

Playing Advice from Mike and Linda

Defending

From Mike Fine

1. Do not play the ace when you see a singleton on the board. Even though you take 1 trick, you can end up giving the opponent 2 tricks on which he will pitch 2 losers.
2. Play low (without hesitation) when declarer is leading toward an honor unless it is the SETTING trick and you have the ace when he leads toward the King.
3. Avoid breaking a new suit. Give them their obvious winners, especially winners in short suits on the board.
4. In 3rd seat or when splitting honors in second seat, play the lower of touching honors.

From Linda MacCleave

5. Second hand low. Don't play the 9 to force the A if you see A-8 on the board. He will not take a finesse that deep. Expect your partner can beat the 8 if declarer decides not to play the A.
6. Cover an honor with an honor unless there are 2 honors on the board. Then cover the second honor (unless you have a doubleton).
7. When dummy comes down, remember the bidding. Then figure out how many points your partner probably has and where the points are likely to be. Defend accordingly.
8. Give partner information about your hand when you want him to lead a suit. This can be done by discarding a high card in the suit you want or (better) discarding a low card in a suit you don't want.
9. Don't assume the first suit your partner discards is the suit he wants led. Look at the rank of the card and compare it to what you can see on the board and your hand. (A 7 is discouraging if you can see the 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. A 7 is probably encouraging if you do not see many of those cards.)
10. Lead high from a doubleton and low from 3. Playing otherwise can cause partner to defend incorrectly and give opponent undeserved trick. In partner's bid suit, do the same thing. If you have supported partner's bid suit, you may play high but only if you have discussed this with your partner. He should know you do not usually have 2 cards in the suit if you supported it.
11. Never hesitate in the play if you have nothing to think about. Doing so is unethical. Hesitations never help you, so plan what you will play before the play is made.



Declaring

From Mike Fine

1. Maximize the tricks you can take in a finesse. Axx opposite QJx will never take any more or less tricks than 2 unless the K is a singleton. Finessing is useless. Play the A and then toward the QJ.
2. Avoid breaking the suit that has Qxx in dummy and Jxx in your hand. You will lose 3 tricks if you break that suit. If opponents break the suit, you will get 1 trick.

From Linda MacCleave

3. Read your opponent's hesitations in play. Beginners have not developed the ability to plan ahead, so use the information they provide to your advantage. (Then remember how easy it is to tell what they have in their hands and practice playing smoothly when you defend.)
4. If you are considering a finesse on the second play of a suit, check the rank of the card that comes from both opponents. If you are planning to finesse toward dummy, and the card that came from the person on your right was an 8 or 9, the missing card may be all alone at that point (unless they are trying to fool you).