



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(201) Transportation

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Level: 2

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General

When declaring a hand, especially at notrump, which hand you are in can greatly affect the line of play that you take. First, being in a hand that contains winners allows you to cash those winners. Alternatively, being in a hand that is opposite partner's high cards allows you to lead up to those cards – hoping to establish them as winners. Being able to easily move back and forth between your hand and the dummy is a major part of good Declarer play. We call being able to get the lead from one hand to the other having *Transportation*. One of the skills you need to learn to be a good Declarer is to manage your transportation (also sometimes called communication between your hand and the dummy). The card that you are planning to use to get the lead in the other hand is called the *Entry*. These entries are valuable assets and are things that we need to manage carefully in order to declare the hand as best we can. Transportation management is particularly important in notrump contracts. In suit contracts, you often have more entries available by using the trump suit to move between the two hands.

Unblocking a Suit

One of the simplest examples of transportation is to play a suit in a fashion that allows us to take all the tricks by *Unblocking the Suit*, which is usually done by getting the honors out of the short side of the suit first.

Example

KQJx Ax

When playing this suit, if you cash the King, Queen, or Jack first then the “short hand” will be left with the stiff Ace and the suit will be blocked. This means that when we take the Ace on second round of the suit, we will be in the wrong hand, not being able to take the last two winners. To avoid blocking the suit, we play the Ace first and then the small card from that hand on the second round (so we win the second round in the long hand and are able to cash a third and fourth winner.)

Rule of Thumb for Unblocking

Get the honors out of the short side first.

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Where to Win the Opening Lead

One of the most basic parts of managing your transportation is what you do at trick one. When there is a long suit in one hand, then (particularly in a notrump contract) we will often attempt to establish this suit into winners. But turning this suit into winners does no good unless there is a way to reach that hand with an entry, and then take those tricks. Thus, it is important to try to maintain the entries to the hand that has winners for as long as possible.

One place where players commonly make a mistake related to transportation (and entries especially) is at trick one. When we have the Ace in one hand and King in the other hand, it is important to be careful about which one we win first. We usually want to keep the winner (entry) in the hand that has the long suit that we will be trying to establish.

Example

♦ A7
♥ KQJ95
◆ 432
♣ 864

♦ K53
♥ T4
◆ AK76
♣ A975

On a hand like this, you plan to knock out the ♥A and establish the ♥ winners. But if you have no entry to the winners, they will not be very helpful to you. On a ♦ lead you must be careful to preserve the entry to the ♥ winners. Win the ♦K at trick 1, leaving the ♦A as an entry to the ♥ winners once you have knocked out the ♥A.

Rule of Thumb for Transportation to Winners

Keep entries to the hand with a source of tricks until after the winners are established.



Example

♦ A2
♥ AK43
♦ 8765
♣ 984

♦ K865
♥ QJ
♦ AK4
♣ A752

Here we combine unblocking a suit, getting the honors out of the short side first, in ♥ with winning the opening ♦ lead in the proper hand. Win the ♦K at trick one and then cash the ♥QJ immediately, before the ♦A is dislodged. Then we have 2♦, 4♥, 2♦, and 1♣ for 9 tricks. You can also play ♦AK and another ♦ to see if the ♦ split 3-3 before you enter dummy with the final entry of the ♦A - making an overtrick if so.

Managing Entries to Take Finesse

Another time when it is important for us to be in the correct hand is when we are going to take a finesse. In this case, we need to lead up to the tenace. If we have limited entries to the “opposite hand” (the hand we want to be in), then we need to manage those entries carefully if the finesse may need to be repeated.

One way we can manage our transportation is to lead an honor, to remain in the proper hand to repeat the finesse if it works. This is particularly important when we have no other entries to the hand we want to be in.

Example

AJT9x

Qxx

In this example, if we are in the South hand and cannot return (no outside entries) then we must be sure to lead the Queen on the first round of the suit. This allows us to take the finesse and if successful, remain in the South hand so the finesse can be repeated. If we lead a low card up to the Jack on the first round we will be in the North hand and will not be able to repeat the finesse. Start by leading the Queen!



Conclusion

The most important part of managing your transportation when you are Declarer is to plan at trick one. This means thinking about all the possible winners (particularly at notrump) that you are attempting to develop and then try to give yourself a chance to reach them if they become winners. In a suit contract, the trump suit may help make transportation easier, but in notrump you must be especially careful to manage your entries to each hand properly! Stop at trick one and plan for how you will develop and take your winners.