

Establishing Suits

NG34Bridge

Extra tricks by force

One of the two ways of making extra tricks (which do not need a trump suit) is by Force-using sequences. Provided you have more cards in your sequence than the number of missing higher cards, you can establish extra tricks.

a)	b)	c)
♥KQ83	♥Q2	♥J932
♥J2	♥J1093	♥1084

a) You have more cards in your sequence (♥KQJ) than missing higher cards (♥A). Lead ♥J (highest from the shorter length hand). If it wins lead ♥2 to ♥Q. The ♥A is forced out and two extra tricks are made.

b) You have more cards in your sequence (♥QJ109) than missing higher cards (♥AK). Play the ♥Q. (highest from the shorter length hand) . Say this loses to the ♥K. On regaining the lead play any of ♥J109, forcing out the ♥A and promoting the other two in the sequence. Two extra tricks guaranteed.

c) You have more cards in your sequence (♥J1098) than missing higher cards (♥AKQ). Use three cards in the sequence (use the ♥10 and ♥8 first - leading from shorter length hand) , to force out ♥AKQ. Your ♥10 or ♥9 is established as a winner, though it will take a while, so you need to attack this suit straight away.

Extra tricks by length

The second common way of making extra tricks (which do not need a trump suit) is by Length. Take this suit:

♥AQ642

♥K53

You begin with three top tricks, but if you play them out (starting with the ♥K (high from the shorter hand) may well find the opposing hearts have all gone, in which case you have two extra winners by virtue of length.

It all depends on the opposing split. If they break 3-2 you have two extra tricks; if they are 4-1 they will still have a heart after you have played the ♥AKQ (probably the ♥J). Give them the ♥2 (the 'lose to win' principle) and on regaining the lead you will have one length winner. If the diamonds split 5-0 (you will find out right away) give the suit up as a bad job.

a)

♥97543

♥862

b)

♥AQ32

♥K94

a) may look unpromising, but a missing odd number of cards rates to split as evenly as possible (here 3-2). Give up three hearts and you will probably have two extra tricks, but you will lose the lead three times so you need to establish* this suit before cashing winners in other suits

** 'establishing a suit' means driving out all the opponents cards in the suit every time you regain the lead, so that your remaining cards in the suit are winners. You can play these winners at any time that you choose. The suit is now 'established'.*

b) looks much better, but, in terms of making extra tricks, it is not. You only make more than your top three tricks when hearts split 3-3, and a missing even number of cards doesn't rate to split evenly. A 4-2 split is more likely. Typically you would leave this suit until late in the play.