

Suit Blockages

Masterclass, April 2024

- What is a blockage?
- Problems caused by blockages
- Ways of unblocking

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Declarer: ♠ K

vs.

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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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Declarer: ♠ A65 ♥ AK ♦ KQJT ♣ 5432

Lead: ♠K, Contract: 3NT

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You need to make sure that your ♦A gets used:

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

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You will take **at most** 1 ♠, 2 ♥, 4 ♦ and 1 ♣ = 8 tricks, down 1.

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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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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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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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♥ A3

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.

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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e.g. ♥ QJ32 ♦ A432

♥ AK ♦ KQJT

You cross to hand with the ♦ K and cash the ♥ AK to unblock the suit.
Then, you cross back with the ♦ A to cash the ♥ QJ.

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♥ K

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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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♥ KQJT ♦ AKQJT

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

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

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