

52 FACTS OF BRIDGE LIFE

Good Advice To Give Your Partner—Handout 3

By Eddie Kantar

Tips 1-30 are on the first 2 handouts in this series. These handouts can be found at http://richmondbridge.net/lesson_handouts.htm

Tips 21-40 are defensive tips:

31. At notrump it is important to keep communications with partner's hand. If partner's lead looks like top of a doubleton, it's usually a good idea not to take the first trick. Let partner keep that second card so when he gets in he can return your suit.

This tip comes in very handy when you have A-K-x-x-x(x) with no outside entry. If you duck the first trick, partner will be able to return the suit when he gets in.

32. When declarer ignores a strong suit in dummy lacking one honor, assume declarer has the honor. If he doesn't, that would be the first suit he would be leading - the rule of 'Unattended Strong Suits'.

If you see something like the K-Q-J-10-(x) or A-Q-J-10-(x) in dummy and declarer plays other suits, assume declarer has the missing honor.

33. When there is a short side suit in dummy and declarer draws all of dummy's trumps, the inference is that declarer doesn't have any losers in that suit to ruff. Translation: It is safe to discard that suit.

34. When discarding, keep length parity with the dummy.

If dummy has four cards in a suit (A-K-Q-8), and you have four cards (9-4-3-2) one of which (the 9) could conceivably take a trick, be careful about discarding from that suit. Be very careful! Don't!

35. It is important to count declarer's tricks as the play progresses. If you find yourself on lead and can see that declarer has enough tricks in three suits to make the contract, shift to the fourth suit. Some chance is better than no chance.

36. When dummy tables, add declarer's likely point count to dummy's known point count.

The bidding has gone 1NT-3NT. Partner leads and dummy has 10 HCP. Say the opponents are playing a 15-17 notrump range. Assume declarer has the middle count, 16, and proceed from there. The opponents have 26 HCP, give or take 1 point, leaving you and partner with 14. You know how many you have, so it is easy enough to figure out how many partner has. Do it!

37. When defending a suit contract, there are two main techniques declarer uses to garner extra tricks: (1) setting up a long suit in dummy, (2) ruffing losers in the short hand (usually the dummy.) If dummy comes down with a long and a short suit and you have the long suit bottled up, lead trumps because the long suit is not usable. If it appears that the long suit is usable, play an attacking defense going for outside tricks quickly. If the dummy comes down balanced, declarer has no place to get rid of losers and will eventually lose them, therefore you and partner should adopt a passive defense. Avoid breaking new suits if possible. Let them have what they have coming. Sit back and wait for your tricks. Your day will come.

38. The best time to lead a short suit is with trump control. A-x-(x) or K-x-x are great trump holdings to lead from shortness. However, if ruffing will cost you a trump trick, leads from shortness with trump holdings such as J-10-x-x, Q-J-9-x or K-Q-9-x are counter productive.

39. When signaling encouragement with equal spot cards, signal with the higher or highest equal.

With A-9-8-7, signal encouragement with the 9 (which denies the 10). If you lazily signal with the 8, you are denying the 9! Some partners actually watch stuff like that.

40. When giving partner a ruff, the card you lead is suit preference telling partner which suit to return after the ruff.

The return of a relatively high spot card asks for a return in the higher ranking of the two remaining suits. A return of your lowest card asks for a return in the lower ranking of the two remaining suits. The return of a middle card is designed to drive partner crazy. It actually means you have no preference.

Tips 41-52 are playing tips.

41. Before playing to the first trick, review the bidding and make sure you remember the opening lead. Sometimes the opening lead is a small spot card and it is important to know exactly how small. If the opening leader later plays another small card in that suit, you really want to know whether it is a higher or lower card than the original lead. You really do!

42. If one (or both) of your opponents is a passed hand, assume that player has fewer than 12 HCP. If that player turns up with 10 HCP early on, play the partner for any missing queen, king, or ace.

43. There is nothing more important than counting your sure tricks before you begin to play. At notrump count your sure tricks outside of the suit you plan to establish. This tells you how many tricks you need in your main suit and then play accordingly.

44. As declarer, when you can to take a trick with one of two equal honors, take the trick with the higher equal. It is far more deceptive.

Say you are playing notrump with the ♠ KQx. If a low card is led and RHO plays the jack, assuming you wish to take the trick, take it with the king. Do the same with the A-Q-J. If a low card is led and the 10 comes up on your right, take it with the queen, not the jack! If you take tricks with lower equals, you might as well be playing with your cards face up on the table!

Major exception: With A-K-x-(x) at notrump take the first trick with the king. If you win with the ace, it is too suspect. If your only stopper is the ace, why aren't you holding up?

45. As declarer, when possible, withhold any spot card lower than the one that has been led or lower than the one played to your right.

If the opponents are playing standard signals, this tip is sure to screw them up. Say the 3 is led against notrump and dummy has the A-K-5 and you have the Q-6-2. You play the king from dummy and third hand plays the 4. If you play the 6, concealing the deuce, consider the confusion you have caused: fourth hand won't know if partner has led from a four- or five-card suit (can't see the deuce) and the opening leader won't know if partner is signaling with something like Q-4-2. (can't see the deuce). If you play the deuce at trick one, East knows that West has led from a four-card suit and West knows that partner's 4 is discouraging. For shame.

46. When leading from the dummy to take a finesse with a number of equal honors in your hand, finesse with the higher or highest equal.

Say you have the A-Q-J-10 in your hand and x-x in the dummy. When you lead low from dummy and second hand plays low, play the queen. You give away too much information if you play the 10. If the 10 loses to the king, second hand will know you still have the Q-J. If the queen loses to the king, second hand won't know you have the J-10. If the 10 wins, and second hand has the king, second hand knows you still have the Q-J. However, if the queen wins, second hand can't be sure you have the J-10.

47. When you have all the tricks but one and you are playing in a trump contract, play off every single one of your trump cards before you play your other suits. Keep the suit you have the loser in until the bitter end. Make them suffer!

Remember, the most you can lose is the last trick.