

**TEST YOUR
BRIDGE TECHNIQUE**

PLANNING IN SUIT CONTRACTS

David Bird • Tim Bourke

♠ K 8 6
♥ A Q J 6
♦ A 8 6
♣ A K 10

♦ Q led

♠ A Q J 10 5 3
♥ 7
♦ 7 2
♣ J 8 7 3

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David Bird

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INTRODUCTION

This book is designed to accompany *Planning in Suit Contracts*, Book 6 in the *Bridge Technique* series. It will give you the opportunity to practice planning declarer play in situations that involve many of the key techniques relevant to contracts in a trump suit.

While we start out gently, it is only fair to tell you that by the end of this book you will be working hard. To solve the later problems you will need to understand not only how to make a plan but also some fairly advanced cardplay techniques. It will be an exciting journey, though, and the winning lines of play will be clearly explained in the solutions. By acquiring the discipline of always making a plan before you embark on a contract, you will greatly improve your results when you return to a real card table.

PLANNING THE PLAY IN A SUIT CONTRACT

The first step in planning a suit contract is to look at the hand containing the longer trumps, usually declarer's hand, and to count the number of potential losers there. You may not be familiar with this process, so let's see an example. Suppose you have to plan how to play 6♥ on this deal, after West has led the ♠Q:

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

You must count the potential losing tricks in the long-trump hand (South). Look at the spades first: the ace and king are certain to score tricks but the ♠3 is a potential loser. In the trump suit (hearts) you have one, two or three possible losers, depending on how the defenders' cards break. In diamonds you have no potential losers. You don't count the ♦6 as a loser because it faces the master ♦K in the dummy. You have only two diamonds in your hand and they are covered by the ace and the king. In clubs you have a potential loser on the third round. You have three clubs in your hand and they are not completely covered by your ace and dummy's king. So, this is the loser situation:

<i>Possible losers in spades:</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Possible losers in hearts:</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Possible losers in diamonds:</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Possible losers in clubs:</i>	<i>1</i>

That is a total of five possible losers and you can afford only one loser. The next step in making a plan is to decide which line of play will give you the best chance of reducing your loser-count to one.

There are four main ways of avoiding a potential loser:

- A suit breaks favorably, and the loser becomes a winner*
- You take a successful finesse*
- You ruff a loser in the short trump hand*
- You discard a loser on a winner in the dummy*

Look at the trump suit on the present deal: you have

♥ 5 3 2

♥ A K 9 7 6

If the suit breaks 3-2 you will have just one loser. If instead it breaks 4-1, you will have two losers. There is nothing much you can do about that, so just hope for the best.

Now look at the spade suit. You can save yourself a loser there by ruffing the third round of spades in dummy (the short-trump hand).

How might you avoid the potential club loser? One possibility is to finesse the ♣J. This relies on luck, however. You would prefer to discard your club loser on dummy's diamonds, if you can set them up.

So this slam deal may allow you to use all four of the main ways to avoid a loser. Let's think how the play will go. You win the spade lead in your hand. You then play the ace and king of trumps, pleased to see a 3-2 break. What will you do next? Ruff the spade loser?

No, because you are hoping to set up the diamonds and a spade ruff will be an important entry to dummy. You play the ace and king of diamonds and ruff a diamond. It makes no difference whether West chooses to overruff with the master ♥Q. Let's assume that he doesn't. You cross to dummy by ruffing your spade loser and ruff another diamond, setting up a long diamond in the dummy. You can then cross to the ♣K and discard your club loser on the established diamond winner. During this process West can take his ♥Q whenever he pleases.

An experienced player would regard this as a straightforward hand to play. That may be the case when you have been playing bridge for many years but you can be sure that a good fraction of players at your local club would have gone down. For a start it was barely possible to make ten tricks unless you paused at the beginning to make a definite plan of action. You then had to arrange the order of the play so that you had sufficient entries to dummy to set up the diamonds when the suit broke 4-2.

Let's look at another deal:

	♠ K 5 3											
	♥ K J 8											
	♦ J 6 5 2											
	♣ J 7 3											
♠ Q 9 6 2	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ 10 8 4	
	N											
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	S											
♥ 7 4		♥ 6 5 3										
♦ 10 8 7 3		♦ Q 9 4										
♣ K Q 2		♣ A 9 8 6										
	♠ A J 7											
	♥ A Q 10 9 2											
	♦ A K											
	♣ 10 5 4											

You bid to 4♥ and West leads the ♣K, the defenders taking three tricks in the suit. How should you plan the remainder of the play when East exits with a low trump?

INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED

TEST YOUR DECLARER PLAY!

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DAVID BIRD has written more than fifty previous books, including the award-winning *Bridge Technique* series (with Marc Smith). A regular contributor to many bridge magazines, he lives near Southampton, England.



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