

Leading Towards Honours

Once you have won the contract and are declarer you will have a target number of tricks, but you will also be rewarded if you are able to make extra tricks – so called overtricks.

There are many cardplay techniques which one can learn to eke out as many tricks as possible between your hand and dummy and the most fundamental is, whenever possible, to lead towards your picture cards. This is a general application of the operation behind the well known cardplay technique of the finesse.

A strange way of thinking – where do we WANT the missing cards to be? Let's assume they are there!

Consider the following four hands. In each of them, there is one suit which is going to be key to success in the contract (or which is going to provide us with a source of overtricks!)

Can you identify the important suit?

Where would you *like* the missing cards to be in that suit?

How would you plan to play the hand?

Contract: 4 Spades	♠ T8762	Contract: 3 No trumps	♠ 96
	♥ AKT9		♥ K982
Lead: Queen of Hearts	♦ 92	Lead: Two of Spades	♦ QJT
	♣ 62		♣ K742
	♠ AK3		♠ A743
	♥ 853		♥ AJ
	♦ KJT87		♦ AK53
	♣ A3		♣ A65
Contract: 7 Clubs	♠ K873	Contract: 2 Hearts	♠ JT542
	♥ AQ		♥ A9
Lead: Ten of Hearts	♦ 842	Lead: Jack of Clubs	♦ K53
	♣ J987		♣ A63
	♠ A		♠ Q
	♥ 32		♥ JT8762
	♦ AKQT		♦ 86
	♣ AQT652		♣ KT72

This habit of thinking about where you want the picture cards to be and then playing in such a way as to take advantage of that hypothetical situation is a difficult concept to grasp at first. It is unlikely that you will master it immediately, so give it some time. In the meantime, what you CAN take away is the following:

When deciding how to tackle any given suit, it is nearly always right to begin by playing a small card *towards* the hand that has picture cards. Leading *away* from your honours will give the opponents the opportunity to win a cheap trick.