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ACCURATE CARDPLAY

TERENCE REESE & ROGER TRÉZEL



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INTRODUCTION

The play of the cards at bridge is a big subject, capable of filling many large books. In the 1970s, Roger Trézel, the great French player and writer, had the idea of breaking up the game into several small books, each dealing with one of the standard forms of technique. He judged, quite rightly as it turned out, that this scheme would appeal both to comparative beginners, who would be able to learn the game by stages, and to experienced players wishing to extend their knowledge of a particular branch of play.

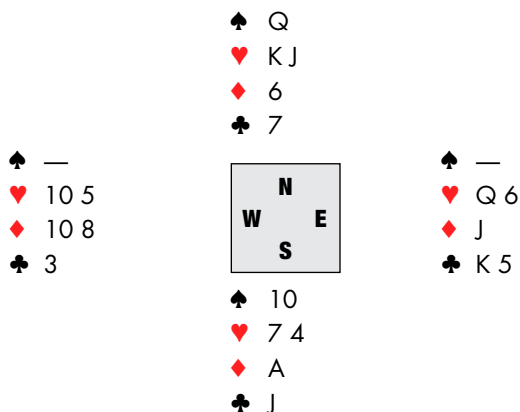
The English version was prepared in collaboration with Terence Reese, and appeared in eight small volumes. This new edition, updated and revised for the modern player, presents the eight original booklets as two larger compendiums, entitled *Accurate Cardplay* and *Imaginative Cardplay*.

PART I

ELIMINATION PLAY

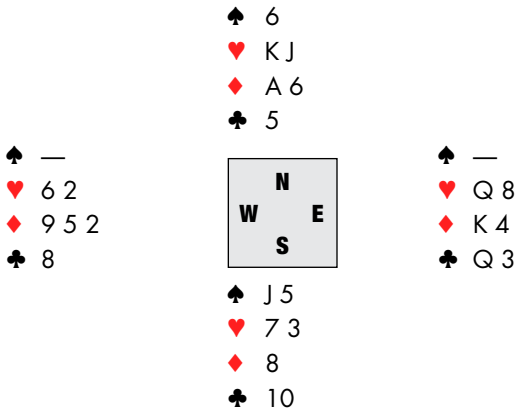
Of all forms of endplay, elimination is the most frequent and the most rewarding. The object of the play is to force an opponent to make a lead that is disadvantageous for his side. Such a lead may save declarer from the necessity of taking a finesse, or it may allow him, in a suit contract, to discard a loser from one hand while he ruffs in the other.

It follows that *the opponent must not be allowed to retain a safe exit card*. Elimination play is directed towards that end.



Spades are trumps and South, who has the lead, requires four of the last five tricks. If he simply finesses the jack of hearts, he will lose a heart and a club. But it is quite easy to circumvent one of these losers. South must first cash the ace of diamonds, *eliminating* East's card of exit. He follows with the jack of clubs, and East is in a classical dilemma: he must either lead a heart up to the KJ, or a club, which will allow declarer to discard a heart and ruff in dummy.

It can be seen that playing off the ace of diamonds accomplishes two purposes: as the cards lie, it extracts the only diamond held by East; it also creates a situation in which, even if the defender who won the club trick held another diamond, he could not lead it safely. In the next example the declarer must eliminate a side suit from dummy and from his own hand before he gives up the lead.



Again spades are trumps, and South can afford to lose only one trick. He must begin by playing a diamond to the ace and ruffing a diamond, *eliminating* this suit from his own hand and dummy. Then a club, as before, leaves East on play.

In the majority of textbooks the term ‘elimination play’ is used only of situations that arise in a suit contract where the declarer has a trump in both hands at the moment of the throw-in. The defender may be forced to concede a ruff-and-discard. More often he will have the alternative of opening up a suit to his disadvantage. There may be a simple finesse, as in the example above, or any ‘tenace position’, such as AJx opposite 10xx, where the prospects of losing only one trick are much improved if the defenders can be forced to lead the suit.

However, the elimination process also occurs in a notrump contract whenever the declarer executes a throw-in. The endplay will not succeed unless all safe cards of exit have been eliminated. So, our use of the term is not restricted to suit contracts: we give examples of elimination play in notrump contracts as well.

As you study the hands that follow, you will become familiar with several types of elimination. Before long you will see at a glance how to make contracts that, but for elimination play, would be impossible.

EXAMPLE 1

You are South, playing 4♠ with the following cards:

	♠ A Q 4 2							
	♥ J 4 3							
	♦ A K Q							
	♣ 6 5 3							
♠ J	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E	♠ 10 8 5
	N							
W	S	E						
♥ A K Q 5		♥ 10 8 7 6						
♦ J 10 9 8		♦ 7 5 2						
♣ K J 8 4		♣ 10 7 2						
	♠ K 9 7 6 3							
	♥ 9 2							
	♦ 6 4 3							
	♣ A Q 9							

West opens 1♣. North doubles, and, after a pass by East, South jumps to 2♠. North bids the game.

The defenders begin with three rounds of hearts, South ruffing. Since the king of clubs is offside, it may look as though two club tricks must be lost, but in fact South can make a certainty of the contract once everyone has followed to the first round of trumps.

After drawing trumps, South eliminates the diamonds by playing off ace, king and queen. Now dummy has the lead in this position.

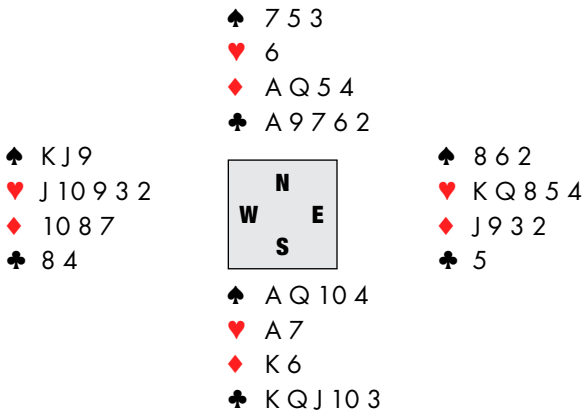
	♠ 4							
	♥ —							
	♦ —							
	♣ 6 5 3							
♠ —	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E	♠ —
	N							
W	S	E						
♥ —		♥ 10						
♦ J		♦ —						
♣ K J 8		♣ 10 7 2						
	♠ 9							
	♥ —							
	♦ —							
	♣ A Q 9							

Declarer leads a low club from the table. If East plays the two or the seven, South must not finesse the queen but must put in the nine. This leaves West with the alternative of returning a diamond, which will allow a ruff-and-discard, or a club up to the AQ.

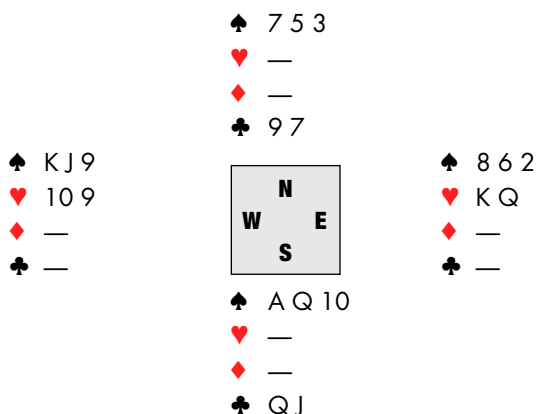
Note that it will not avail East to insert the ten of clubs, because in that case the play of the queen will leave West in a similar dilemma. (It would, however, be good play for East to insert the ten; this would save the ship if South held ♣AQ8 and West, ♣KJ9.)

EXAMPLE 2

On the next hand declarer arrives at the same sort of ending after making an elimination play in two suits.



Playing in 6♣, South wins the heart lead and draws trumps in two rounds. To escape the hazard of finding both spade honors in the wrong hand he sets about eliminating the red suits. First, he plays king, ace, and queen of diamonds, discarding a spade from hand; then he ruffs a fourth diamond. A heart ruff leaves him on the table with the remaining cards as follows:



A low spade runs to the ten and jack, and West, stripped of all safe cards of exit, must either return a spade into the AQ or concede a ruff-and-discard.

EXAMPLE 3

When it seems as though you will need a finesse for your contract, postpone that play until the last possible moment. Often you will find some means of avoiding it altogether.

Most elimination plays occur in suit contracts, but the same technique can be applied at notrump, although in the following case the ruff-and-discard element is not present. Here, the declarer in 3NT made several attempts to find his ninth trick, but they all failed because his technique was deficient.

	♠ K 8 6 4					
	♥ 7 6 2					
	♦ K 9 6					
	♣ Q 5 3					
♠ QJ ♥ KJ 8 3 ♦ QJ 10 8 7 ♣ J 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 10 9 7 2 ♥ 10 9 5 ♦ 4 2 ♣ 10 9 8 6	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ A 5 3					
	♥ A Q 4					
	♦ A 5 3					
	♣ A K 7 2					

South opened 2NT and was raised to 3NT. West led the queen of diamonds, and South saw no reason not to capture the first trick with the ace.

There were eight tricks on top and the chances for a ninth included a 3-3 break in spades, a 3-3 break in clubs, and a finesse of the queen of hearts. Keeping his powder dry, as he put it to himself, South tested the spades first, leading low from hand. When West played the jack, South let him hold the trick.

West followed with the jack of diamonds, and South deemed this a suitable moment to hold up the king. That was his big mistake. West played a third round of diamonds on which East discarded a heart. South played three rounds of clubs, finding this suit 4-2, then tested the spades, but these also did not break evenly. Muttering ‘Not my day’, South resorted finally to the heart finesse and was not surprised when this lost also. West thereupon cashed two diamonds to defeat the contract.

Here, South failed to retain a *card of exit*. He should have won the second diamond and tested the black suits, as before. When they proved recalcitrant, he could exit with the nine of diamonds, forcing West, after he had cashed his diamond winners, to lead away from the king of hearts.

EXAMPLE 4

There are two ways of looking at a finesse. On the one hand, it is attractive to win a trick that might be lost; on the other, it is undesirable to take a chance that might be avoided.

Any player who regards a finesse not with fascination, but with misgiving, is half-way to becoming a good player, even if he does not at first discover the best means to avoid the hazard; this knowledge will come with practice.

Here you are South in a contract of 6♦:

	♠ 9 8 7 ♥ A Q ♦ K 9 7 5 4 2 ♣ Q 4											
♠ K 10 3 2 ♥ 10 8 5 4 ♦ 8 ♣ J 9 7 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 6 5 ♥ K J 9 7 2 ♦ 6 ♣ 10 8 5 2	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A Q 4 ♥ 6 3 ♦ A Q J 10 3 ♣ A K 6											

South opens 1♦, and North has nothing better than to give a double raise to 3♦. From this point South will not stop short of 6♦.

West's lead of the four of hearts presents South with an immediate problem. Players quite often underlead a king against a small slam, so the finesse may hold; and if it fails, a spade can be discarded on the third club, and a finesse of the spade queen will win the contract. In short, South appears to need one finesse out of two, which is a 75% chance, if one regards each finesse as an even proposition.

Thanks, however, to the presence of the ♠987 on the table, South can make a certainty of the contract by a different line of play. He should go up with the ace of hearts, draw trumps, and take three rounds of clubs, discarding the queen of hearts from dummy. A heart is ruffed and the position is:

	♠ 9 8 7 ♥ — ♦ K 9 7 5 ♣ —										
♠ K 10 3 2 ♥ 10 8 ♦ — ♣ J	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 6 5 ♥ K J 9 ♦ — ♣ 10
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q 4 ♥ — ♦ A J 10 3 ♣ —										

Now South can laugh at fate. He leads a spade from dummy and covers any higher card played by East. West will win this trick but will have no good return.

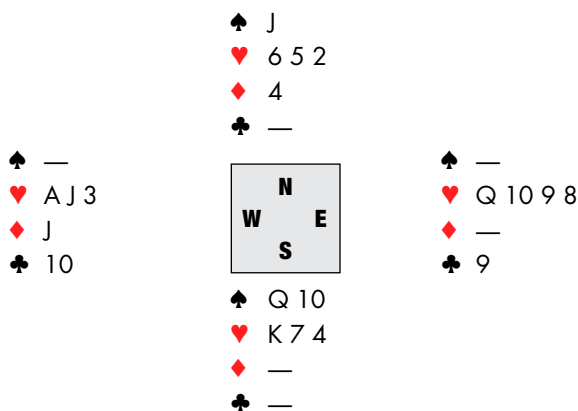
EXAMPLE 5

Sometimes you will aim to lose a trick to a particular opponent, because no lead by that player will present an immediate danger; that is a sensible precaution. Sometimes the surrender of a trick to a particular opponent will force him to give up a trick, whatever he returns; then you have a perfect safety play. On the deal below you achieve this result by means of an elimination followed by a classic 'loser-on-loser' play.

	♠ J 4 3 ♥ 6 5 2 ♦ K Q 8 4 ♣ K 4 2										
♠ 9 5 ♥ A J 3 ♦ J 10 7 6 ♣ Q J 10 8	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 2 ♥ Q 10 9 8 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A 9 6 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K Q 10 8 6 ♥ K 7 4 ♦ A 5 3 ♣ 7										

South plays in 4♣, and West leads the queen of clubs. It would, of course, be poor play to cover with the king, forcing East to take the trick and giving him a chance to lead a heart through the king. South plays low from dummy, therefore, and probably East will play low as well, although, as the cards lie, the winning defense is to overtake. West follows with the jack of clubs, and South ruffs. The trumps fall in two rounds, and at this point South can be sure of the contract if the ace of hearts is held by East, or if the diamonds are 3-3, permitting him to discard a heart on dummy's long diamond.

There is an additional chance, however, which will ensure the contract not only if diamonds are 3-3 but also if West holds four or more. Declarer plays off the ace and king of diamonds, ruffs the king of clubs, and leads a third diamond, arriving at this position:



Now the four of diamonds is led from dummy, and South discards the four of hearts. West takes this trick and is forced to return a heart or a club, either of which will present declarer with his tenth trick.

EXAMPLE 6

Landing a contract of 5♣ doubled against an opponent who has the values for an opening 2NT is a satisfactory achievement, all the more so when the distribution is not abnormal, and the contract has been reached by way of a delicate auction.

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

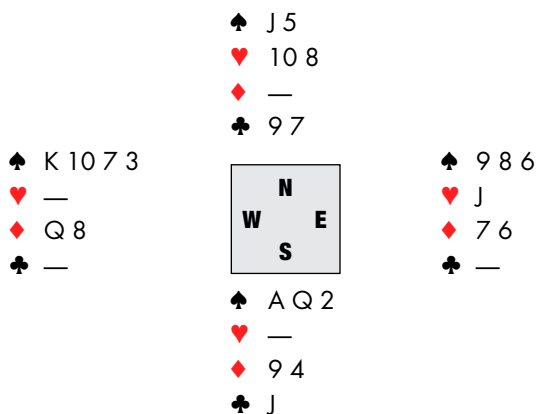
South was the dealer with neither vulnerable and the bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
dbl	1♥	pass	1NT
dbl	2♣	pass	3♣
3♦	pass	pass	dbl
pass	4♣	pass	5♣
dbl	all pass		

When North took out the double of 3♦, it was reasonable to suppose that he was short of this suit, and this encouraged South to bid the game. Many players would have doubled 5♣, as West did, but it is worth remarking that an expert would have refrained from doing so: he would have realized that the double stood to gain only an extra 50, at most, and that the defense might prove difficult.

West led the king of diamonds and switched to the king of hearts, hoping eventually to make a spade, a diamond, and a

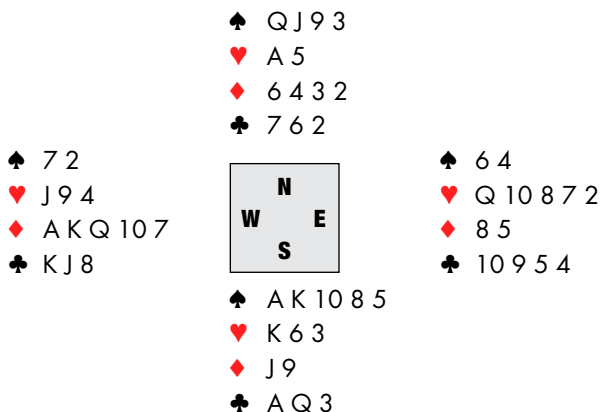
club. South won with the ace of hearts, ruffed a heart, and led the jack of diamonds, forcing West to cover. Dummy ruffed, and after another heart had been ruffed, South played off ace and another club. West found himself on lead in this position:



South was still a trick short on the surface, but whatever West played was bound to give him the extra trick he needed. West in fact led a low diamond, hoping that South would not play him for the queen. South was not deceived, however; he let the eight run to his nine, discarding a spade from dummy, ruffed a diamond, ruffed a heart, cashed the ace of spades, and made the last two tricks with dummy's last trump and the established ten of hearts. It was neatly done, and the hand is worth playing over again.

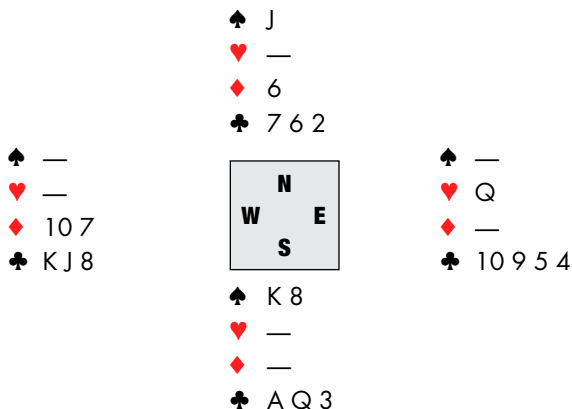
EXAMPLE 7

The play on the next deal is similar to that of Example 5. It is only by observing several hands of the same type that you will acquire the facility to bring off a similar coup at the table.



South opens 1♠, West doubles, and North jumps to 3♠ making it too dangerous for East to enter. Although he recognizes his partner's jump as a defensive measure, South decides that he is strong enough to bid game.

West leads the king of diamonds against 4♠ and follows with ace and another. South ruffs and is happy to find the trumps 2-2, for now he has a cast-iron loser-on-loser elimination. He ruffs the third round of hearts in dummy to eliminate this suit and the remaining cards are:



Now South does not expose himself to the hazard of the club finesse. Instead, he leads the losing diamond from dummy and discards the three of clubs from hand. West, left on lead, must either return a club or concede a ruff-and-discard.

Learn from the Masters

In the 1970s, two of the best bridge writers of all time collaborated on a series of eight small books on a number of aspects of cardplay at bridge. These books have long been out of print, and are republished now in two combined volumes, edited and updated by BRIDGE magazine editor Mark Horton.

Accurate Cardplay is the first of these two books, and comprises the following titles from the original series: *Elimination Play in Bridge*; *When to Duck, When to Win in Bridge*; *Blocking and Unblocking Plays in Bridge*; and *Safety Plays in Bridge*.



TERENCE REESE (1913-1996, UK) was a world champion and one of the best-ever writers on the game. His *Reese on Play* and *The Expert Game* are classics of bridge literature.



ROGER TRÉZEL (1918-1986, France) was a multiple world champion. His partnership with Pierre Jaïs is regarded as one of the greatest in the history of the game.

