

BRIDGE ENTRY TECHNIQUES

David Bird



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Introduction

A substantial part of planning any contract or defense is the handling of entries. A vast number of techniques are available in this area. This book describes the most useful of these, both for declarer and the defenders.

Bridge writers are divided on whether the reader should be shown the full 52-card deal at the start, or only two hands. Those favoring the latter approach say that it matches the player's experience at the bridge table; the full deal can be given at the end.

In my view, it can be difficult to follow the description of a line of declarer play when only the North and South hands are on view. I much prefer to start with all 52 cards. This also saves space because on most deals only one diagram, rather than two, will be needed. Many more deals can be accommodated in a book with a given page count.

Whichever method you like, you will find them both in this book. The first twenty chapters feature 112 instructional deals, grouped according to the type of entry technique. These are followed by two quizzes: 24 problems on declarer play and 16 on defense. Only two hands, along with the bidding, will then be presented initially. To solve these problems, you will need to use one or more of the entry techniques explained earlier in the book.

Will your experience be totally entertaining and enjoyable? Here and there, perhaps, but my main objective is to be instructive. You can certainly expect to improve your level of play, particularly with regard to entry handling. Using the described methods will open the way to many productive areas of cardplay.

Throughout the book teams scoring will be assumed, rather than matchpoints. As declarer, your aim will be to maximize the chance of making the contract, When defending, you must seek to beat the contract. Even if you find one or two deals somewhat taxing at first reading, you will surely relish the subsequent improvement in your results at the bridge table. Good luck!

David Bird

Many thanks to my friend and fellow writer, Simon Cochemé, who kindly checked the final draft of this book. Four eagle eyes are better than two!

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For Bertie Bellis, head of mathematics at
Highgate School in North London,
who taught me something very precious:
how to think logically.

PART I


Entry techniques for declarer

1

Untangling your winners

Think back to the time when you first learned how to play bridge. As declarer, you were no doubt taught to make a plan before playing dummy's first card. Sound advice! An important part of any such plan is to check that you will have sufficient entries for your intended line of play.

You may have to judge where to win the first trick, or decide which suit to play first. You've heard enough waffle for now and would like to test yourself on a deal? Your wish is my command!

	♠ A 6 ♥ K Q ♦ K Q J 10 5 ♣ A 8 5 3		
♠ 9 8 7 ♥ 10 8 5 3 ♦ 9 7 2 ♣ K J 10		♠ K J 4 3 ♥ 9 7 ♦ 8 6 4 3 ♣ Q 9 7	
	♠ Q 10 5 2 ♥ A J 6 4 2 ♦ A ♣ 6 4 2		

West	North	East	South
			1♥
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	3♣	pass	3NT
pass	6NT	all pass	

How will you plan the play when West leads the ♠9?

The normal first move when planning a no-trump contract is to count your top tricks. Unless hearts break 5-1 or 6-0, you can count five tricks in each red suit and the two black aces. That's a total of twelve. There's a

potential blockage in both red suits, though, so you must take care with planning your entries.

Let's see first how the original declarer went down. He played low from dummy, aiming to set up a second trick in spades. East won with the ♠K and switched brightly to a diamond. This removed a key entry from the South hand, preventing declarer from playing the heart suit optimally.

Declarer won with the bare ♦A and crossed to the ♥K. He continued with four more diamond tricks and the ♠A. Since he had no side entry to his hand, he was then forced to overtake the ♥Q with the ace, hoping for a 3-3 break. No such luck came his way, nor did the ♠Q drop the ♠J. He was one down.

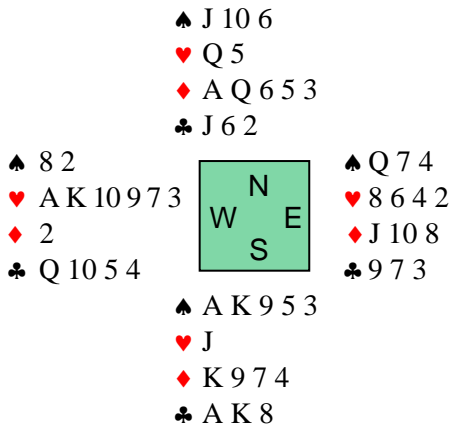
If declarer had taken the trouble to make a plan before his first play from dummy, he would surely have spotted that the ♦A was a vital entry to his hand. Once the defenders had missed their chance to lead that suit, he should not have given them a second chance.

So, you should win the first trick with the ♠A and unblock the ♥KQ, nodding happily when both defenders follow. You then cross to the ♦A, score three more heart tricks and return to dummy's ♣A to cash four diamond tricks.

ENTRY TECHNIQUE REQUIRED

You must play the hearts before the diamonds. The ♣A entry will be needed to reach the diamond winners. To prevent the defenders dislodging the ♦A before you have unblocked the ♥KQ, you must win the first trick with the ♠A.

On the next deal, from a local club game, the original declarer was unhappy with his partner's bidding. He allowed this to distract him when playing the final contract.



West	North	East	South
			1♠
3♥	4♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♦	pass	6♠
all pass			

South's 4NT was traditional Blackwood, asking for aces, and the 5♦ response showed one ace. West led the ♥A and down went the dummy.

'You bid 4♠ on that?' exclaimed the declarer. 'Only three trumps and a 10-count full of queens and jacks?'

'If I bid 3♠, that just shows a normal raise to 2♠,' his partner retorted.

Declarer ruffed the second round of hearts and cashed the ♠A. He then led the ♦4 to the ace, to finesse East for the ♠Q. Dummy's jack and 10 were run successfully, and declarer drew the last trump. He then played four more rounds of diamonds to discard the ♣8. The slam was his.

That was his intention, anyway, but he had blocked the diamond suit! When diamonds broke 3-1, he had to play an honor on each of the first three rounds. His last diamond, the ♦9 or the ♦7, then faced dummy's ♦65 and blocked the suit. The slam duly went one down.

There was no need whatsoever for the diamond suit to be blocked. Declarer should have led the ♦7 to the queen, and later dropped the ♦9 under dummy's ace. Dummy's ♦65 would then score over South's ♦4.

ENTRY TECHNIQUE REQUIRED

Declarer needs to unblock the ♦7 and ♦9 under dummy's ace and queen. He can then cross to dummy's ♦6 on the fourth round.

Let's see a different kind of unblocking that allows you to access winners that would not otherwise be cashable.

	♠ 8 5 3											
	♥ 10 9 5											
	♦ 9 7 5 3											
	♣ A K Q											
♠ –	<div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 7 6 4 2	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ K 8 6 3		♥ A Q 7										
♦ K Q J 4		♦ 10 8 6 2										
♣ 8 6 4 3 2		♣ 5										
	♠ A K Q J 10											
	♥ J 4 2											
	♦ A											
	♣ J 10 9 7											

West	North	East	South
			1 ♠
pass	2 ♠	pass	3 ♣
pass	4 ♠	all pass	

You reach 4♠ and the ♦K is led. Dummy goes down and you like your prospects, with an apparent ten top tricks at your disposal. You win with the ♦A and play a top trump. Ah, West shows out. Does that affect matters?

It does. If you draw all the trumps, the club suit will be blocked and you will have no entry to the fourth club winner in your hand. What can be done?

At trick three you should cross to the ♣A. Since you are blessed with the ♣J109 in your hand, there is no need to play any more of dummy's club honors at this stage. You switch back to trumps, drawing East's trumps, and discard dummy's ♣KQ in the process. The way is then clear for you to score the ♣J109 for the contract.

ENTRY TECHNIQUE REQUIRED

You aim to discard blocking clubs from the dummy. Since you have only one low club in your hand, you need cash only one of dummy's club winners before playing trumps.

Extra point: Suppose your clubs were weaker, ♣J1052. You would then have to cash two of dummy's top clubs, before reverting to trumps. If East was unable to ruff, you would draw the remaining trumps, discarding the last blocking club. The way would then be clear for you to play the ♣J10.

	♠ 4 2		
	♥ A 7 4 2		
	♦ A 10 8 6		
	♣ Q J 5		
♠ 10 8 5	<div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: 0.8em;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: 0.8em;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ K 9 6 3	
♥ 10 9 8		♥ 6	
♦ J 7 4		♦ K 9 5 3	
♣ K 10 8 3		♣ 9 7 6 2	
	♠ A Q J 7		
	♥ K Q J 5 3		
	♦ Q 2		
	♣ A 4		

West	North	East	South
			1♥
pass	3♥	pass	3♠
pass	4♦	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	6♥
all pass			

You bid the heart slam. West leads the ♥10 and now you must make it! Does any great plan spring to mind?

You will surely need the ♠K to be onside. How should you plan the play? In particular, how should you manage your entries to dummy, which are not plentiful?

Win the trump lead with the king and cross to the ♥A. You finesse the ♠Q, pleased to see the finesse win, and draw the last trump with the queen. What next?

If you cross to the ♦A to repeat the spade finesse, you will go down. With a diamond loser exposed, you would have to take a successful club finesse to make the slam. Instead you should play ace and another club, setting up a second club trick for a diamond discard. You are then safe on any return. If East returns a club, for example, you will win and discard your diamond loser. You can then repeat the spade finesse and ruff your last spade in dummy.

ENTRY TECHNIQUE REQUIRED

When the spade finesse wins, you can count ten tricks outside clubs. Only one entry is left to the dummy (the ♦A), but you can afford to untangle the club suit by playing ace and another.

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This book is packed with techniques and tips on the subject of entry management, both for declarer and the defenders. A clear understanding of this topic is vital when the dummy goes down and you stop to plan your campaign.

Part I contains 69 instructive deals on entries from declarer's point of view. The featured topics include: creating entries, destroying entries, finesse entries, sacrifice entries, ducking, holding up, blocking, unblocking, overtaking, avoidance play and forcing the defenders to assist you.

Part II contains 43 deals where the defenders use similar techniques on their own behalf: maintaining communication, creating and destroying entries, blocking, unblocking, hold-ups, preventing a duck, overtaking honors, entry coups, Morton's Fork and avoiding an endplay.

Part III contains 24 entry problems for declarer, followed by 16 problems for the defense.



DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) is the world's most prolific bridge writer, with 141 bridge books to his name. Known for the clarity of his writing and explanations, he has won the American Bridge Teachers Association 'Book of the Year' award a record eight times. His celebrated humorous fiction series, featuring the cantankerous Abbot, has run for over 45 years. His books have been translated into eight languages.