

## DISCARDING FOR US DUMMIES

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While there is no substitute for counting this might help the lazy and the damned  
WHAT SHOULD I SAVE?? The four sources of information

I am quite sure that all of us are faced with this dilemma every session: declarer is running a long suit and we are feeling the pressure -- what to keep and what to throw away? And haven't we all had that horrible sinking feeling that he has done it to us again as we find that we have saved the wrong card!

"He was squeezing me", we think. And that may or may not be true. But I must tell you that for every squeeze that occurs, MANY a "pseudosqueeze" occurs. Let's define these terms (with an assist from the immortal Victor Mollo): When declarer is running a long suit and you throw the "wrong" card, that's an error. And if you throw some other "wrong" card, that's a different error. These are "pseudosueezees". It is only when there is no "right" card to throw that you are truly squeezed -- and this is fairly rare.

Always assume that there is SOMETHING that you (and your partner) can save to prevent that extra trick. And don't go down without a fight! What I want to help you do this month is to become more skilled at saving the RIGHT card. These are not rules about what to save -- these are the "sources of information" to help you make good decisions! Saving the right card will turn MANY below-average boards into above- average boards, trust me!

As we frequently need to do whenever we are trying to improve our game, we need to dispense with a previous habit. Here is a key statement:

The WORST way to make a decision about which card to save is by looking at your own hand!

What?? Is he serious?? Yes, I am. Many a time a player has come up to me with their hand and asked what they should save. (Usually they are looking for sympathy -- grin.) They are usually unsatisfied when they leave, as neither I nor anyone else can answer this question without some access to these four basic sources of information...

First disclaimer: If you are counting out the hand, and you KNOW what to save, pay no attention to these guidelines. You don't need them, at least on this hand.

Second disclaimer: nothing works all the time -- these "sources of information", listed somewhat in prioritized order, are designed to HELP your thought processes.

THE DUMMY Or: what can you see?

If you can SEE the AKQ2 of clubs in the dummy, and you have the J543 (or even 6543!), then this is what you likely should save. Even if it means you have to throw away the Ace of diamonds! Yes, I am serious. There are only two possibilities here - - declarer has the diamond King, in which case you were doomed anyway (a legitimate squeeze), or partner has it, in which case he has the diamonds covered, and it is VITAL that you save that fourth card in the dummy's suit. It is not at all uncommon for it to be necessary to save four cards in a suit, even with no honor.

THE BIDDING Or: what could you see if declarer's hand was dummy?

From the bidding, you can frequently know quite a bit about declarer's shape. Even though you cannot actually "see" his cards, try to see them in your MIND. (For example, if declarer -- playing 3NT -- responded two spades to a Stayman auction, you may need to save your spades!)

PARTNER'S DISCARDS Or: what is partner telling you?

In it's simplest form, there is a good principle available here -- if partner is throwing one suit, he must be saving another. Don't save the same suit. Good partnerships use good signaling (and they pay attention!) to help each other. But remember, you can't save everything -- if you can, there is no problem on this hand, right? If you have no idea what to save, it is frequently a good idea to just pick something and throw it so that your partner will know what you are NOT saving.

DECLARER'S DISCARDS Or: what is declarer saving?

Well, if he is throwing one suit, he is probably saving another. You should likely save that one too. Beware of trickery, though. Watch ALL of declarer's discards, not just the first one or the last one.

Here are some other hints about being a good discarder:

Plan ALL your discards early. Take your time BEFORE it becomes critical. If you can see the need to make four discards, plan all four if you can. If you agonize over each card, or especially if you wait until it becomes painful, a good declarer will KNOW what your problem is.

When in doubt, keep parity (the same number of cards in each suit) with the hand on your right.

Don't save doomed cards. If you have the Kx in front of dummy's AQx, throw them both. Partner may need to save Jxx, and your King is dead anyway.

Help your partner. For example, if you have the KQ of a suit, discard the king to tell partner you have the queen (and are saving it). That may relieve the pressure on his Ace. And also...

Make informative discards EARLY. If you have decided you need to save clubs and therefore eventually throw the QJ2 of diamonds, then it may be best to throw the Queen AND the Jack early in the hand. (Partner may not realize his T9x is important unless you tell him -- before it is too late!)

When all else fails, and you truly feel that you are legitimately squeezed, "bare the King" that is behind the Ace. This works fairly often as long as you can do it without visible agony. And it's best to do it early. Just don't blame it on me when it DOESN'T work...grin.

Happy discarding! Jack Brawner