

Suit Establishment (tricks by length)

NG34Bridge

One of the two ways 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)

b)

♥97543

♥AQ32

♥862

♥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.