



ACCURATE CARDPLAY

PART IV: SAFETY PLAYS

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 IV

SAFETY PLAYS

Safety plays are a form of insurance against a bad break.

Suppose, for example, that a normal division of the adverse cards would enable you to lose no tricks at all in the suit that interests you, whereas against a very bad distribution you might lose two tricks; if there is a way to lose just one trick, *whatever the distribution*, then a safety play is available and you must employ it whenever the contract depends on not losing more than one trick. Putting it another way, you sacrifice a trick when the distribution is favorable, but when it is unfavorable you make sure you do not lose two tricks.

It is essential to know all the standard safety plays; they will reward you many times over. The occasional overtricks you give up, worth 20 or 30 points apiece, will be amply compensated by the thousands of points you will gain by ensuring your contract.

A special point about safety plays is that it is not necessary to count the hands or to know the adverse distribution: all you need realize is that a particular suit may break badly. It is enough, when you are playing a contract that seems to be lay-down, to pause and say to yourself, 'Can I go down if the breaks are extremely bad?' If the answer is yes, then look for a safety play that will protect you against such a distribution.

EXAMPLE 1

You hold between dummy and yourself eight cards of a suit including the ace, king and ten. These cards may all be in the same hand or in opposite hands. Your object is to lose not more than one trick in the suit. First lead the ace and then lead a low card, intending to put in the ten if the left-hand opponent has also played low. These are typical holdings:

K 10 x x x ▬ A x x	K 10 x x ▬ A x x x	A K 10 x ▬ x x x x
A K 10 x x ▬ x x x	K 10 8 x x x ▬ A 9	A K 10 9 x x ▬ x x

If the finesse of the ten loses to the jack or queen, then the distribution must be 3-2 and the remaining honor will fall under the king on the next round. Meanwhile, you insure against QJxx on the left. If these cards are on the right, nothing can be done. Note that in the last two examples, where declarer has only a doubleton, it is necessary to add some strengthening cards; otherwise a defender with, say, QJ9x could render the safety play ineffective by splitting his honors on the second round.

You play the following hand as South in a contract of 4♥:

	♠ Q 2	
	♥ K 4 3	
	♦ A Q 3	
	♣ Q 9 8 7 6	
♠ A K 10 9 ♥ 9 ♦ J 10 9 8 7 ♣ 5 3 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 8 7 6 5 4 ♥ Q J 8 2 ♦ 6 2 ♣ J 10
	♠ J 3	
	♥ A 10 7 6 5	
	♦ K 5 4	
	♣ A K 4	

West leads the king and ace of spades, then switches to the jack of diamonds. South wins with the ace and sees that there are no more losers outside the trump suit; he must, therefore, avoid losing two trump tricks.

South leads the king of hearts from dummy, East plays the two and West the nine. On the next heart East plays the eight and now South must put in the ten. If East began with QJ82, South will win this trick and lose only one heart. If East began with Q82, West will capture the ten with the jack, but East's queen will fall under the ace on the next round.

Note that it would not help East, as the cards lie, to play the queen or jack on the second round. South would win, cross to dummy with a diamond or a club, and then lead up to the 1076, again losing one trick. East does better not to split his honors in this type of situation; then he will make two tricks if South neglects to make the safety play.

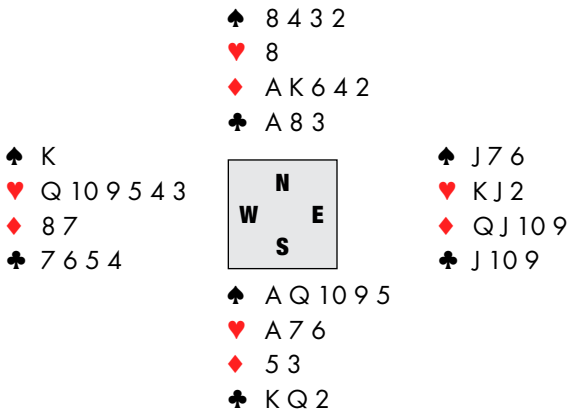
EXAMPLE 2

You hold between dummy and yourself nine cards of a suit including the ace and queen, with or without the ten, the ace and queen being in the same hand. Your object is to lose not more than one trick in the suit. You should lay down the ace, then lead up to the queen.

A Q 10 x x	x x x
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
x x x x	A Q x x x x

In the first example if the ace drops a singleton king from East, you lose no tricks at all, as you can return to hand to finesse the ten. In the second example you lose one trick if the king is singleton on your left, but if you had finessed the queen you would have lost a second trick to East's J10x.

You play the following hand as South in a contract of 6♠:



West leads the eight of diamonds and you win with the king in dummy. You see that there are no losers outside the trump suit; therefore your sole concern is to avoid losing two tricks in spades.

If you lead a spade from dummy and finesse the queen, losing to West's king, you will have to guess on the next round whether to play for the drop (by leading the ace) or to take a finesse against the jack. You would be in the same dilemma if you finessed the ten on the first round and lost to the jack: West might hold the KJ or the jack might be singleton.

The correct play is to lay down the ace on the first round. If West follows with a low card, you reenter dummy and lead towards the queen. If West sits over you with the KJx, there is nothing to be done, but if East has three cards, or if the distribution is 2-2, you lose just one trick.

When the king is singleton, as in the diagram above, you lose no tricks at all, as you can safely cross to dummy and finesse against East's Jx. If West has KJ alone, or the jack alone, you lose just one trick. But if you finesse the queen on the first round, losing to the king, you will have to 'take a view' on the next round, and it is even money that you will do the wrong thing.

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.

