

PINOCHLE – SINGLE DECK – PARTNERS STRATAGY NOTES

(Note: Strategy Notes there may be errors and omissions).

There are many techniques used in evaluating a hand. Some require more experience than others. Our intention is to bring our players along so they enjoy the learning process; while playing the game. We believe that overloading players, especially beginners, drive players to lose interest. In order to avoid this, and make the game enjoyable we will introduce advanced strategy slowly. We will begin with what we will call Basic Strategy.

Bidding Evaluation

Evaluating a hand is the first thing to address. On the first round of bidding you want to pass information on to your partner describing your hand. You will evaluate if you have 100 pts. in meld and if you do you will bid 20 pts. over the last bid. If you have four Aces in four different suits you would bid with a 30 pt. jump. Lastly, if you have a run (A,10,K,Q,J must be in the same suit), you would bid a 50 pt. jump. When you bid before your partner, this is the only thing to address; if you have one of those bid opportunities

When your partner bids first, you would use the above sequence and give your partner a bid back. However, if you do not have any of the sequences your process changes depending on what bid you are given.

A 100 meld bid (20 jump) or an Aces (30 jump), you would need to evaluate how much to bid. To do this you would need to know how many points you can make in the hand during the play of the tricks. I will describe a simple method to evaluate your hand, and what to bid.

Evaluating How Many Points a Hand Could Make

First you evaluate how much meld you have in your hand; that is, the combinations as described in the pinochle overview document. Let's say you have 10 points in meld. You add this 10 to the 100 points your partner gave (Aces are 100 as is the 100 point meld bid; although the Aces represent much more power), and you now have a total of 110 in meld. You count 20 points for each card in the suit you will name trump, if you have the Ace of trump and at least 5 pieces. Without the Ace or less than 5 pieces you would count 15 points for each. If you have 4, you would count 60. If you have 5 and the Ace you would count 100, 45 without the Ace. You will add to this amount 20 points for each Ace you have **Not in Trump**. So, if you have (2) Aces this would be another 40 points. This is your evaluation:

Partner	100 Pts
You	10 Pts
Your Trump	100 Pts (5 + A Trump 20 Each)
Your Other Aces	40 Pts. (2 Aces 20 Each)
Total Bid	250

This hand on average will bring in 140 Pts.; the 100 plus the 40 you and your partner have 110 meld so the total is 250 NOTE: As you gain experience you would analyze the hand to a greater extent however, at this time playing conservatively is in order.

Your partner would respond by passing if they want to give you the hand. Or, your partner would evaluate their hand in exactly the same manner. The focus at this point for your partner would be to see if they could bid 300 or a higher closeout bid. If they cannot bid 300 then they would pass.

Your bid is now 250 and let us say, your partner cannot go to 300. Their next move would be to see if they could push you to the 300 close out. If your partner had an additional 50 points they could bid 290 or 10 below the 300 close out. This would indicate they want you to go to 300. This is known as a “Push Bid.” The key here is to count what you plan to make in cards, 20 pts. for each trump (if you have the Ace and at least 5 pieces) and 20 pts. for each Ace, during the play of the hand add that to the meld you have and the meld your partner has. Once you have that total, you will bid to the close out below that number depending on your hand strength.

Push Bids

In order to push a hand getting the maximum amount of points, a rigid bidding system is always preferred. If you bid on assumptions and your partner does not have what you expect, you could go bade. On the other hand if you do the same thing and your partner does have they think is power and strength, they could push you to a number and you could go bade. So, the correct strategy is during the bidding you communicate exactly what you have according to the bidding system we have devised. Your bid should always be at the closeout bid **below** the evaluation you determined. Note that if you evaluate your hand at 10 – 20 points above a close out number, i.e., you can make 380, then you should bid 360. In other words, you can make 380 and if you bid 350 your partner would need over 50 points to push you to the next close out of 400. If you bid 360 and can safely make 380, you are asking your partner for 40 pts and if they have it they can safely push to 400. This refines the bidding process a little more. Normally your partner would need a solid 50 to push, but by bidding this way you are asking for a little less for that push. This way, your partner can accurately push you to a bid that can be made. The maximum bid will be obtained more often using this system than any other I know; that is, other than cheating.

In another example, you bid 210 (20 jump) and your partner closes at 270 (60 jump means nothing). You have 60 additional points in meld then you would bid 290 and they respond with 300. In the previous example your additional meld should get your partner to 330 (270 + 60). So, evaluating if your aces could get your partner to 350 is critical. Your team is only short 20 points and if you have 2 aces in two card suits or three aces you should push to 350 by bidding 340. Push bids should be used with caution and pushing only with Aces is risky because you do not know what those aces will bring in, and you are not sure if they will even be good, not trumped for example.

Saving Your Partner

When your partner deals, you must consider if you can take them “off the hook.” The dealer is stuck for 190 and if they have a weak trump suit, you will go set. If you have meld but it is under 100 and cannot give a bid, and you have 3 or 4 Aces but nothing longer than a 4 piece trump suit – you should pass. Your hand will help your partner. But if you have a 5 piece suit you should open for two reasons :

1. If your partner is weak your team will go set anyway.
2. There is a good chance your partner’s trump suit is weaker than yours.

Opening also gives your team the opportunity to get a bid from your partner and go for a higher score. If you have a long suit there is a good chance your partner is weak in that suit, and if you don’t have power in that suit the other team will make all the point in that suit (60). If you open in that suit you will make points because you will trump some of the other team’s winners.

Counting Trump

Beginners, and for that matter experienced players, lose track of the amount of trump played. This is especially true if there is talking at the table, and we want to have fun, so talking is permitted. You can count 1 for each trump played as it hits the table then add that to the amount you have in your hand, then subtract from 12, the

amount in the game. This is confusing and a mistake is easy. One method is to subtract the amount you have from 12; which leave the number in the other hands. Deduct one for every one that is played. When you reach 0 the only trump left are in your hand.

The two things to master as beginners, is the counting of trump; however you accomplish that. To master the game you must also keep track of many other things such as Aces, cards played in other suits, etc.

Playing Hands

When Your Team Has The Bid

1. When You Name Trump:

You count your cards, each trump 20 (15 if 4 or less trump or you do not have the Ace of trump) and other Aces 20, and this will determine if you will easily make the hand or not. You will find out that to play for maximum points, you will have to hold 10's and sometimes K's so that they will win tricks. If your analysis suggests you will make 120 points this roughly amounts to 6 tricks, or half the total amount of tricks which is 12. When you try to get more points you will need to win more tricks. To do that, you have to win with 10's. Where this comes into play is when you have 3 or 4 cards in a non-trump suit with the highest being a 10. To make that 10 good as a winner you have to have the 2 Aces and the other 10 come out. If that occurs, you must be able to clear trump, so that no one else trumps that 10. If you were playing for an amount that is possible to make that 10 would be placed on your partners Ace at the first chance you get to do so. As you can see, when you get greedy and miss you will loose many of the points that you counted as making; and the hand could be jeopardized.

2. When Your Partner Names Trump:

When your partner names trump, it's not up to you to try to control the game. The reason for this is your partner is attempting to set his hand up to win extra tricks. He can only do this if he is in control. For this reason when you get the lead your job is to ***play your aces never hold aces back on your partner.*** After playing your Aces always lead back trump, King or queen if you have them. Although there are exceptions, one being if you have a double Ace, you must play your Aces. Also, if your partner plays an Ace you must put your 10's on them if you have them. So, in the first few tricks your partner can evaluate how to play his hand. The worst thing you can do is confuse your partner

So, to review, your partner names trump and will attempt to get you in the lead. This is the single most important thing to do. As the person that named trump, the only sure way to get to your partner is when their partner bids Aces. You would lead a card in a suit you have the Ace in. At that point your partner should play all their Aces then lead back to you in that suit. Naturally, this would preferably be in trump. However, if you do not have the ace of trump, you would lead in a suit you have an ace in. Leading back in that suit is very important for your partner to continue to control the game. In the event you have aces and have a double in a suit, do not play the double but play the other three and lead back in the suit your partner originally lead. If you did not bid Aces, your partner will most likely lead a trump to try to get you in the lead. If no Ace was played and you have the Ace you must play that Ace. If you do not have the Ace and you have the 10, you must play that 10 to either force the Ace or win with the 10. There is no alternative to this strategy, at least for now.

If you do not have a card in the suit lead to go back to your partner, lead another suit 5 pointer that you did not meld, but watch what was played. If the opposition plays a 10 on your Ace stay away from that suit. It may be your partner's second suit.

Trying to control the game when your partner names trump will always lead to your team will always make fewer points than they otherwise would have. This is the only method that will let your partner make good a second suit, if they have one.

3. When The Other Team Name Trump:

There are no set rules so anything goes. Confusing the other team is your goal. Put the pressure on them to play or open suits during play. Unless you get the lead and have more than 4 cards with an Ace in it; never play your Aces. The idea is not to show the other team your aces. Keeping them confused makes it harder for them to make extra tricks. So, play the opposite logic if you did not name trump. What you would like to see played as the one who names trump, so would the other team. Don't help them.

Experience

Playing can bring you so far, and then you must analyze hands with a more experienced player. Most analysis consists of "what if", and process of elimination scenarios. When you are playing a hand and you name trump, you want to control trump and try to evaluate how you can utilize your partner's hand. When you didn't name trump you have to help your partner by showing cards that give them an idea how they can set up their hands. Your partner is trying to figure out how to make the lower cards in their hand good. They can only do that if the higher cards come out.

Lead Backs

When you name trump you want to try to get your partner in the lead before turning over the lead to the other team. Lead backs are used to communicate if your partner has aces. There are some common standard lead backs that we will discuss here. However, a lead back is no good to you if the other team trumps your partner's ace. So, it is important to first control trump.

If you name trump, and have the high pieces and you can play the high trump and void the opposing team of trump, then a trickless can be attempted. In most cases, a trickless requires your partner to have the double ace of a suit. On your partner's trump lead the first card you throw when you are out of trump would be a 9 or J of the suit you have a double ace in. If your partner continues to throw trump it indicates he is trying for the trickless. You would then throw in this order, a 5 point card you have another ace in; and another 5 pointer if you have a third ace in another suit. When you do not have an ace to communicate, throw off a 10 pointer. On successive trump tricks throw away your losers. When your partner runs out of trump they will play their aces then lead the suit you gave the initial signal in.

If you don't make the trickless, you will usually not make the most points using this method. So, you only go for a trickless when you can afford to give up the points, if you don't make it.

Standard Lead Backs:

- 9 lead back indicates a double ace when trump is being played down and you are void of trump.
- Q lead back off of a marriage indicates an ace, a K indicates no ace.
- Five Pointer on an ace when no marriage was shown indicates an ace.
- An Ace on an Ace indicates double 10.

Confusing Your Partner

A common mistake inexperienced players make is confusing their partner. When you name trump you are looking to accomplish a number of items. The first is not to let the opponents trump cards hurt you. In order to

do this you must control trump. This is accomplished either by playing winning trump tricks; therefore reducing the amount of trump your opponents hold or playing lower trump. So, when trump is led your partner must play the highest trump cards in his hand and not try to hold back 10's; or even the Ace. For instance, you lead the Ace of trump in order to take out 4 pieces then lead another trump to clear three or four more. In the majority of cases, when an Ace of trump is led and both Aces are not held, you are looking for the Ace. If your partner hold and Ace, 10, they should play the Ace if they have strong suits for lead backs later. If it were the intent of the person naming trump to force the ace out they would have led a king. Seeing the Ace helps the person who named trump. You might make one more trick at times by holding back that Ace; however, the majority of time it will hurt the playing of that hand.

For instance, if you force your partner to lead another trump, and you get in the lead - you will invariably lead a card back that changes how your partner wanted to play the hand or you will be forced to play your strength before your partner clears the rest of the trump. In other words, show your partner as much as you can during the play of the hand.

When you get in the lead always play all your aces. In the event you have a double ace and you feel your partner can control trump, you might elect not to play the Ace. But for this to work you need to have a trump in your hand to play to your partner and you must have a 9/j as the double ace lead back. When your partner leads trump and you get in the lead, after playing your aces you lead trump back. Never play a new suit, your partner may want to set that up if he has the winners in that suit. If you play it early, you will spoil that strategy. Leading cards without a purpose is never a good idea and if you didn't name trump, you can never guess the correct play of cards. So, do not try – leave your partner in control.