



Simple Squeeze Play

A simple squeeze is the most basic form of squeeze and occurs when declarer leads a card that forces a defender to discard or unguard a winner. A simple squeeze operates in two suits, as illustrated below in hearts and spades.

	Dummy	
	♠AJ	
	♥5	
West	♦—	East
♠32	♣—	♠KQ
♥2		♥A
♦—	South	♦—
♣—	♠4	♣—
	♥K	
	♦9	
	♣—	

In this three-card ending, South is on lead in a no-trumps contract. When South leads the ♦9 (the "squeeze card"), dummy's heart is discarded and East is squeezed in the majors.

If East discards the ♥A, South's ♥K becomes a winner. If East tosses the ♠Q instead, then a spade to the ace fells East's king.

An important concept in squeeze play is "rectifying the count." This refers to conceding all the necessary losers before attempting a squeeze. If playing in a small slam, this means conceding one trick to the defense first. If playing 3NT, this means conceding four tricks.

In the above diagram, imagine that South still has a club loser when she leads the ♦9

		Dummy	
		♠AJ	
		♥5	
West		♦—	East
♠32		♣3	♠KQ
♥2			♥A
♦—		South	♦—
♣J		♠4	♣8
		♥K	
		♦9	
		♣2	

In this case, East can simply throw his "idle" card, the baby club, and there is no squeeze

Another example of a Simple Squeeze:

		Dummy		
		♠976		
		♥AK62		
West		♦A43	East	
♠AKJT		♣J75	♠5432	
♥JT98			♥53	
♦65		South	♦9872	
♣K96		♠Q8	♣T84	
		♥Q74		
		♦KQJT		
		♣AQ32		

West opens 1♣ but South winds up in 3NT. The defence wins four rounds of spades, South discarding clubs from both hands. West then exits with a heart to South's queen.

South expects the club finesse to fail because West opened the bidding. A 3-3 heart split is also less likely than a 4-2 split. The best plan is to cash a second round of hearts (to help get a better count on the hand later), and then run all the diamond winners. Note that the count has already been rectified by the defenders. In the actual layout, the fourth diamond catches West in a heart-club squeeze:

			Dummy	
			♠—	
			♥A6	
	West		♦—	East
	♠—		♣J7	♠—
	♥T9			♥—
	♦—		South	♦9
	♣K9		♠—	♣T84
			♥7	
			♦T	
			♣AQ	

On declarer's lead of the ♦T, West is stuck. A heart discard would establish dummy's long heart, while a club discard would bare the king.

Remember: An important concept in squeeze play is conceding all necessary losers before attempting a squeeze. This tactic often occurs late in the hand, where the play of a card (the squeeze card) forces an opponent to discard a winner or the guard of a potential winner.

Squeeze plays are considered by many “to be the domain of the experts,” but many of the positions are straightforward once the basic principles are understood. However there are many, many different types of Squeeze Plays – the Simple Squeeze is just a start.

Squeeze plays are important in difficult-to-make high-level contracts and in matchpoint play where the taking of one more trick than generally achieved by the field is a real difference-maker likely to result in a top board. The opportunity to employ a squeeze play arises sufficiently frequently that it essential to learn if aspiring to become an advancing player!

A few relevant tips for both declarers and defenders. As declarer: play out all your idle trumps to force defenders to find discards. They may make errors. For defenders: when finding discards in these situations, discard first the suit you can't stop. Partner then knows to hold this suit. Secondly, as a defender, keep 'parity' with dummy. When dummy holds a four card suit and you also hold 4 cards in that suit, hold all these cards so that you keep the same number as dummy. Only when dummy discards from that suit may you also discard.