



Set Up Your Side Suit Early

A valuable method for setting up extra tricks is to use a long suit, but it is very important to have an entry to run this suit. With this in mind, it can be wise to set up your side suit before drawing all the trumps.

<p>♠ A 4 2 ♥ 7 6 3 ♦ J 5 2 ♣ K Q 9 3</p>	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 9 8 ♥ 10 5 2 ♦ K 9 7 6 ♣ A 6 5 4</p>
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<p>♠ 7 6 5 ♥ Q J 9 8 ♦ Q 10 8 ♣ 8 7 2</p>		<p>♠ K Q J 10 3 ♥ A K 4 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ J 10</p>									
<p>Contract: 4♠. Lead: ♥Q.</p>											

You have eight top tricks and there appear to be three easy extra tricks available from clubs. However, if you draw trumps first and then play clubs, the defenders will take their ace on the second round. Suddenly, you find that your game is going one off because you cannot reach dummy's club winners.

Instead, you should establish your club suit whilst keeping one trump in dummy. You win the heart with the ace, play the queen of spades followed by the king. Then you play on clubs, the jack, then the ten to the king. East wins the second club, but you can win any return and draw the last trump by leading to dummy's ace. This leaves you well placed to take your two extra club winners to make 4♠ with an overtrick.

Entries are one good reason to set up a side suit early, but there are others. Sometimes, you need to set up a side suit while you have trumps as stoppers. Have a go at this deal:

<p>♠ A 10 ♥ 7 6 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ A Q 8 6 5 2</p>	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 5 2 ♥ K Q 10 9 ♦ 9 7 6 4 ♣ K 10 7</p>
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<p>♠ 8 7 3 ♥ A J 5 4 ♦ Q J 10 8 ♣ 9 4</p>		<p>♠ K Q J 9 6 4 ♥ 8 3 2 ♦ A 5 ♣ J 3</p>									
<p>Contract: 4♠. Lead: ♦Q.</p>											

You have nine top tricks and the best place to look for extra tricks is in clubs. (If you try to ruff a heart in dummy, you have to give up the lead twice and the defenders can lead a trump each time to thwart you.) A long suit is so often the solution and, as the maxim suggests, you need to focus on the suit early. Here you cannot afford to draw trumps because, if the club finesse loses, the defenders will make a club trick and three heart tricks. The entry position is also a factor because you will need to get back to the clubs after drawing trumps.

Having made a plan, make sure that you win the first diamond in hand with the ace and then set about the club suit, running the jack. East must take the king at once or you have ten easy tricks (indeed you can draw trumps and ruff out the clubs to make all thirteen). If East returns a diamond or a club, you win, draw trumps and run the clubs, making overtricks. If instead East shifts to a heart, the defenders can make only two hearts and a club before you regain the lead. Either way, your contract makes.

Delaying the drawing of trumps is a risk and you do it only with good reason, such as to save entries or to set up or reach a long suit.

<p>♠ A 10 9 8 ♥ 7 6 ♦ 5 4 2 ♣ K Q J 5</p>	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 7 6 2 ♥ K Q J 8 5 4 ♦ Q 7 6 ♣ 9</p>
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<p>♠ 3 ♥ A 10 9 ♦ J 10 9 8 ♣ A 8 4 3 2</p>		<p>♠ K Q J 5 4 ♥ 3 2 ♦ A K 3 ♣ 10 7 6</p>									
<p>Contract: 4♠. Lead: ♦J.</p>											

You have seven top tricks and can make three extra tricks from clubs. You may need an entry to dummy because, if someone takes the ace on the third round, you will not be able to reach dummy in the club suit itself. However, this time dummy has an extra trump, so unless trumps break 4-0 (which they do not!), you can draw trumps safely and avoid the risk of an adverse club ruff.

Here, if you play clubs before trumps, East can get a club ruff or two, beating the contract. Instead, draw three rounds of trumps and then knock out the ace of clubs. West does hold up his ace until the third round, but you can reach dummy with a fourth round of trumps. You can then discard a loser on the fourth club.

Conclusion

Long suits are very important in bridge. It is vital that you address them straight away: use the entry rule to decide whether the suit is worth trying to establish and then decide when to play it. So often, you need to make these decisions at trick one, to avoid wasting a precious entry. Of course, you also have to be wary of not drawing trumps: only delay if you have a good reason. ■