

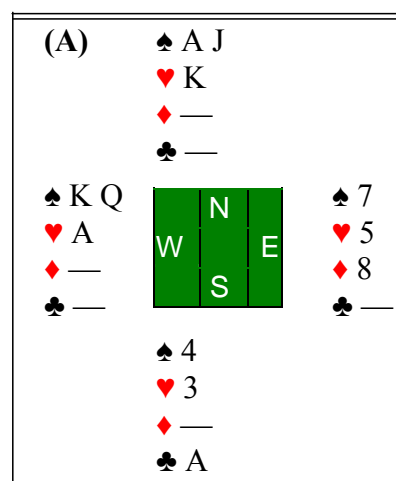
Introduction to Simple Squeezes

By Jack Feagin

The simple squeeze is the most basic form of a squeeze in the game of contract bridge. By playing a winner in one suit, an opponent is squeezed out of a winner in a different suit. Seeing is believing. You will learn quickly if you lay out these lesson hands with a deck of cards and play them a trick at a time.

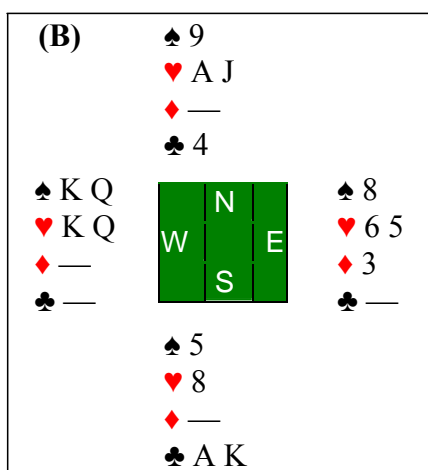
The simple squeeze is a squeeze against one opponent and gains one trick. It normally only works with the count, meaning that Declarer needs to have all winners but one. Example A shows a basic ending.

When the ace of clubs is cashed, West is squeezed in the major suits. Whatever he discards then declarer gets the rest of the tricks. Obviously the key factor is that West has to discard before North. This squeeze matrix will not work if the East and West cards were swapped. This is therefore considered a positional squeeze.



To review, a simple squeeze occurs when you have two threats against one person.

The count must be correct – you must have winners to cover all of the remaining tricks but one. In other words, you have one loser. When the simple squeeze works, you win all of the remaining tricks.



South in Example B has West busy in two suits and he has 3 out of the last four tricks but the squeeze will not operate on the cashing of the ♣A because West has an idle card, the ♠Q. After the ♣A West has no more idle cards and the ♣K will squeeze him.

Squeeze Terminology

Simple Squeeze This is a squeeze which acts against one opponent in two suits.

Squeeze Card The card which forces the defender to discard a busy card. The defender has no cards in this suit and must discard.

(Note: in a simple squeeze the squeeze card must be a winner played from the hand opposite the two-card menace, so that the two card menaces and the squeeze card can not be in the same hand)

Threat A card that is not a winner but threatens to become a winner if a defender gives up his top card in that suit. Also called a “menace”.

Busy Cards An important card which in the lay of the hands and the timing of its play may control the outcome of the tricks won or lost. Generally winners that the defenders hold

Vienna Coup: An unblocking play made in preparation for a squeeze to correctly position a menace.

Cyde Love’s BLUE

Conditions for Simple Squeezes

B Busy The Opponent to be squeezed must hold "busy cards" in more than one suit. That is, in at least two suits there are cards which prevent each threat from becoming a winner.

L Losers Declarer has lost all his losers save one. When this situation exists, we say “the count is rectified.” The squeezed defender(s) must not hold any idle cards, i.e. the ones that could be safely disposed of.

In Example C the squeezed defender holds the ♥Q, an idle card, i.e. one that could be safely disposed of. On playing the ♠J, the squeezes fails because the timing is wrong. If it were a

(C)								
♠ 8								
♥ —								
♦ A J 8								
♣ —								
♠ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S			♠ —
W	N	E						
S								
♥ Q		♥ 6 5 4						
♦ K Q		♦ —						
♣ 9		♣ 3						
♠ J								
♥ —								
♦ 5								
♣ 7 6								

(D)	♠ A J		
	♥ K		
	♦ 4		
	♣ —		
♠ K Q		W	N
♥ A			E
♦ 6		S	
♣ —			
	♠ 5		♠ —
	♥ —		♥ —
	♦ 7 5		♦ 8 3 2
	♣ A		♣ 3

3-card ending without West having the idle ♥Q, it would work.

Declarer has in Example D a squeeze card (♣A) and the necessary menaces (♠J, ♥K). West however is not harmed by the cashing of the ♣A because West has the idle ♦6. The single word to describe the critical element is TIMING. Remember the defender can not have any idle cards; his cards must all be busy.

U **Upper** The hand opposite the one playing the squeeze card must hold at least one threat card "over" the squeezed opponent's "busy cards." At least one of the menaces is placed after the squeezed defender (the "squeezee?") plays.

E **Entry** Transportation to the hand of the established threat (the hand with the threat cards). Declarer must have sufficient entries (winners serving as communication between two hands) to cash the developed menaces.

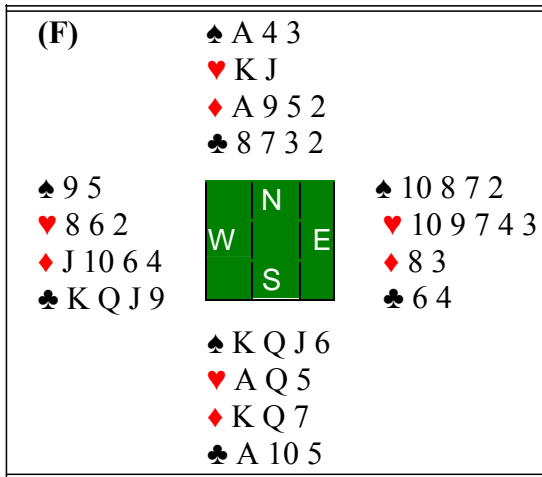
Let's try it with a full hand

(E)	♠ K Q 10 3		
	♥ 8 6 4		
	♦ Q 7 5 4		
	♣ 7 4		
♠ 7 6 2		W	N
♥ J 9			E
♦ J 10 9 3		S	
♣ A Q 10 2			
	♠ A J 5		♠ 9 8 4
	♥ A K Q 2		♥ 10 7 5 3
	♦ A 6		♦ K 8 2
	♣ J 9 8 5		♣ K 6 #

You're in 3NT. The defense leads four rounds of clubs and then the ♦J. No chance that putting up the ♦Q will work (at least not against a decent defender). That card can later be a threat to squeeze East, who fortunately for you also has four hearts. East will be busy in two suits, diamonds and hearts. The timing and entries are right and you easily squeeze East to get your 9th trick. If this is not clear, play out all the spades down to the five-card ending.

One interesting point of this hand relates to defense. If they see this squeeze coming, they should stop cashing clubs. Declarer won't have the "count", that is, he isn't down to winning the rest of the tricks but one.

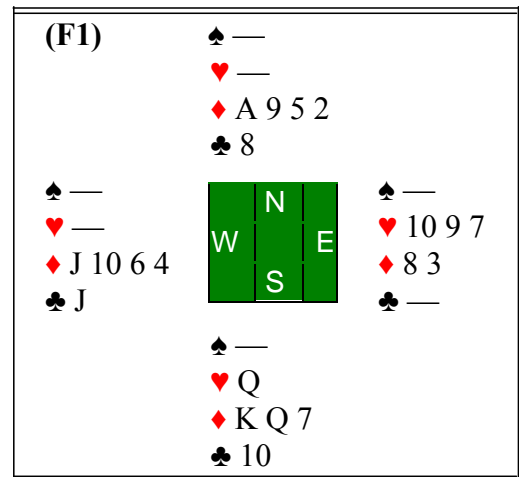
I think many players find their first squeezes in slam contracts. The conditions are often easier to see.



This hand comes from the New York Times. Shivann Shah of London was South in Exhibit F when he was just nine years old. A simple, quantitative auction left Shah in 6NT with only 11 tricks: four spades, three hearts, three diamonds and one club. The obvious hope was a 3-3 diamond break, but there was also the possibility of a minor-suit squeeze.

When West led the club king, declarer let him hold the trick. This is a common way to "rectify the count." Shah had now lost all the tricks he needed to and has all the remaining tricks save one. Declarer took West's club continuation with his ace, then cashed four spades and two hearts to give this end position, shown in Diagram G at left.

The lead of the heart queen squeezed West. He could not retain the club jack and four diamonds.



Try this one looking at only your hand and dummy. You are in 7NT and the ♠J is led. When you need all the tricks, you have the count rectified at trick one!

(G)

♠	6 5									
♥	A K 4 2									
♦	A J 8 3									
♣	J 6 5									
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	N									
W		E								
	S									
♠	A 10 3									
♥	Q 8									
♦	K Q 7 4 2									
♣	A K Q 5									

If West's lead of the ♠J is a standard lead, then East apparently has the KQ♠. What other threat can we have to produce a squeeze?

We have to hope that East also has the long hearts and if so we can bring this hand home. Run your minor suit winners. With four cards left (four hearts in dummy and the two spades and two hearts in hand), East cannot hold a spade winner and four hearts.

The full hand:

(G1)

	♠ 6 5										
	♥ A K 4 2										
	♦ A J 8 3										
	♣ J 6 5										
♠ J 9		♠ K Q 8 7 4 2									
♥ 10 5 3		♥ J 9 7 6									
♦ 10 9		♦ 6 5									
♣ 10 9 8 7 4 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♣ 3
	N										
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	♠ A 10 3										
	♥ Q 8										
	♦ K Q 7 4 2										
	♣ A K Q										

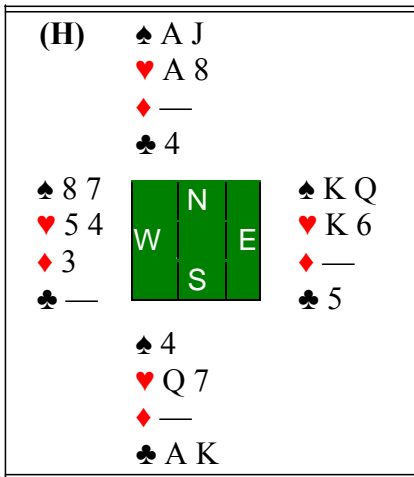
The Vienna Coup

The Vienna coup is an unblocking technique so called because it was first recorded in Vienna in the days of whist. It is used to avoid entry problems when executing an automatic squeeze.

Here are the conditions when you need to consider this coup. For ease of presentation, Declarer is South and holds the squeeze card.

- Declarer in one hand is holding the squeeze card and one threat
- South has no winner in either threat suit
- North holds winners in both threat suits

The problem here is that South will have no entry to cash his threat card should it become established. South can cash the ♣A and easily play the four from dummy.

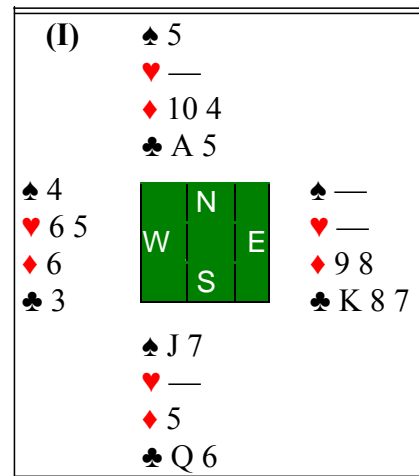


But when she plays the ♣K, what can she discard from dummy? If she plays the ♥8, she cannot get back to her hand. The ♥A in the North hand will block the suit.

The solution therefore is to cash North's winners in South's threat suit before the squeeze trick, in this case that ♥A. The best way to understand is get out a deck of cards and try playing the hand without cashing the ♥A and the squeeze fails because East is pitching after North. If you cash the ♥A first, the ♥Q in your hand is a legitimate threat.

Here's another Vienna Coup example.

Try squeezing this hand without cashing the ♣A before playing off the spades. The squeeze fails. You must cash the ♣A so that one threat will be in the South hand. If this isn't clear, grab that deck of cards and play the hand out both ways, once without cashing the ♣A and a second time by playing it before running the spades.



We know a squeeze will fail if each opponent has a guard against our two menaces. Both will have idle cards to play. Even when that occurs, we still have a chance if we can transfer one of the guards to the other hand. This is called "transferring the menace", even though it is obviously a misnomer. We hold the menaces; what we really are transferring is the guard against the menace.

You are in 6♥ on the lead of the ♠6, which East wins with the queen and returns the

♣4. You have eleven tricks, 3 clubs, one club ruff in dummy, two diamonds and 5 hearts. East holds the ♠A, but how can we squeeze her. Not in diamonds and spades, as we lack “U”; East will discard after dummy. And not in clubs and spades, as we have no entry to the ♠K threat. So we switch our attention to West. If he long in diamonds, we will have a squeeze if we can put another threat in his hand. Let’s say the play proceeds to Example J1.

(J)	♠ K 9 3		
	♥ K 9 7 6		
	♦ A 7 6 5		
	♣ K Q		
♠ 10 8 7 2	W	N	E
♥ J 8			
♦ Q 10 9 2		S	
♣ 10 8 2			
	♠ J		♠ A Q 6 5 4
	♥ A Q 10 3 2		♥ 5 4
	♦ K 4 3		♦ J 8
	♣ A 7 6 3		♣ J 9 5 4

We know the diamonds are with West. (The opening lead marks East with at least 5 spades and she has already played 2 hearts and 4 clubs.) But the spade winner is with East. Our only hope is to “**Transfer the Menace**”. Play the ♠K and ruff out East’s ace. You hope that West has the ♠10 and now you will have the ♠9 and a small diamond as threats against West. Cashing your hearts will squeeze West and give you your twelfth trick.

(J1)	♠ K 9		
	♥ —		
	♦ A 7 6		
	♣ —		
♠ 10 7	W	N	E
♥ —			
♦ Q 10 9		S	
♣ —			
	♠ —		♠ A 6 5
	♥ Q 3		♥ —
	♦ K 4 3		♦ J 8
	♣ —		♣ —

There are probably over thirty types of squeezes. The good news is that most are so rare that you don't really need to worry about them.

See <http://www.bridgeguys.com/Squeeze/Squeeze.html> for a very good discussion of the squeezes you do want to know about.

Basic double squeezes are as easy as simple squeezes and will be the subject of a future lesson.

Further reading

Beginner to intermediate

David Bird, Bridge Squeezes for Everyone

Norman Squire, Contract Bridge, Squeeze Play Simplified

Frank Schuld, The Simple Squeeze in Bridge - New and Revised

Advanced

Clyde E. Love, Bridge Squeezes Complete (the Bible but difficult)

Terence Reese, Master Play in Contract Bridge

Terence Reese, Squeeze Play Made Easy

David Bird, Bridge Squeezes for Everyone

Peter Thoma, The Art of Bridge Squeezes

Hugh Kelsey, Kelsey on Squeeze Play (Master Bridge)

Fook H. Eng, Bridge Squeezes Illustrated

Chien-Hwa Wang, The Squeeze at Bridge

George Coffin, Endplays in Bridge: Eliminations, Squeezes and Coups