

play bridge

A section designed with the newer player in mind.

Like many of you, I just finished serving a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner for my family. The only difference is that my family consists of 60 bridge players who join us at the club to share our Thanksgiving feast.

Rick and I do the turkeys and gravy, and everyone else brings their favorite side dish. We have to coordinate pretty carefully or we would have had 12 servings of mashed potatoes and green bean casserole and only one pumpkin pie. It is a wonderful spirit of togetherness. After the feasting everyone pitches in to restore the bridge tables and chairs to their original positions. Then the guide cards come out and the bridge game begins. What better way to spend a Thanksgiving afternoon than with good food, good friends and a club championship!

One of the ways we might give thanks at the bridge table is when our opponents are overly generous, when they give us tricks we cannot get for ourselves. While we all want to be good neighbors, we do not want to give what can't be earned.

When defending, we need to rely on partner to help us avoid giving away unearned tricks. One of the ploys that works so successfully for declarer also works for the defenders — the hold-up play. There are just two things you need to know: when to hold up and how many times to hold up.

Here's an easy one. The contract is 1NT. Dummy has \spadesuit K Q J 10 9 and no other high cards. You have the \spadesuit A 8 7. If you hold up on the ace, you are likely to stop declarer from taking the four diamond tricks he hopes for. You might just

think it would be wise to hold up until the third round of the suit, hoping that declarer is out. That might be careless, however. You may be giving declarer one of those unearned tricks. What if declarer started with only two diamonds?

Here's a possible layout of the suit:

\spadesuit A 8 7 \spadesuit K Q J 10 9
 \spadesuit 6 5 \spadesuit 4 3 2

If you (West) win the second round of the suit, you will hold declarer to one trick in the suit, the only trick to which he is entitled. If declarer had started with three diamonds and partner only two, however, it is right to hold up until the third round. So how will you know? Is it just a guess?

No, that is why you have partner around. He is the only one you can trust to tell you the truth. If he has three diamonds, he plays them up the line (first the \spadesuit 2, then the \spadesuit 3 and then the \spadesuit 4). If he has two diamonds, he plays high low (first the \spadesuit 4, then the \spadesuit 2). If partner shows you how many he has, you will know when to win your ace.

You always want to win the trick when declarer is playing his last card in the suit.

Another type of hold-up play for the defense can be performed when you have two good tricks in the suit led. Suppose this is the layout in the diamond suit:

\spadesuit 8 7 \spadesuit K J 10 9 6 5
 \spadesuit 4 3 \spadesuit A Q 2

If dummy has no other entries, you can win your queen when declarer plays a diamond to the jack. You can win your ace on the second round of the suit after



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partner follows. This way, declarer gets no tricks.

There is an additional consideration, however, if the dummy has one outside entry. You need to hold up on the first play in the diamond suit, even though it is tempting to win the queen. If you win the first trick, declarer will later lead diamonds until you win your ace. Then he will use the outside entry to get to dummy to run the rest of the diamonds.

It is a different story if you let declarer win the first diamond trick. He will probably go back to his hand to repeat the successful (he thinks) finesse. Now you win your queen. Since declarer has played his second and final diamond, he must use dummy's entry to drive out your ace, but he can no longer enjoy all those wonderful diamond tricks.

This is a double hold up and probably occurs more often on declarer play than on defensive play. But when it does come up and you make the right play, think about how thankful your partner will be. \square

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