

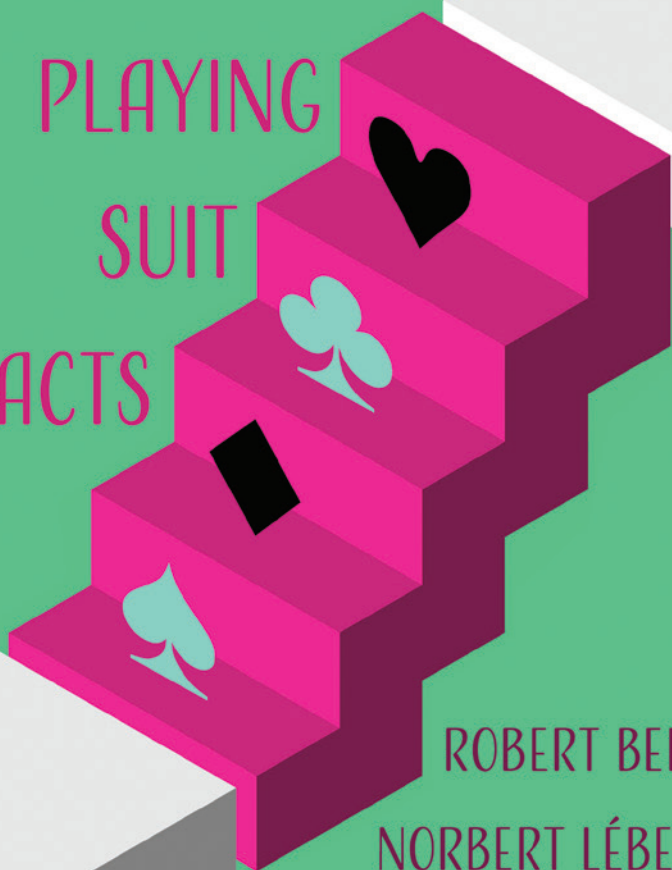
IMPROVE YOUR CARDPLAY

# STEP BY STEP

PLAYING

SUIT

CONTRACTS



ROBERT BERTHE

NORBERT LÉBELY

IMPROVE YOUR CARDPLAY

STEP  
BY STEP  
PLAYING SUIT CONTRACTS

ROBERT BERTHE & NORBERT LÉBELY

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# FOREWORD

First of all, I cannot resist the pleasure of quoting part of Jean-Paul Meyer's foreword from the original 1982 edition of this series, since it demonstrates his analytical mind: "I have no doubt that anyone who reads (I don't want to use the phrase 'works at') Books 1 and 2 of *Step by Step* carefully will not only make great progress in their cardplay, since they will have learned the necessary techniques, but they will also have acquired the self-confidence that is essential for success at bridge."

As one can easily imagine, the teaching of cardplay, as well as that of bidding, in bridge has progressed over the last forty years. For a long time, any good declarer in a suit contract was taught to count his losers before attempting to reduce them to the target number. However, at the start of the 21st century, the approach changed to counting winners.

How did this happen? Quite simply, various top players came to realize that, at the start of play, a systematic count of both winners *and* losers made it much easier to find a winning line of play, especially in high-level or doubled suit contracts.

Obviously, the new edition of *Step by Step: Playing Suit Contracts* has incorporated this change and it is a safe bet that when you have finished reading it, you will have developed the habit of counting your sure winners, as well as your potential winners, before calling for the first card from dummy.

Norbert Lébely



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# INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to present to you our second *Step by Step* book, dedicated to suit contracts. As you will see, the techniques involved are more varied, and somewhat more complex, than at notrump; but they are also much more interesting.

We want to remind you that it is vital that you play by our rules, as it is only in this way that the *Step by Step* method will really work. Don't look at the answers before you have thought the problems through. Gradually, you will absorb the consistent process of asking yourself the key questions and answering them logically. We therefore invite you to imagine you are at the table as much as possible as you read, so that you will no longer be among those who set off on an adventure without thinking about it first.

The organization of the book is very similar to *Step by Step: Playing Notrump Contracts*.

First, fifty example deals illustrating the techniques to be learned; these are organized in order of difficulty and not by topic. We again emphasize the importance of the principles listed after each deal: they represent the critical points you should remember.

In the middle, we have an organized list of topics. Do not ignore this, as it will be extremely useful if you cultivate the excellent habit of attaching names to the plays that you encounter at the table or in books. Get used to identifying them so that you can group them into types. Being able to think, 'Look, I'm going to need to establish that suit... a strip and endplay... a crossruff...' enables you to retrieve the information you need while choosing your line of play.

Finally, the exercises, twenty-six in all, revisit and expand on the themes developed earlier on. They will be a test of how much you have understood and, we hope, your progress. However, we are introducing one slight change from the first book. In order to get you used to the exercises gradually, we suggest you read *Step by Step: Playing Suit Contracts* in two stages:

1. Examples 1-21 and the corresponding exercises A-J
2. Examples 22-50 and Exercises K-Z

This way, you will be able to consolidate what you have learned from the first part of the book before you move on to the rest.

Final point: your opponents lead fourth-best and the top card from an honor sequence; their carding is standard.

# PART 1: THE EXAMPLES



# EXAMPLE 1

Neither vul.

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

West	North	East	South
pass	4NT	pass	4♠
pass	6♠	all pass	5♣*

Opening lead: ♥K

What do you need to do?

To make 6♠, you have to produce twelve tricks.

How many do you have at the start of the deal?

The ♦AKQ, ♥A and ♣A make five, to which you can add seven tricks from your spade holdings. Five plus seven makes twelve.

Does that mean that, at the start of the play, everything is fine?

No because your heart loser — originally protected by the ace — has become a fast loser after the opening lead. You are going to have to get rid of the ♥3 without delay — before touching trumps and giving up the lead to the ♠A.

How will you do this?

By simply discarding it on the ♦Q. So, you win the opening lead with the ♥A and immediately cash the three top diamonds. Aargh! East ruffs in with the ♠2; you overruff.

And now?

Only one chance: screw up your courage and play a small club to the queen. If it loses, you will go down two; but the prize (making your slam) is worth the risk. Hooray – today, your finesse is crowned with success and, before touching trumps, you get rid of your losing heart on the ♣A.

## Remarks

If they had made a different opening lead, making the slam would have been trivial: you would have drawn trumps and then cashed your three top diamonds without having to worry about a ruff.

Counting winners is extremely useful. Use it routinely when you are declarer; note that it is especially effective:

- In a slam or a partscore
- When your trump suit is not very solid
- When you are intending to crossruff

However, it is equally important to always count your losers.

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

## PRINCIPLE

To make a small slam, in a suit just as at notrump, you have to collect twelve tricks without losing two. Your *winners and losers* are two sides of the same coin and counting both is the first thing you should do every time you start playing a suit contract.

# PART 3: THE EXERCISES

# EXERCISE A

East-West vul.

♠	K 7 3
♥	10 5 4
♦	K Q J 8 2
♣	J 9
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px;"></div>
♠	A Q J 10 2
♥	A 7 2
♦	10 6 3
♣	A 6

West	North	East	South
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠
pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♠
all pass			

Opening lead: ♣K

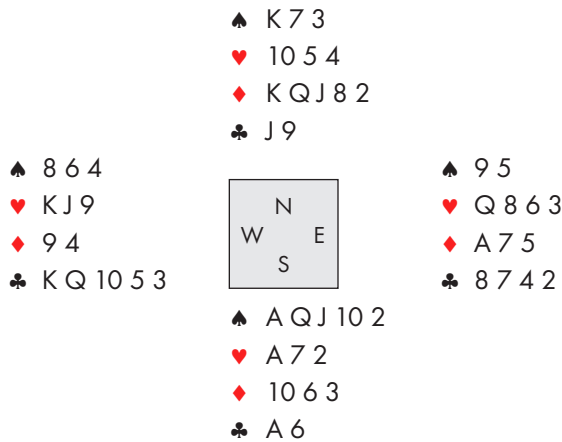
## QUESTIONS

1. Count your winners and identify your losers.
2. What plan are you going to use?
3. How many rounds of trumps will you play? Why?

## ANSWERS

1. Five spades, the ♥A and the ♣A: you have seven top tricks. The club loser has become a fast loser after the lead, while the heart losers are still protected by the ace.
2. In order to set up the missing tricks and get rid of your heart losers, go for Plan 2: set up the long suit in dummy. If all goes well, you should have no problem making an overtrick thanks to dummy's diamonds.

3. Pay attention to your communications. Suppose you draw three rounds of trumps. If one of your opponents has  $\heartsuit Axx$ , he will watch for a count signal from his partner when you play the suit and will hold up his ace until the third round in order to cut you off from dummy. So, after winning the first trick, play only two rounds of trumps: the ace and the queen. Then, go after diamonds: the  $\heartsuit 3$  and the  $\heartsuit 9$  from West, the  $\heartsuit K$  and the  $\heartsuit 5$  from East. Continue the suit. This time, East rises with the ace and gives his partner a ruff (whose  $\heartsuit 9$ , followed by the  $\heartsuit 4$ , has suggested this defense). You have effectively lost two diamonds instead of one but it doesn't matter: you still have ten tricks.



It's good to remember that executing Plan 2 often depends on having the entries to get back to dummy and that it's not unusual to have to refrain from drawing all the opponents' trumps.

ALSO AVAILABLE



IMPROVE YOUR CARDPLAY STEP BY STEP:  
PLAYING NOTRUMP CONTRACTS

Robert Berthe & Norbert Lébely

978-1-77140-074-9

Forty years ago, in 1980, Robert Berthe and Norbert Lébely put the finishing touches on two books that would revolutionize the teaching of bridge cardplay: the first two books in the Step by Step series (*Pas à Pas* in the original French).

Based on an innovative yet clear and easily-understandable pedagogical approach involving the reader in a series of questions and answers, the series has allowed hundreds of thousands of readers over the years to absorb techniques known to be arduous and complex. Now available in English for the first time, this edition reflects the updates made by Lébely in 2020. He did the revision alone, as Robert Berthe had passed away in 2016.

The first part of the book teaches the techniques by leading the reader step by step through a series of examples. The second part consists of problem deals where what has been learned can be applied and reinforced.

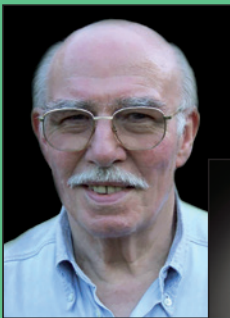
## NOVICE/INTERMEDIATE

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Particular care has been taken with this revision of the second volume, which is devoted to play in suit contracts. Indeed, in the years since the original publication, the authors changed their minds on how best to teach declarer play when a trump suit is involved. They abandoned the traditional method of counting losers, which is difficult and not very intuitive, to focus on counting winners, much like the technique used at notrump. This innovative approach has resulted in a book which is a much-improved learning tool.

The first part of the book teaches the techniques by leading the reader step by step through a series of examples. The second part consists of problem deals where what has been learned can be applied and reinforced.



### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

After their first meeting, at the Sarcelles Bridge Club, it became inevitable that the bridge writer, Robert Berthe, and the professional teacher, Norbert Lébely, would



collaborate on books for teaching bridge. The result was *Pas à Pas*, a series which in its original form has sold more than 300,000 copies in France.



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