

No Trump Contract Play ~ Counting Winners

Guess where most people make their first mistake in playing bridge???? Yes, I've done it too!! It's at trick one!! When you are playing a notrump contract, you need to count your winners **BEFORE** you play to trick one!!!!!!!

Why? Because that may give you an idea of how to play the hand for the maximum number of tricks!

First, let's define a winner!! A winner is a trick you can take right away. Let's look at an example:

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

Now let's count winners between the two hands:

How many winners do you have in spades? _____ Which cards? _____
 How many winners do you have in hearts? _____ Which cards? _____
 How many winners do you have in diamonds? _____ Which cards? _____
 How many winners do you have in clubs? _____ Which cards? _____

How can you develop tricks?

- ✓ Finessing
- ✓ Developing long-suit winners

Developing Winners

Okay, you know what finessing is so let's talk about deciding the best suit to develop. Sometimes it's your longest, but that's not always the case. First, determine how many tricks you need; next, determine which suit(s) give you the best opportunity to develop the most tricks.

North Hand	South Hand
♠ K 10 6	♠ A 9 3 2
♥ A 10 3	♥ Q 8 2
♦ K J 10 9	♦ Q
♣ 10 9 3	♣ K Q J 7 6

How many total winners do you have in these two hands? _____
 What are they? _____
 What is the best suit to develop more tricks? _____ Why? _____
 What is the second best suit for more tricks? _____ Why? _____
 In order to develop these suits, what do you need to do? _____

Beginning bridge players like to take all their winners and then let the opponents in; however, there are many times when you need to permit the opponent's to take a trick or tricks so that you can make your contract. Okay, you know to tackle your best suit first so which suit do you tackle last? _____ Why? _____

If you play your shortest suit first or in the beginning of the hand, you may lose control of the hand and lose LOTS of tricks!!!!

Let's Practice

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

Number of winners in spades _____ hearts _____ diamonds _____ clubs _____
 Best suit(s) to develop the most tricks _____

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

Number of winners in spades _____ hearts _____ diamonds _____ clubs _____
 Best suit(s) to develop the most tricks _____

North Hand	South Hand
♠ 10 6 3	♠ K Q J 2
♥ A Q 5 2	♥ 6
♦ Q J 10 7 5	♦ 8 3 2
♣ A Q 2	♣ K J 8 6 3

Number of winners in spades _____ hearts _____ diamonds _____ clubs _____
 Best suit(s) to develop the most tricks _____

Things to remember when setting up suits:

- Count the number of tricks you can take in each suit **AND** ask yourself how many times you must give up the lead to establish that number of tricks. Then ask yourself "Which is the best suit to tackle? Why?"
- Don't leave yourself "stuck" in the wrong hand.
- If you must give up tricks to establish future tricks, make sure you still have the other suits "stopped" before giving up the lead!!!!!!!!!!!!!!