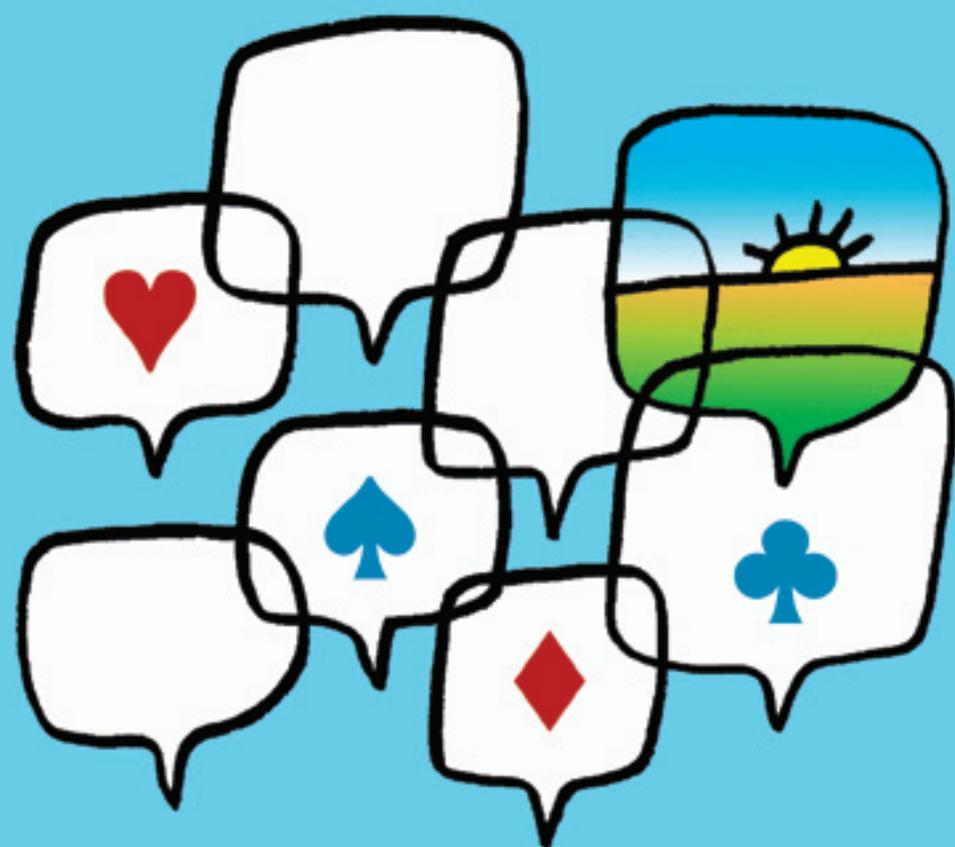


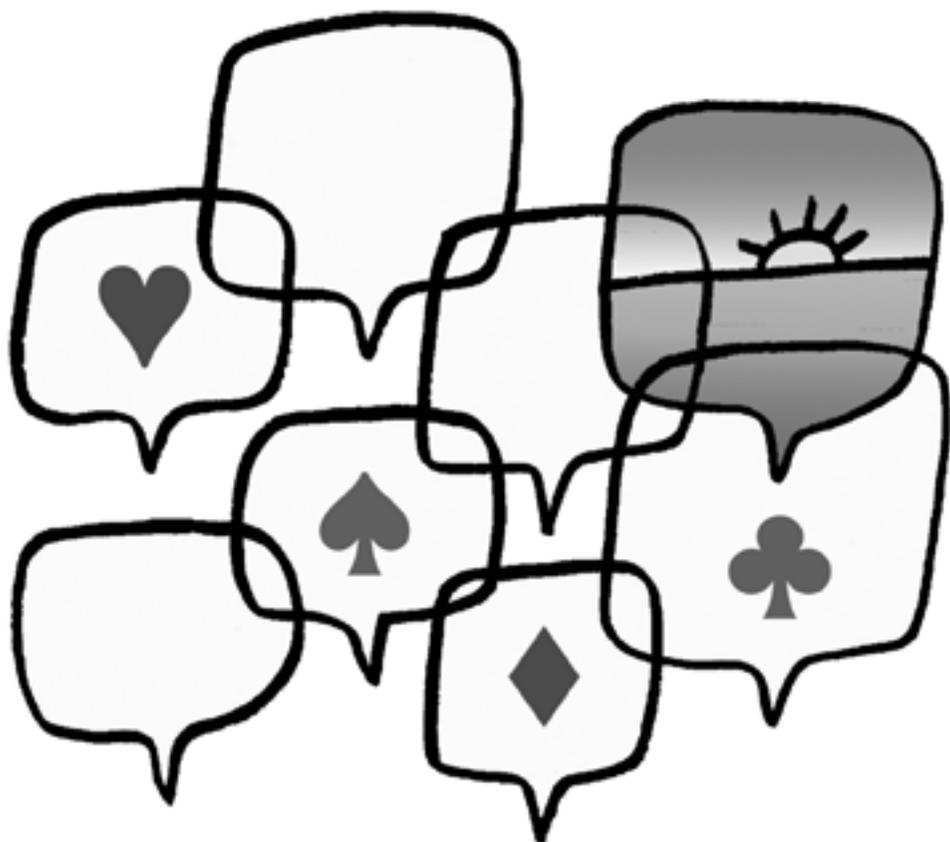
PLANNING THE PLAY OF A BRIDGE HAND



BARBARA SEAGRAM • DAVID BIRD

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MASTER POINT PRESS • TORONTO, CANADA

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INTRODUCTION

Any worthwhile book on bridge cardplay will emphasize the importance of making a plan. This should be done right at the start of the contract, before you play the first card from dummy. It is one thing to know that you should make a plan — quite another to discipline yourself to do it!

Most bridge contracts are relatively easy to plan, particularly those at the game or slam level. We will see in the next few chapters exactly how you set about the task. This might be the plan for a typical suit contract:

PLAN: I will win the club lead, draw trumps, and ruff the diamond loser in dummy.

As you see, the plan is only fifteen words long. It doesn't give the details of what happens, from trick to trick, but is still sufficient to explain what you intend to do.

When you first start to play bridge, the mechanics of playing tricks and of moving from one hand to the other can seem daunting. It is much the same when you first learn to drive a car. If you asked an expert driver how to get to the nearest McDonald's burger bar, he might tell you:

Go North to the I-28 and make a right. McDonald's is a mile up, on the right-hand side.

Suppose you were still learning to drive and desperate for a quarter-pounder. You would have to concern yourself not only with these basic directions, but also with gripping the steering wheel, operating the indicators, braking if any traffic light turned red, and so on.

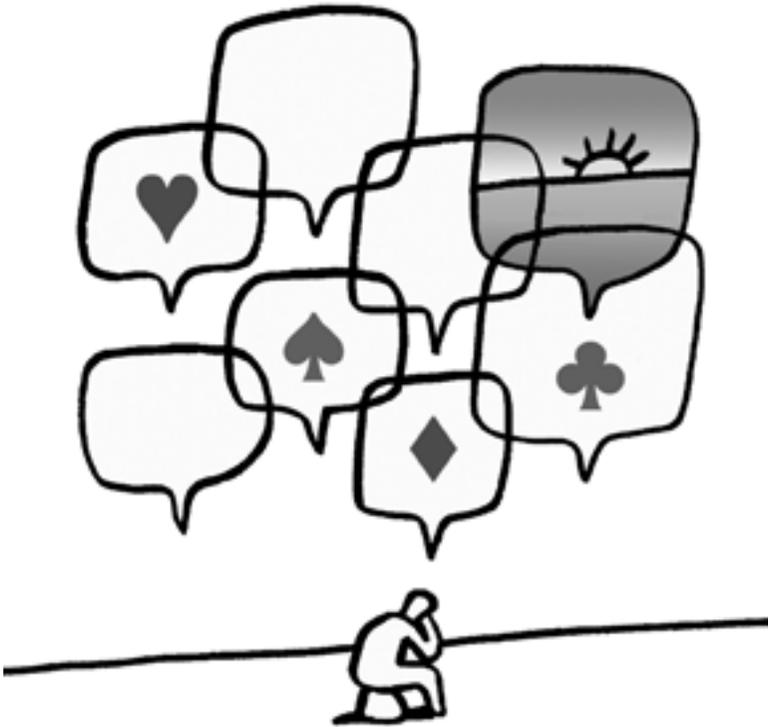
So, don't worry if the mechanics of playing a bridge contract are new to you and you find our recommended 'plans' somewhat brief. The full details of the play will be given in the accompanying text. You will soon become familiar with the basic cardplay techniques and can then put all your efforts into determining the best possible plan for the contracts you play.

One note: bidding can be complicated, but the focus of this book is on cardplay. We have therefore elected to use only a few simple conventions in our example auctions, including old-fashioned Blackwood (not Roman Keycard), so as not to distract readers.

Barbara and David

PART I

PLANNING A SUIT CONTRACT



1

HOW TO PLAN A SUIT CONTRACT

The first step in making a plan for a suit contract is to count the potential losers in your hand, declarer's hand, looking at each suit in turn. You do this by taking into account the high cards in both your own hand and the dummy. Look at these three suits, for example, assuming that South (as always in bridge books) is the declarer:

(a) ♠ A 10 7 2

 ♠ 5

(b) ♥ Q 8 6 5

 ♥ K 3

(c) ♦ K 8 4

 ♦ 9 5 2

The South hand has only one spade in (a), so the maximum possible number of spade losers would be one. Here, your loser is covered by dummy's ace, so you have no spade losers. If dummy's top card was the king, or some lower card, you would have one spade loser.

You have two hearts in (b), so the maximum possible number of heart losers would be two. Since you have the king and queen between the hands, you have only one potential loser, to the ♥A.

In position (c) you have three diamonds in your hand and therefore a maximum of three potential losers. Dummy's king does not necessarily prevent you from losing three tricks, as it may be captured by the ace, so you must count three diamond losers. If instead dummy held ♦A84, you would have only two diamond losers. With ♦AK4 in the dummy, the number of losers would drop to one. With ♦AQ4 you would again have two losers, since if a finesse of the ♦Q failed you would lose two diamond tricks. Do you get the idea?

To test yourself, look at the 4♥ contract overleaf and see if you can calculate how many potential losers you have in each of the suits.

	♠ 10 5 2		
	♥ A 9 5 2		
	♦ 8 6		
	♣ J 6 5 3		
♠ K 8 4	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	♠ A 9 7 6	
♥ 8 6		♥ 3	
♦ 10 7 4 2		♦ Q J 9 3	
♣ A K 9 7		♣ Q 8 4 2	
	♠ Q J 3		
	♥ K Q J 10 7 4		
	♦ A K 5		
	♣ 10		

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

West leads the ♣A against 4♥; East encourages with the ♣8 and West continues with the ♣K. How many possible losers are there in each suit?

Spades: Two losers. You will lose to the ace and the king.

Hearts: No losers. The suit is solid.

Diamonds: One loser. You have three diamonds and the ♦5 is a loser.

Clubs: One loser.

For every suit contract in this book, we will summarize the loser situation like this:

Losers: ♠ 2 ♥ 0 ♦ 1 ♣ 1 **Total** 4

You have a total of four possible losers and the contract is 4♥, where you can afford only three losers. You must therefore plan to reduce the number of losers from four to three. Can you see how to do it?

There are three main ways in which you can dispose of a loser:

- (1) You can ruff (trump) a loser in dummy;
- (2) You can take a successful finesse in the suit containing the loser;
- (3) You can discard a loser.

On the present deal, you have no chance of avoiding the three losers in the black suits, but you can ruff your diamond loser in the dummy.

How does the play go? You will ruff the second club and draw trumps in two rounds. You will then play the ♦A and ♦K and ruff your diamond loser in the dummy. Finally, you will drive out the ♠A and ♠K to set up one trick in spades.

You would express the plan in this abbreviated form:

PLAN: I will ruff the second club, draw trumps and ruff my diamond loser. Then I will establish the spade suit.

As we mentioned, there are three ways to avoid a loser: ruffing, finessing and discarding. In the previous contract, you saved a diamond loser by ruffing. In the next two contracts we will see the other two methods of saving a loser. See what you make of this small slam in spades:

	♠ 10 9 6 2		
	♥ A 9 5		
	♦ Q 6		
	♣ A Q 7 4		
♠ K 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; background-color: #e0e0e0; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	♠ 7 5	
♥ 8 4 3		♥ J 10 7 2	
♦ J 10 9 3		♦ 8 7 4 2	
♣ K 10 6 3		♣ J 9 5	
	♠ A Q J 8 3		
	♥ K Q 6		
	♦ A K 5		
	♣ 8 2		

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

West leads the ♦J against your spade slam and you count the potential losers in each suit:

Losers: ♠ 1 ♥ 0 ♦ 0 ♣ 1 **Total:** 2

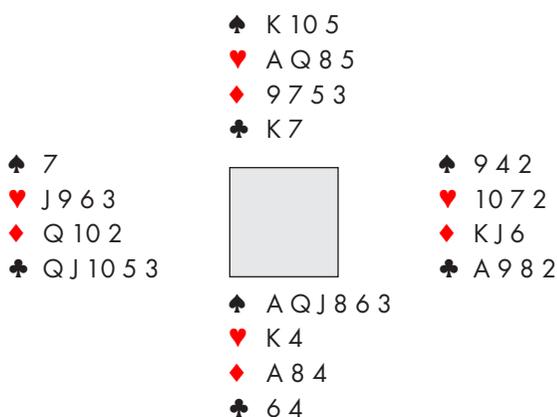
To make the small slam, you must reduce the total number of losers from two to one. Both the black suits offer you a chance to finesse against the king. If either of these finesses wins, you will save yourself a loser.

You win the diamond lead with dummy's ♦Q and lead the ♠10, running the card (in other words, you play low from your hand when East follows with a low card). For the moment, it is not your lucky day; the finesse loses to West's ♠K. It makes no difference what West chooses to return. Let's say that he plays his remaining trump and you win in your hand, the suit breaking 2-2. The time has come to take the other black-suit finesse. You lead a low club and play the ♣Q

from dummy. That's better! The finesse wins. You have managed to side-step your potential loser in clubs. The remaining tricks are yours and the slam has been made.

PLAN: I will win with the ♦Q and run the ♠10. If the trump finesse loses, I will need a subsequent club finesse to win.

We have seen two contracts so far. The first was made by ruffing a loser in dummy; the second was made by finessing successfully. Let's see a deal where the contract can be made by discarding a loser.



West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

West leads the ♣Q against your spade game. As always in a suit contract, the first part of making a plan is to count the potential losers in your hand:

Losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 0 ♦ 2 ♣ 2 Total: 4

West's opening lead of the ♣Q makes it perfectly clear that East holds the ♣A and that two tricks will have to be lost in clubs. So, you need to reduce the number of diamond losers from two to one. Do you see how this can be done?

One of the diamond losers can be discarded on the third round of hearts. Let's say that the defenders take their two club tricks and then switch to a diamond. You win with the ♦A and draw trumps in three rounds. You then play the ♥K, ♥A and ♥Q, discarding a diamond from your hand on the third round. You will now lose only one diamond trick and the contract is yours.

PLAN: I will win the diamond switch, draw trumps and discard one diamond loser on the hearts.

The deals in this chapter illustrate the three main methods of reducing the number of losers. You can ruff a loser, you can take a successful finesse in the suit, and you can discard a loser on a surplus winner in a different suit. In the next few chapters we will examine these three techniques in more detail.

Remember these points

- When you are planning a suit contract, you begin by counting the potential losers in your hand, looking at each suit in turn to see whether dummy can help you. If the total number of losers is more than you can afford, then in order to make the contract you must look for the safest plan to reduce that number.
- There are three main ways to avoid a loser: ruffing, finessing and discarding. When you need to avoid two or more losers, you may have to use two different techniques on one deal.
- Before you embark on the play, try to fix a brief plan in your mind.

Now try these...

To Answers

A.

	♠ K 3
	♥ 10 8 6 2
	♦ J 9 7
	♣ K 7 6 3
♠J led	<input type="text"/>
	♠ A 7 4
	♥ A K Q J 7 5
	♦ 6 4
	♣ Q 8

West leads the ♠J against your contract of 4♥.

- (a) How many potential losers are there?
- (b) What is your plan?

B.

	♠ Q J 4
	♥ A 8 5 3
	♦ A Q 2
	♣ 10 7 6
♥J led	<input type="text"/>
	♠ K 10 9 6 5 2
	♥ K 7
	♦ K 6 3
	♣ A Q

West leads the ♥J against your contract of 6♠.

- (a) How many potential losers are there?
- (b) What is your plan?

C.

	♠ A Q 6 3
	♥ J 10 5
	♦ 10 9 3
	♣ K 7 4
♦K led	<input type="text"/>
	♠ K 7
	♥ K Q 3
	♦ A 4
	♣ A Q J 9 8 2

You reach 6♣ and West leads the ♦K.

- (a) How many potential losers are there?
- (b) What is your plan?

D.

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

You reach 6♦ and West leads the ♣Q.

- (a) How many potential losers are there?
- (b) What is your plan?

E.

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

West leads the ♣Q against your contract of 6♠.

- (a) How many potential losers are there?
- (b) What is your plan?

F.

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

You reach 4♥ and the defenders cash three club tricks, switching to a trump.

- (a) How many potential losers are there?
- (b) What is your plan?

- A.** (a) You have one potential loser in spades, on the third round. The hearts are solid, so you have no losers there. In diamonds you have two certain losers. You have two cards in clubs but only one loser — you will lose one trick to the defenders' ace. This is the summary:

Losers: ♠ 1 ♥ 0 ♦ 2 ♣ 1 **Total:** 4.

- (b) You can ruff your potential losing spade in the dummy. You win the spade lead with the king and draw trumps. You then cash the ♠A and ruff a spade in the dummy. Finally, you drive out the ♣A.

PLAN: I will win the spade lead, draw trumps and ruff my spade loser in dummy. Then I will play clubs to set up a trick there.

- B.** (a) You have one certain loser in spades, since the defenders hold the ace. You have no heart losers; the South hand contains only two hearts and these are covered by the ace and king. The diamond suit is solid, so there are no losers in that suit. You have one possible club loser.

Losers: ♠ 1 ♥ 0 ♦ 0 ♣ 1 **Total:** 2.

- (b) After winning the heart lead, in either hand, you should immediately play a trump to drive out the ace. Suppose West wins with the ♠A and plays another heart. You will win and draw the remaining trumps. You can then cross to dummy with a diamond and finesse the ♣Q, hoping that East holds the ♣K.

PLAN: I will win the heart lead, draw trumps, driving out the ace, and then finesse the ♣Q.

- C.** (a) You have no losers in spades and one certain loser in hearts (to the ace). There is one loser in diamonds but none in clubs, the trump suit.

Losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 1 ♦ 1 ♣ 0 **Total:** 2.

- (b) You can discard the diamond loser on the third round of spades. Win the diamond lead, draw trumps and play the ♠K, ♠A and ♠Q, discarding a diamond. You can then establish the heart suit.

PLAN: I will win the diamond lead, draw trumps and throw my diamond loser on the third round of spades.

- D. (a) This is the loser position:

Losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 1 ♦ 1 ♣ 1 **Total:** 3.

- (b) You must avoid two losers to make the slam. A successful trump finesse will save a loser there; the club loser can be discarded on dummy's spades.

Win the club lead with dummy's ♣A and run the ♦Q. If West follows with a low diamond, repeat the diamond finesse if necessary and draw all the trumps. Continue with the ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q, discarding the club loser. Finally, you can knock out the ♥A to set up a trick in that suit. You combine the techniques of finessing and discarding.

PLAN: I will win with the ♣A, finesse in trumps and draw trumps. I can then discard my club loser on the spades and set up a heart trick.

- E. (a) This is the loser position:

Losers: ♠ 1 ♥ 0 ♦ 1 ♣ 1 **Total:** 3.

- (b) Even this wonderful book cannot tell you how to avoid losing a trick to the ace of trumps, so you will have to dispose of the two losers in the minor suits. The diamond loser can be discarded on the third round of hearts and the club loser can be ruffed in the dummy.

You win the club lead with the king and play a trump to drive out the ace. When you regain the lead, you will draw trumps and play three rounds of hearts to discard the diamond loser. You can then play the ♣A and ruff the club loser. You combine the techniques of ruffing and discarding.

PLAN: I will win with the ♣K and play a trump. When I regain the lead, I will draw trumps, discard a diamond on the third heart and ruff the club loser.

- F. (a) This is the loser situation:

Losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 0 ♦ 2 ♣ 3 **Total:** 5.

- (b) You have already lost three club tricks, so you must avoid any losers in diamonds. You must hope for a successful finesse of the ♦Q to save one loser. You can then save another by ruffing the third round of diamonds in the dummy. You combine the techniques of finessing and ruffing.

PLAN: I will draw trumps, finesse the ♦Q (hoping that East holds the ♦K) and then ruff a diamond in the dummy.

2

MAKING A PLAN — TO FINESSE

In this chapter we will look in more detail at how you can make a plan that involves one or more finesses. Here is a straightforward example:

	<p>♠ 9 6 5 ♥ J 7 5 ♦ A 8 4 2 ♣ 7 3 2</p>	
<p>♠ 10 8 3 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ J 10 9 7 ♣ J 9 4</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p>♠ A K Q J 7 2 ♥ A 6 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A Q 5</p>	<p>♠ 4 ♥ K Q 9 4 2 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ K 10 8 6</p>

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

West leads the ♦J against your spade game. What plan will you make?

Looking at the potential losers in the South hand, you see:

Losers: ♠ 0 ♥ 1 ♦ 1 ♣ 2 **Total:** 4

You must hope to reduce the number of club losers from two to one, by finessing the ♣Q successfully. You win with dummy's ♦A and must decide whether to draw trumps straight away. What do you think?

NICE DUMMY, PARTNER — BUT WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Do you get that terrible sinking feeling when you first see dummy? Does your mind go blank as everyone waits for you to play to the first trick? If so, you're not alone.

Beginning bridge players are taught some of the basic techniques of declarer play: suit establishment, ruffing losers, the finesse, and so forth. The hard part is learning what to do when. In the dreaded moment following the opening lead, the typical novice declarer has no idea where to start. Yet the key to success is simple: before playing from dummy at Trick 1, *make a plan*.

In this book, two of the world's best bridge teachers/authors explain how to go about making a plan as declarer – using a simple step-by-step process. Readers will learn how to decide what to do on a given deal, both in notrump contracts and suit contracts. By the end of the book, even the most inexperienced declarer will be comfortable with more advanced material, such as entry management and counting the hand.



BARBARA SEAGRAM (Toronto, Canada) has more than 250,000 copies of her books in print. These include the bestselling *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* and most recently, *Barbara Seagram's Beginning Bridge*.



DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) is one of the world's best-known bridge authors, with more than eighty books to his credit. David's recent titles for Master Point Press include *Bridge Endplays for Everyone* and *25 Ways to Be a Better Defender* (with Barbara Seagram).

