

Give The Opponents Nothing

There are lots of clever things we can do as defenders, however one of the most significant habits we can develop that is not spectacular but which will save us a lot of tricks in the long run is to not give the Declaring side tricks they are not entitled to. Make them work for their contract! Don't hand them overtricks when they might guess wrongly if left to their own devices.

Underleading An Ace

This is a famous one. Imagine you are playing the following contract in Four Spades (East-West and you get the lead of the Two of Clubs (from someone who hold the Ace.

♠ KQJ762	♠ T98
♥ Q53	♥ JT98
♦ KT	♦ AQJ
♣ Q3	♣ KJ4

Without the underlead of the Ace of Clubs, declarer is going to lose One Spade, Two Hearts, No Diamonds and One Club – One Off.

However, by underleading your Ace, they will win the first trick and can then play three rounds of Diamonds (discarding their last club). They will now not lose a club and will make their contract!

Leading Away From A Tenace

A Tenace is a pair of honours separated by a "gap" of one or two cards. The classic examples are Ace-Queen and King-Jack but (unsurprisingly) it can include a pair including the Ten and the Ace. Imagine we are on lead with the West cards against Three No Trumps and we choose to lead a Spade.

Let's look at Declarer's chances in Three No Trumps. They have a combined twenty seven points and two balanced hands with no fit. Everyone should BID three no trumps. But should they make it?

Counting Declarer's tricks, they have Four Heart Tricks and Two Diamond tricks. They can force Two Club tricks by driving out the Ace but that only brings them to Eight. They will HAVE to go looking in the Spade suit and because your Ace-Queen sits "over" the King-Jack they will never score a trick in that suit....

.....unless you play Spades for them!

♠ 754
♥ AQ76
♦ K85
♣ KQT
♠ AQ62
♥ 982
♦ QJT2
♣ 65
♠ KJ3
♥ KJT
♦ A743
♣ J43

Giving a "Ruff And Sluff"

This is one of the most common defensive errors in regular club play and it is ALWAYS a costly mistake! If you can eliminate this from your game as a defender, your opponents will have a much harder time! If you can deduce that declarer is void in both dummy AND their hand as well as having trumps in each, you should refrain from playing the void suit for them. It is easiest to see this from Declarer's perspective. Imagine you are in Three Diamonds, the Opponents are on lead. (You have drawn trumps and the defenders have no more Diamonds). How do you rate your chances of winning the rest of the tricks?

♠ void	♠ void
♥ K43	♥ A52
♦ A3	♦ QJ
♣ A63	♣ K4

Left to your own devices, things look grim. You can play the top two clubs and ruff the last Club. You can win two Hearts. But no matter what you do you will lose a Heart trick at the end.

Now imagine what happens if the defenders lead a Spade...Suddenly, you can throw away a Heart in one hand, ruff in the other hand and you will make the rest of the tricks. No more Heart loser!