

## Discards - 2nd October 2024

All bridge players are aware of the pain of seeing a long, solid suit appear in dummy and realising that you are going to have to throw away a large number of cards from your hand. Sometimes that suit will be in declarer's hand and the pain will be the same but will only become slowly apparent. I've outlined below some suggestions on how to choose which cards to discard. You are unlikely to be able to follow them all - you have to choose which is best for each deal.

This is, of course, an extreme example. More often you need to find a small number of discards or even just one. The suggestions below apply to that situation as well - it just isn't as extreme.

You may have high cards in your hand and you need to keep "guards" so they don't fall under the high cards held by the opposition. For a king you need one other small card so you can play that if the ace is played and still have your king. For a queen you need two small cards and for a jack three. If you have to choose between suits then sacrifice the jack unless there is a reason to keep it. Guard cards are the "x" cards in these combinations:

Kx, Qxx, Jxxx, KQx, QJxx

Watch what partner is discarding and, if you have a choice, keep the suit they are throwing away. If you know partner has winners, keep at least one card in that suit so that you can use it if you get on lead. If you throw away your other cards in their suit it may help your partner work out what declarer has.

Remember the bidding. If, for example, declarer bids hearts before switching to no-trumps then they will have at least four hearts and you should keep your hearts if you have four cards or more - unless you see declarer throwing their hearts away.

Declarer will often need to discard as well - watch what they are discarding and that may help you decide what to keep. Don't keep what they are throwing away.

If possible try to keep one card at least in all the other suits. If declarer discovers one of the opposition is void in a suit they know where all the other cards are and this may help them. You should, of course, make yourself void in a suit if this means your partner can give you a ruff.

It may be that you have winners in your hand. This is most likely in no-trumps. You will need an entry to cash those winners. If you don't have an entry and your partner has none of that suit left then you might as well throw them away because you are never going to get the chance to take them. Prioritise tricks in other suits.

In the end you may come down to a choice. Say you are left with:

♠

♥

♦ K 4

♣ Q 10 9

You have kept the high cards guarded but now you have to find another discard. Use whatever evidence you have to choose one of the suits and keep that one. Don't try to keep both of them. If you have no evidence then throw the clubs - you have more chance of making a king than a queen. This means throw all the clubs and keep ♦ K 4

If none of these rules helps then the best approach is to keep shape with dummy