

Safety Plays

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Taking a SAFETY PLAY is done to ensure one's contract against the worst possible distribution of the opponents' cards. There are basically three types of safety plays: 1) those that guard against adverse breaks without sacrificing any advantage, 2) those plays that deliberately sacrifice a trick that might possibly be won in order to guard against the loss of two tricks and 3) those that refuse an immediate finesse to avoid getting a ruff.

♠752
♥742
♦AK932
♣108

♠109	♠864
♥K983	♥J106
♦108	♦QJ4
♣AK742	♣J963

♠AKQJ3
♥AQ5
♦765
♣Q5

Sensible bridge technique requires ensuring contracts rather than risking them.

Providing For The 4-0 Break

Safety plays that give up nothing.

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|----------|-------|
| 1. A10xx | KQxxx |
| 2. A10xx | KQ98x |
| 3. A9xx | KQ8xx |

In each of the above card combinations, the safety play is not to play the Ace first but to play the King first to guard against a 4-0 split.

Nine-Card Fits Missing The Q(J)

Using the principle of restricted choice.

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|----------|---------|
| 1. 98x | AK10xxx |
| 2. A10xx | K98xx |

3. KJxx

A9xxx

In each of these combinations, the safety play is to finesse. You make this decision based upon the distribution of the remaining suits. If Dummy and Declarer are both distributed, you can count on a bad split in all suits. It is prudent to recognize that now, and then the suit might break well for you, but statistically when you see two suits that have wild distribution, you do better to assume that the remaining suits will break badly as well.

Eight-Card Fits Missing Two Honors

You must first determine how many tricks you need in these suits (or how greedy you are for all of them since these plays deliberately concede a trick to avoid the possibility of losing two in the event of a 4-1 break).

1. Jxx

AK9xx

2. 10xx

AK8xx

3. xxx

AQJxx

The best play with these suit holdings is again to finesse. Playing the suit from the top will most often result badly.

Refusing A Finesse To Avoid A Ruff And Managing Dummy To Avoid An Extra Loser

The contract is 4♠, with West having overcalled 2♣. South bid 1♠, West overcalled 2♣, North bid 4♠. Opening lead is the ♣Q.

	♠J94	
	♥K87	
	♦K32	
	♣AK42	
♠K3		♠872
♥Q64		♥J1095
♦QJ		♦109765
♣QJ10987		♣5
	♠AQ1065	
	♥A32	
	♦A84	
	♣63	

If you win the top Club and the Spade finesse fails, a Club will be returned for a ruff. Start Spades from the top to avoid a Spade ruff. This is a safety play.

Ducking Safety Plays To Maintain Communication

Assume that these suits are in a dummy that contains no outside entries. In the first example, you lead toward dummy and the jack pops out. In the second example, a small card comes out when you lead toward dummy. You must DUCK!

1. AK10xxxx xx
2. AKJ9xxx xx