

The 1st 90 Seconds

• Stop	0 sec
• Look	15 sec
• Listen	15 sec
• Analyze	45 sec
• Plan	15 sec
• Execute – and Look as you go	5 min



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We continue looking at how we develop our plan based on the information available.

1. Before you play to the 1st trick, count your winners and losers. How many tricks do you need?
2. Review what your opponents said/did not say, and what they led.
3. Look for ways to eliminate losers or create winners.
4. Formulate a plan. We know what our options are (losers and winners, sources of tricks), which defender can hurt you, and what additional information we need to make informed choices.

Planning is often dynamic – the direction you choose depends on what you learn along the way. Sometimes the obvious plays are not the best plays. Learning the best play for a given card combination helps. Playing the cards you have for the number of tricks you really need helps even more. Playing within the context of the entire hand is our objective. Check every plan to see if you overlooked an opportunity or threat.

Finding hidden opportunities to gain extra tricks can put us over the top. Every extra chance we find puts us closer to the top of the scoreboard.

Here's hand to put this approach to good use:

North

♠J972
 ♥KQ4
 ♦A95
 ♣1086

4 Spades
 Lead ♦Q

South

♠Q108653
 ♥62
 ♦K74
 ♣AK

Stop/Look/Listen

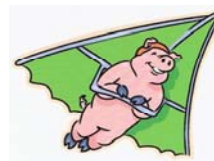
HCP:
 Top Tricks:
 Losers:
 Entries:
 Lead:

Eliminate a Loser

Analysis:

Losers -
 Times can lose lead
 Suit to develop
 Timing – Where win 1st trick
 Trump Management

Plan:



William S. Root, How to Play a Bridge Hand, p. 85

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Here's the complete Analysis and Plan:

North

♠J972

♥KQ4

♦A95

♣1086

4 Spades
Lead ♦Q

South

♠Q108653

♥62

♦K74

♣AK

HCP: 10 + 12

Top Tricks: 4

Losers: 4

Lead: Hit Weak Spot

Eliminate
a Loser

Analysis:

Need to avoid Diamond Loser

Can't lose lead more than once

Must find ♥A with West

Plan:

Win ♦K to

Lead ♥ toward ♥KQ

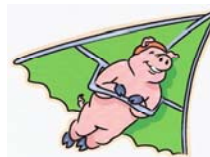
Return to hand with ♣

Repeat low ♥ toward ♥K

William S. Root, How to Play a Bridge Hand, p. 85

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South has a thin game opportunity. Many would be concerned since HCP are much lower than the typical 26 HCP target. Since there are only 4 losers there is hope. South will lose ♠AK trumps and the ♥A. Nothing can be done about these losers. The opening lead puts a ♦ loser in focus. South must win the race to establish a winner to discard a loser in ♦s from either hand. Because opponents led ♦ initially, South cannot afford to draw trumps. Leading trumps will let the opponents establish their ♦ winner before South can get rid of the slow loser.

Since neither ♣s nor ♦s offer a way to establish an extra trick, South must find the ♥A on-side. Importantly, South must arrange entries safely to lead ♥s twice toward the board. It's always better to lead a low card toward a high card – if the opponent's take their winner you lose only small cards! If South starts ♥s by leading an honor from dummy, South cannot create the winner needed for a ♦ discard.

When using entries to win the race against opponents, make sure you consider what entry cards are safe to use, and what cards pose more risk. Here, South avoids the risk of opponents holding a singleton in either minor by using one top card each in ♣s and ♦s.

Side Note: When drawing trumps missing tops, be sure you can afford to lose the lead.

Timing: In what hand do I need the lead, how many times can opponents win a trick before they beat my contract, what suits let me win the race, and do I have enough entries to succeed?

Keywords: SLL-APE, Timing, Lead low toward High, Slow Loser, Manage entries for minimum risk.