

F902 Play of the Hand Handout

1. Plan your play as Declarer

Most common mistake: failing to plan before playing to the opening lead.

Step 1: How many tricks do you need to make (defeat) the contract?

Step 2: If you have enough to make the contract, take them and run

Step 3: If you don't have enough winners or too many losers, develop the rest by:

- Promoting high cards

- Developing a long suit

- Finessing

- Ruffing losers in dummy

- Discarding losers on dummy's winners

Step 4: Which alternative should you try first? Which is most likely to succeed?

- Analyze opponent's likely hands: Did the bidding tell you anything?

- How will their cards likely split?

- If Plan A fails, will you still be able to try Plan B?

- Do you have enough entries to accomplish the plan?

2. Developing Tricks – Promotion and Length

Promote high cards by losing a trick to an opponent's higher card

Develop long suits, preferably unevenly divided. First deal with trumps, then your second suit.

3. The Crossruff

When you see a short side suit in dummy and a different short side suit in your hand, you may have the opportunity to crossruff. You use your trumps as ruffing entries so that you can continue to lead the side suit that dummy can trump. Cash in your winners in the remaining suit first.

4. General Guidelines

Odd number of cards will split as evenly as possible. Even number of cards will divide unevenly

Declarer:

- Count winners in NT, losers in suit contract

- Play high card from the short hand first

- Draw trumps first before cashing side-suit winners

- Missing the queen: Eight ever, nine never

Defender:

- Return your partner's opening lead

- Second hand low, third hand high (but only as high as needed)

- Cover an honor with an honor

- Signals: High-low is encouraging**