

The 1st 90 Seconds

Improve your declarer play

Basic – Intermediate

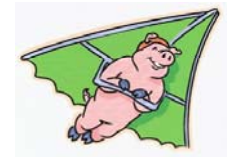
http://www.cincybridge.com/Lessons/online_learning_points.htm



The 1st 90 Seconds



- **Stop**
 - The most valuable 90 seconds you take are immediately after dummy comes down.
 - Do NOT call a card until you have a PLAN...
 - Use this time to...



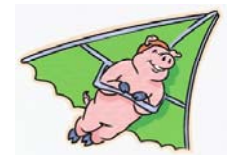
The 1st 90 Seconds

- | | |
|--|--------|
| • Stop | 0 sec |
| • Look | 15 sec |
| • Listen | 15 sec |
| <hr/> | |
| • Analyze | 45 sec |
| • Plan | 15 sec |
| <hr/> | |
| • Execute – and Look as you go | 5 min |



The 1st 90 Seconds - LOOK

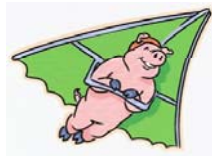
- **LOOK**
 - Count **HCP** –
 - Is this a sound or light contract?
 - Common contract or rare contract?
 - Count **Top Tricks (NT)** –
 - Match Winners against your contract.
 - How many more tricks do you need to develop so you make your contract?
 - Count **Losers (Suits)** –
 - How many losers are there?
 - How many tricks can you afford to lose?
 - How many losers must you eliminate?
 - Count **ENTRIES**
 - How many entries do I have to dummy? ..To my hand?



The 1st 90 Seconds - LISTEN

• Listen

- What did opponent's **bid**? ...Not **bid**?
- What did opponents **lead**? ...Not **lead**?
- What are their likely **shapes**.
 - Do I need to learn more? How?
- How are HCP **divided**?
 - Do I need to learn more? How?



The 1st 90 Seconds - ANALYZE

• Analyze

- What are my **GOALS**? *Make or Overtricks*
- Where can I find extra tricks? *List all chances.*
 - *What suits should I delay or not lead?*
- Where can I eliminate losers? *List all chances.*
- How many times can I lose a trick before they defeat my contract? (*Assume perfect defense*)
- What are threat suits and who is the danger hand?
- What plays should I make 1st to avoid the threats?
- What do I know about opponents distribution?
 - *How can I learn about distribution in key suits?*
 - *How can I learn about HCP in key suits?*



Where to Find Tricks

Eliminate Losers:

- Develop a side suit where you can pitch the losers
- Play TOWARD high cards so that their Ace captures only small cards
- Consider playing a loser on a loser, even when defense ruffs
- Consider a ruffing finesse.
- Block the opponents long suit
- Cause the opponents to lead to eliminate a sure loser (end-play)
- Squeeze—cause the opponents to discard a winner ahead of your threat.

When you have a choice of 2 or more suits, choose the one that:

- Leaves the defense poorly placed to attack your weakness,
- Keeps open the most options/choices for extra tricks
- Offers most tricks when right, and
- Is consistent with the bidding and known distribution of missing high cards.

Create Winners:

- Set up a long suit—if you can afford to lose the tricks it takes. See Danger Hand.
 - Ducking an early trick might pay big dividends later.
 - Know the basics about suit splits and suit play combinations
- Ruff with trumps from the short hand.
- Ruff with trumps from the long (closed) hand **IF AND ONLY IF** you can draw trumps in Dummy **AND** you can ruff to shorten the long hand to less than dummy's length. (Requires a good trump split and enough entries to dummy). **Dummy Reversal**
- Cause the opponents to lead to eliminate a sure loser (end-play)
- Squeeze—cause the opponents to discard a winner ahead of your threat.



Basic Info - Your Tool Kit

• Suit Combinations

- *How many tricks do I need from a suit*
- *What is the **best play in the context of the hand**?*

• Key Probabilities

- *Suit Splits*
- *Honor Distributions*
- *Finesses*
- *Drop a missing honor*



Key Probabilities

Split %	0	1	2	3
Missing				
7 Cards	0.5	7	30.5	62
6 Cards	1.5	14.5	48	36
5 Cards	4	28	68	
4 Cards	10	50	40	
3 Cards	22	78		
2 Cards	48	52		

Suit Splits

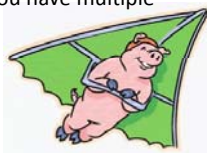
Missing odd cards split evenly
 Missing even cards split oddly (except 2 cards)
 A 3-3 break is 36% → worse than a finesse
 A 3-2 split is 68% → better than a finesse

Finesses

50% a priori, no information
 Distribution & Vacant Spaces
 2 tricks 76%: xxx – AJ10 or xxx – AQ10
 2 independent finesses 25%
 3 Independent finesses 12.5%
 Finesse + 3-3 split: 18%

Finesse or Drop an Honor

Finesse > dropping K unless impossible
 Drop > Finesse for Q missing 3 or 4 cards
 Drop adds chances when you have multiple finesses.



10

The 1st 90 Seconds - PLAN

PLAN

- What order of plays wins the race to the contract?
 - **Choose best chance** – 50% finesse > 36% 3-3 break. 100% end play > 75% combined finesses.
 - **Combine chances** – Allow additional chances if the 1st fails.
 - **Delay** plays that offer less. Avoid suits opponents should lead for you.
 - **Transportation** – Conserve or Create Entries. Unblock. Save a small trump.
 - **Avoidance** – keep the danger hand off lead until tricks established.
 - **Discovery** – learn about HCP and shape to make a better choice
- What have I forgotten or overlooked?
- Still Short Tricks? Think **Discovery, End Play, Squeeze.**
 - Learn their distribution so that you can make right choices
 - Assume key cards are where you need them and play accordingly
 - 10% chance of success is infinitely better than a 0% chance
 - Get a new partner... (*just kidding*)
- Adjust your plan w/ the information you gather during play.
- **Don't Stop Sensing and Thinking.**

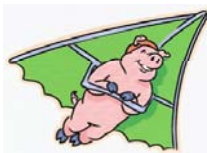


11

After the 1st 90 Seconds - EXECUTE

Execute

- Start with your plan
- Gather information trick by trick
 - Carding & following suit → Their HCP & distribution
 - Defensive tricks
- What PLAN adjustments are necessary?



12

North

♠J972

♥KQ4

♦A95

♣1086

4 Spades
Lead ♦Q

South

♠Q108653

♥62

♦K74

♣AK

SSL:

HCP: 10 + 12

Top Tricks: 4

Losers: 4

Lead: Hit Weak Spot

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

Hand I

Eliminate
a Loser



13

North

♠Q9542

♥A32

♦A32

♣K4

6 Spades
Lead ♠10

South

♠AK1086

♥KJ10

♦KJ7

♣AJ

SLL:

HCP: 13 + 20

Top Tricks: 11

Losers: 2

Lead: No Threat

Analysis:

Need 1 of 2 Finesses (75%)

Can't lose lead more than once

How to avoid 2 guesses?

Plan:

Win ♣ and Draw Trump

Win 2nd ♣

Play A, K, J of ♦

Defense must return a helpful card

END PLAY

Hand II

Choose
the 100%
Line



Edwin Kantar, Take All Your Chances, p. 86 #53

Steve Moese © 2010 All Rights Reserved

14

SLL:

HCP: 14 + 18

Top Tricks: 10

Losers: 3

Lead: No Threat

Analysis:

3 Finesses??!!

Can't lose lead more than once

♣ before ♦ offers additional chances

Plan:

Draw trump ending in Dummy

Finesse ♣; If loses, discard ♦ on ♣J

Play A, K, 3 of ♦ ruffing (drop Q 3rd)

If no ♦Q, take ♠ finesse

North

♠QJ

♥AJ86

♦AJ43

♣J104

6 Hearts
Lead ♥10

South

♠A10

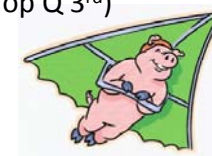
♥KQ5432

♦K62

♣AQ

Hand III

Combine
your
chances



Edwin Kantar, Take All Your Chances, p. 34 #17

Steve Moese © 2010 All Rights Reserved

15

North

♠Q65

♥AKJ532

♦A74

♣2

6 Spades
Lead ♦K

South

♠AKJ1097

♥6

♦J32

♣KJ5

SLL:

HCP: 14 + 13

Top Tricks: 9

Losers: 3 Quick

Lead: Threat!!!

Analysis:

Can't lose lead before rid of ♦ losers

Assume LHO 1444 w/10+ HCP & ♥Q

Plan:

2 Rounds trump confirm LHO's singleton

Finesse ♥J then ruff ♥

Use ♠Q as entry to 4 good ♥s.

Pitch 4 losers, make 12 tricks.

Hand IV

Clues from the bidding
West doubles South's 1♠
bid. East bids 2♣ over
North's redouble.



William S. Root, How to Play a Bridge Hand, pp. 200-201

Steve Moese © 2010 All Rights Reserved

16

Good Books!!!

- William Root, [How to Declare a Bridge Hand](#)
- Louis Watson, [Play of the Hand at Bridge](#)
- Edwin Kantar, [Take All Your Chances](#)
- Edwin Kantar, [Take All Your Tricks](#)
- Kelsey, H. & M. Glauert, [Bridge Odds for Practical Players](#)
- Guy Levé, [The Encyclopedia of Card Play Techniques At Bridge](#)
- Clyde Love, [Bridge Squeezes Complete](#)

Homework: SLL & APE → Practice, practice, practice...

Steve Moese © 2010 All Rights Reserved

17

