

Bridge Endplays FOR Everyone*

**Yes, Even You!*



♠ J10
♥ Q
♦ K103
♣ —

♠ — 97
♥ —
♦ A974
♣ —

♠ —
♥ 85
♦ J65
♣ 8

David Bird

From the author of *"Bridge Squeezes for Everyone"*

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Endplays
FOR
Everyone*

***Yes, Even You!**

David Bird

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My thanks are due to friend and fellow writer Tim Bourke,
who constructed many of the best deals in this book.

Basics of Elimination Play

One of the most frequently occurring endplay techniques is known as ‘elimination play’. Suppose you are in a contract of 4♠. You have a side suit where it would assist you if the defenders made the first play:

♦ K 10 3	♦ Q 8 2 □ ♦ J 6 5	♦ A 9 7 4
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As the cards lie, you cannot make a diamond trick if you play the suit yourself. However, if East or West has to lead the suit first, the situation is different. One of them will have to play high in third seat and you will then make the queen or jack on the third round.

The idea of elimination play is to put a defender on lead at a time when he will have to make the first play in your problem suit (diamonds, here) or give you a ruff-and-sluff. Let’s put those diamonds into the context of a complete deal:

Neither Vul.
Dealer South

<p>♠ Q J 10 4 ♥ Q 10 2 ♦ K 10 3 ♣ 9 4 2</p>	<p>♠ K 5 ♥ K 9 7 4 ♦ Q 8 2 ♣ K J 10 3</p> <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="width: 100%; height: 100%; position: relative;"> N S W E </div> </div> <p>♠ A 8 ♥ A 8 5 3 ♦ J 6 5 ♣ A Q 8 6</p>	<p>♠ 9 7 6 3 2 ♥ J 6 ♦ A 9 7 4 ♣ 7 5</p>
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West	North	East	South
pass	2♣	pass	1NT
pass	4♥	all pass	2♥

West leads the ♠Q against your heart game. How will you play the contract?

The black suits are solid. You have one loser in the trump suit, provided it breaks 3-2 (as you must hope). Diamonds is your ‘problem suit’ and you would dearly like the defenders to make the first lead there. This wish is about to be granted!

You win the spade lead and play the ace and king of trumps, both defenders following. The idea now is to put a defender on lead with a third round of trumps. It is no good doing this immediately because then the defender would have a safe exit in either black suit. Before exiting with a trump, you must ‘eliminate’ the two black suits.

The first step is to cash your remaining spade honor. This is the first way to eliminate a suit — by leaving yourself with no cards in either hand, the defenders will not be able to play a spade without giving you a ruff-and-sluff.

Next you cash three rounds of clubs. This is the second way of eliminating a suit. By removing all of the defenders’ cards, you again prevent them from exiting safely in the suit. This position remains:

<p>♠ J 10 ♥ Q ♦ K 10 3 ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ — ♥ 9 7 ♦ Q 8 2 ♣ J</p> <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="width: 100%; height: 100%; position: relative;"> N S W E </div> </div> <p>♠ — ♥ 8 5 ♦ J 6 5 ♣ 8</p>	<p>♠ 9 7 ♥ — ♦ A 9 7 4 ♣ —</p>
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You play a trump, putting West on lead and at the same time eliminating the trump suit by removing the defenders' last card there. What is the result of all of this hard work? West must either play on your problem suit (diamonds), saving you a trick there, or he must lead a spade and give you a ruff-and-sluff. In the latter case, you will be able to ruff in one hand and throw a diamond from the other, again restricting your diamond losers to two.

Look back at what happened. You eliminated the black suits and threw a defender on lead with the third round of trumps. He then had to give you a trick with his return.

It is an important condition of every elimination play that both the dummy and declarer's hand contain at least one trump when the defender has been put on lead. That is exactly why West, on the present deal, could not exit safely in spades. It would give you a ruff-and-sluff.

Three different ways of eliminating a suit

There are three main ways of eliminating a suit, two of which we saw in the previous section. Look at these three side-suit holdings:

(a) ♠ A 7 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> ♠ K 6	(b) ♣ K J 8 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> ♣ A Q 9 4	(c) ♦ K 10 3 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> ♦ A 6
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With the spade side-suit shown in (a), you cash the ace and king, thereby removing your own holdings. The defenders will not be able to play a spade without giving you a ruff-and-sluff.

When you have the club side-suit shown in (b), you play sufficient rounds to remove the clubs in both of the defenders' hands. They cannot then play a club because they have no cards left in the suit.

The diamond holding in (c) offers a third possibility. You eliminate the suit by cashing the ace and king and ruffing the third round. As with (a), the defenders will not be able to play on that side suit without giving you a ruff-and-sluff.

Eliminate-exiting in a suit

Suppose you are playing in a major-suit contract and have a side suit of ♣A-6 opposite ♣9-5. After drawing trumps and eliminating one of the side suits, you will have the chance to play ace and another club. The second round of clubs will simultaneously eliminate the club suit and put one of the defenders on lead. We will refer to this as 'eliminate-exiting' in clubs. Think of this as a fourth way of eliminating a suit, along with the three methods we saw in the previous section.

The endplay is an aspect of declarer play at bridge that many players think is beyond them. Yet while endplays can be extremely complex, the basic principles are not. Five years ago, David Bird wrote *Bridge Squeezes for Everyone*, a book about an even more complex topic that has become a modern classic. Using the same straightforward, conversational style and helpful recaps and quizzes that characterized the earlier book, this new book will take endplays from intimidating to understandable for many readers who have been afraid to attempt to learn them.



DAVID BIRD is the author or coauthor of more than ninety books, ranging from technical (*Off-road Declarer Play*) to humorous (*Saints & Sinners*). He is perhaps best known for his St. Titus Abbey stories, which appear regularly in bridge magazines around the world. He lives near Southampton, England.

