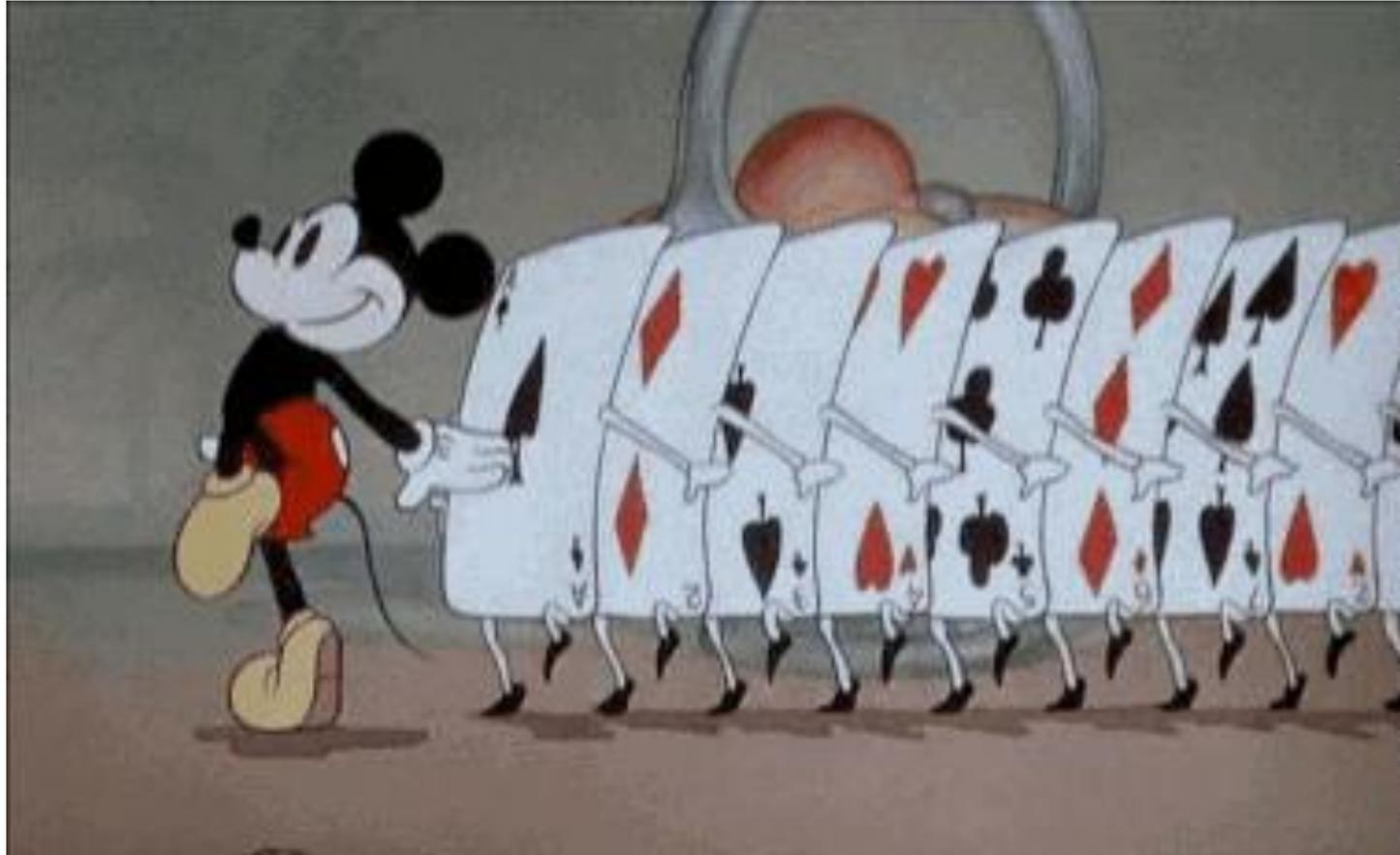


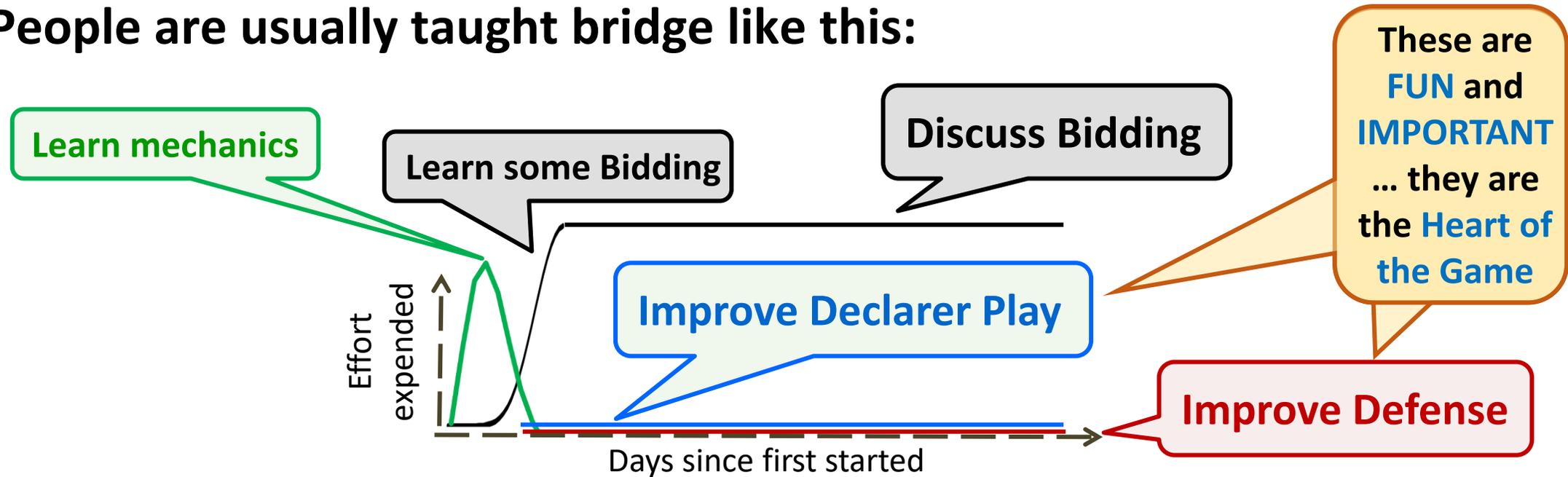
Card Play is Magical

February 18, 2026



planet-bridge.org teaches card play before bidding

People are usually taught bridge like this:



Declarer Play	1	Declarer's Toolbox - promotion and length
	2	Declarer's Toolbox - finesse
	3	Declarer's Toolbox - finesse part 2
	4	Planning the play of a NT contract
	5	Declarer's Toolbox - combining tools
	6	Planning the play of a Suit contract
	7	Declarer's Toolbox - ruffing in the short hand
Defense	8	Opening Lead vs NT
	9	Opening Lead vs Suit - and Signaling
	10	Basic Defense Principles - part 1
	11	Basic Defense Principles - part 2

Bidding	12	Counting Points - Why, How, and Implications
	13	Opening 1NT, balanced raises
	14	Opening 1 Major; Raises (2, 3, weak freak)
	15	Opening 1 Major; Respond 1NT or a new Suit
	16	Opening 1 of a Minor, Responding: up the line, 1NT, etc.
	17	Pre-empts
	18	Bidding Strong Hands (jump rebid, strong jump-shift, 2C opener)
	19	Bidding is a Conversation (review last 6 weeks)
	20	Overcalls
	21	Takeout Doubles
	22	Transfers
	23	Stayman
	24	Slam Bidding with 1430

I love this book:
Planning the Play of a Bridge Hand (Barbara Seagram & David Bird)

Card play (declarer and defense) is SUPER-important

Dana and I played a hand online on Aug 16 2025

The hand was played 17 times

Look how much 1 extra trick helped !!

Board	Result
10	3NTW+3
10	3NTW+2
10	3NTW+1
10	3NTW=

- 1
- 7
- 6
- 3

% score for N-S



Taking just ONE extra trick usually moves your FINAL score up by 1 to 2.5%
... what if you did it 2 or 3 or 4 times ?

In a 20-board Pairs game, each board is 5% of the total, so this is the impact on the FINAL score

Be V E R Y patient, if needed

Contract: 3NT by South

NOTE the ♣J is not a 4th ♣ winner
... you have only 3 ♣s



You have 8 winners

Only Hope for trick #9:
Diamonds break 3-2, and
your last one is good

- Win the opening lead, and **play a ♦** (*knowing you'll lose the trick*)
- Win whatever they lead back, and **play another ♦** (*knowing you'll lose*)
- Win whatever they lead back, and **play yet ANOTHER ♦** (*knowing you'll lose*)
- **Finally, your last ♦ is good, for trick #9**

Here's a FUN "length" hand



Opening Lead



→ Hope for this "friendly distribution"



Can you make 3NT?

NT → Count WINNERS (7)

Look at the ♦ suit

→ If they break 3-2, your last 2 are good !!

PROBLEM: After cashing the A♦ and K♦, they win the 3rd round, and you can't get back to Dummy

SOLUTION:

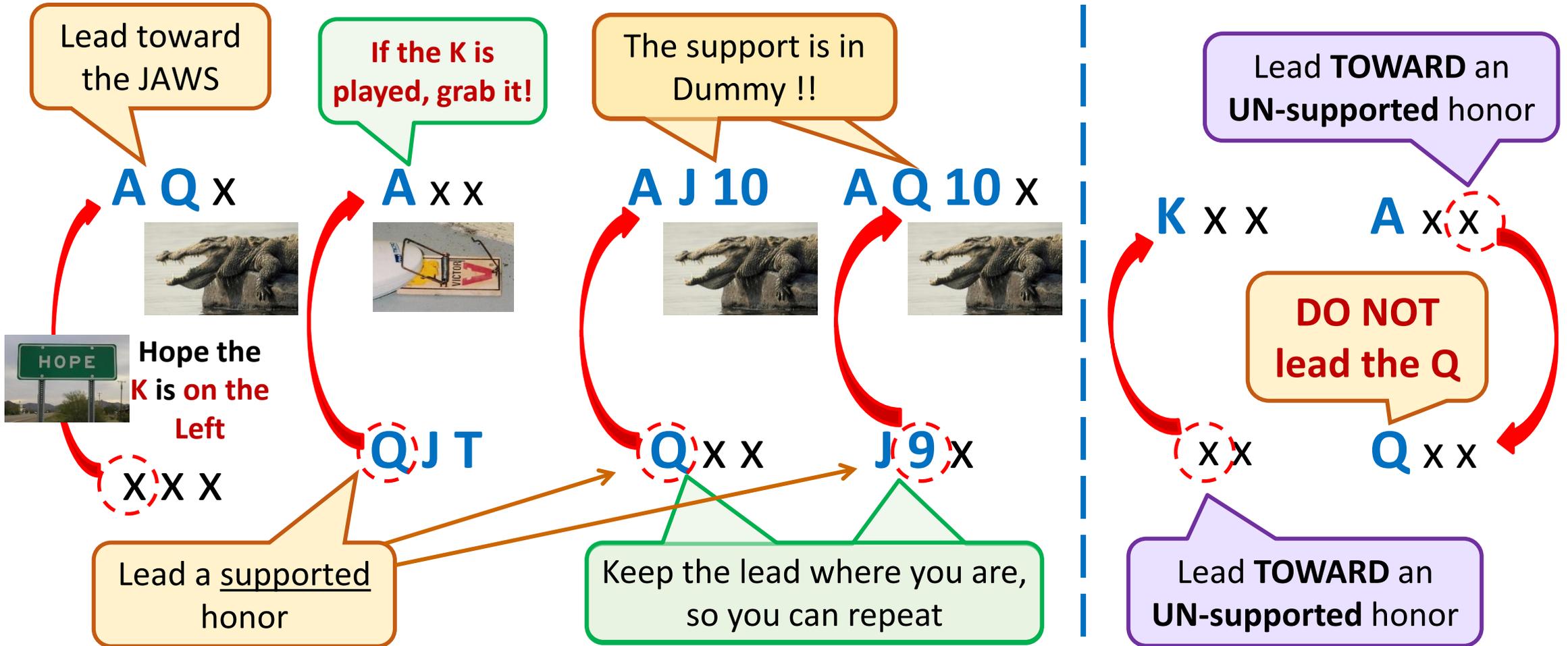
- Lead a low ♦ from hand and ... **PLAY LOW from Dummy!** ... let them win the 1st Diamond trick (*not the 3rd one*)

Later, when you play A♦ and K♦, you'll capture all their remaining Diamonds – and your last 2 are good !!

Finesses & Positional Advantage

- How would you play each of these suits?

With *Time at the Table*
 → you'll *recognize these in a flash*
 ... *no thinking required* 😊



A crucial time to “lead toward” an un-supported honor

Suppose this is your trump suit:

A 4 3 2

Q 7 6 5

If you lead the Q ...

... it will **NEVER TAKE a TRICK**

Why?

Because **the Q has no supporting cards.**
So you **must lead toward the Q.**

Play the Ace.

Then **lead small toward the Q.**

Typical situation:

J 8

K 10 9

East is helpless.

The Q will win a trick if you lead TOWARD it

Why you play the Ace first – layout might be this:

K

J 10 9 8

We want to ruff in the **SHORT HAND**

In a ♠ contract, each hand takes 6 tricks.
 Ruffing in this hand **does NOT** add tricks.

Declarer

1 ♠ A K Q J X
 ♥ X X X
 ♦ X X
 ♣ A X X

2 ♠ A K Q J X
 ♥ X X X
 ♦ X
 ♣ A X X X

3 ♠ A K Q J X
 ♥ X X X X
 ♦
 ♣ A X X X

Ruffing ♦s in the
LONG HAND
 does **NOT** add
 tricks
 → you'll win
 those ♠ tricks
 anyway !!

Let's look at some Dummy hands in a ♠ contract ...

Declarer
 ♠ A K Q J X
 ♥ X X X
 ♦ X X
 ♣ A X X

Dummy
 ♠ X X X
 ♥ A K X
 ♦ X X X X
 ♣ X X X

1 Dummy takes 2 tricks

2 ♠ X X X
 ♥ A K X X
 ♦ X X X X
 ♣ X X

2 Dummy takes 3 tricks
 if you ruff a ♣

3 ♠ X X X X
 ♥ A K X X
 ♦ X X X X
 ♣ X

3 Dummy takes 4 tricks
 if you ruff 2 ♣s

→ Ruffing ♣s in
 the **SHORT**
HAND DOES
 add tricks

Use Dummy's "assets"

Contract: 2♥ by S



Opening lead 



Delay calling Trump IF you have important work to do

Looks like 6 possible LOSERS

The singleton ♠ and 2 small ♥s are HUGE ASSETS

PLAN:

- Ruff 2 ♠s in Dummy
- Discard the 3♣ on the ♦K

Suppose West continues with ♠K

- Ruff it in Dummy
- Lead to ♦A
- Cash the ♦Q
- Ruff a 2nd ♠
- Lead the ♦K (hoping they break 3-3) and discard the 3♣

"unblock" (get the Q out of the way, so you can play the K later)

If everything works, you take 10 tricks !!
(9 if ♦ don't break 3-3)

Defense is HARD ... and FUN

Defense is FUN ... as your Declarer play improves, so does your Defense !

Contract: 2♥ by S

SAME HAND as last page

South's PLAN = ruff ♠s in Dummy

West's hand

A	K	J	10
♠	♠	♠	♠
A	7	4	
♥	♥	♥	
8	6	5	2
♣	♣	♣	♣
9	7		
♦	♦		

Dummy

2	8	3	K	10	9	7	4	K	8	6	4	2
♠	♥	♥	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦

Opening lead

A
♠

Perfectly normal opening lead, hoping/planning to take A♠ and K♠

9	8	7	6	K	Q	J	10	6	5	3	A	Q
♠	♠	♠	♠	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♣	♦	♦

If West does this, South takes only 7 tricks, not 9 or 10

THINKING is the key to playing winning Bridge

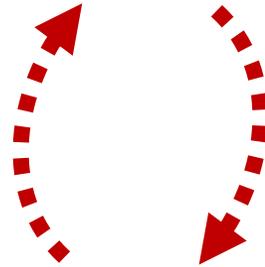
What should West be thinking when she sees the DUMMY ??
 → OMG, Declarer is going to ruff ♠s in Dummy
 What can I do ???
 → I'll lead ♥A then another ♥ ... removing the ♥s from Dummy

Magic! ... make the Defense HELP YOU – the “Throw-in”

N North												
K	J	7	3	2	7	5	K	J	3	K	3	2
♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♥	♥	♣	♣	♣	♦	♦	♦

W	N	E	S
			1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening Lead



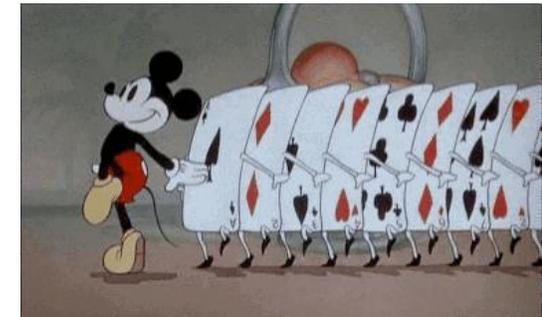
Looks like 2 ♥ losers and 1 ♦ loser ... so the contract depends on guessing which way to finesse in ♣

A	Q	8	6	4	6	2	A	10	2	A	7	4
♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♥	♥	♣	♣	♣	♦	♦	♦

BUT there's a 100% guaranteed way to play the hand !!

Go to this page: <https://tinyurl.com/2c38hcxw>

Click “Next” repeatedly to watch the cards played



The "Throw-in play" explained ...

N North

K	J	7	3	2	7	5	K	J	3	K	3	2
♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♥	♥	♣	♣	♣	♦	♦	♦

3 sure losers in ♥ and ♦.
Looks like you must guess which way to finesse Q of ♣

Opening Lead



A	Q	8	6	4	6	2	A	10	2	A	7	4
♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♥	♥	♣	♣	♣	♦	♦	♦

You take the ♦A

You call trump

N North

K	3	2	7	5	K	J	3	K	3
♠	♠	♠	♥	♥	♣	♣	♣	♦	♦

A	6	4	6	2	A	10	2	7	4
♠	♠	♠	♥	♥	♣	♣	♣	♦	♦

INSTEAD of ♣ finesse: cash ♦K and "throw them in" with your last ♦ – let them take their 2 ♥ and 1 ♦ tricks

N North

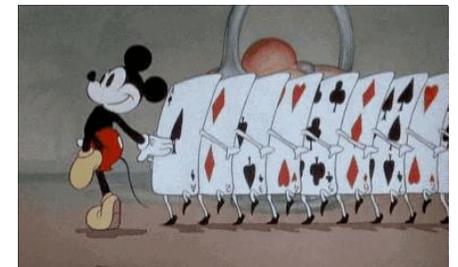
K	3	2	K	J	3
♠	♠	♠	♣	♣	♣

A	6	4	A	10	2
♠	♠	♠	♣	♣	♣

100% guarantee!

Now, if they lead a ♣, they give you a "free finesse."

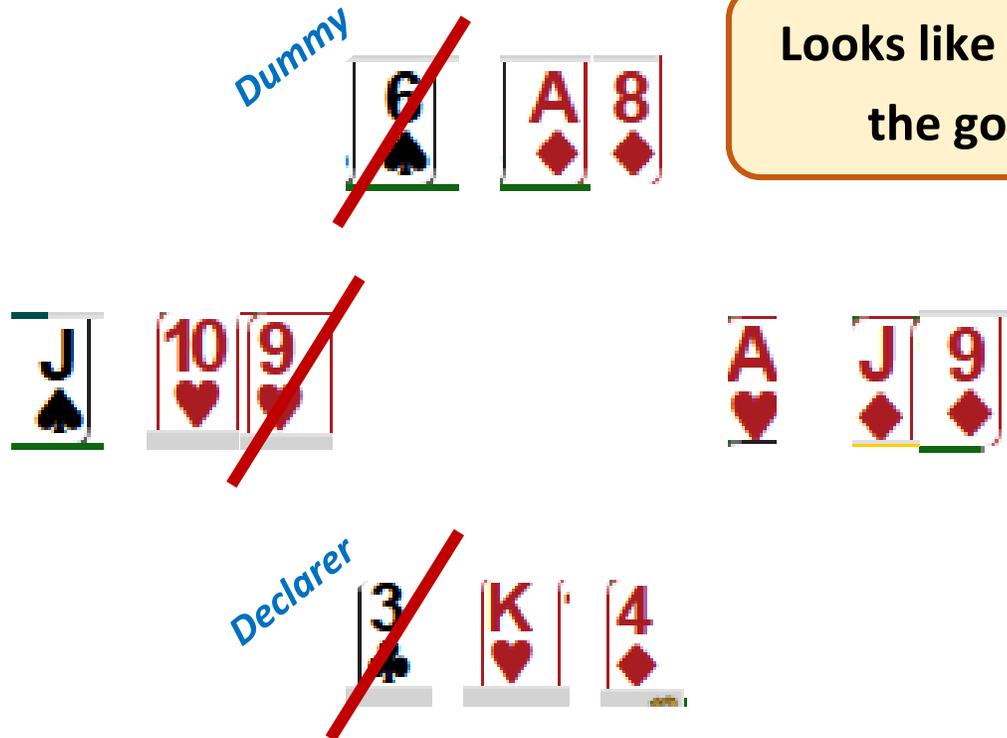
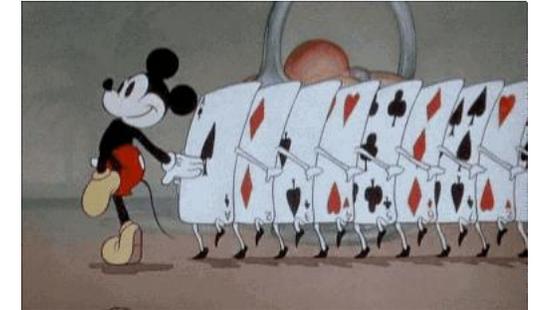
If they lead ♦ or ♥, you discard a loser from 1 hand and ruff in the other hand.



Another example of Magic (the “squeeze”)

South is declarer in NT

South is about to lead to trick #11



Looks like South can take **only 2 tricks**:
the good $\spadesuit 3$ and then the $\heartsuit A$

BUT ... Watch what happens to EAST
when South leads the $\spadesuit 3$

EAST is **SQUEEZED**

- If East throws the $\heartsuit A$, South wins 3 tricks:
($\spadesuit 3$, $\heartsuit K$, $\heartsuit A$)
- If East throws a \heartsuit , South wins 3 tricks:
($\spadesuit 3$, $\heartsuit A$, $\heartsuit 8$)