plan. TIMING IS EVERYTHING.

Here are three more deals for you to study on your own:

A) Contract - 6♥ by South

Lead - ♣T

♠T76
♥6
♦9632
♣T9876

♠J5432
♥Q98
♦K54
♣QJ

♠K
♥AKJT542
♦A87
♣AK

♠AQ98
♥73
♦QJT
♣5432

The precise auction would vary greatly, and is outside of the scope of this lesson. I would expect many experienced players to arrive in 6♥. Let's see if you want to be one of them!

Declarer has a spade loser and a diamond loser. If the opponents' seven spades break 4-3, can a fifth spade be established to discard a diamond? Of course, you say, or this hand wouldn't be here.

Let's go through what declarer needs to do in the spade suit in order to set one up: **lose one spade, then ruff three of them, then get back to dummy**. She does have the needed **four entries**, if she handles them exactly right. Each of dummy's trumps must be used as an entry to ruff spades. Win the ♣A, and give up a spade. Win whatever the defense plays, in hand (except a trump, which would be won in dummy), and cross to the ♥8. Ruff a spade high, then cross to the ♥9. Ruff another spade high, then cross to dummy's last trump. Ruff yet another spade, establishing the ♠6 as a winner. Finally, cross to the ♦A and throw a diamond on that precious winning spade. **YOU ARE HOME!**

B) Contract 4♥ by South

Lead - ♣A

♠J84
♥986
♦85
♣AKT65

♠65
♥AJ5
♦AQ763
♣J32

DEALER
♠A32
♥KQT73
♦K2
♣Q87

♠KQT97
♥42
♦JT94
♣94

Suggested Auction

1♥	P	2♦	P
2NT	P	3♥	P
4♥	P	P	P

The defense should start with ♣A, ♣K, and a club ruff, with E having encouraged on the first club. Now E switches to a spade. Declarer must win the ♠A (the defense already has three tricks), and hope she can dispose of her two remaining spades on diamonds. Declarer should draw only two rounds of trump, making sure to leave an entry to the dummy. Now she plays ♦K, ♦A, and ruffs a diamond high. Now a trump back to the board draws the last trump, and

declarer can cash the ♦Q, dropping East's last diamond. The ♦7 now takes care of declarer's other spade loser.

On the preceding deal, make sure you understand why declarer could not draw all the trumps (that would allow her to make the hand only when the diamonds split 3-3).

Also study the reason for declarer **not** to cash the ♦Q before ruffing a diamond (**don't cash winners while trumps are out against you, if you have nothing to gain, and they can safely be cashed after trumps are drawn**). Finally, note what would happen if the trumps broke 4-1 (4-0 after the ruff). Now declarer would have no choice but to finish drawing trump, and rely on a 3-3 diamond split.

C) Contract 4♠ by South

Lead - ♣K

♠764

♥QT

♦KT64

♣KQ94

♠Q92

♥A7652

♦82

♣763

♠3

♥KJ84

♦Q9753

♣J85

DEALER

♠AKJT85

♥93

♦AJ

♣AT2

Suggested Auction

1♠ P 2♠ P

4♠ P P P

Declarer counts one heart loser, one diamond loser, and two club losers. She needs to set up at least one extra trick from dummy's heart suit.

In analyzing the heart suit, start with the assumption that they will split 4-2, and plan accordingly (if you then realize you must have a 3-3 split, you can then shift gears, and plan along those lines). Assuming the 4-2 split, declarer can win one heart, needs to lose one, and must ruff two (not necessarily in that order) to be able to set up the fifth heart.

This plan requires three entries to dummy (two for ruffing, and one to get back to the established extra trick). Does declarer have the required entries, or must she hope for a 3-3 split? The answer is yes, she does have the entries she needs, as long as she uses them prudently.

The key play is to duck the first round of hearts, as opposed to playing the ♥A, and then losing a heart. Now declarer can use the ♥A as an entry for ruffing a heart. Then one trump entry allows declarer to ruff another heart, setting up the winning heart. The other high trump allows declarer to get back to dummy to cash the winning heart and throw a diamond. At some point (**not** before ducking the heart, lest the defense play a second round of trump and remove one of declarer's entries prematurely), declarer must play one high trump from her hand, so that the last entry to dummy also draws the opponent's last trump.

It is not enough to have the required number of entries - you must use them at the right time!