

DISCARDING by Maritha

What do you keep when you have to discard on Declarer's long suits? The general principles are:

- 1) **Guard your honors**—and guard in order of precedence (Kings more vital than Queens, etc.)
- 2) Remember that guarding means having enough small guards to guarantee that your honors will NOT fall under a higher honor. A King needs at least one small card with it to be guarded. A queen needs at least two small cards with it to be guarded. A Jack needs three small cards with it to be guarded.
- 3) Keep **equal length with dummy** if you are behind dummy (playing after dummy) if your highest card is higher than Dummy's lowest card. Given a choice, **guard suit on your right**, rather than suit on your left.
- 4) If you have **4 or more cards in a suit**, it is probably YOUR responsibility to guard it. (Partner can't help.)
- 5) **If Declarer has bid a suit**, showing a certain number of cards, you know **that you should probably keep your cards in that suit** (unless or until you see Declarer throw cards in that suit away).
- 6) **If Declarer has denied a certain suit, you can safely discard from that suit.**
- 7) **If dummy has a short side suit and Declarer ruffs one or two cards in that suit, and then pulls trumps, assume that Declarer has no more cards in that suit.** It is an excellent candidate for your discards.
- 8) It is better to unguard one suit completely than to unguard two suits partially (unless partner has help).
- 9) **Discarding a (relatively) high spot card says you like that suit.** Discarding a low card says you do not like that suit. Partner must check the spot cards to be sure whether your discard is high or low!
- 10) **When you discard an honor, you promise an honor sequence of three or more** (and tell partner s/he can safely get rid of that suit). For example, discard Queen from QJ109.
- 11) **Negative discards** (throwing low cards from suits in which you have NO interest) **are usually best in no trump.** If you discard a high card in a suit in which you DO have interest, it might be the setting trick.
- 12) **Be as clear as possible in your discards.** The more obvious your signal, the more likely partner will notice.
- 13) When discarding in a suit that partner has led, give **current count**. If you have three cards left, discard your lowest card. If you have two cards left, discard your highest card—the card you would have played back.
- 14) **Use the Rule of 11** to help your discards. Sometimes you have a lot of help in the suit partner leads against no trump and you know that you have knocked out Declarer's last stopper—but partner does not know that. If you have a chance to discard a high card in partner's suit, do it! That tells partner that s/he can just run the suit as soon as s/he gets the lead. Example: you hold QJ7 and dummy has 83 and partner leads the 6. When Declarer takes your Jack with the King, you know that Declarer has no more cards above the 6 in that suit, but partner does not know that. At first opportunity, discard your Queen in that suit!
- 15) Try to always **keep one card in your partner's suit at no trump**—if you have even the ghost of a chance of getting the lead at some point.
- 16) If you are desperate **to create an entry to partner's hand**, you **may have to discard an Ace or a King** (so partner's presumed queen or jack can become an entry).
- 17) Try to **avoid discarding from one, two, or three small cards** in a suit in which the **opponents** are known to **have strength**, or where there is a **finesse combination** (e.g., KJ10) in dummy. You may help Declarer place the cards!
- 18) **Be very careful about discarding a high spot card.** It might be too valuable at times! In such a case, a negative discard (or two) might be better than a come-on signal.
- 19) **Don't tell Declarer more than you must.** If your partner shows out of a suit, Declarer knows your exact holding in that suit. If you can afford to, make most of your discards in that suit. Ditto when your bidding showed a long suit. You will keep your distribution in the other suits secret from Declarer for a longer time.
- 20) Make a **negative discard** in a suit you do NOT want led **when you cannot spare a high card in the suit you DO want led** or when you **suspect partner is likely to lead that suit** and you want something else led.
- 21) **When you discard twice in the same suit, the first discard is attitude, the second discard is count (present count).**
- 22) **After you lead a suit, your first discard in that suit is present count.**

23) After you play third in a suit, your first discard in that suit is present count.

24) When you have nothing, try to discard one suit completely to help partner the most in counting.