



# Play & Learn

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## Managing entries

In a suit contract, declarer's toolkit has a limited number of basic solutions for avoiding losers: ruffing, discarding and turning potential losers into winners based on power (as in a finesse) or length. It's how a player puts those techniques together that matters. Suit establishment — making one or more cards in a long suit good so declarer can discard losers — is one of declarer's most valuable skills.

The long suit is usually in dummy, so the question is: How long should it be? Long enough that there is a chance both defenders will run out of that suit so at least one of dummy's low cards is good.

With, say, ♣A K 8 6 3 in dummy opposite ♣5 4 in your hand, the defenders' six cards could split 3-3 or 4-2, which would make one or more low cards in dummy good. A 5-1 or 6-0 split will not help you.

With ♣8 7 6 5 in dummy opposite ♣9 3 2 in your hand, only a lucky 3-3 split of the six missing cards will allow for a discard.

With five low cards in dummy opposite one in your hand, the defenders' seven cards could split 4-3, making one low card in dummy good. Any

worse split does nothing for you.

A suit such as A K Q 6 5 4 2 in dummy could provide no tricks if you are void in that suit and can't reach dummy. If you can get there, you will take three to seven tricks depending on how the defenders' six cards split and how many dummy entries you have. One entry is enough for seven tricks when the six missing cards split 3-3. Additional entries are needed on other splits.

There is a "rule" of sorts to help you predict the most likely splits for different suit combinations. Think of odd-even as your guideline. With three or more missing cards (odd number), the opponents' cards are most likely to split as evenly as possible. An even number of missing cards is most likely to split one off from exactly even. For example, six cards (even number) will split 4-2 more often than 3-3. With five missing cards (odd number), the split will be 3-2 more often than 4-1.

Declarer usually has to ruff dummy's long suit good. Before committing to suit establishment, make sure you have the entries to ruff and get back to dummy to use the good card you worked so hard to establish.

*Entries are critical when you plan to establish dummy's long suit.*

For example: Dummy has ♣7 6 4 3 2. You have ♣A 5. The six missing clubs are more likely to split 4-2, so dummy will probably need three entries outside of clubs. You can lead twice from your hand but you will need entries to dummy to lead clubs two more times, then a third entry to enjoy that hard-earned extra trick. If you are desper-

ate and have only two dummy entries or if you must discard two losers, you'll have to play for a 3-3 split.

Swap your ♣A for one of dummy's low clubs to get ♣A 7 6 4 3 opposite ♣5 2. Do you still need three entries outside of clubs to cater to a 4-2 split? Not if you use the ♣A as a key entry. Win dummy's ♣A on the second club lead, which puts you in dummy for a ruff. Now you need only two dummy entries outside of clubs.

Planning entries gets easier with practice, so cover up the East-West hands and plan your play in 6♥ as South with the ♠10 opening lead.

♠ K J 4			
♥ A 3			
♦ J 6 5 3 2			
♣ A 6 5			
♠ 10 9 8 7		♠ 6 3 2	
♥ 6 4		♥ 9 7 5	
♦ A 8 4	N W E S	♦ Q 10 9 7	
♣ Q 10 7 2		♣ J 9 4	
		♠ A Q 5	
		♥ K Q J 10 8 2	
		♦ K	
		♣ K 8 3	

South's losers are one diamond (fast) and one club (slow) — one too many. Are you happy to see that five-card suit in dummy? You should be. It could be your salvation!

You have six diamonds between your hand and dummy. East-West have seven diamonds, which are most likely to split 4-3. If you play diamonds five times, you can discard your club loser on the fifth diamond. The only hitch is that four dummy ➤





entries are needed. Does dummy have four entries? Before trick one is played, dummy can be reached with the ♣A, the ♥A, the ♠K and the ♠J. If you win trick one with any card except the ♠A, you will reduce this number to three dummy entries. By winning the ♠A, you can later lead the ♠5 to the jack and the ♠Q to the king.

Win the spade with your ace and play the ♦K at trick two. Don't play trumps yet. The ♥A is one of the entries you need to set up the fifth diamond for a discard. □