

**REVISED AND UPDATED BY  
BARBARA SEAGRAM**

**INTRODUCTION TO  
DECLARER  
PLAY**

**SECOND EDITION**

**EDDIE KANTAR**



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# FOREWORD

The game of bridge revolves around the bidding for and the taking of tricks. In this book we are not worried about the bidding — just the taking. In fact, this is the part of the game that most people like best. As declarer, you are no longer at your partner's mercy (although of course, his bidding may have landed you in a bad contract, but you are good enough to recover, surely!). No, you are finally in control, with twenty-six cards that are yours to play as and when you will, and with which to frustrate your opponents' efforts to defeat you.

In this book, you'll learn the fundamentals of declarer play: counting winners and losers, and the various methods at your disposal for creating enough extra winners to reach your goal before the opposition can get to theirs. If you already know all these things, there is no need to buy a copy of this book. Instead, buy one for your partner, who must be lacking in some of these categories or you would be winning every time you play.

One word about the text: in dealing with the dreaded 'he/she' problem, I decided to use 'he' for simplicity. If this offends any woman reading the book, I apologize.

Finally, if anyone had written a book like this when I was an emerging player, it would have saved me a great deal of effort, he added modestly.

*Eddie Kantar*

# FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

This book and its companion book, *Introduction to Defense*, are in my opinion the two best bridge books ever written. Eddie Kantar has been my mentor and guru for many years. He is the kindest, most wonderful man who has always been very generous with his time to teachers everywhere. Without Eddie, I would not have had the success that I have had in teaching bridge. His bridge hands are legendary and a joy to work with. His pearls of wisdom have taught so many so much. We constantly have AHA! moments from our students when we use them.

I was asked to tweak and modernize this book. This was a privilege. I just wanted to see these books back in the marketplace so that students of today have access to this wonderful learning tool.

If you are fairly new to the game, read this book, use the techniques and then play a lot. Try to play duplicate as much as you can. It is *the* way to get better. Go over two or three hands each time after playing. Try sometimes to play against and with better players — that way you can ask for advice. Sometimes you will need a thicker skin. Bridge is a game of mistakes; it is impossible to be perfect. You will have good days and bad days... it's all in a day's work. Keep coming back for more; the good always outweighs the bad. It is a wonderful game and such good exercise for the brain.

Above all, have fun!

*Barbara Seagram*

# CONTENTS

## **Part I — Playing a Hand in Notrump**

Chapter 1: Sure Tricks . . . . .	9
Chapter 2: Establishing Tricks . . . . .	17
Chapter 3: Taking Tricks with the Spot Cards . . . . .	27
Chapter 4: Taking Tricks by Finessing. . . . .	37
Chapter 5: The Hold-up Play . . . . .	53
Chapter 6: The Rule of Eleven . . . . .	65
Chapter 7: The Danger Hand. . . . .	77

## **Part II — Playing a Hand in a Suit Contract**

Chapter 8: The Trump Suit . . . . .	93
Chapter 9: Counting Losers . . . . .	97
Chapter 10: Creating Extra Winners . . . . .	111
Chapter 11: Long-suit Establishment . . . . .	133
Chapter 12: Ruffing in the Short Hand . . . . .	151
Index. . . . .	166



**PART 1**

**PLAYING A HAND**

**IN NOTRUMP**







# CHAPTER 1

## SURE TRICKS

*After looking over both hands carefully, it should be an easy matter to see how many tricks are a certainty and how many are probable. R.F. Foster*

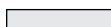
What you're going to learn:

- » What a 'sure trick' is
- » How to count your sure tricks
- » Play the honors from the short side of a suit first

The most important single move that you must make before starting to play a hand as declarer is to count your tricks. That seems easy enough, doesn't it? Let's take a simple example:

**Dummy**

♠ A 4 3



**You**

♠ K 5 2

Whenever you declare a bridge hand, you get to see all of your partner's cards before you play. Your partner's hand is called the dummy — and that term has nothing to do with the way he may have bid his hand.

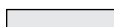
So what you do when playing a hand in notrump after the opponent on your left makes an opening lead, is to look at one suit at a time; look, for example, at your spades and at dummy's spades and count the number of sure tricks you have in that suit. Then go through the same process in each suit and come up with a figure. That is a very important figure. It tells you how many tricks you can take at a moment's notice. Remember that term — *sure tricks* — because we are going to work with it for a while.

Now let's go back to our example. In dummy we have the ♠A43, and in our own hand we have the ♠K52. The ace will take one trick and the king will take another, so we have the two sure spade tricks. This may seem elementary, but you will never learn to play a hand unless you do this.

Counting tricks has its hazards. Let's try this one:

**Dummy**

♠ K Q



**You**

♠ A 2

Now how many sure tricks do you have in spades? Even though you have the ace, the king and the queen, the answer is two, not three. You see, when you play a card from your hand, you must also take a card from the dummy. Let's say you play the ace; then the queen must be played from dummy. That leaves you with the two in your hand and the king in dummy. In other words, you have two tricks, not three.

The important thing to see is that you can never take more tricks in a suit than there are cards in the longer of the two hands. Look:

**Dummy**

♠ A K Q

**You**

♠ J 10

Between you and your dummy you have the ace, king, queen, jack, and ten. But you can only take three tricks. That is because the dummy, which is the longer hand in spades, has only three cards.

Let's have a quick quiz so you can practice counting sure tricks. In each case, count your tricks, and decide in which order you should play the cards.

## TEST YOURSELF

**1) Dummy**

♠ K Q 3

**You**

♠ A 5 2

**2) Dummy**

♠ A Q J 8

**You**

♠ K 7

**3) Dummy**

♠ A J 3

**You**

♠ K Q 5 4

**4) Dummy**

♠ Q J 10 5 4

**You**

♠ A K 3

## Solutions

1. Three tricks. You can take them in any order you like. You could play the king, then the queen, and then the three to your ace; or you could play the ace, and then a little one to the king, and then the queen. Or you could play the king, then the three to your ace, and then a little one back to your queen. You see, when you have an even number of cards in both hands (e.g. three cards on each side), you have quite a bit of flexibility. You would have to see all twenty-six cards before you knew which hand you wanted to end up in. I am merely showing you that you don't always have to play the ace first when taking tricks.
2. Four tricks. Now this situation and the following ones are a little different because you do not have an even number of cards on both sides. In this case the dummy has four and you only have two.

---

***TIP: As a general rule, whenever you have a bunch of good tricks in a suit that is unevenly divided, you should play the high card(s) from the short side first.***

---

Here, this means playing the king, which will take the eight from dummy, and then leading your seven over to the ace, queen, and jack in dummy. When cards are high it does not matter which one you play first. In this case, when you have played the king and are about to lead the seven over to the dummy, it doesn't matter if you play the jack, queen, or ace — they are all the same. In this little game we are playing, we are always assuming that the opponents have led some other suit and we have taken the trick. Now we are about to play our suit. Sometimes we will have won the previous trick in dummy. If the lead is in the dummy, we must play the ♠8 over to our king and then the seven back to the dummy. But in either case we are playing the high card from the short side first.

3. Four tricks. If the lead is in the dummy (from the prior play), we should first play the ace, then the jack, and then the three over to our king and queen. Notice that, as always, we played the high cards from the short side first. Things would be exactly the same if the lead were in our hand. We would play the four over to the ace (or jack), then the jack, and then the three over to our king and queen. It is conceivable that the opponents might lead this suit themselves, in which case we would still play it the same way.
4. Five tricks. This time we would play the king and ace (or the ace and king) from our hand and then lead the three over to the queen, jack, and ten in the dummy.

Playing the high card or high cards from the short side first allows us to end up on the long side, where we can take the maximum amount of tricks.

Now let's practice counting our sure tricks in an entire hand:

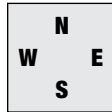
**Dummy**

♠ A 4 3

♥ K 4

♦ 10 8 7 5

♣ A K Q 3



**You**

♠ 7 5 2

♥ A Q 3

♦ A 4 3 2

♣ J 4 2

Let's pretend the contract is 3NT and West, your left-hand opponent, leads the ♠K. How many sure tricks do you have in the *entire* hand?

You should have come up with nine sure tricks. You have one in spades, three in hearts, one in diamonds and four in clubs.

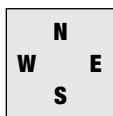
Sometimes counting tricks and taking them are two different things. But if you remember about always playing the high card from the short side first, you will not have any trouble. In clubs, you would play the jack first from your own hand and then play a little one over to the ace, king and queen in dummy. In hearts, you would play the king first and then the four over to the ace and queen in your own hand.

Here are a couple more hands for you to try on your own.  
Count your sure tricks and see what you come up with:

## TEST YOURSELF

### 5) Dummy

♠ K Q 3  
♥ A J  
♦ A J 7 6  
♣ K 4 3 2

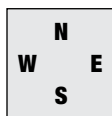


### You

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

### 6) Dummy

♠ K Q J  
♥ Q J 10 9  
♦ J 10 9  
♣ K Q J



### You

♠ 10 9 8  
♥ K 8 7 6  
♦ K Q 8 7  
♣ 10 9

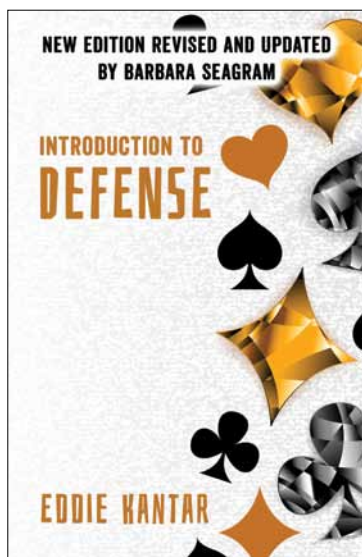


# INDEX

- Bath Coup 63
- Counting by fours 139-140
- Counting losers in a suit contract 97-110  
    quick vs. slow losers 101-103
- Counting tricks in notrump  
    sure tricks 9-16  
    tricks to be established 18-23
- Counting trumps 95-96
- Danger hand in notrump 77-84  
    definition of 80  
    finesses and 81-89
- Drawing trumps 95-96  
    before or after playing extra winners 101-103  
    long-suit establishment and 134-139  
    when declarer plans to ruff losers in dummy 153
- Ducking in notrump 32  
    *See also* Hold-up play
- Dummy  
    entry to, in establishing long suits 135-141  
    even and uneven division of suits between declarer and 114-120, 129, 156, 159-160  
    ruffing losers in 151-161
- Equal cards, playing of 26
- Establishing extra winners  
    by establishing long suits 133-150  
    by force 112-117
- Establishing tricks in notrump 17-20  
    in long suits 17-36  
    to precede taking of sure tricks 23-25
- Evenly vs. unevenly divided suits in suit contracts 114-115  
    finessing and 119-120
- Extra winners in suit contracts 111-132  
    created by establishing long suits 133-150  
    created by finessing 117-126  
    established by force 112-117  
    throwing losers on 99, 109, 149-150  
    when in long hand 160  
    whether played before or after drawing trumps 102-103
- Finessing  
    in notrump 37-52  
    into non-danger hand 83-84  
    repeated finessing 40, 41, 116-117  
    in suit contracts 117-126  
    with no losers in the suit 123-126  
    unevenly divided vs. evenly divided suits 119-120
- Free finesses 124-126
- Hold-up play 53-64
- Honors, rules for leading 46
- Long-trump hand  
    counting losers from 98  
    definition of 98

- Long suits
  - in notrump 27-36
  - in suit contracts 133-150
- Losers in suit contracts
  - counting of 97-110
  - quick vs. slow losers 102-103
  - getting rid of
    - by throwing on extra winners 99
    - by ruffing in short hand 151-164
- Low cards, see Spot Cards
- Non-danger hand,
  - see Danger hand
- Repeatable finesses
  - in notrump 39-40
  - in suit contracts 121-123
- Ruffing, defined 96
  - in short hand 151-164
- Rule of Eleven 65-76
- Short-trump hand
  - definition of 98
  - ruffing in 151-164
- Spot cards, taking tricks with
  - in notrump 27-36
  - in trump, by establishing long suits 133-150
- Suit contracts
  - counting losers in 97-103
    - quick vs. slow losers 102-103
  - counting trumps in 95-96
  - defenders' leads of trumps in 157
  - difference between notrump and 93-96
  - drawing trumps in 95-96
    - before or after playing extra winners 101-103
  - long suit establishment and 134-139
  - when declarer plans to trump losers in dummy 153
  - extra winners in 111-132
    - created by establishing long suits 133-150
    - created by finessing 117-126
    - established by force 112-117
    - throwing losers on 99-100, 109, 149-150
    - when in long hand 160
    - whether played before or after drawing trump 102-103
  - ruffing in short hand 151-164
  - risk of going down extra tricks vs. making contract 125
  - Rule of Eleven in 76
  - same hand played at different levels 110
  - Sure tricks in notrump
    - counting of 9-16
    - when to take 22-25
  - Trumping (see Ruffing)
  - Voids in trump play, free finesses and 125-126

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BY EDDIE KANTAR

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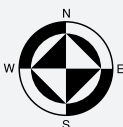
The classic introductory book on declarer play at bridge, covering all topics with clarity, skill and humor. More than fifty years after first publication, this book has been revised and updated by Barbara Seagram, one of North America's best-known bridge teachers, to bring it into line with modern methods of play and bridge education.



**EDDIE KANTAR** (California, USA) is a member of the Bridge Hall of Fame, and former world champion. He is the author of numerous bestselling books on the game, and his columns appear regularly in bridge magazines around the world.



**BARBARA SEAGRAM** (Toronto, Canada) travels the world teaching bridge. She is author or co-author of more than a dozen well-known books, the most popular being *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know*.



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