

PROMOTING

Promoting is a simple and effective way of establishing tricks. It involves knocking out the opponents' winners in a suit in order to promote high cards into winners.

Unlike some other techniques, promoting is generally successful regardless of the distribution of the opponents' cards.

Sometimes we're lucky enough to have a suit that is sufficiently strong for us take all the tricks. For example:

North A K Q

North has three top winners that we can take at any time. (In the play of a full hand it's often best not to cash them immediately.)

South 7 4 3

Now let's consider the following suit combination:

North K Q J 10

This time we don't have any top winners and therefore need to establish some. We can do this by leading North's king. If an opponent wins the trick with the ace, we're left with the following layout:

South 7 4 3 2

North Q J 10

With the ace and king gone the situation is equivalent to the first layout, in that we now have three top winners.

South 7 4 3

If the opponents decline to take their ace on the first round we simply continue with North's queen and (if necessary) the jack. Whatever they do we'll make exactly three tricks in the suit altogether.

This is a simple example of promotion. We started with no top winners and finished with three. Here it doesn't matter which hand we lead from, nor which card we play from North.

Here's a similar example:

North
K J 6 4
South
Q 10 3 2

This time the high cards are split between the two hands, but the procedure is the same. We lead (or lead towards) any of the honour cards to dislodge the opponents' ace. If they don't win that card on the first round we keep playing honours until they do. Again we'll finish with three tricks regardless of the defence.

Sometimes we need to knock out more than one high card:

North
Q J 10
South
9 7 4 3

We're missing the ace and king, but can still promote two winners in the suit. We use one of North's honours to knock out the king and another to knock out the ace. If the opponents take these cards on the first two rounds North's remaining honour becomes a winner. After cashing this trick South's 9 is also a winner, which could normally be reached using an entry in another suit.

If the opponents refuse one of the first two tricks we lead North's remaining honour and South's 9 still becomes our second trick.

In the examples so far we know how many tricks we're going to promote before we start, but sometimes this isn't the case:

North
K Q J
South
9 7 4 3

As before we start with North's king. If the opponents win with the ace we've promoted North's remaining QJ into winners. But what about South's 9? This might also become a winner, but only if the opponents have had to play their 10 on the first three rounds.

If either opponent has four or more cards including the 10 then that card will still be available to beat South's 9 and we'll have to be content with two tricks. In practice we'll make three tricks about half the time with this suit combination. Here promotion will always succeed, but we won't know the extent until some tricks have been played out.

Regardless of the above it doesn't matter when the opponents win their ace.

Here's another example of promotion where two high cards need to be knocked out:

North
K
South
J 10 9 8 2

Although we have only six cards of this suit between the two hands we can normally use promotion to establish three winners. We start by leading South's 2 to North's king.

If an opponent wins with the ace we re-enter the South hand in order to lead one of our remaining cards. If the opponents win their queen then South's remaining three cards are all winners. It doesn't matter if the opponents hold up their

queen because South can continue with his other cards until they do. South will of course need a second entry in another suit to cash these winners.

The opponents might sometimes be able to cause problems by allowing North's king to hold the trick (although this could be a difficult defence to find in practice). Now South will need three outside entries: one to knock out the ace, one to knock out the queen and one to reach the established winners.

Thus in this example the principle of promotion is still valid, but success is dependent upon what South has in the other suits.

Now suppose that we replace South's 9 by the 3. If South has enough entries it will always be possible to use promotion to establish two winners, but a third winner is only available if the opponents' seven cards are split 4-3.

We've seen several examples of promoting, which when employed on its own is a fairly straightforward process.

In practice, establishing tricks in a suit often requires promoting to be combined with other declarer techniques. These suits aren't usually so easy to play, but a thorough understanding of promoting will help to identify the best approach.

Now test your skill with some practice hands on promoting:

[Level 1 hands](#)

[Level 2 hands](#)