

32- 2023 – Safety Plays

The better bridge players make 'safety plays' all the time, to increase their chances in making a contract, or a valuable overtrick

Safety plays often involve visualising how the cards may lie in a worst case, and play to cover that if you can

Here are 2 examples:

EXAMPLE 1

You hold Spades as follows:

NORTH

AQ974

SOUTH

K1083

You have 9 in this suit. It is easy if the suit breaks 2:2 or 3:1. When you cash the top 3 cards (SA, SK and SQ), the missing ones will all fall, and you will make 5 Spade tricks

But, visualise a worst case scenario:

NORTH

AQ974

WEST

-

EAST

J652

SOUTH

K1083

If you start with SK, you will lose one trick to SJ. Using the safety play, you will never lose a trick

Simply start with SA or SQ – when West shows out, you pick up SJ with a finesse

It is as simple as that

EXAMPLE 2

You hold Spades as follows:

NORTH

A974

SOUTH

K1083

Unless you are very lucky (SQ and SJ doubleton), you have a sure Spade loser

But, visualise a worst case scenario:

NORTH

A974

WEST

2

EAST

QJ65

SOUTH

K1083

If you play SA and then SK you will lose two tricks to SQ and SJ

What is the answer, to give your best shot at only losing 1 Spade?

Simply start with SA, then play S9. If West covers with SQ or SJ, win with SK, but if it is not covered, play S10

Then, SK picks up SJ, and you only lose SQ

If West has not run out and wins with SQ or SJ, you will still only lose 1 Spade

COMMENT

You may be on a guess which way you do the safety play here. It may be a pure guess, or you may have some information from the bidding, to help if you can (for example if one player bid a long side suit, indicating length in that suit, then they are more likely to have the shortage in Spades)

MORAL OF THE STORY

Safety plays are a big way to improve your bridge scores. There are many books on them, and it is worth learning the easy ones to give you better results

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