Suit Blockages

Masterclass, April 2024

India Natt

Problems caused by blockages

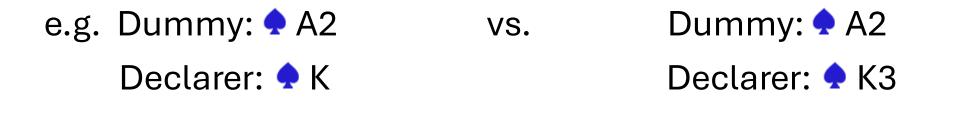
Ways of unblocking

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The \$3 on the right is a communication card allowing you to reach the \$\$ A in Dummy.

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Without it, the suit is **blocked**.

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Here, we are just going to focus on declarer-play blockages.

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e.g. Dummy: ♦ 32 ♥ QJ32 ♦ A432 ♠ QJT Declarer: ♦ A65 ♥ AK ♦ KQJT ♠ 5432 Lead: ♦K, Contract: 3NT

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- **1.** After the **V**AK have been played.
- **2.** As an entry for cashing the ♥QJ.

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You will take **at most** $1 \diamondsuit$, $2 \heartsuit$, $4 \diamond$ and $1 \clubsuit = 8$ tricks, down 1.

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e.g. Dummy: • 432 • AQ32 • 5432 • 32 Declarer: • A765 • K • AKQJ • AK65 Lead: • K, Contract: 3NT

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Declarer: ◆ A765 ♥ K ◆ AKQJ ◆ AK65
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In addition to $1 \diamondsuit$, $4 \lor$ and $2 \bigstar$, you have 3 top \heartsuit = 10 winners.

However, if you play the ♥K and follow low from the dummy, unblocking the suit, you will have no way of getting back to the dummy to reach your ♥AQ, so you will only take 8 tricks.

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In addition to $1 \diamondsuit$, $4 \diamondsuit$ and $2 \bigstar$, you have 3 top \heartsuit = 10 winners.

However, if you play the ♥K and follow low from the dummy, unblocking the suit, you will have no way of getting back to the dummy to reach your ♥AQ, so you will only take 8 tricks.

Therefore, you must **overtake** the ♥K with the ♥A in order to cash your ♥Q for your ninth trick.

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• If the suit is not currently blocked but the high cards are split between the two hands in holdings of unequal length, play the **top card from the shorter holding** first.

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You cash the *****A first to prevent the suit from getting blocked, which it would if you started by playing the *****3 towards the *****KQJ.

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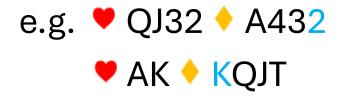
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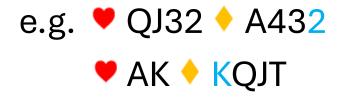
The "top of the short" rule is a staple of good card play and should become second nature if it is not already.

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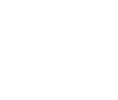
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You cross to hand with the \diamond K and cash the \heartsuit AK to unblock the suit. Then, you cross back with the \diamond A to cash the \heartsuit QJ.

• Overtaking the blocking card.



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You overtake the ♥K with the ♥A, which puts you in the correct hand for cashing the ♥QJ without further manoeuvring required.

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You cash the <a>AKQJT and then, on the fifth round of the suit, you can discard the <a>A to unblock that suit.

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You cash the <a>AKQJT and then, on the fifth round of the suit, you can discard the <a>A to unblock that suit.

Then, you will be able to cash the **V**KQJT without being bounced into the wrong hand.

Now head to the Suit Blockages tournament and try the practice hands!