

Play of the hand in suit contracts

In a suit contract, before you play your first card you should

- Start by considering how many tricks you need for your contract
- Count how many sure tricks you have and work out how many more you need
- Decide where you need to develop tricks

Counting sure tricks

a) Contract 4♠

♠ Q109	♠ AKJ43
♥ K842	♥ A63
♦ A842	♦ 76
♣ 73	♣ A98

b) Contract 4♥

♠ Q102	♠ AKJ9
♥ AK982	♥ 1065
♦ KQ54	♦ 98
♣ 86	♣ KQ94

c) Contract 4♥

♠ J102	♠ AK3
♥ AQJ87	♥ K63
♦ 87	♦ A976
♣ AK5	♣ 432

You have 5 top spades, two top hearts, and the A♦ and A♣

= 9 sure tricks
1 more needed

Four top spades, two top hearts

= 6 sure tricks
4 more needed

Two top spades, four top hearts, one top diamond and two top clubs

= 9 sure tricks
1 more needed

Possible tricks

None

one club & 1 diamond

none

Potential tricks

One – trump 3rd club in the “short” hand

three or four if A♣ & A♦ favourably placed plus 5th heart

Finesse Q♠, 5th heart

Drawing Trumps

In a suit contract it is usually correct to draw trumps as soon as you win the lead

Contract 4♥, lead K♦

♠ KQ108	♠ J4
♥ AQ943	♥ KJ2
♦ 85	♦ A62
♣ J3	♣ A9654

Win the A♦ and draw trumps by playing small heart to the K♥, cash the J♥ and play the 2♥ to the A♥. If there is a heart still out draw it by playing the Q♥, otherwise play a small spade to the J♠ and one back to the KQ♠

Stop drawing trumps if the opponents have none left

If, after drawing the opponent's trumps, you continue playing trumps you will come down to

♠ KQ108	♠ J4
♥ -	♥ -
♦ 8	♦ 62
♣ J3	♣ A96

Now when you switch to spades and the opponent's win the A♠ and they cash their diamonds you have no trumps left to ruff the third round of diamonds and the contract will be defeated

Lesson 8a

If the one trump outstanding is the best trump, don't draw it!

Contract 4♠, lead K♦

♠ AKJ106	♠ 982	Win the A♦ and play two rounds of trumps. If the Q♠ is still outstanding, start playing on hearts by cashing the K♥ and playing small to the J♥; then play Q♥ and A♥ on which you discard two of your losing diamonds
♥ K6	♥ AQJ4	
♦ 9853	♦ A762	
♣ 96	♣ A8	

If you had played a third round of trumps you will come down to

♠ 106	♠ -	Now, when the opponents win the Q♠, they can cash their three top diamonds and the contract will be defeated.
♥ K6	♥ AQJ4	
♦ 985	♦ 762	
♣ 96	♣ A8	

Establishing extra tricks

- Setting up a side suit

Contract 4♥, lead Q♦

♠ A97	♠ 64	Win the A♦ draw two rounds of trumps. If Q♥ falls draw the last trump. Otherwise play on clubs. Continue with clubs until the A♣ is played, then use the K♦ as entry to dummy and throw your losing spades on the top clubs = 11 tricks
♥ AKJ943	♥ 42	
♦ A8	♦ K974	
♣ 93	♣ KQJ10	

- Play an honour from the short hand first

Contract 6♠, lead K♦

♠ A3	♠ KQJ764	Win the A♦. Play the A♠, and a small spade back to the K♠. Continue playing trumps until all are drawn. Now play small club to the K♣ and another back to the A♣. Continue with clubs = 12 tricks
♥ 9432	♥ -	
♦ A983	♦ 74	
♣ K8	♣ AQJ62	

- Taking a finesse

Contract 4♥, lead K♣

♠ AQJ	♠ 764	Win the A♣. Play a small spade to the J♠, and a small heart back to the A♥, Play a spade to the Q♠ and a heart back to the K♥, draw last trump if necessary and play a spade to the A♠ and cash the A♦ = 10 tricks
♥ J32	♥ AKQ85	
♦ A983	♦ 84	
♣ J8	♣ A62	

Why take the finesse when you could lose to the King? If you cash the Ace then you will always lose a trick to the King. Half the time the King will be on your right and half the time it will be on your left. Therefore if you take a finesse you will win an extra trick 50% of the time – which is far better than losing a trick 100% of the time if you don't take the finesse