

5 LINES OF DEFENSE (Part 1)

From How the Experts Win at Bridge

Defense can be broken down to 5 basic situations. Much of learning how to defend well comes down to learning these 5 situations, recognizing which one best fits a particular hand, and then playing to fit that situation. Just as declarer should make a plan before playing to trick one, **the defenders should make a plan before playing/playing to trick one.**

THE FIVE LINES OF DEFENSE

FORCING DECLARER	BEING ACTIVE	BEING PASSIVE	CUTTING DOWN ON RUFFING POWER	CREATING TRUMP TRICKS
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1. **FORCE DECLARER TO USE UP TRUMP (lose control)**

If you can FORCE declarer to ruff enough times so that declarer has fewer trumps than your side, your side can take your side suit winners instead of declarer taking her side suit winners. Even if you cannot take over total control of the hand yourself, you might make declarer abandon side suit winners.

DIGRESSION

North

S 8

H 6

D Q87642

C K8753

West

S A9

H AKQJ7

D J109

C Q96

East

S 643

H 108532

D A5

C J104

South

S KQJ10752

H 94

D K3

C A2

South is playing 4S. West leads the Ace of hearts.

If West leads the King of hearts at trick 2, is he giving South a trick?

Let's say that West plays the Ace of spades at trick 2 then the King of hearts. Is West giving South a trick?

Fundamental Principle: If declarer ruffs from the short trump hand, he usually gains a trick. If declarer ruffs from the long trump hand, declarer rarely gains a trick.

Back to THE FORCE.

Under the right conditions, the FORCE is the most powerful line to maximize defensive tricks and so when conditions are right the FORCE has priority over other lines of defense.

FEEL the FORCE



CONDITIONS FOR FORCING DECLARER

- a. You or partner have 4+ trumps, especially when Declarer has a two-suiter (Declarer is unlikely to have 6 trumps) or opponents trumps are 4-4
- b. 4-3 trump contracts
- c. Long trump hand can be forced early

How do you force Declarer? By leading your side's longest and strongest suit.

You are willing to risk leading from a tenace when you or partner have 4+ trumps, especially when Declarer has a two-suiter (Declarer is unlikely to have 6 trumps and is more likely to have an easy route to 10 tricks if left alone) or opponents trumps are 4-4.

Example 1

North

S J83

H QJ7

D KQ5

C 8752

West

S 7642

H 85

D A3

C KJ1093

East

S 9

H K109643

D 8742

C A6

South

S AKQ105

H A2

D J1096

C Q4

South	West	North	East
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1S	Pass	2S	Pass
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3D	Pass	4S	All Pass
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West has 4 trumps and accordingly sets out to FORCE the declarer to ruff by leading from this longest suit, even though he is leading from a tenace. South's bid of 3D (a help suit game try) and North's subsequent jump to game (suggesting that Declarer will not lose many Diamond tricks) makes leading from this holding club holding more palatable, since it seems that Declarer is likely to be short in clubs (i.e., likely can be forced in clubs) and the defense needs to be aggressive (Declarer and Dummy's cards are fitting together well).

The J of clubs is led (top of an interior sequence). Partner wins the A and returns the club 6. West continues clubs, forcing declarer to ruff. Declarer needs to use the rest of his trumps to draw your 4 trumps. Unfortunately for him, you have the Diamond Ace, and can cash your 2 long clubs, setting declarer by 2 tricks. No other defense works here (try it).

Example 2

North
 S K84
 H Q1072
 D 83
 C KJ5

West

S 92
 H A653
 D AKQ109
 C 64

South	West	North	East
1 NT	Pass	2C	Pass
2H	Pass	3 H	Pass
4 H	All Pass		

Contract: 4H South

West has 4 trumps with the Ace (giving him some control of the suit) and a solid side suit. With the opponents in a 4-4 fit, this is a good setting for applying a FORCE. Declarer ruffs your 3rd diamond in dummy. When he draws trump, **hold off on taking your Ace until the 3rd round**, when dummy has to play his last trump. Now, when you play diamonds again, declarer has to ruff with his last trump, leaving you with the only trump left. When you trump in, the rest of your diamonds will be good. If declarer

decides instead not to draw all of your trump, you will be able to ruff with your last trump, setting the contract.

Note that the FORCE will work equally well when it is your partner who has 4 trumps, such as with this bidding sequence:

South	West	North	East
1D	Pass	1H	Pass
1S	Pass	3S	Pass
4S	All Pass		

Here, the opening diamond bid denies having 5 spades; responder also shows only 4 spades (respond up-the-line with 4 cards in both majors; bid the higher ranking suit with 5 in each suit). If you have 1 spade, your partner must have 4! Lead your longest and strongest suit and FEEL the FORCE.



Problem 1

You are West and hold the following hand:

S 5

H 9875

D K9764

C A93

The bidding is as follows:

South	West	North	East
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1 H	Pass	1 NT	Pass
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3 C	Pass	3 H	Pass
-----	------	-----	------

4 H	All Pass		
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What is your line of defense?

What do you lead?

Problem 2

You are East.

Contract: 4H South

North

S AQ

H Q93

D QJ108

C AKQJ

East

S 6543

H AK62

D K73

C 98

West leads the Spade Ten.

Declarer wins the Ace and leads a low heart, ducked by you and won by declarer with the Jack, partner following low. Declarer continues with a low trump to the Q, West playing the Diamond 9 (standard discards, so West is encouraging in Diamonds, presumably because he has the Ace). You win with the King.

What is your line of defense? What do you play?

If you decide to play a diamond, which diamond do you play and why?

Answers

Problem 1

North

S J96

H K62

D A105

C 10762

West

S 5

H 9875

D K9764

C A93

East

S A87432

H 3

D QJ32

C 54

South

S KQ10

H AQJ104

D 8

C KQJ8

Your line of defense is to FORCE declarer. You choose this line because you have 4 trumps AND declarer has shown a 2-suited hand. These 2 factors together make a forcing defense a strong favorite to be best.

Lead low from your longest suit (if you are playing 4th best leads from a broken holding, lead the 6).

Declarer would like to draw trump then knock out your side's black suit Aces. Look what happens if you lead a spade looking for a ruff. Partner wins the Ace and leads a spade back, which you ruff. But now, whatever you lead, declarer will be able to draw the rest of your trump, knock out your Club Ace, and win the rest of the tricks.

Now, look what happens if you start with a diamond. When declarer draws your trumps in 4 rounds and knocks out one of your side's black Aces, your side will play another diamond, forcing declarer to use his last trump. When he forces out your side's other black Ace, you can cash 2 diamonds for down 1.

Notice that the force worked even though your 4 trumps are small.

Problem 2

	North	
	S AQ	
	H Q93	
	D QJ108	
	C AKQJ	
West		East
S 10982		S 6543
H 7		H AK62
D A9654		D K73
C 1043		C 98
	South	
	S KJ7	
	H J10854	
	D 2	
	C 7652	

Play the **King** of diamonds then another diamond. If declarer has 2 diamonds, you set him immediately. If he has 1 diamond, you will FORCE him to ruff your second diamond. He has to draw your trumps before cashing his clubs (or you will ruff the 3rd club for the setting trick). When he plays another heart, you win and lead a diamond through declarer, forcing him to ruff again. Now, your 4th trump is the only remaining trump.

NOTE what happens if you lead a low diamond instead of the King. Partner will win the Ace and return a diamond. You will cover dummy's card with your King, which will be ruffed. Now, dummy's diamonds are good and you cannot force declarer to ruff. You need to play the King initially so that you can force

declarer to play before your side's remaining honor needs to be played, thus preserving your side's remaining honor. Also note how your partner's signal on the second heart trick helped you figure out what to do.