

MARY ANN DUFRESNE

PLAYING A BRIDGE HAND

Just the Basics



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And thanks to bridge players and bridge teachers everywhere. I love being part of your community. And I love to hear from you so please send your questions and comments to...

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Introduction

When we first set out to learn this wonderful—and frustrating!—game, we tend to focus almost exclusively on the bidding. Bridge is all about getting to the right contract. Eventually though, we begin to notice that good bidding doesn't always yield good results. We're occasionally down one on contracts that more experienced players are making. Sometimes other declarers take an extra trick or two. Now that's really frustrating!

If you're ready to get serious about your declarer play, this book is a great place to start. We'll work through all the fundamentals. You'll see lots of practical examples and lots of quizzes to show off your new learning. With just a little study and a little discipline you'll soon be getting much better results.

As you work through all the deals, you won't be asked to bid because that's not our focus in this book. You'll always be shown a suggested auction, however, so you'll know how other players would probably bid. Fair warning: Sometimes our theoretical bidders get a little frisky. You'll be challenged to play—and make—some ambitious contracts that should never have been bid!

Now on to play of the hand. As you're about to see, it all starts with a good declarer plan.

Part 1

Suit Contract Basics

Chapter 1: Start with a Plan!

Do you ever watch experienced players at work? One thing you'll notice is: As soon as the opening lead is faced, there is always a long pause—often a very long pause. What's going on? Declarer is thinking things through. He won't call for a card from dummy until he decides how he is going to play the hand to make his contract. Here's the best advice you'll ever get about declarer play: Imitate the experts! Don't play a single card until you have a plan.

**Don't play a single card
until you have plan!**

What do I mean by a plan? Nothing elaborate. Teacher/writer Barbara Seagram suggests using just a sentence or two to describe how you intend to proceed. If it's a fairly easy hand, your plan will be fairly simple. A reasonable plan for an easy suit contract might be: **I'll win the opening lead, draw trumps and ruff a heart to guarantee at least ten tricks.**

Sometimes the hand is quite challenging and your plan will have to be more detailed. For example, a plan for a more difficult suit contract might be: **I'll win the lead with the ♣A in my hand and immediately lead diamonds to drive out the ace. When I get in again, I'll draw trumps, cross to dummy's ♠K, cash dummy's diamond winners and discard my losing hearts.**

Notice that your plan needn't capture all the details of play—just the important things that will guarantee your contract:

- How will you eliminate losing tricks?
- What will you do first, then second, and so on?
- Do you have enough entries?

Are you familiar with the term **entry**? An entry is simply a sure winner that guarantees you will be able to reach the other hand if you need to lead from that side for some reason. In our first example of a plan, entries were not discussed so presumably there were no entry problems. In the second example, declarer planned carefully to preserve the ♠K in dummy as the **entry** to diamond winners in that hand.

That's a lot to think about it, isn't it? Fortunately, you'll find that it soon becomes second nature to plan ahead. In the chapters to come you'll learn exactly how to think things through. You'll soon be planning like an expert!

Key Ideas

Don't play a single card until you have a plan.

Your plan should answer these questions?

- How will you eliminate losing tricks?
- What will you do first, then second, and so on?
- Do you have enough entries?

An entry is a sure winner that guarantees you will be able to reach the other hand if you need to lead from that side.

WANT BETTER RESULTS? TRY BETTER DECLARER PLAY!

Have you noticed that good bidding doesn't always mean good results? Sometimes you don't make your perfectly-bid contract. Sometimes other declarers make an extra trick or two.

If it's time to get serious about better declarer play, this is the perfect 'how to' book. You'll find it's surprisingly easy to:

- Count your winning and losing tricks.
- Master three basic techniques for eliminating losers.
- Manage your entries.
- Set priorities. What to do first, second, and so on?
- Plan the play.

You'll work through plenty of practice deals in this simple guide to better declarer play. You'll also find quizzes at the end of every chapter to test your new-found skills. With a little practice, you'll soon be getting the results you deserve!



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