



Bridge Cardplay: An Easy Guide

DISCARDING LOSERS

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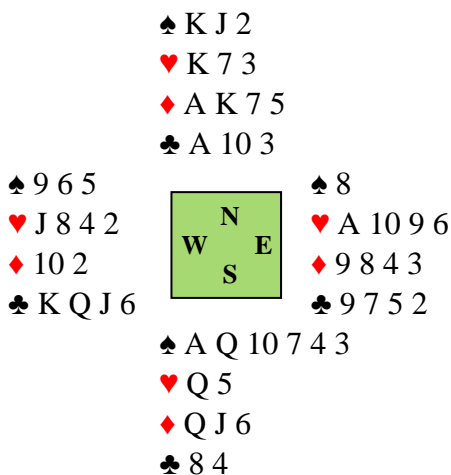
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1.

Discarding to reduce the loser total

There is an accepted general method of planning a trump contract. You start by looking at the long-trump hand, usually declarer's hand, and count the potential losers in each suit. By adding the four numbers together, you determine the total possible losers.

This process may already be familiar to you. To refresh our memories, let's perform the necessary calculations on this slam contract:



West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♣
pass	6♣	all pass	

West leads the ♣K. Looking at the South hand, you see no potential losers in spades. In hearts, you have one loser – you will lose a trick to the ♥A. There are no losers in diamonds. In clubs you have two losing cards, but one of them is covered by dummy's ♣A. So, one club loser will be added to the total.

Potential losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 1 ♦ 0 ♣ 1 **Total:** 2.

You have a total of two losers and are certain to lose a heart trick. What is your plan to avoid a club loser?

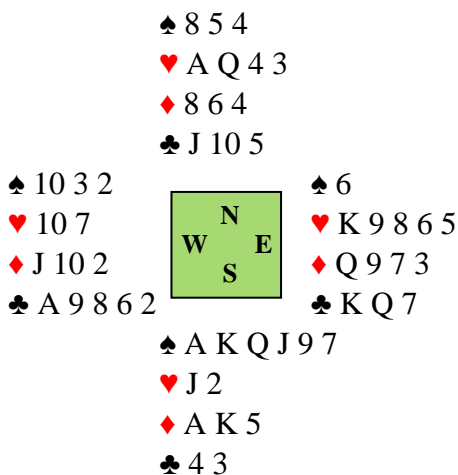
There are three main methods to avoid a loser:

- You can take a successful finesse in the suit
- You can ruff a losing card in the dummy
- You can discard a loser on a surplus winner in the dummy

The first two methods are not available on this deal. However, dummy has a surplus winner in diamonds, and this will provide a discard for your club loser.

The play is straightforward. You win the club lead with the ace and draw trumps in three rounds. You then play four rounds of diamonds: the queen and jack first, then over to the ace and king. On the fourth round of diamonds, you discard the ♣8 from your hand. With this task behind you, it is safe to play a heart, setting up a twelfth trick for yourself in that suit. The slam is made.

On the deal we have just seen, the diamond suit provided a discard with no effort required. What do you make of the next one?



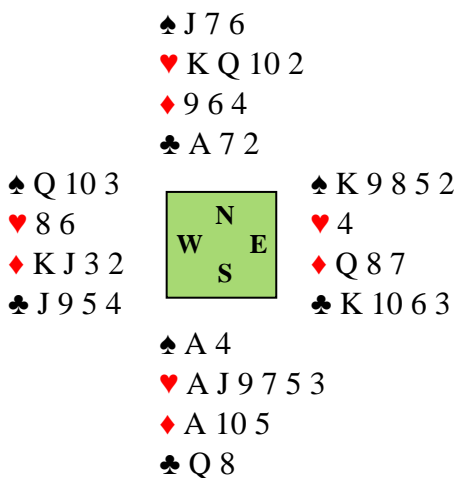
West	North	East	South
pass	2♠	pass	1♠
all pass			4♠

West leads the ♦J and you can see four potential losers: two clubs and one in each red suit. Look at the heart suit. If West has the ♥K, a heart finesse will win and you will not lose a heart trick. You will lose three tricks in the minors and make the game.

What will happen if you run the ♥J and East wins with the ♥K? You will still make the game! Dummy's ♥AQ will allow you to discard the losing diamond.

How should the play go? You win the first trick with the ♦A and draw trumps in three rounds. You then lead the ♥J, running the card when West plays low. East wins with the ♥K and the defenders take two club tricks. When they play a second round of diamonds, you win with the king. You then cross to the ♥A and throw your last diamond on the ♥Q.

On the deal we have just seen, no discard was available immediately. By playing on hearts, you could set up a discard on the third round of the suit.



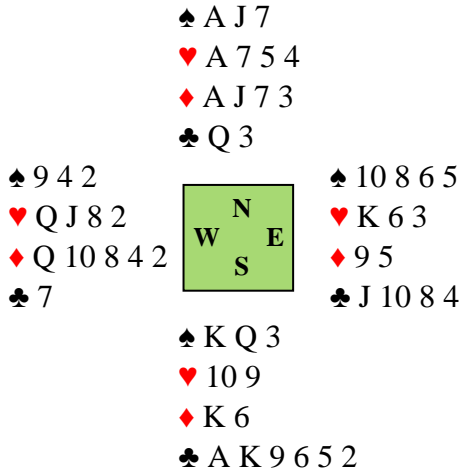
West	North	East	South
			1♥
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♦2, striking lucky when East produces the ♦Q. How will you play the heart game?

You can see four potential losers: two in diamonds and one in each black suit. There is little chance of avoiding two diamond losers, once the suit has been led. You must therefore look for some clever move to cause one of the black-suit losers to vanish. Any ideas?

The spade suit cannot provide a discard. In clubs, you may be able to establish a surplus winner in dummy if East holds the ♣K in front of your ♣Q. You win the first trick with the ♦A and draw trumps with the ace and king. Hoping for the best, you then lead towards the ♣Q. Luck is with you when East rises with the ♣K.

The ♦8 is returned and West takes two tricks in the suit. When he switches to the ♠3, you win with the ♠A and play the ♣Q. You then return to dummy with a trump to play the carefully established surplus winner, the ♣A. Away goes your ♠4 and the game is yours.



West	North	East	South
			1♣
pass	1♦	pass	3♣
pass	6♣	all pass	

West leads the ♥Q and you are happy with the dummy that appears. You win with dummy's ♥A, continuing with the queen and ace of trumps. Oh dear, West shows out and you now have a trump loser. What can you do?

You will have to avoid a heart loser. The only chance is to discard the ♥9 on a surplus winner in the dummy. If dummy held the ♦AQ73, the discard would be available on a plate. As it is, you will need a bit of luck.

You draw a third round of trumps, cash the ♦K and lead the ♦6. Cross your fingers, if you think it will make any difference, and finesse the ♦J. You turn nervously to see what card East produces. It is the ♦8. Hurray for that! You play dummy's ♦A and discard the ♥9. Your bad luck in clubs was redressed by good fortune in the diamond suit. The club slam is successful.

If the trumps had split 3-2, of course, you would have given no thought to a finesse of the ♦J. Such a reckless move would risk the contract when you had only one loser anyway.