

Advanced Playing and Bidding Techniques

Chapter 25

In This Chapter

- The strip and end play and the principle of restricted choice
- Blackwood and interference
- Weak jump responses and lead-directing doubles
- Cue bids and splinter bids
- Jacoby Transfer

The goal of this book is to quickly teach you how to play Bridge and to show you that it's easy to master the basics. But improving at Bridge is an ongoing process. Now that you know the basics and should be able to sit down and play a respectable game, I want to introduce you to some slightly advanced elements. I'm introducing these in no particular order. Some are playing techniques, and some are bidding techniques.

The playing techniques are methods you can use immediately when you master them because they only involve you and the way you play your cards. The bidding methods must be used with someone who has the same understanding of them as you do.

The Strip and End Play

Although this sounds like something you might see in a Madonna movie, the *strip* and *end play* is actually an ingenious way to make an extra trick. One of the hands in which it works is where you have to find a missing honor, like the Queen, and you have the appropriate distribution in declarer and dummy. For instance, a strip and end play would work if your hand and dummy's have mirror distributions of 3-5-3-2. You have a problem of finding the Queen of one of the suits and the contract depends on your locating the Queen. If you don't take the Queen, you'll go set. Do you finesse? Or is there a way to play it so that there is absolutely no guess?



DEFINITION

Strip means to take away the opponents' cards that they can safely lead without giving you a trick. These cards are called *exit cards*. **End play** means to put the opponents in the lead in a situation in which anything they lead will gain you a trick.

Look at the following hand, which South is playing in 6 Hearts:

<i>North</i>		
♠ AJ7		
♥ KQT72		
♦ K82		
♣ 84		
<i>West</i>		<i>East</i>
♠ ?		♠ ?
♥ ?		♥ ?
♦ ?		♦ ?
♣ ?		♣ ?
 <i>South</i>		
♠ KT2		
♥ AJ943		
♦ AQ7		
♣ A6		

You have 11 cold tricks, and the success of the contract depends on your ability to locate the Queen of Spades. You could guess and leave it up to luck. Or you could play it in such a way that the contract is cold. Obviously, the latter is a better choice. Before you learn how to do it, can you figure out how to play this hand without any possible chance of not making six?

The answer is to execute a strip and end play. It doesn't matter what cards your opponents hold or lead. You can't lose this contract if you play it correctly. You are in total control. Have you figured it out yet?

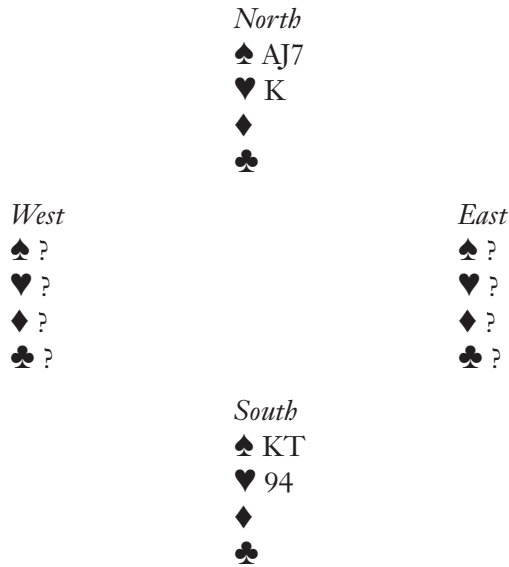
For those of you who haven't, here's what you do: You pull trump, even if it takes three rounds. Then you take your three Diamond winners and the Ace of Clubs. This leaves you with the following holding:

<i>North</i>		
♠ AJ7		
♥ K2		
♦		
♣ 8		
<i>West</i>		<i>East</i>
♠ ?		♠ ?
♥ ?		♥ ?
♦ ?		♦ ?
♣ ?		♣ ?
 <i>South</i>		
♠ KT2		
♥ 94		
♦		
♣ 6		

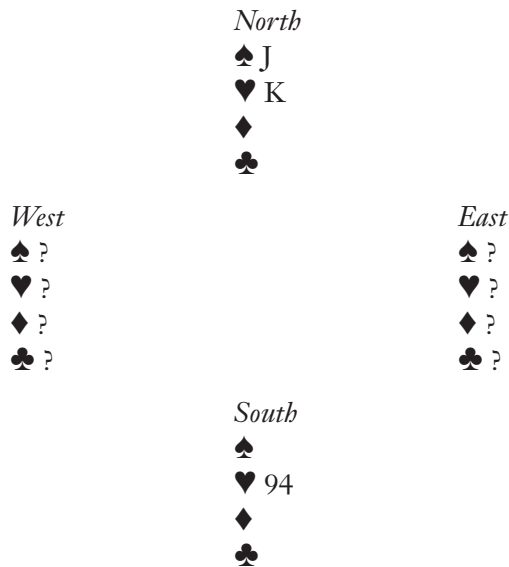
What now? Well, what you don't do is guess your finesse. Instead, you lead a Club, which you will obviously lose. But now look at your situation. Your opponents are out of trump, so they can't lead Hearts. If they lead Spades, they lead right into you because you can take it in the fourth seat. So a Spade lead

obviates the need for a finesse. You are void in both Diamonds and Clubs in both hands at this point, so if they lead either of those suits, you get a ruff and a sluff, throwing off your losing Spade and ruffing in the other hand. That way you can trump your losing Spade in the other hand.

Look at the situation after they lead a Club or a Diamond and you sluff the Two of Spades in South and ruff the Club in North:



See? Now you can't lose. You lead the Seven of Spades to the King. Then lead the Ten of Spades to the Ace. Now your holding is as follows:



You can ruff the Seven of Spades in South, so the contract is made. You can't go set if you recognize a strip and end play and execute it properly.

The key to a strip and end play is to lose a trick at a time when any lead by opponents will either give you a ruff and a sluff or force them to lead into your tenace.

Which leads into another aspect of the strip and end play: placing the lead in the opponent who will be forced to lead into your tenace. Look at the following situation at the end of your playing a Spade contract, after you have drawn all the trump:

<i>North</i>		
♠ 7		
♥ 543		
♦		
♣		
<i>West</i>		<i>East</i>
♠ ?		♠ ?
♥ ?		♥ ?
♦ ?		♦ ?
♣ ?		♣ ?
<i>South</i>		
♠ 5		
♥ AQ9		
♦		
♣		

How do you make three of the last four tricks? If you play it correctly, you can't fail. Your opponents have no good defense against the correct offense. No matter what they do, if you know what you are doing, you have three of the last four tricks cold if you have the lead in North.

You lead a low Heart from the North hand. If East goes low, you play the Nine. That leaves West to take the trick and lead into your Ace–Queen. If he leads a Diamond or Club, he gives you a ruff and a sluff. He's helpless.

Even if East goes up with the Ten or the Jack, you have it cold. Why? Because if East plays the Ten, let's say, and you play the Queen and West wins with the King, your Ace–Nine is now in a tenace position because the only card out between them is the Jack. So the Ace–Nine is now basically the same card holding as the Ace–Queen had been prior to the play.

The essentials of the strip and end play are as follows:

1. Strip your hand of two nontrump suits.
2. After you've stripped your hand (or with the lead that completes the strip), lose a trick and put opponents into the lead.

The Principle of Restricted Choice

Although it's a little more complicated than this, the principle of restricted choice essentially decrees that if one of your opponents drops an honor the first time a suit is led, you should play his partner for the other honor. I show you by an example. Following are your cards:

	<i>North</i>	
	♠ A732	
<i>West</i>		<i>East</i>
♠ ?		♠ ?
	<i>South</i>	
	♠ KT854	

You play the Ace, East follows with the Six, and West plays the Queen. Assuming you have no clue from the bidding, what do you do? Play for the 2–2 split, or finesse the Ten? Even though it's a guess, the correct play is to finesse the Ten. Why? Because of the principle of restricted choice.

The theory is that if he has both, he could have played either, but if he only has one he's limited to playing it. The odds favor the proposition that he only has one and if you lead low to South's hand and East goes low (with the Nine, which is the only other card out except the Jack), you should play the Ten. The odds are somewhat like 2–1 in your favor that East holds the other honor in this situation.

Blackwood and Interference

There are two methods of dealing with interference. In the first, if your partner bids Blackwood and your RHO bids a suit, you use a convention called *DOPI* (Double = Zero, Pass = One). If you don't have any Aces, you double. If you have one Ace, you pass.

So look at the following two hands:

1. ♠ KQT9 ♥ QJT ♦ 983 ♣ QJ9	2. ♠ AQT9 ♥ QJT ♦ 983 ♣ QJ9
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Your partner has bid 4 No Trump, but before you can bid you hear your RHO bid 5 Hearts. What do you do?

Hand 1: Double. That tells your partner that you have no Aces. It says nothing about your ability to defend and set a contract of 5 Hearts by opponents. Your partner won't take this as a penalty double and will just bid her hand as she sees fit, knowing that you don't have any Aces.

Hand 2: Pass. This tells your partner that you have one Ace. There's no chance of the hand being passed out because your partner still has another chance to bid since her LHO bid.

The second method of dealing with interference by your RHO after your partner has bid 4 No Trump asking for Aces is to just bid up the line starting with the next available bid. So in the preceding example, where your RHO bid 5 Hearts, a bid of 5 Spades by you would say you had no Aces. Because it's the next available bid, it would be equivalent to your bidding 5 Clubs. If you had one Ace, you'd bid 5 No Trump. You indicate two Aces by bidding 6 Clubs. Well, you get the picture. Frankly, I don't like this method because it gets you too high and it precludes your partner from asking for Kings with 5 No Trump. But it's a method of which you should be aware.

Weak Jump Responses

In Chapter 12 I told you that all jump responses show a strong hand. However, the modern trend for advanced players is to play jump responses as weak. This is the way they work showing weak hands.

A weak jump shift is called a *preemptive jump shift*. There are three requirements for this bid:

- You must have at least six cards in the suit.
- You must have less than 6 HCP.
- You must not have three cards in your partner's suit if she opens in a major.
- A final corollary to these rules is that you must not bid again unless your partner makes a forcing bid that requires you to bid again.

A preemptive jump shift (PJS) tells your partner that you have a terrible hand, but a long suit, and asks her not to bid again. Unless she has an unusually strong hand, she should pass, even if she's void in your suit. The exception to this is if she's void and has a six-card major suit of her own, in which event she might rebid her opening suit. Whatever she does after you've made a PJS, she knows that you will not bid again.

Don't try to save your partner. After you've described your hand accurately, you must trust that she wants to play the hand in a contract of whatever she bids in her rebid if it's not a forcing bid. Remember, you've already told her, "Partner, this is my hand and this is my only bid. Anything you do after this is at your own risk because I'm going to pass, pass, pass every time it's my turn."

I tell all my partners, "Don't ever try to save me. I generally know what I'm doing and you must trust me. If you have accurately described your hand to me, let me make the decision." I've been burned more times than I would like to remember by partners who thought they had a terrible hand and that I was in big trouble so they bid something trying to save me, only to end up in a worse predicament than I would have been in.

If you have described your hand and made a bid that says, "I'm not going to bid again," you must trust your partner to know what she's doing. Think of the downside. If you save her and get a terrible result, she's going to have the right to criticize you for taking her out of a less damaging contract. But if you let her go ahead with her bid after you've said you're not bidding again and she gets in trouble, she can't criticize you at all. Maybe that's a selfish way to look at a partnership, but it's realistic. Trust your partnership agreement.

Finally, a word of explanation. Why is a PJS made with a weak hand? The answer is simple. When you and your partner have the bulk of the points in your hand, you want to keep the bidding low so you can communicate. It makes no sense whatsoever to make a jump bid, because you are preempting yourselves. The point of a jump bid should be to crowd the bidding for your opponents, to make it more difficult for them to communicate when they have the bulk of the points. So when your partner opens and you don't have much, your PJS does two things:

- It tells your partner exactly what you have; not much.
- It crowds the bidding for your opponents, who probably have a lot more than you and your partner have. They will have to start their conversation at, probably, the 3 level, when, without your PJS they could have started at the 1 level.

When you have the bulk of the points, keep the bidding low for as long as you can so you and your partner can converse back and forth and tell each other what you have and where you have it.

Lead-Directing Doubles

Lead-directing doubles often come into play after an opening by your LHO of 1 No Trump and a conventional bid by your RHO, like 2 Clubs, Stayman. Let's say you have a good Club suit headed by two of the top three honors or three of the top five, so you want a Club lead if they're playing the contract in No Trump. You tell your partner what to lead by doubling the 2 Clubs bid. This generally only works when opponents are making conventional bids.

If you're going to play lead-directing doubles, be certain that your partner is playing it, too, and knows that when you make a double of a conventional bid it's only for lead-directing purposes.

Splinters

A splinter is an advanced bidding technique. It doesn't come up often, but when it does it describes your hand to a "T."

A *splinter* is a bid by responder (generally, although opener may splinter also) that shows four-card trump support, a singleton or void, and opening hand values. It's generally made in response to a major suit opening, although it may be made in response to a minor suit opening.

Let's say your partner opens 1 Heart and you hold the following:

♠ KQJ
♥ A987
♦ 4
♣ KT987

That's a pretty good hand, don't you think? It's one you'd open. If you didn't have a specialized bid, you'd probably bid 2 Clubs, then jump to 4 Hearts, depending on your partner's response. However, is there a way to tell your partner that you have a singleton Diamond? Can you think of a way? Maybe kick her twice under the table?

Okay, that's illegal, so you don't want to do that. How do you tell your partner that you have an unusual hand here and describe it in one bid?

Give up? The answer, as you might have guessed, is that you make a splinter bid. I love this bid. How do you splinter? You make a *double jump* shift bid and bid your singleton (or void, as the case may be).

So in response to your partner's opening bid of 1 Heart, you bid 4 Diamonds (skipping 2 Diamonds and 3 Diamonds)! That tells your partner three things in one bid:

- You have a singleton or void in Diamonds.
- You have at least four cards in her opening bid, Hearts.
- Your hand has opening values, at least 13 points.



DEFINITION

A **double jump** is a bid that skips two levels of bidding. If you open 1 Club and your partner bids 2 Spades, that's a jump, but it only skips one level (it skips 1 Spade). So a double jump would be a response of 3 Spades, because that skips two levels of bidding, 1 Spade and 2 Spades.

All that information in one bid! Is that terrific, or what? The bid is obviously game forcing and it's exploring for slam.

The problem with the bid is that if you're not used to it, your partner could misinterpret it and pass. Then you're playing the contract in your singleton. That's not much fun. So if you decide you want to play splinters—and there's a little more to them than this—be sure you and your partner are on the same wavelength.

Just remember, when you open the bidding and your partner skips not one, but two levels of bidding in her first response, she's doing something very unusual and that should alert you that this is a splinter and that she's telling you she has a singleton or void.

The Jacoby Transfer

Contrary to what you may be thinking, the Jacoby Transfer is not a new rock group. In fact, it's one of the most ingenious conventions in Bridge, and one of the easiest to learn. This is a convention that a lot of Rubber Bridge players don't play, so you should be prepared to play Stayman only. But this is a great bid, and I'm including it here so you'll know what it is and be able to play it with people who know it.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Jacoby Transfer is played in conjunction with Stayman. They are complementary conventions. Most advanced players play both of them. Some people play Stayman without Jacoby, but I've never heard of anyone playing Jacoby without Stayman.

Have you ever envied Svengali? Have you ever wished you could train someone like Pavlov trained his dogs? In short, have you ever wanted to have total control over someone? The Jacoby Transfer will give you a taste of what Svengali and Pavlov experienced. Maybe your partner won't drool, but if you play the Jacoby Transfer, you can control exactly what she says by what you say.

What if you heard your partner open with 1 No Trump and looked at your hand and saw that you had only 2 points, but six Spades? Your partner, by opening 1 No Trump, has told you several things:

- She has 15 to 17 points, no more, no less.
- She has a balanced hand with no voids or singletons, and no more than two doubletons.

You have a maximum of 19 points between you, your 2 and her maximum of 17. Because you need 25 points to make game, you aren't going anywhere. But you know that the best place to play this contract is in 2 Spades because you are assured of at least an eight-card trump fit in Spades (because your partner couldn't have opened 1 No Trump without at least two cards in each suit; remember, no singletons or voids when you open 1 No Trump).

If you pass and your partner plays it in 1 No Trump, she could be set; if you could play it in 2 Spades, however, you'd have a much better chance of making the contract. However, if you bid 2 Spades, you have two big problems:

- First, your partner won't know the size of your hand. Do you have 2 points or 10? Does she pass or bid on after you bid 2 Spades?

- Second, if you end up playing in Spades, you'll be playing the contract and your partner will put her hand down as dummy. What's so bad about this? Well, everyone at the table knows that your partner has 15 to 17 points. If you're playing in 2 Spades, they also know that you don't have much. They can see the dummy and know fairly well what's in each other's hand. Ergo, they can easily defend, knowing that the high cards that are not in their hand are probably in their partner's hand.

So the problems are: How to tell your partner you don't have much, and, at the same time, tell her that you have six Spades, and communicate both bits of information to her in a way that results in her playing the hand so your hand is dummy!

Hard problem? It was until Mr. Jacoby came along with his fantastic idea. The gist of the Jacoby Transfer is that when your partner opens 1 No Trump ...

- If responder bids 2 Diamonds, opener must bid 2 Hearts.
- If responder bids 2 Hearts, opener must bid 2 Spades.

In the previous hand, you would bid 2 Hearts, your partner would bid 2 Spades and, because your hand stinks, you would then pass and she'd play the hand in 2 Spades. Opener has no choice here. If you bid 2 Hearts in response to her 1 No Trump opening, opener *must* bid 2 Spades.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Both partners must be playing Jacoby Transfer for it to work!

Remember that when one partner opens 1 No Trump, the other partner becomes the captain of the hand. *You have to trust your partner!* The responder knows opener's hand as a specific, balanced 15 to 17 points. Responder's hand is undefined, so responder places the contract. One of the beauties of the Jacoby Transfer is that responder makes the decision. With six Spades and 2 points, the contract is played by opener in 2 Spades.

Any time you have a five-card major and your partner opens 1 No Trump, you can transfer. Even if you have no points, it would be better to play in 2 of your major, with an assured seven-card trump fit, than to force your partner to play in a more questionable 1 No Trump.

Responder's Bid After Partner Accepts Transfer

Going on, if you have an invitational hand (8 to 9 points) and five cards in your suit, you bid 2 No Trump in response to your partner's bid. That tells your partner exactly what you have. If she has three cards in your suit and is at the top of her range, she goes to 4. If she isn't at the top of her range with three cards in your suit, she closes out at the 3 level. If she only has two cards in your suit and a maximum, she goes to 3 No Trump. If she only has two cards in your suit and not a maximum, she passes 2 No Trump.

With six cards or more, and a 7- to 8-point invitational hand, you, as responder, bid 3 of your major in response to her 2 bid. With a six-card suit and 10 points, you go to game in your major in response to her 2 bid. With less than 8 points, you pass her 2 bid. Following is a chart showing responder's rebid.

Responder's Hand	Responder's Rebid
Less than 8 points	Pass
Five-card suit, 8-9 points	2 No Trump
Six-card suit, 8-9 points	3 of your suit
Five-card suit, 10+ points	3 No Trump
Six-card suit, 10+ points	4 of your suit

Why is the fact that opener might have three cards in the suit to which responder is transferring so magical in the discussion of Jacoby Transfer? Because responder might be transferring with a five-card suit. At responder's first bid, opener doesn't know how many cards responder has in her suit. Responder tells opener how many she has by her next bid. If her next bid is No Trump, she only has five. If she rebids her suit, she has six or more. At that point, the captaincy changes back to opener because she now knows a lot about responder's hand, and the decision where to play the hand and at what level is opener's responsibility. Opener knows that responder either has five or six (or more) cards in her suit. After responder's rebid, opener also knows she either has 7-8 points or 10 points. Opener places the contract based on how many points she has (15 to 16, or 17) and how many cards she has in responder's suit. Following is a chart showing opener's third bid.

Responder's Rebid	Opener's Hand	Opener's Rebid
2 No Trump	Two cards in responder's suit, 15-16 points	Pass
2 No Trump	Three cards in responder's suit, 15-16 points	3 of responder's suit
3 of a suit	15-16 points	Pass
3 of a suit	17 points	4 of responder's suit
3 No Trump	Two cards in responder's suit	Pass
3 No Trump	Three or more cards in responder's suit	4 of responder's suit

The Least You Need to Know

- The strip and end play allows you to force opponents to either lead into a tenace or give you a ruff and a sluff.
- A preemptive jump shift tells your partner that you have 5 points or less in your hand, a six-card suit, and you don't have three cards in any major suit she bid.
- D0P1 is used to tell your partner how many Aces you have when opponents interfere with Blackwood and stands for "Double = Zero, Pass = One."
- A splinter is a double jump shift that shows four-card trump support, opening hand values, and a singleton in the suit bid.
- Jacoby Transfer requires a partner who opens 1 No Trump to bid the next higher-ranking suit when responder bids 2 Diamonds or 2 Hearts.