

**REVISED AND UPDATED BY
BARBARA SEAGRAM**

**INTRODUCTION TO
DEFENSE**

SECOND EDITION

EDDIE KANTAR



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FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

This book and its companion book, *Introduction to Declarer Play*, are in my opinion the two best bridge books ever written. Eddie Kantar has been my mentor and guru for many years. He is the kindest, most wonderful man who has always been very generous with his time to teachers everywhere. Without Eddie, I would not have had the success that I have had in teaching bridge. His bridge hands are legendary and a joy to work with. His pearls of wisdom have taught so many so much. We constantly have AHA! moments from our students when we use them.

I was asked to tweak and modernize this book. This was a privilege. I just wanted to see these books back in the marketplace so that students of today have access to this wonderful learning tool.

If you are fairly new to the game, read this book, use the techniques and then play a lot. Try to play duplicate as much as you can. It is *the* way to get better. Go over two or three hands each time after playing. Try sometimes to play against and with better players — that way you can ask for advice. Sometimes you will need a thicker skin. Bridge is a game of mistakes; it is impossible to be perfect. You will have good days and bad days... it's all in a day's work. Keep coming back for more; the good always outweighs the bad. It is a wonderful game and such good exercise for the brain.

Above all, have fun!

Barbara Seagram

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INTRODUCTION

There is no question that defense is the most difficult aspect of playing bridge. Many players become adequate bidders by simply memorizing the point count for various bids; others find that being declarer becomes easy with practice. But defense is a matter of *logic* and thus it requires not just experience but thought.

If you are a good defender it is almost impossible to be a losing player. At least half of your opponents' contracts can be defeated with a good defense, but the sad truth is that about eighty percent of them are fulfilled. Why? Because most players have not been well-drilled in the fundamentals of defensive play, which are:

- knowing the suit and the card in that suit to lead that will give partner the maximum amount of information
- knowing when to signal
- knowing when to play an attacking defense (taking your tricks as quickly as possible) as opposed to a passive defense (sitting back and waiting for your tricks)
- deciding what declarer is trying to do based on his manner of play.

To use a football analogy, this is the blocking and tackling of bridge. You cannot be a good bridge player unless you can do these things with reasonable skill.

In this book, we will be assuming the use of standard signals and leads. This is a system in common use throughout the world. It is important to note that there are other methods, some of which are equally good. You and your partner must agree on which methods you are going to use — what matters most is that you are both on the same page. Sometimes your opponents at the table will ask you what method you

are using. If you are following the principles described in this book, you can just reply: Standard.

One word about the text: in dealing with the dreaded 'he/she' problem, I decided to use 'he' for simplicity. If this offends any woman reading the book, I apologize.

Eddie Kantar

CHAPTER 1

THE OPENING LEAD AGAINST NOTRUMP

Some suit must be selected for the attack, and some one card of that suit must be the first to advance.

R.F. Foster

What you're going to learn:

- » How to decide which suit to lead against notrump
- » How to pick the right card to lead once you've chosen the suit

In order to be a good defender you must have some objectives in mind. What are they?

Go back and ask yourself how you play a hand as declarer. You try to 'establish', or set up, your tricks before the defense can establish theirs. You are fortunate in that you can see both your hand and the dummy and can usually tell which suit to establish. But even so you are almost always involved in a race.

The defenders, on the other hand, cannot see each other's cards and often will waste time trying to establish the wrong suit. However, the defenders have one great advantage that overshadows all else — they have the opening lead! In other words, in the great 'establishing' race the defenders always get off to a head start; and if you consistently make the proper opening lead, you will go down in history as one of the

world's greatest players, even though your bidding and defense may be just average!

Why is it so hard to make the proper opening lead? Opening leads are based on the bidding and your hand. Sometimes the bidding makes it clear which suit to lead, other times you will have a clear-cut lead in your own hand, but much of the time you will be forced to make an intelligent guess because the bidding will not have given much away. Consider these two bidding sequences by your opponents:

West (you)	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

as opposed to:

West (you)	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	1♣
pass	3♦	pass	3♣
all pass			3NT

In both cases, as West you have to make the opening lead. In the first case your partner hasn't bid and the opponents have given away very little information. They may have a weakness somewhere but you cannot be sure where. On that first hand, you have a 25% shot at hitting your opponents' weak spot.

Now take the second case. South has excellent clubs and North has good diamonds. As West, you can eliminate a club or a diamond as a possible opening lead because you don't want to waste your time establishing the opponents' suits. You would select either a heart or a spade lead depending upon your hand. So, now you have a 50% chance of hitting the opponents' weak spot!

The important point is: listen to the bidding. *You must listen to the bidding; you can't even begin to defend unless you do.*

As a general rule, the declarer will establish his longest suit first, and the defense tries to do the same — the most logical way being to lead it. *That is why, with nothing else to go by, the opening leader leads a long suit.* Notice the key words, ‘with nothing else to go by’. However, many times you are provided with plenty of information: your partner may have bid, or the opponents may have bid your longest suit. In such cases you would probably select another lead.

Assume, for the sake of argument, that after listening to the bidding you have decided to lead your longest suit, as this is by far the most common lead against notrump. Which card do you lead? Let’s look at a hand.

Sitting West, you hold:

♠ A 8 6 5 3 ♥ J 7 4 2 ♦ Q 3 ♣ 8 2

The bidding has proceeded: 1NT on your right and 3NT on your left. It is your lead. Now, if you could peek into your partner’s hand and see that he had only one spade and five hearts you would lead a heart because that is your *combined* longest suit. Unfortunately, the rules do not permit this, so you must assume, because you have more spades, that spades is the longest combined suit. So you are going to lead a spade — but which spade?

Normally, when leading a suit that has four or more cards you lead your *fourth-highest card*. Fourth-highest means starting at the top and counting down four places. In this case your fourth-highest spade would be the five. Don’t make the mistake of starting at the bottom and counting up. *Start at the top and count down.*

That’s simple enough, isn’t it? What’s the catch? The first catch is that your suit may have a three-card sequence, which simply means three equal cards at the head of the suit. For example, QJ1042 would be an example of a three-card sequence.

Whenever you hold a three-card sequence or longer at the head of your suit you always lead the *top card of the sequence*. The top of a sequence rule takes precedence over the fourth-highest rule. If the third card (the lowest card) in the three-card sequence is missing by one spot (e.g. QJ92), it is called a **broken sequence**; it is still considered a sequence so the queen is led. However, if the third card drops off by more than one spot (e.g. QJ82), you revert to the fourth-best rule and lead the deuce against notrump.

TIP: Simply put, the rule for leading from a suit of four or more cards is this: lead fourth-highest unless the suit is headed by a sequence of three or more cards; if it is, lead the top of the sequence instead.

TEST YOURSELF

Which card would you lead from each of these combinations?

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. K J 7 6 5 | 4. K Q J 10 2 | 7. J 10 7 6 4 |
| 2. A 8 7 2 | 5. K Q 10 8 5 | 8. Q J 8 7 3 2 |
| 3. K Q J 2 | 6. K Q 8 4 3 2 | 9. J 10 8 5 3 |

Solutions

1. 6 Fourth-highest
2. 2 Fourth-highest
3. K Top of a sequence
4. K Top of a sequence
5. K Top of a broken sequence (the third card in the sequence is missing by only one spot)
6. 4 Fourth-highest (you must have a three-card sequence before you can lead an honor card)
7. 6 Fourth-highest
8. 7 Fourth-highest
9. J Top of a broken sequence

Sometimes you will have a choice of suits to lead. For example, sitting West you hold:

♠ Q 7 6 3 ♥ J 10 9 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ 5 4 2

Once again the bidding goes 1NT on your right, 2NT on your left, and everyone passes. It's your lead and you have two four-card suits. Which one should you lead? You should lead a heart — the jack, to be more specific.

TIP: When holding two long suits, one of which contains a sequence, you should lead the suit with the sequence.

When you lead the top of a perfect sequence, you never give away a trick — i.e. you never help the enemy. As a matter of fact, sequences are such fine leads that if you also had the ♠2 rather than the ♣2 you should still lead the ♥J, even though you had five spades and only four hearts.

Another possibility on opening lead is that your opponents may have bid your longest suit. Let's say you hold this hand:

♠ K 7 6 4 2 ♥ Q 10 4 2 ♦ J 10 7 ♣ 2

Again, you are West and your right-hand opponent bids 1♠, your left-hand opponent 2♣, 2NT on your right, and 3NT on your left. Your partner has been as silent as a mouse and it's your lead.

Had the opponents simply bid notrump without mentioning any suits, you would lead the ♠4. But spades have been bid, and it is usually a bad idea to lead suits the opponents have been bidding unless you have a strong sequence. So, we rule out a spade lead and lead our next-longest suit, hearts. The proper lead *on the bidding* would be the ♥2.

TIP: Usually, when you lead a suit the opponents have bid, you are saying, 'Let me give you a hand with making this contract.' Not recommended!

Now let's keep the same hand but assume that our left-hand opponent bids 2♥ instead of 2♣.

♠ K 7 6 4 2 ♥ Q 10 4 2 ♦ J 10 7 ♣ 2

Once again, you are leading against notrump, only this time your opponents have bid both of your long suits! When you do not have a sequence in either of the bid suits, you normally select a lead from a three-card suit. In this case you would lead the ♦J. But why the jack, when you don't have a sequence?

When leading from a *three*-card suit, you must keep a few important points in mind. The most important is that the ten, jack, queen, king, and ace are considered honor cards. If you hold two touching honors and exactly three cards in the suit you must lead the higher honor (the one exception to this is that with AKx you lead the king — that is because the lead of an ace against notrump has a special meaning, which we'll cover later in this chapter).

Remember that these are three-card holdings. If you have four or more cards in the suit you should lead fourth-highest or top of a sequence, depending upon the size of the third card under the touching honors.

If you have three cards in the suit to be led headed by either one honor or by two non-touching honors, you must lead your *lowest* card. For example, if you were to lead from Q104, you would lead the four. You have two *non-touching* honors, and from this type of holding you lead low. Also, if you had Axx, Kxx, Qxx, Jxx or 10xx, you would lead your smallest card

Finally, if you have three spot-cards, such as 842 or 975 or 653, lead the top card. This is called leading **Top of Nothing**.

Leads may be easier to remember if you repeat 'top of nothing', 'low from an honor', 'top of a sequence' and 'fourth-highest' a few times. A useful acronym is BOSTON — 'bottom of something, top of nothing' — but remember that top of a sequence always takes priority.

The easiest of all rules to remember when making an initial lead covers which card to lead with a doubleton. With a doubleton, *always* lead the higher card first. Very often partner will have thrown in a bid and you will be leading his suit. When you have precisely two cards in that suit, lead the higher card.

TEST YOURSELF

The time has come to do a little reviewing. Which card would you lead from each of the following holdings?

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. J 9 7 5 3 | 7. K Q 3 2 | 13. K J 8 6 4 3 |
| 2. J 7 5 | 8. K 10 4 | 14. Q 3 |
| 3. 5 3 | 9. K J 9 3 2 | 15. 9 6 2 |
| 4. Q J 9 7 3 | 10. A K 7 5 2 | 16. Q 7 4 2 |
| 5. A 2 | 11. 10 9 3 2 | 17. 10 6 3 |
| 6. K Q 3 | 12. 10 9 4 | 18. 4 3 2 |

Solutions

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | 5 | Fourth-highest |
| 2. | 5 | Low from an honor |
| 3. | 5 | Top of a doubleton |
| 4. | Q | Top of a sequence |
| 5. | A | Top of a doubleton |
| 6. | K | Top of two touching honors, when holding exactly three cards |
| 7. | 2 | Fourth-highest, when holding two touching honors and more than three cards |

- | | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 8. | 4 | Low from two honors when they are not touching in a three-card suit. |
| 9. | 3 | Fourth-highest |
| 10. | 5 | Fourth-highest |
| 11. | 2 | Fourth-highest |
| 12. | 10 | 109x is considered the same as two touching honors even though the nine is not an honor. |
| 13. | 6 | Fourth-highest |
| 14. | Q | Top of a doubleton |
| 15. | 9 | Top of nothing |
| 16. | 2 | Fourth-highest |
| 17. | 3 | Low from an honor (remember that the ten is considered an honor against notrump) |
| 18. | 4 | Top of nothing |

These rules apply not only to the opening lead but also any time in the hand when you are leading a suit for the first time. But common sense dictates your play *after* you see the dummy. For example, if dummy contains a singleton ace and you have KQ106 in that suit, you should lead the six and not the king.

The reasons behind these opening leads are quite logical. Keep in mind that when you lead against notrump you will usually be leading a suit that has four or more cards. Your partner is aware of this and knows that you are leading from your long suit. Therefore, when you lead a low card from a holding such as KJ943, your partner will know that you have an honor (Bottom Of Something) and play his highest card:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6	
West (You)	▬	East (Partner)
♠ K J 9 4 3		♠ Q 8 5
	South	
	♠ A 10 2	

Assume that you are defending a notrump contract and you lead the ♠4. Dummy plays low and your partner must play his queen. This protects your holding. If your partner refuses to play his queen and plays the ♠8 instead, declarer makes two tricks rather than the one to which he is entitled.

You may wonder why, as West, you would lead a low card from a holding such as the one shown here:

	Dummy	
	♠ 9 8 6	
West	▬	East
♠ A K 7 5 3		♠ 4 2
	South	
	♠ Q J 10	

If you were to lead the two top spades and then a third spade, South would win the trick. You would be left with two good spades, but your partner would not have a spade; if he then gained the lead he would not be able to return your suit. If you first lead the ♠5, the declarer wins the trick; however, if your partner regains the lead he can return your suit and you can take your ace, your king and your two little ones.

You must remember that at notrump you cannot lose an ace — since they cannot be **ruffed** (taken by playing a trump on them), you don't have to take all of your aces and kings immediately. If you have read the companion book, *Introduction to Declarer Play*, you will recall that when you are playing a hand in notrump you seldom have enough sure tricks to make your contract; generally, you must establish and make good your lower honors as well as your smaller cards. *The same applies to the defense.* They, too, must establish their lower cards if they wish to defeat most

contracts, and the best way to do that is to lead fourth-highest from their longest suit.

There are a few more combinations that we have not discussed and which simply must be memorized. These holdings include sequences in the middle of the suit, called **interior sequences** — holdings such as KJ1093, AJ1083, or simply KJ1054 or AJ106. With any KJ10 or AJ10 holding the jack is led.

This naturally results in a little confusion, because the jack is also led from J109 or J108 combinations. The only thing that can be said is that when partner leads the jack you must be aware that he can conceivably have AJ10 or KJ10.

Similar holdings are A109, K109 and Q109 with or without extended length. From these three holdings the ten is led. In other words, if you were to lead from K10963 you would lead the ten in preference to the six. Incidentally, these leads do not always work out well. Sometimes it turns out better to lead fourth-highest from these holdings, especially if one of the opponents has bid the suit and you decide to lead it anyway. Nevertheless, most of the time leading the ten works out best.

If you have an interior sequence beginning with a nine or lower, *you still lead fourth-highest*. (From A9872, K9873, Q987 or J987 lead the seven.) Don't lead from the top of an interior sequence unless there is at least one honor card in the sequence.

Finally, we come to the lead of the ace in an unbid suit. *The lead of the ace against notrump asks partner to drop any high honor he may have in the suit!* Therefore the lead of the ace shows one of these holdings (with, perhaps, additional length):

A K J x x x A K J 10 A K Q 10 A Q J 10

In other words, when you have all the honors but one in your suit and you want your partner to unblock and throw his

honor, you lead the ace — obviously an unusual lead against notrump.

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 5 3	
West	▬	East
♠ A K J 10		♠ Q 4
	Declarer	
	♠ 9 8 6 2	

West leads the ace against notrump and East throws the queen as requested: West can now take the first four tricks. If East does not throw the queen, West will assume that South has it, and he may make a mistake in the subsequent play.

TEST YOURSELF

Now that you know which card to lead from a good many holdings and you realize how important it is to listen to the bidding, you are going to have a chance to test your new-found ability. In each of the following problems you are to decide which card you would lead. You will always be West.

1. You hold:

♠ K J 7 5 ♥ Q J 9 6 ♦ 7 6 ♣ J 10 4

The bidding has proceeded:

West (you)	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All pass	1NT

2. You hold the same hand but this time the bidding has proceeded:

West (you)	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	all pass	

3. With the same hand again, the bidding has proceeded:

West (you)	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	2♦	2NT
Pass	3NT	All pass	

For each of the following five different hands to lead from, assume that in each case the bidding has gone:

West (you)	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	3NT	All pass	

4. ♠ A K J 10 ♥ 9 7 5 3 2 ♦ 4 2 ♣ 8 7
5. ♠ Q J 10 6 ♥ K 8 6 5 3 ♦ 5 2 ♣ J 7
6. ♠ 8 6 3 ♥ Q 8 4 2 ♦ K 5 ♣ Q 10 4 2
7. ♠ J 8 6 ♥ K 10 9 3 2 ♦ J 7 6 ♣ K 6
8. ♠ 7 ♥ J 9 8 7 6 ♦ A 10 7 6 ♣ Q 3 2

Solutions

1. ♥Q The sequence lead is preferred over the non-sequence lead in spades.
2. ♣J Both of your suits have been bid, and unless you have a perfect sequence (QJ10) you normally do not lead a suit that an opponent has bid at his first opportunity. Dummy will almost always have five hearts and you will be wasting your time leading a heart.
3. ♦7 This time your partner has told you what to lead.
4. ♠A This asks your partner to play the queen if he has it.
5. ♠Q A sequence lead in a four-card suit takes precedence over a broken five-card holding.
6. ♣2 When both suits look about the same, lead the stronger of the two.
7. ♥10 The ten is led from holdings which include A109, K109, or Q109.
8. ♥7 Do not be misled by the sequence in hearts. To justify a lead from the top of an interior sequence, the sequence must be headed by the queen, jack or ten. A lead of the nine would guarantee no higher honor (Top Of Nothing).

KEY POINTERS

- In order to select the proper opening lead, you must listen to the bidding.
- With no clues from the bidding, the opening leader normally leads his longest suit.
- Top of a sequence leads are better than fourth-best leads and take precedence over them. A four-card suit headed by a sequence is usually a better lead than a longer suit without a sequence. Sequence leads never help your opponents.
- Avoid leading suits that the opponents have bid unless you have three-card or longer sequences in those suits.
- Aces, kings, queens, jacks and tens are considered honor cards. The more honor cards you have in a particular suit, the better, in terms of it being likely to work out well as the opening lead. A lead from K1042 is preferable to a lead from K862.
- If partner has bid, especially if he has overcalled, you should lead his suit. The only exception is if you happen to have a very strong opening lead of your own (for instance, KQJxx with an outside entry).
- When leading from a long suit, lead either top of a sequence or fourth-highest, unless you happen to have one of these holdings:
 - » AJ10 or KJ10, in which case you lead the jack (top of an interior sequence).
 - » A109, K109, Q109, A1097, or AK109, in which case you lead the ten (top of an interior sequence). Note that these are good leads against notrump but not against suit contracts.

- When leading from a three-card holding headed by one honor, lead your lowest card ('Bottom Of Something').
- When leading from a three-card holding headed by no honors, lead your top card ('Top Of Nothing').
- When leading from a three-card holding that has two honor cards, lead the top honor if they are touching and the lowest card if they are not (an exception is AKx, since the lead of an ace against notrump has a special meaning).
- When leading from any two-card holding, lead the top card. Always lead the higher card from a doubleton.
- The rules for leads apply not only on opening lead, but all the way through the hand, whenever a suit is being led for the first time.
- As a general rule, honor leads show sequences, high middle cards tend to be top of nothing, and low cards tend to be fourth-highest. The lead of the nine is always the highest card in that suit.
- Always keep your objective in mind. You are trying to set up your suit or your partner's suit before declarer can set up his suit or suits. You have a head start because the defense makes the opening lead. Don't waste your opportunity.

CHAPTER 2

THE OPENING LEAD AGAINST SUIT CONTRACTS

In the early days of whist, the first general principle settled seems to have been that the best leads were from sequences of three or more. R.F. Foster

What you're going to learn:

- » How to decide which suit to lead against a suit contract
- » How to pick the right card to lead once you've chosen the suit

Your objectives when defending a suit contract are the same as when defending a notrump contract:

- to defeat the contract, *and*
- to give partner information about your hand by proper leads and by signaling.

The main difference between a suit contract and notrump is that against a suit contract it no longer pays the defense to establish long suits, because either the declarer or the dummy will simply ruff the tricks that the defense has established.

This affects your choice of opening leads. Against a notrump contract, from AK752 you lead the five. You are willing to give up one trick to declarer in the hope of getting back four. However, in a suit contract it would be the height of madness

to lead the five because either the dummy or the declarer might be short in the suit and you would never be able to score your ace and king.

Against notrump you are constantly leading long suits in an effort to establish tricks. Against suit contracts you are more apt to be leading short suits (singletons or doubletons) hoping to eventually ruff one of declarer's good cards in that suit. Whatever you lead, partner must be aware of what you have in the suit. For that reason, once you have decided upon the suit you don't just throw any old card on the table.

Basically, once you have decided upon a suit, the card you lead will be the same card you would have led had you been defending a notrump contract — with three exceptions:

1. From the ace-king.

- With AK7643, you would lead the six against notrump but the ace against a suit contract*.
- However, when holding the AK alone (doubleton) against a suit contract, lead the king and then play the ace. This tells partner you started with only two cards in the suit.

2. From the king-queen. With KQ753, you would lead the five against notrump but the king against a suit contract. The king is always led from the king-queen against suit contracts. The idea behind the lead is to establish one trick in the suit.

At this point it might be wise to mention that leads from the AK and the KQ are our top choice against suit contracts.

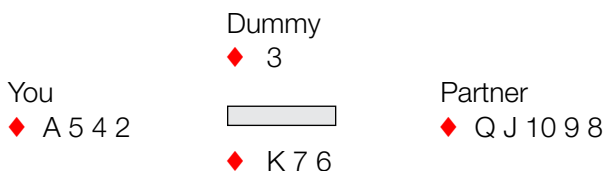
* The ace is the standard lead from ace-king combinations against suit contracts at Trick 1. Later in the hand, since you are more likely to want to lead an unsupported ace, you should lead the king from ace-king. More on this much later in the book.

3. Suits that contain only the ace (i.e. not the king as well).
Against notrump contracts you lead low (fourth-highest)
from:

A 7 6 **3** A 8 5 **4** 3 or A 7 6 **4** 3 2

Against suit contracts it is best to lead another suit, but
if you have to lead this one, then the normal play is to
lead the ace.

The danger, if you lead a small card away from the ace against
a suit contract, is that this may be the situation :



You lead the ♦2. There is a singleton diamond in dummy and
declarer wins the ♦K. He then ruffs his two remaining dia-
monds in dummy and you never score your ♦A.

If you *lead* your ace, on the other hand, yes, at least you
score a trick with it but declarer later gets to score his king.
So best of all, wait until partner or declarer leads this suit
and then scoop up declarer's king with your ace. Aces were
put on this earth to capture kings and queens, *not* tiny, in-
substantial cards.

TEST YOURSELF

As a quick review, assume that you are leading against a suit contract. Which card would you lead from each of the following holdings?

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. K 6 4 | 5. A K 7 6 5 | 9. Q 7 6 4 3 |
| 2. K Q 6 4 | 6. Q 5 | 10. Q J 10 4 |
| 3. 8 3 | 7. 9 5 3 | 11. J 5 3 2 |
| 4. A 7 6 3 | 8. K J 4 2 | |

Solutions

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | 4 | Low from an honor (Bottom Of Something) |
| 2. | K | King from KQ vs. a suit contract (lead the four against notrump) |
| 3. | 8 | Top of a doubleton |
| 4. | A | (If you have to lead this suit.) Against notrump lead the three |
| 5. | A | Against notrump lead the six |
| 6. | Q | Top of a doubleton |
| 7. | 9 | Top of nothing |
| 8. | 2 | Fourth-highest as you have no sequence (Bottom Of Something) |
| 9. | 4 | Fourth-highest (Bottom Of Something) |

10. Q Top of a sequence
11. 2 Fourth-highest (Bottom Of Something)

Just remember B.O.S.T.O.N. — Bottom Of Something and Top Of Nothing. That will help you to choose the right card when you are on lead after you have decided which suit to lead. *But* Top of a Sequence takes precedence over this.

CHOOSING THE SUIT TO LEAD

Let's assume that you have memorized these leads and that your problem is to select the suit. How do you figure that out? The most important point is to *remember the bidding*. Avoid leading your opponents' suit or suits unless you have a sequence or perhaps a singleton in that suit. The best leads against suit contracts are the ace from AKx(x)(x), tops of sequences, partner's suit, suits unbid by the opponents or short suits, e.g. a singleton.

Let's take some examples. You are West and you hear this common bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
all pass			

Now consider this hand:

♠ Q 5 ♥ J 8 7 4 ♦ A K 6 3 ♣ 9 6 4

Your partner has not bid so you are faced with a blind lead. Since the two best leads are sequences or the ace from ace-king, you should definitely lead the ♦A.

With the same bidding, consider this hand:

♠ 7 6 3 ♥ 2 ♦ A 7 6 4 3 ♣ Q 7 6 4

You have no sequences or AK combinations and your partner hasn't bid anything, so you are on your own. As a general rule a singleton in an unbid suit is a good choice, so you should lead the ♥2.

It should be noted that a less experienced player is more apt to lead a singleton than anything else. If partner has the ace he can win the first trick and return the suit so that you can score a small trump. That is very true. But always look at your own trump holding before you lead a singleton.

Again, with the same bidding as before, this is your hand:

♠ Q J 10 9 ♥ 2 ♦ A 7 6 ♣ Q 7 6 4 3

You can see that you have two certain tricks in trumps whether you ruff anything or not. You gain nothing by ruffing, and, therefore, should *not* lead a heart.

We have a general rule about leading a short suit (unless, of course, partner has bid it). When holding either 'natural' trump tricks or four trumps, do not lead a short suit. With four trumps you normally lead your longest suit — more on that shortly. In the above example you might even lead the ♠Q. If your four spades were not in sequence, however, you would lead the ♣4.

Let's talk a little more about natural trump tricks. A *natural trump trick* is a trick that you will always win, no matter what. The best example is QJ10. You will always get one trump trick; if you ruff some other suit you lose your trump trick, so you merely break even. But what if you have A32 of trumps or K32? In these cases, if you ruff one of declarers' winners with one of your worthless trumps you have gained an extra trick for your side.

Consider this layout of the trump suit:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q J 10 9	
West	▬	East
♠ K 3 2		♠ 8 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A 7 6 5	

West is certain to make one trump trick, and if he can ruff something with a small trump he will make two trump tricks. Therefore, with Kxx or Ax(x) in trumps, a short-suit lead is particularly effective. West will be able to win an early round of trumps, and perhaps put his partner on lead to give him a ruff.

However, with four trumps one does not normally lead a short suit. Your most effective defense in this case is to lead your *longest suit!* The idea behind this lead is to force the declarer to ruff, hoping that you will soon have as many trumps as he does, or perhaps more. When this happens, the declarer can kiss his contract goodbye. It is next to impossible for him to retain control of a hand when a defender has more trumps than he does.

TEST YOURSELF

In the light of this discussion, what would you lead as West from each of the following hands against the same bidding?

	West (you)	North	East	South
	Pass	2♠	Pass	1♠
	all pass			4♠
1.	♠ A 6 5	♥ K 7 6 3	♦ Q 7 6 3	♣ 7 2
2.	♠ K 8 5 3	♥ K 7 6 3 2	♦ Q 2	♣ 7 2
3.	♠ Q J 6	♥ 8 3	♦ Q J 10 4	♣ K 5 4 2
4.	♠ A 9 3 2	♥ 8 3	♦ Q 10 6 4 2	♣ J 5


Solutions

1. The ♣7. Holding Axx or Kxx of trumps, a short suit lead is very desirable. We have control of trumps, and can win an early round.
2. The ♥3. With four trumps, lead your longest suit. Your hope is that declarer will be short in that suit and will have to use up his trumps. Eventually, you may end up with more trumps than declarer has.
3. The ♦Q. You have a natural trump trick so there is no point in trying for a ruff.
4. The ♦4. With four trumps, lead your longest suit. See (2).

SOME WORDS OF WARNING

It might be well to digress a moment to mention that whenever you play bridge, as if by magic, at least one player at the table will become the ‘teacher’. You may get very lucky and have a good teacher in every game, but most are apt to give you some bad advice. For example, I am sure you have heard someone say ‘Never lead away from a king’, or ‘When in doubt, lead trumps’.

Unfortunately, these little sayings are not true. It is actually safer to lead away from a king than from a queen or jack. For example, if you lead away from a queen and the opponents have the ace-king-jack, you will never take a trick in the suit. If you lead away from a king, you might still get a trick even if the opponents have the ace-queen-jack.

	Dummy	
	♠ 5 4 3	
		
West		East
♠ K 10 6 2		♠ 9 8 7
	Declarer	
	♠ A Q J	

Let's say you (West) lead the ♠2 here and declarer wins the jack or queen. You are very unlucky that your partner doesn't have either the queen or the ace. But even here, most of the time, you will still score your king.

We have already seen that when you hold four trumps, you should lead your longest suit that the opponents have not bid — and that is true whether or not it contains a king. Likewise, if your longest suit is the only unbid suit you should lead it even if that means leading away from a king. It is unlikely that the opponents are strong in that suit if they have bid each of the others; otherwise, they probably would have ended up in notrump. The fact that they did not suggests that partner has at least one high honor in the suit.

If your friends keep insisting that you should never lead away from a king, tell them the story about the man who never did. When he passed away he found himself in a bridge game sitting West. The bidding went:

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All pass			

It was his lead with this hand:

♠ K 7 6 ♥ K 3 ♦ K 4 3 2 ♣ K 5 4 3

Then and there he knew where he was!

Another tempting lead for a newer player, besides the singleton, is the ace. The best times to lead unsupported aces are against slam contracts or when you have only two cards in the suit (e.g. Ax) — in which case you are trying for a ruff.

TIP: If there are two unbid suits and you have the ace (and not the king) in one of them, you almost always lead the one in which you do not have the ace.

The reason is that when you lead aces, you immediately make the opponents' kings and queens good. If you wait, you can often capture a king or queen with your ace. *Aces were not created to capture deuces and threes.*

TEST YOURSELF

Check yourself on the following. Again, you are West and you hear this bidding:

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	all pass	

It is your lead. With each of these hands, which card do you choose?

- ♠ 7 5 ♥ K J 7 4 ♦ Q 7 6 ♣ A 7 6 4
- ♠ A 7 6 ♥ 8 3 ♦ J 10 5 4 ♣ A 6 5 4
- ♠ Q 9 8 3 ♥ Q 8 7 3 2 ♦ 6 5 ♣ K 2
- ♠ 7 6 3 ♥ K Q J 5 ♦ 6 ♣ Q 7 6 5 4
- ♠ 3 ♥ K 8 7 6 4 ♦ 8 6 4 ♣ Q 6 5 4
- ♠ J 7 6 ♥ 6 4 ♦ A 6 5 4 ♣ A K 8 4
- ♠ Q 7 6 ♥ 6 4 ♦ K Q J 10 ♣ J 10 5 4

Solutions

1. ♥4 The choice is between hearts and clubs. Normally, you do not lead the suit that has the ace nor do you consider leading the opponents' suit unless you have a sequence.
2. ♥8 With Axx of trumps, a short-suit lead is very attractive.
3. ♥3 With four trumps, lead your longest side suit (non-trump suit).
4. ♥K Were you able to withstand the temptation of leading the diamond? The strong sequence in hearts is preferred.
5. ♥6 This time your partner probably has four trumps, so you are leading your longest suit for him. Figuring that one out required some real detective work.
6. ♣A If you are fortunate enough to have an AK combination, you should lead it.
7. ♦K Even though diamonds have been bid, your powerful sequence in the suit makes the lead inviting this time. As a general rule, though, avoid leading dummy's first-bid suit. Since declarer often will attack this suit himself in order to set up tricks and obtain discards, you are usually helping declarer if you lead the suit for him.

LEADING TRUMPS

Finally, we come to the trump lead. Should you ever lead a trump, and if so, when? There are two or three times in bridge when a trump lead is mandatory. Here is one of them. You are West again:

West	North	East	South
			1♠
dbl	all pass		

This is your hand:

♠ 3 ♥ A J 8 7 ♦ K Q 8 6 ♣ K 9 7 6

You have doubled 1♠ to force your partner to bid, yet he has passed! Why? There is only one possible reason that your partner can pass your takeout double — he has good spades; in fact, great spades. He must have five or six good spades, and by passing he is saying that he thinks his spades are better than declarer's. Therefore, you should assist your partner in drawing declarer's trumps. It is as if you were playing the hand in spades: You would try and remove the opponents' trumps, wouldn't you? Well, you should do the same thing here.

Tip: Whenever your partner passes a takeout double at the one-level he is announcing great strength in trumps, and a trump should be led.

Now consider this bidding:

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♥
All pass			

and your hand (West):

♠ A Q 10 8 ♥ 7 3 ♦ K 7 6 4 ♣ J 8 7

South has bid spades and North has denied good spades by bidding 1NT. Next, South bids hearts, and North likes hearts better than spades and passes 2♥. What do you think North has in spades?

A little thought will tell you that North is very weak in spades, holding perhaps a singleton. South has at least five spades and they are not great, because yours are very good. What is South going to do with all those spades? Let's look at the full deal and we'll see what South is going to do.

		Dummy											
		♠ 2											
		♥ 10 5 4											
		♦ A 9 8 3 2											
		♣ K 6 5 2											
West		<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		East	
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♠ A Q 10 8			♠ 5 4 3										
♥ 7 3			♥ K Q 6 2										
♦ K 7 6 4			♦ Q J 10										
♣ J 8 7			♣ Q 10 4										
		South											
		♠ K J 9 7 6											
		♥ A J 9 8											
		♦ 5											
		♣ A 9 3											

If you give South a chance (for example, by leading a diamond), South will win the ace, lead the ♠2 from the dummy, and finesse the jack. You will win the queen, but subsequently South will lead spades from his hand and ruff them in the dummy. Two or three of your good spades will thereby be lost.

In order to prevent South from doing that, you lead a trump originally, which immediately removes one trump from the dummy. Now when you get in with the ♠Q you lead a second trump; as it turns out, your partner will win the trick and play a third trump. (On the first trump play partner played the queen, forcing the ace.) Now there will be no trumps in the dummy, and South will wind up losing four spade tricks.

Your trump lead was devastating, because South wanted to use dummy's trumps to trump spades and you knew it. You could tell from the bidding and your own strength in spades what was going to happen.

Tip: Whenever declarer bids two suits and you are very strong in the one that does not become trump, a trump lead is usually a good idea.

Note that when you decide to lead a trump, lead from two or three small cards, as you may be able to use the bigger ones later.

KEY POINTERS

- Your opening lead is the most important card you will play during an entire hand, so give it a little thought. Review the bidding before leading.
- As a general rule, your first choice for a lead against a suit contract should be any suit headed by an AK, in which case you lead the ace. Also ranking high on the list of good leads are perfect honor sequences (**KQJ**, **QJ10**, **J109**), broken honor sequences (**KQ10**, **QJ9**, **J1082**) and partner's suit.
- Lead the ace from AK at Trick 1 only — in the middle of the hand lead the king, which guarantees either the ace or the queen.
- From AK all alone lead the king at Trick 1 and then play the ace. This guarantees a doubleton.
- From any KQ combination lead the king. (Against notrump, fourth-highest is led from king-queen combinations that do not have the jack or the ten.)

- If you have an AK combination or a KQJ combination that can be led in preference to partner's suit, do so. In any other case you should lead partner's suit.
- Short-suit leads are attractive against suit contracts but not when:
 - » You have natural trump tricks QJx, KQJ, AJ10, or
 - » Four trumps.
- With four trumps, lead your longest suit.
- Avoid leading suits that the opponents have bid unless you have solid sequences in those suits. The talk you hear about leading through strength in dummy applies mainly to short suit holdings in the dummy, such as AQ, AQx, Kxx or KJx. You almost never lead through longer, stronger holdings, where you will simply be helping declarer develop extra winners.
- There is no such rule as 'never lead away from a king'. Leading away from a king is safer than leading away from an ace, queen or jack!
- Be careful about laying down unsupported aces. Aces are most often led against slam contracts, in suits partner has bid, or when they are singleton or doubleton.
- If there are two unbid suits and you have the unsupported ace in one of the unbid suits, you should usually lead the other suit.
- A trump lead is indicated if partner passes your takeout double at the one-level, or if declarer bids two suits, one of which you are strong in, and the contract winds up in the other suit.
- When leading trumps, lead low from two or three small trumps because you may be able to use your bigger ones later.

- Remember that the two main ways declarer gets rid of losers are by ruffing them in the short hand (usually the dummy: the hand with fewer trumps) or discarding them on extra winners. As a defender you must ask yourself which declarer is going to do. If it appears that he is going to trump them in the short hand, then you should lead trumps. If it appears that he is going to discard them on a strong suit, you should attack the other suits quickly.

CHAPTER 3

THIRD-HAND PLAY TO THE FIRST TRICK

*An excellent maxim for the guidance of the Third Hand:
let him do for his partner what he would like his partner
to do for him. R.F. Foster*

What you're going to learn:

- » How to decide whether to play high or low as third hand
- » Which card to play when you return the suit your partner has led

As important as it is to select both the proper suit and the proper card in that suit for your opening lead against notrump, it is equally vital for your partner to be able to 'read your lead' and play properly to the first trick.

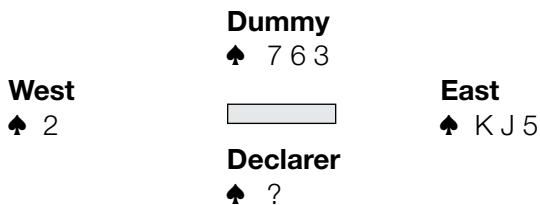
Generally, you will be leading either a low card (fourth-highest) or an honor card (top of a sequence) against notrump unless you happen to be leading your partner's suit, in which case you may have only one or two cards in his suit.

When you are in third chair and partner has made the opening lead, you must consider:

- The card led
- The cards in that suit in the dummy
- The cards in that suit in your hand
- The bidding

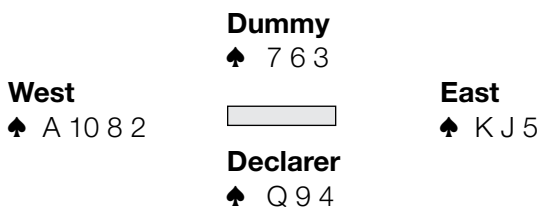
In the first two chapters you were always West, making the opening lead. You are about to be switched over to the East side of the table, where you must start ‘reading’ your partner’s lead. Let’s start out by assuming your partner is leading a small card — for example, the deuce.

THIRD-HAND PLAY WITH TWO OR THREE SMALL CARDS IN DUMMY



We are going to assume, for the sake of argument, that the bidding has been non-committal (1NT by South, pass by West, 3NT by North) and that your partner, West, has led the ♠2. After dummy plays the ♠3, which card should you play sitting in the East position, and why?

Before answering, look at the entire diagram:



By the way, it will probably help you to get a deck of cards and lay out these diagrams as you go — then you can play the cards and see what happens more easily. I hope you can see that if you play the king and then return the jack, South will be unable to take a single trick in the suit; but if you play the jack, South will win the queen — a trick to which he was not entitled.

What can we conclude from this example? We can say that when partner leads a low card and dummy has only small cards in the suit led, third hand must play its *highest* card. The only exception is if third hand has two or three equal high cards, in which case, third hand plays the lowest of the equals. This simply means that if East had KQ5 instead of KJ5, East would play the queen rather than the king. And if East happened to have KQJ5, the jack would be the proper play.

The reason for third hand playing its highest card when partner leads low is to protect partner's holding in the suit and to prevent declarer from winning a cheap trick. Remember that when partner leads a small card, they promise an honor (Bottom Of Something).

TEST YOURSELF

Now that you know the rule for third-hand play when partner leads low and there are no honor cards in the dummy, it's time to do a little practicing. Assuming that your partner has led the ♠2 against a notrump contract and you have the following holdings, which card would you play?


	Dummy		
	♠ 7 6 3		
West	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 10px; width: 60px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	East	
♠ 2			1. ♠ Q 10 9
			2. ♠ A K 4
			3. ♠ Q J 10 5
			4. ♠ Q J
			5. ♠ J 9 8 5
	Declarer		
	?		

Solutions

1. ♠Q Third hand high when not holding equal high cards
2. ♠K Lower of two touching equals
3. ♠10 Lowest of three touching equals
4. ♠J Lower of two touching equals
5. ♠J Third hand high when not holding equal high cards

The moment has come to take stock of what is going on. It may seem confusing that when you have QJ10 and *you* lead the suit originally you lead the queen but when your *partner* leads the suit you play the ten. There are some very good reasons for this, as you will soon realize.


In order to see how far you have progressed, assume that you are once again in the West position for a moment:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West		East
♠ Q 10 5 2		♠ A
	Declarer	
	?	

You lead the ♠2 against a notrump contract by South, your partner takes the first trick with the ace, and South plays the four. Question: Who has the king?

With a little thought you should realize from your partner's play of the ace that South must have the king. If your partner had held both the ace and the king he would have played the king.

Try this one:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West		East
♠ Q 9 8 4 2		♠ J
	Declarer	
	♠ A	

Again, you are West, and this time you lead the ♠4 against South's notrump contract. East produces the jack, and South takes the trick with the ace. Who has the king and who has the ten?

The way to solve these is to ask yourself how your partner would play if he had these various cards. If your partner had the king and the jack, he would play the king, not the jack. Remember that the rule is third hand high unless you hold *equal* high cards. The king and the jack are not equal, so East surely would have played the king if he had held it. Therefore, South is trying to mislead us by taking the first trick with the ace, but we know he has the king also. (Declarer has no rules about winning tricks with his lowest card as his partner is the dummy, so there are no messages to give to partner.)

But wait! Where's the ten? South must have it as well. If East had owned the ten as well as the jack he would have played the ten the first time. Therefore, South has both the king and the ten. Are you beginning to see why it is so important for third hand to play the proper card to the first trick? *It tells the opening leader where the missing honors are.*

However, third hand's responsibility does not end with the first trick. Very often he will wish to continue the suit — right away if he wins the first trick, or later in the hand if he does not — and it is important that he knows which card to return. Look at this next diagram for a moment:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6	
West	▬	East
♠ A 9 8 5 2		♠ K Q 4
	Declarer	
	♠ J 10 3	

Occasionally your opponents will wind up in notrump without a stopper in one suit. It is inevitable. However, often that suit is not even led and declarer romps home easily. Once in a while declarer gets caught and the proper suit is led, but even then the defense must know how to handle its riches.

In the hand above, West leads the ♠5 and East wins the trick with the queen. East now has two cards left in spades, the king and four. *When you are left with exactly two cards in partner's suit you should return the higher of the two.*

TIP: Remember that you always lead high from a doubleton.

East must return the king, which takes the trick, and he then plays the four. West will win the third round of the suit with the ace, and both West's nine and eight will be good.

Notice what happens if East gets cold feet. If he returns the ♠4 at Trick 2, West wins the trick with his ace and then leads a third round to East's king. East has no more spades — unless West can win a trick in another suit, he will be unable to cash his two remaining good spades.

There is nothing quite so aggravating in bridge as to have some good tricks only to find that when your partner gets the lead he has no more cards in your suit to lead to you. What East is actually doing when he returns the king is **unblocking** his spades for West. Another way to look at this is to pretend that you are West playing the hand at notrump and you wish to take your good spades.

If you have read the companion book to this, *Introduction to Declarer Play*, you will remember that when taking good tricks you should play the high card or cards from the short side first. If West were declarer, he would play the ♠K and ♠Q and then a little one to his ace. The only difference between West taking spade tricks as declarer and East-West taking spade tricks on defense is that they cannot see each other's hands. But the principle is the same: *play the high card(s) from the short side first*.

If the defender (East) has four or more cards in partner's suit he returns his original fourth-highest card.

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West	▬	East
♠ K J 8 2		♠ A 10 5 4
	Declarer	
	♠ Q 9	

In this case West would lead the deuce, and East would play the ace and return the *four* — his original fourth-highest card. Once again, there is a good reason for this as it enables your partner to know how many cards you started with and to work out how many declarer had as well.

TEST YOURSELF

Let's have another quiz. This time, sitting East, you must decide not only which card to play at Trick 1 but also which card to return after you win the trick.

	Dummy										
	♠ 8 4										
West	▬	East (you)									
♠ 3		1. ♠ Q J 5 2									
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 100%;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		2. ♠ A 9 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		3. ♠ K 10 6 5 2									
		4. ♠ A J 5									
		5. ♠ K Q J									
		6. ♠ K Q J 10									

Solutions

1. You should play the ♠J (lower of touching equals) and return the ♠2 (original fourth-highest).
2. Win the ♠A and return the ♠9. (With two remaining cards, return the higher one.)
3. Play the ♠K and return the ♠5 (original fourth-highest).
4. Win the ♠A and return the ♠J, as in (2).
5. Play the ♠J and return the ♠K, as in (2) and (4).
6. Play the ♠10 and return the ♠K. (This one is a little different. When you have a complete sequence and you have already played your lowest card then you should return your highest.)

TIP: With touching high cards as a defender, you win from the bottom but you lead from the top.

TEST YOURSELF

Now move back into the West position where you are going to have to figure out not only who has the missing honors but also how many cards each player started with in the suit you have led:

1.

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 4	
West	<input type="text"/>	East
♠ K 9 5 3 2		♠ J
	Declarer	
	♠ Q	

You are West. You lead the ♠3 and your partner plays the jack, which loses to the queen. Who has the ace and the ten?

2.

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6	
West	▬	East
♠ K 10 5 3		♠ Q
	Declarer	
	♠ A	

You are West. You lead the ♠3 and your partner plays the queen, which loses to the ace. Who has the jack? Later on your partner regains the lead and returns the ♠2. How many spades do you figure your partner had originally?

3.

	Dummy	
	♠ 6 5 3	
West	▬	East
♠ J 8 7 4 2		♠ 10
	Declarer	
	♠ K	

You lead the ♠4 and your partner plays the ten, which loses to the king. Account for all the missing cards!

4.

	Dummy	
	♠ 8 4	
West	▬	East
♠ K 9 7 6 3 2		♠ A
	Declarer	
	♠ 5	

You lead the ♠6 and partner wins the ace and returns the ten. Declarer plays the queen. Who has the jack?

Solutions

1. South has both the ace and the ten. If partner held both the ace and the jack he would have played the ace first, and if partner held the ten he would have played it in preference to the jack (lower equal).
2. South must have the jack because partner's play of the queen has denied it. Whenever you lead a low card, dummy plays low and partner now plays a card, partner is always denying the card directly beneath it, but does not deny the card directly above it. This is so important that it is worth digressing a moment:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 5	
West		East
♠ K 8 3 2		♠ 10
	Declarer	
	♠ Q	

West leads the ♠2 and partner plays the ten, which loses to the queen. West knows that East does not have the nine but cannot be sure about the jack. Either East or South might hold the jack. After all, South might have elected to take the first trick with the queen while holding both the queen and the jack. The point is that declarer has no rules that he must follow when taking a trick because his partner is merely the dummy. He usually does his best to try and confuse the defenders. The defenders, on the other hand, do their best to try and tell each other exactly what they have. Even with all this honesty, it is not always possible for a defender to pinpoint the location of a particular honor if declarer happens to be clever enough to know that it is to his advantage to win a trick with the higher of equal honors.

3. Your partner has a singleton ten and South has the AKQ9. No other possibility exists. Remember that your partner's play of the ten has denied the nine, and if he had held the ace or queen along with the ten he would have played it (third-hand high). Neither the ace and ten nor the queen and ten constitute equal honors, and the higher one must be played in such cases.

4. Declarer has the jack. If your partner had had the AJ10 he would have returned the jack. (With two cards remaining in your partner's suit, always return the higher one.)

Too many things to remember? The best way to master all these rules is to play bridge at every opportunity. These plays come up so many times on each hand that they become habit in no time. The trick is to play lots.


Do you think you have mastered third-hand play? Not yet — in all the cases covered here so far the dummy had two or three little cards. What happens when there is an honor card in the dummy? This brings us to:

THIRD-HAND PLAY WHEN THERE IS AN HONOR CARD IN DUMMY

When there is an honor card in dummy there are two possibilities:

- Third hand has no honor higher than dummy's
- Third hand has an honor higher than dummy's

Let's take the first case because it is the easier:

	Dummy	
	♠ K 7 3	
West		East
♠ 2		♠ Q 9 5
	Declarer	
	?	

West leads the ♠2, dummy plays the ♠3, and East should *play the queen — the same card he would have played if dummy had no honor cards at all*. In other words, when third hand has no honor card higher than dummy's he plays exactly as if dummy had no honor at all.

But now look at:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 8 3	
West	▬	East
♠ 2		♠ A J 4
	Declarer	
	?	

If West leads low and dummy plays low, what should East play now? East should play the jack! Before memorizing the rule, look at the entire suit.

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 8 3	
West	▬	East
♠ K 7 5 2		♠ A J 4
	Declarer	
	♠ 10 9 6	

Notice that if East plays the jack he takes the trick; the defense can take three tricks in spades if the hand is played in a suit contract, and four tricks if the hand is played in notrump. East will cash the ace next, then play the four to West's king. In notrump, West's seven will then be good.

If East takes the first trick with the ace and returns a spade to West's king, dummy's queen will win the third trick. Clearly it is better to play the jack the first time.

Perhaps you are wondering how East knows that West has the king. East cannot be completely sure, but West's lead of a low card does promise an honor, and the only honors missing are the king and the ten. Let's take a look to see what would happen if South had the king:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7 3	
West	▬	East
♠ 10 9 5 2		♠ A J 4
	Declarer	
	♠ K 8 6	

West leads the ♠2, dummy plays low and East plays the jack but South takes the trick with the king. Has anything gone wrong? No. Holding the king and queen in the suit, South is always entitled to one trick. However, if East plays the ace the first time, South will make two tricks — the king *and* the queen!

This is what the suit looks like after East has played the jack:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7	
West	▬	East
♠ 10 9 5		♠ A 4
	Declarer	
	♠ 8 6	

If *West* gets the lead later in the hand he can lead his ten, and East can capture the queen with the ace. Notice that if *East* should ever get the lead (in another suit) he should not lay down his ace. That will make the queen in dummy high. East must wait for West to lead *through* the queen. If the defense plays properly, East-West will take at least two tricks by playing the jack the first time rather than only one by playing the ace.

Take a look at this complete deal to see third-hand play in action:

Dummy					
♠ K 4 3					
♥ Q J 7 5					
♦ A J 10 9					
♣ Q 4					
West	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N	W E	S	East
N					
W E					
S					
♠ 9 8 7 6		♠ A J 10			
♥ 6 2		♥ 9 3			
♦ 8 7 6 3		♦ K 5 2			
♣ A J 2		♣ 9 8 7 6 5			
Declarer					
♠ Q 5 2					
♥ A K 10 8 4					
♦ Q 4					
♣ K 10 3					

South is declarer in 4♥. West leads the ♠9 (top of nothing). Dummy plays low, and the fate of the entire contract depends upon the card that East plays to this trick!

If East plays the ten (not the jack because the jack and the ten are equals and the defenders always win from the bottom but lead from the top), South wins the queen. South draws trumps and winds up in his own hand.

In an effort to rid himself of his losing spades, South finesses the ♦Q, but East wins with the king. At this point East has the ♠AJ and dummy the ♠K4. If East lays down his ace, dummy's king becomes good. In order to make two tricks in spades East must put West in to lead through dummy's king.

The only hope is clubs. East leads the ♣9 (top of nothing) and West takes the trick with the ace. West now returns a spade, seeing that the diamonds are established and knowing that East has nothing in clubs. East scores the jack and the ace to defeat the contract. If East had played his ♠A on the first trick, South would have lost only one spade trick and made 4♥.

You can see how important it is for third hand to make the proper plays. The rule for third hand when he has an honor higher than dummy's is simply this:

Rule: If dummy has an honor card (jack, queen, or king) and third hand has a higher honor, third hand plays as follows:

- **if the honor is played from dummy, third hand covers dummy's honor.**
 - **if the honor in dummy is not played, third hand keeps his honor and inserts his next highest card, provided it is a nine or better.**
-

Let's take a look at each case:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7 4	
	<input type="text"/>	
West		East
♠ 2		♠ K 9 3
	Declarer	
	?	

West leads the ♠2 and dummy plays the queen. East should cover with the king. If dummy plays low, East should save the king — holding it over the queen — and play the nine instead.

Now picture the same diagram assuming that East started with K83. If dummy plays low East should play the king. If third hand is to retain his honor card over dummy he must be able to insert a nine or higher. If he cannot, he plays his honor card. This calls for a little practice.

TEST YOURSELF

Assume you are always East and your partner leads the two.

	Dummy ♠ K 7 3										
West ♠ 2	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		East 1. ♠ A Q 9 2. ♠ Q 10 5 3. ♠ A J 9 4. ♠ A 6 4 5. ♠ Q J 10 4 6. ♠ A J 10 9 7. ♠ A 10 8 8. ♠ J 9
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	Declarer ?										

Assuming dummy plays low, which card should East play?

Solutions

1. ♠Q Common sense should tell you this. The queen is as good as the ace, with the king in the dummy.
2. ♠Q When dummy has an honor higher than your highest, you simply play third hand as if there were no honor in the dummy at all.
3. ♠J Retain the higher honor over dummy's honor and play the next highest card as long as it is the nine or better.
4. ♠A You have no card as high as the nine to insert so you have to win the ace.

5. ♠10 Lowest of three touching equals. Win from the bottom.
6. ♠9 The jack, ten, and nine are all equals, and you must save the ace to catch the king so you play the nine, the lowest of touching equals.
7. ♠10 Save the ace to capture the king.
8. ♠J Third hand high when dummy has an honor higher than your highest.

There will also be times like this:

	North	
	♠ Q 7 3	
West	▬	East
♠ J 10 9 8		♠ A 6 2
	Declarer	
	♠ K 5 4	

West leads the jack and dummy plays low. What should East do? He should simply play a low card[†].

South wins the king, but if the defense plays properly that will be South's only trick. If East plays the ace, South will score tricks with both the king and the queen.

We can now say this:

Rule: If partner leads an honor card, dummy has a higher honor, and third hand has an honor higher than dummy's, third hand should play his honor only if dummy plays its honor.

[†] In Chapter 4, you will learn that the correct card to play is the ♠6, which will tell partner that you probably have an honor higher than dummy's queen.

Unfortunately, not one of these rules is as good as a little common sense. Look at this case:

	North	
	♠ K 3 2	
	♥ Q J	
	♦ A K Q J 10 9 8	
	♣ 7	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W E</div> <div style="margin-top: 5px;">S</div> </div>	East
♠ J 10 9 8 7		♠ A 5 4
♥ 10 9 2		♥ A 6 5 4 3
♦ 7 4 2		♦ 6 5
♣ 5 4		♣ 6 3 2
	South	
	♠ Q 6	
	♥ K 8 7	
	♦ 3	
	♣ A K Q J 10 9 8	

Through a bidding misunderstanding, South winds up playing a contract of 6NT after he has bid clubs strongly and North has promised a long diamond suit. West leads the ♠J. Dummy plays low and *East must win the ace*.

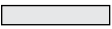
East must keep sight of the most important thing of all — the contract. East has the slam defeated by taking his two aces. In other words, logic, common sense, and the contract dictate that East must win the first trick with the ♠A rather than waiting for the king to be played. If he does play low, you can see that declarer will quickly run off all the remaining tricks with his club and diamond winners, and actually make an overtrick!

You cannot be a robot and expect to be a good bridge player. At first, you should follow the rules just to keep the game going, but eventually you are going to have to *think*.

There is still another important addition to third-hand play:

UNBLOCKING BY THIRD HAND

Consider this common notrump situation:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 5 3	
		
West		East
♠ K Q J 8 4		♠ A 2
	Declarer	
	♠ 10 9 6	

South is declarer in a notrump contract and West leads the king. Which card should East play? East must play the ace!


This play is not so crazy as it seems. Remember that the lead of the king shows either KQJ or KQ10, and if East, holding a doubleton, does not play the ace, he will win the second trick but will be unable to continue the suit.

Let's see what happens when East plays the ace. He returns the ♠2, and West takes the remaining four tricks in the suit. In other words, East saves three tricks by putting his ace on his partner's king! He has *unblocked* the suit for the defenders.

TIP: When you have a doubleton ace you must unblock since your partner has greater length.

Remember the 'play the high card from the short side' rule when you are taking tricks in a suit? Well, this is the same principle. The defense also plays the high card from the short side when taking tricks.

Now let's look at another unblocking play:

	Dummy	
	♠ 5 3 2	
West		East
♠ Q J 10 9 7		♠ K 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A 8 6	

South is declarer in a notrump contract and West leads the ♠Q. South has only one spade **stopper** — a high card that prevents the opponents from cashing their tricks in the suit right away. He does not want to relinquish it if he can help it. If East and South both play low, West can continue the suit. This time East plays the king, and let's say South plays low again. East has no more spades and the defense cannot remove South's only spade stopper.

Let's see what happens instead if East makes the correct play of putting the king on his partner's queen on the first spade trick. South plays low and East continues the suit. South plays the eight, but this time West wins the second round of the suit and can drive out South's ace.

East should not think in terms of 'wasting honors' when he puts the king on the queen. He should think of the necessity of driving out South's ace, and if he doesn't put the king on the queen the defense will be unable to remove South's only stopper.

These two unblocking plays occur at both notrump and suit contracts and your partner is sure to be impressed when you make them. Indeed, it is worth mentioning here that for practical purposes, third-hand play against suit contracts is much the same as third-hand play against notrump. However, one must remember that against notrump the opening leader is apt to lead from his longest suit, whereas against a suit contract he will sometimes be leading from a short suit.

KEY POINTERS

- Third-hand play to the first trick is one of the most important facets of defensive play.
- Third hand must always consider the contract, then look at the card partner is leading and at the dummy before deciding which card to play.
- If partner leads a low card he announces the possession of an honor card. The lead of an honor card shows a sequence. The lead of a high middle card (seven or eight) is usually top of nothing. The lead of the nine is always the opening leader's highest card in the suit. It is always top of nothing.
- If partner leads a low card and dummy comes down with low cards in the suit, third hand must play his highest card. If third hand's highest card has one or two equals he must play the lower or the lowest equal (e.g. the jack from queen-jack or the ten from queen-jack-ten).
- It is also important for third hand to know which card to return in partner's suit if he wins the first trick. With two remaining cards, return the higher. With three remaining cards, return the lowest. With four or more remaining cards return your original fourth-highest card (e.g. with A8753 win the ace and return the five).
- If you play your cards in the proper order, your partner, who has made the opening lead, can usually tell where the missing honors are and how many cards each player originally held in that particular suit.
- When dummy comes down with an honor card and third hand has a higher honor, third hand normally saves his honor until dummy's honor has been played, inserting his next-highest card instead provided it is the nine or better.

- If partner leads an honor card, dummy has a higher honor, and third hand has a still higher honor, third hand waits for dummy's honor to be played before playing his honor.
- If third hand has a doubleton ace or a doubleton king, he usually plays his honor on top of partner's honor lead. This is called **unblocking** and is done to help partner set up his long suit.
- In all cases of third-hand play, common sense overrides all rules. Common sense in action:

	Dummy	
	♠ 4 3 2	
West	[]	East
♠ 9		♠ K 8 6 5
	Declarer	
	?	

West leads the nine, which must be his highest card. East should not play the king because he knows that South has the AQJ10.

Watch dummy's cards closely!

	Dummy	
	♠ A J 6 2	
West	[]	East
♠ 5		♠ Q 10 9 7
	Declarer	
	?	

West leads the ♠5 and dummy plays the deuce. East should play the nine. With the jack in the dummy, the queen, ten, and nine are all equal cards. East is simply playing his lowest equal. If there were no jack in the dummy, East would play the queen.

CHAPTER 4

SIGNALING AGAINST NOTRUMP

There must be some system of intelligible correspondence established between your hand and your partner's, in order that your idea of the best tactics may be conveyed to him, and his to you. R.F. Foster

What you're going to learn:

- » The two basic signals against notrump: attitude and count
- » Signaling with your discards when you cannot follow suit

If you have read this far in the book you have probably played some bridge by now. Assuming you have, it is a virtual certainty that the most challenging part of the game for you is defense. This is the case with many players.

Even an expert will make more mistakes on defense than in any other phase of the game. But, and this is important, if you sit an expert down opposite a partner who does not know the fundamentals of third-hand play and signaling, the expert is quite likely to make a mistake or two on every hand! This emphasizes the fact that bridge is a partnership game. If you know more about defensive play than your partner, you had better teach him what you know. Otherwise, his bad plays are going to cause you to make mistakes!

One of the best methods of conveying information about your hand to your partner is by means of signals — legal ones. There are certain standard defensive signals that are used the world over. Without them defense becomes little more than a guessing game.

What are these signals? In this chapter we will discuss some defensive signals and save the rest for the next chapter, which is on Signaling against Suit Contracts.

THE ATTITUDE SIGNAL

In order to appreciate the advantages of the **attitude signal**, one simply has to try to defend a few hands without it. For example:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West	▬	East
♠ Q J 10 9		?
	Declarer	
	♠ A	

Assume that you are West and you lead the ♠Q against a notrump contract. Declarer takes the trick with the ace. Who has the king?

The truth of the matter is that the only way you can tell is by the card your partner plays to the first trick. If your partner likes the suit you have led, he should signal this to you by playing the highest spot card that he can afford. He will like your suit if he has an honor *equal* to the one that you have led. For example:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	East
♠ Q		1. ♠ K 8 2 2. ♠ K 8 5 4 3. ♠ K 8 4. ♠ 8 2 5. ♠ 8 5 4 6. ♠ 8 5 4 2
	Declarer	
	?	

Assume that you are East and your partner has led the ♠Q against a notrump contract. Dummy plays low and you have

each of the above holdings in spades. How would you inform your partner as to your holding? Keep in mind that your partner is interested mainly in one thing: Do you have an honor card in the suit he has led?

In cases (1) and (2) holding an equal honor, you would play the eight under partner's queen.

TIP: Whenever partner leads an honor card and you play a high middle card, you are normally telling your partner that you have an equal honor in his suit.

What is the definition of a 'high middle card'? Unfortunately, it may be as low as the three! What if you have K32? The highest card you can afford is the three. Similarly, with K432 the best you can do is signal your partner with the four. However, most of the time you will have a slightly bigger card, and partner will be able to tell that you are signaling.

A very clever partner will even be able to read a three or four as a *possible signal* because the lower cards that you are holding will not be visible. As long as your partner has reason to believe you are not playing your lowest card, he has reason to believe that you may be encouraging.

Back to our original diagram, in case (3), with K8 East must play the king! Remember that if you have a doubleton honor you must unblock with the king. Review the chapter on third-hand play if you have forgotten why.

In cases (4), (5) and (6), you have no honor card in partner's suit and you should play your *lowest* spade. Using an attitude signal will usually allow partner to figure out who has what.

There are two cases in which the attitude signal may be a little confusing. The first appears in this common situation:

	Dummy	
	♠ 6 5 3	
West	▬	East
♠ Q		♠ 10 7 2
	Declarer	
	♠ ?	

West leads the ♠Q. Which spade should East play? The important point to realize is that West has both the queen and jack, and the ten is actually equal to the queen! Therefore, when partner leads the queen and you have the ten you should signal with the seven. Indeed, the ten is such an important card that if you hold 10x you must drop the ten under partner's queen as a form of unblocking play, at the same time showing your partner that declarer does not have the ten. The play of the ten under the queen will not cost a trick because partner must be leading from QJ9. If partner did not have QJ9 he would have led fourth-highest in the suit against notrump.

The most common — slightly different — equal honor situation arises in this familiar position:


	Dummy										
	♠ 6 4										
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 100%;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		East
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ K		1) ♠ A 8 3 2 ♠ A 8 2 ♠ A 8 2) ♠ Q 8 3 2 ♠ Q 8 2 ♠ Q 8 3) ♠ J 8 3 2 ♠ J 8 2 ♠ J 8 4) ♠ 9 8 3 2 ♠ 9 8 2 ♠ 8 2									
	Declarer										
	?										

1. Partner leads the king against a notrump contract. First let's consider your play holding the ace — an equal honor. With A832 or A82 you should signal with the eight. With the A8 you should overtake the king with the ace.
2. With Q832 or Q82 you should play the eight because you have an equal honor. With the Q8 you should also play the eight. If your partner had wanted to force you to

throw away your queen he would have led the ace. (See Chapter 1.)

- When partner leads the king, the jack is considered an equal honor (because partner owns the queen). Therefore, with J832 and J82 East should signal with the eight. With the J8 doubleton East must unblock the jack. This might appear to be contradictory, but you unblock the jack for the same reason that you unblock the ten from a doubleton ten when partner leads the queen. The lead of the king will usually be from KQJ or KQ10. When you have the jack, partner must have KQ10, and your play will help clarify the position for him.
- In all the other cases where you have no equal honor you should simply play your lowest card.

In order to see what you have learned, put yourself in the West seat and try to figure out what is going on. Keep in mind that partner will be signaling you if he has an equal honor.

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West		East
♠ Q J 9 8		♠ 2
	Declarer	
	♠ A	

You lead the queen and partner plays the deuce. Declarer wins the ace. Who has the king and who has the ten?

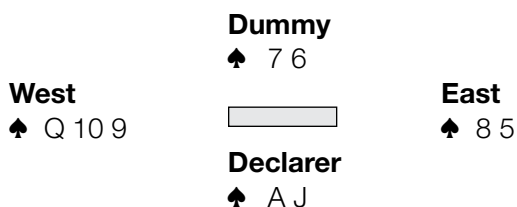
Declarer must have them both. If partner had either the ten or the king he would have played a high spot card. He has played his lowest card, indicating that he has no equal honor in your suit.

You may now be asking yourself: ‘Why do we even care?’ We care because if West gets on lead and leads another spade, declarer will score three tricks in spades instead of only two. It’s the same in the next example:



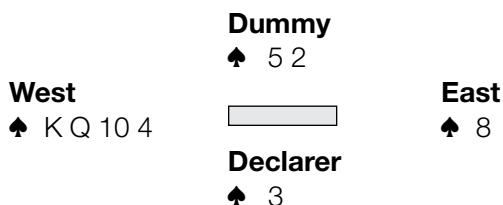
You lead the king, partner plays the four, and declarer the two. Do you continue the suit?

You had better not! Declarer is working one of the oldest tricks in the book on you; he is executing a sneaky little play known as the Bath Coup. You see, declarer must have both the ace and the jack. Your partner can't have either, since he played the four — which you recognize as his lowest card because you can see the two and three. So why isn't declarer taking your king? Look at this diagram of the spade suit after that first trick, and you will see why:



Can you see the trap declarer has set for you? If you play another spade, declarer will make two tricks in the suit. You must simply shift to another suit and wait for your partner to lead a spade through the declarer's ace-jack. Without the attitude signal you would never know to shift suits.

How about this one?



You lead the king, partner plays the eight, and declarer the three. What do you think you should do now?

Partner's play of the eight indicates either the ace or the jack, or both. In any case it is safe to lead your four next, as partner will now play his honor. In fact, this could be the entire distribution:

	Dummy	
	♠ 5 2	
West		East
♠ K Q 10 4		♠ A 8 3
	Declarer	
	♠ J 9 7 6	

After you lead the four the second time to your partner's ace, he can return his three and you will take the next two tricks with your queen and ten.

You can use an attitude signal not only with an equal honor, but also when you hold an *unequal* honor. This means you have an honor that is higher but not an equal to the honor your partner has led. The first and most common situation is:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West		East
♠ Q		♠ A 8 2
	Declarer	
	?	

Defending a notrump contract, East knows that South has the guarded king and normally signals with the eight, as it is impossible to prevent South from taking at least one trick with his king. Against a *suit* contract East would play the *ace*, as there is a possibility that South has a singleton king!

Do you remember this position from Chapter 3?

	North	
	♠ Q 7 3	
West	▬	East
♠ J 10 9 8		♠ A 6 2
	Declarer	
	♠ K 5 4	

West led the ♠J against a notrump contract, and declarer played low from dummy. You want to keep your ace to take dummy's queen eventually, but you should play the ♠6 on this trick — a high middle card to let partner know you like spades, and that he should lead them again when he gets in.

We also have this:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West	▬	East
♠ J		♠ A 8 2 or ♠ K 8 2
	Declarer	
	?	

The lead of the jack can be from J109, J108, AJ10 or KJ10. Because of the last two possibilities, East is obliged to play his high honor when his partner leads the jack.

The same applies here:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West	▬	East
♠ K J 10 9		♠ A 8 2
	Declarer	
	♠ Q 5 4	

It would be embarrassing for the defenders to allow South to take a trick with the queen here. With, again, the jack lead, if East plays the ace and returns the eight (the higher of two remaining cards), South cannot take a single trick in the

suit. If we switch the ace and king in the East-West hands, the lead would be the same and East would have to play the king over his partner's jack.

Finally, we have cases where partner leads the ten and we have either the queen, king or ace.

Study this:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 3	
West	▬	East
♠ K 10 9 8		♠ Q 5 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A J 2	

West leads the ten (remember that the ten is led from A109, K109, or Q109 as well as from 1098 or 1097) and East must play the queen or South will take a cheap trick with the jack. The same would be true if the queen and king were exchanged in the East-West hands.

TEST YOURSELF

Now, for a short quiz:

	Dummy										
	♠ 7 6 2										
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		East
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ J		1) ♠ K 8 5									
		2) ♠ Q 8 5									
		3) ♠ A 5 4									
		4) ♠ 8 3									
	Declarer										
	?										

Defending against notrump, which card should East play on partner's lead of the jack?

Solutions

1. East should play the king because West might be leading from AJ10.
2. East should signal with the eight because he has an equal honor.
3. East should play the ace because West might be leading from KJ10.
4. East should play the three because he has no honor in partner's suit.

SUMMARY OF THIRD-HAND PLAY WHEN PARTNER LEADS AN HONOR AGAINST NOTRUMP

- If partner leads the ace, drop any high honor you may have. (With no high honor play your smallest card if you have three and your top card if you have two.)
- If partner leads the king, signal if you hold the ace, queen or jack. Overtake if you have doubleton ace and unblock if you have a doubleton jack (i.e. play the jack).
- If partner leads the queen, signal if you hold the ace, king or ten. Overtake with the doubleton king or doubleton ace. Unblock with the doubleton ten.
- If partner leads the jack, signal if you hold the queen. Overtake with the king or ace provided dummy has no honor cards in the suit.
- If partner leads the ten, signal if you hold the jack. Overtake with the queen, king or ace if dummy has no honor cards in the suit.
- If partner leads an honor and you have no honor cards in the suit at all, play your smallest card.

THE COUNT SIGNAL

In order to understand the importance of the **count signal** you must look at the following two deals that South plays in 3NT.

	North										
	♠ 7 6 3										
	♥ 7 2										
	♦ K Q J 10 4										
	♣ 9 4 3										
West	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		East
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ Q 9 4 2		♠ J 10 8									
♥ J 9		♥ Q 10 8 4 3									
♦ 6 3 2		♦ A 9 5									
♣ J 8 6 5		♣ 10 7									
	South										
	♠ A K 5										
	♥ A K 6 5										
	♦ 8 7										
	♣ A K Q 2										

West leads a low spade, East plays the ten (lower of equals), and South wins the king. As you can see, South has seven sure tricks outside the diamond suit, which is his best suit in the combined hands.

Let's see what happens if South leads a diamond now. West plays low and dummy plays the king. If East takes the trick, South will still have another diamond and will be able to take four more diamond tricks and make his contract easily.

What if East does not take the first diamond trick? What if East takes the second diamond instead? South will have no way of getting to dummy's diamonds and will make only one diamond trick instead of four, thus being defeated one trick.

But wait a minute! What if East decided to take the third diamond trick? Then South would make his contract, as he only needs two tricks in diamonds. Clearly, it is right for East to take precisely the second diamond trick, because South has exactly two diamonds. How can East tell?

Before you answer, look at this deal:

	North				
	♠ 7 6 3 2				
	♥ 7 2				
	♦ K Q J 10				
	♣ 9 4 3				
West	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	East
N					
W E					
S					
♠ J 9 8		♠ Q 10 5 4			
♥ Q J 10 6		♥ 9 8 5			
♦ 8 2		♦ A 9 5 4			
♣ J 8 7 6		♣ Q 10			
	South				
	♠ A K				
	♥ A K 4 3				
	♦ 7 6 3				
	♣ A K 5 2				

This time West leads the ♥Q against South's 3NT. South has six sure tricks and must try to set up the diamonds.

Let's say South leads a diamond at Trick 2. If East takes the ace, South will have established three tricks in diamonds and will make his game contract. Indeed, if East takes the second diamond, which was the correct play on the previous hand, South will still make his contract, because South will have a third diamond with which to get to dummy.

On this particular hand East must take the *third* diamond to defeat the contract. By taking the third diamond, East will hold South to two diamond tricks. But how does East know to take the second diamond on the first deal and the third diamond on the second deal?

Simple. *West* tells East which diamond to take — not in words, but with something called a **count signal**.

Before a discussion of the count signal you must understand this: Whenever declarer is setting up a long suit in dummy and there are no side entries in dummy to the suit, the de-

fender with the ace must win the trick at the same time declarer is running out of that suit in his hand.

This means that if declarer started with one card in dummy's suit, the defender with the ace should take the first trick. If declarer started with two cards, the defender should take the second trick, and so on. In this manner, declarer will be prevented from getting over to dummy to use the rest of the tricks in that suit. You are severing declarer's communication with dummy.

Now let's take another look at both of these deals. In the first deal South led a diamond at Trick 2 and West, who is the key man in this operation, must tell East how many diamonds he has. Once East can figure out how many diamonds West has, he can figure out how many diamonds South has and thus know which diamond trick to win.

Rule: When using the count signal (whenever declarer is establishing dummy's long suit) the defender with three small cards must play his lowest card first. With two small cards the defender must play his higher card first.

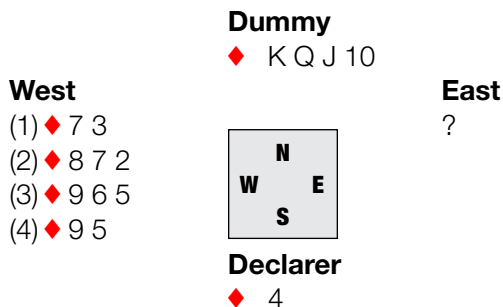
For the time being we will not worry about the defender having four or five small cards, although it can't hurt to know that with four small cards the defender plays his second highest and then his lowest, and with five small cards his lowest first.

In the first example, West must play his ♦2, his lowest card in the suit, to show East an original holding of three diamonds. East can then figure out that if West started with three diamonds South must have started with two; thus, he can confidently win the second diamond trick.

Now take a look at the second deal. When South leads a diamond at Trick 2, West must play the ♦8 to show East a doubleton. East can then figure by looking at his own diamond holding and dummy's how many diamonds South has. In

this case East can figure that South has three and can confidently win the third trick, cutting declarer off from dummy's fourth diamond.

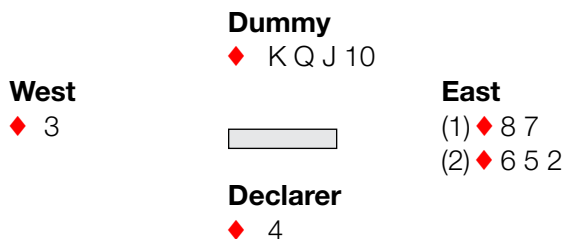
Let's do a little practicing:



Let's say you are defending a notrump contract (although the count signal is the same against a suit contract) and declarer leads the ♦4 up to dummy's strength. Which diamond should you play?

In cases (1) and (4) you should play your higher diamond. In the middle two cases you should play your lowest diamond. In this way your partner will be able to tell which diamond to take with his presumed ace. If declarer has the ace it won't matter which diamond you play, but since you don't know who has it you must presume it is your partner.

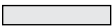
Incidentally, you would give the same count signal if you were East and declarer was leading up to dummy:



In this case, West might have the ace and be waiting to see which diamond you play so he will know which trick to take

with his ace. In case (1) you should play the eight and in (2) the two.


Now let's see how good you are at reading your partner's count signal.

	Dummy	
	♦ K Q J 10	
		
West	Declarer	East (You)
♦ 3	♦ 2	♦ A 8 7 5

Declarer leads the ♦2 and partner plays the three. How many diamonds does declarer have and which diamond should you plan to take?

Partner is playing his lowest diamond so he must have three; that leaves declarer with two diamonds, so you should take the second round of diamonds with your ace.

Try this:

	Dummy	
	♦ K Q J 10 9	
		
West	Declarer	East (You)
♦ 8	♦ 2	♦ A 7 4

Declarer leads the ♦2, partner plays the eight. Which trick do you plan to take?


You should figure your partner for a doubleton and that leaves declarer with three cards in the suit. So you should take the third diamond trick.

There are a couple of other pointers about this count signal.

- The player with the ace does not have to give his partner the count, but the player with the small cards *must* give his partner the count.


- If there is a side entry to the dummy (e.g. an ace or a king) the count signal loses some of its effectiveness, but it should still be given.

The count signal is used primarily when declarer is setting up dummy's long suit. Of course, the long suit does not always have KQJ10. It might look like this:

	Dummy	
	♦ Q J 10 9	
West		East
♦ 8 2		♦ A 7 6 5
	Declarer	
	♦ K 4 3	

South leads the ♦K and West plays the eight. East now can count West for a doubleton and win the third round of diamonds. The play would be the same if the East and West cards were reversed.

Here's a tricky application of the count signal:

	Dummy	
	♦ A Q J 10 9	
West		East
♦ 7 6 2		♦ K 8 3
	Declarer	
	♦ 5 4	

South leads the ♦5 and West plays the deuce, showing three cards in diamonds. East can now deduce that South has two diamonds. Assuming South finesses the ♦Q, East should play low! South will probably think that West has the king and return to his hand to repeat the finesse; he is due for a shock. When South finesses the diamond a second time, East wins the king and South may never be able to use the rest of dummy's diamonds.

Notice that if East takes the first diamond with the king, South still has another diamond to get over to dummy's good tricks.

THE DISCARD SIGNAL

Many times at notrump, either your partner or the declarer will be playing a suit in which you have no more cards. In these cases you must make a discard, and the discards you make can show either strength or weakness.

Basically, there are two types of discard signals:

- A high discard indicates strength in the suit being discarded. For example: if you were going to discard from AK852 and you wanted to let partner know about your strength, you would discard the eight. This is known as an **encouraging** (or positive) signal.
- A low discard indicates weakness in the suit being discarded. This is known as a **discouraging** (or negative) signal; for example, discarding the deuce from 832. Low means 'no'!

Very often it will be difficult to determine whether partner is making an encouraging or discouraging signal from seeing only one card. However, if he gets a chance to make a second discard in the same suit he can usually clear up this confusion.

Discarding high then low in the same suit shows strength. Therefore, a discard of the four followed by the deuce indicates strength in the suit. A low-high discard in the same suit, such as the seven followed by the eight, indicates weakness. Naturally, it is easier to decide which signal your partner is making after you see two cards, but you don't always have that luxury.

Is it better to make encouraging or discouraging signals? Logic should tell you that negative signals are better at notrump, because you can then keep all of your cards in your best suit — keep winners (or potential winners) and throw losers. Try to make discards from your weaker suits as far as possible. For example, assume that you must select between discarding from the ♠AK108 or the ♥5432 against a notrump contract and you can make only one discard. You should not waste any of your good spades (the AK108 suit) but should

discard the ♥2 (your 5432 suit). The ♥2 is just as emphatic a denial as the eight or ten would be an encouragement, and this way you retain all your good cards.

Two Negative Signals Equals One Positive Signal!

	Dummy										
	♠ 8 7 5 3										
	♥ J 8 4										
	♦ A J 10										
	♣ K 6 5										
West	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		East
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ A 9 6 4 2		♠ —									
♥ 7 3		♥ A K Q 10									
♦ 8 7 4		♦ 9 6 5 3 2									
♣ 10 9 7		♣ 8 4 3 2									
	Declarer										
	♠ K Q J 10										
	♥ 9 6 5 2										
	♦ K Q										
	♣ A Q J										

South is declarer in 3NT and West leads the ♠4. South wins with an honor, and East discards the ♦2, showing no interest in diamonds. At this point West knows that South started with ♠KQJ10 as East is void.

South decides to establish his spades and returns one.

On the second round of spades West wins the ace and East discards the ♣2, showing no interest in clubs. Now it is easy for West to shift to the ♥7. East then can run off *four* heart tricks and defeat the contract one trick. If instead, East had wasted the ♥10 in order to give an encouraging signal, the defense could only have taken three heart tricks and declarer would have made the contract.

KEY POINTERS

- When partner leads an honor card and you have an equal honor, you normally play a high spot card unless you have a doubleton honor, in which case you unblock by playing your honor.
- If partner leads the jack or the ten against notrump, you normally cover with the king or ace to protect your partner's holding and to prevent declarer from taking a possible cheap trick.
- If partner leads an honor and you have no honor in his suit, play your lowest card.
- If you lead an honor, watch whether your partner, by his play, is beginning an encouraging signal with an equal honor or is warning you that he has no honor cards.
- When declarer begins establishing his long suit in dummy, the defender with weakness in dummy's long suit must give his partner a count signal. He does this by playing his lowest card if he has three cards and his highest card if he has a doubleton.
- When discarding, keep in mind that there are two types of signals — encouraging and discouraging. An encouraging discard is the discard of a high spot card to indicate strength in the suit discarded. A discouraging discard is the discard of your smallest card in a suit to indicate weakness.
- As a general rule, better players make discouraging discards against notrump in order to retain their high cards. Less experienced players are more apt to make encouraging discards.
- By making discouraging discards in two different suits you are implying strength in a third suit.

- A high-low discard in the same suit indicates strength; a low-high discard in the same suit indicates weakness.
- Never discard your last card in the suit that your partner has led. You may get the lead and want to play that suit. As a general rule you should never discard down to a void or a singleton in a suit even if you are very weak in that suit. The reason is that when declarer plays the suit and you have no more he will know immediately what cards your partner has and will make all the proper finesses. Try to confine your discouraging discards to longer weak suits.
- Remember — you are trying to give your partner information. Make it simple.

CHAPTER 5

SIGNALING AGAINST SUIT CONTRACTS

The agony of the discard is one of the most maddening things in bridge. R.F. Foster

What you're going to learn:


- » The three important signals against suit contracts
- » When to use each of them

There are three important signals to be learned when defending against suit contracts:

- The attitude signal
- The queen from queen-jack when partner leads the ace
- The suit-preference signal

THE ATTITUDE SIGNAL

The first signal we have for use against suit contracts is the high-low signal to show either a doubleton or an equal honor. Partner can usually tell which you mean.

	North	
	♠ Q 6 5	
	♥ K Q 9 8	
	♦ A Q J 2	
	♣ 4 3	
West		East
♠ A K 9 8 2		♠ 10 3
♥ 4 3		♥ 5 2
♦ 10 9 8		♦ K 7 6 5
♣ 7 6 5		♣ Q J 10 9 8
	South	
	♠ J 7 4	
	♥ A J 10 7 6	
	♦ 4 3	
	♣ A K 2	

South is declarer in 4♥ and West leads the ♠A. East knows that West almost certainly has the king too.

East also sees that if West plays the king after the ace and then a third round of spades, East can ruff. In order to alert West to this possibility East plays the *ten* at Trick 1. He is beginning a **high-low**, an attitude signal which shows either a doubleton or an equal honor, and encourages partner to continue the suit.

West, on the other hand, knows that the ♠10 must be the beginning of a high-low to show a doubleton because the queen, which is the only equal honor East could have, is in the dummy. West, therefore, continues with the ♠K, and when East completes the high-low signal (technically called an **echo**) by playing the three, West leads a third spade, which East ruffs. East exits with the ♣Q (top of a sequence), and South must eventually take the diamond finesse, which

loses. The contract is defeated one trick. Contrast the above deal with this one:

	North	
	♠ Q 6 4	
	♥ K Q 9 8	
	♦ A Q 7	
	♣ 8 5 4	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W E</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">S</div> </div>	East
♠ A K 9 8 2		♠ 10 7 3
♥ 4 3		♥ 5 2
♦ J 10 9 8		♦ K 6 5 2
♣ 7 6		♣ A J 10 9
	South	
	♠ J 5	
	♥ A J 10 7 6	
	♦ 4 3	
	♣ K Q 3 2	

Once again South is declarer in 4♥ and West leads the ♠A. This time East does not have either a doubleton or an equal honor, so he does not begin a high-low. He simply plays the three.

West knows that East does not have a doubleton because East has played his smallest card. West now must realize that laying down the king next is not such a clever play. For one thing, South may be able to ruff and dummy's queen would then be good for a discard. Even if South does not ruff West's ♠K, the ♠Q is now established for a discard.

In cases like this it is often wise for the defender not to lay down his king and establish the queen in the dummy. Notice that if West does play a second spade now, South can later discard his losing diamond on the ♠Q and never have to take the diamond finesse. South eventually will lose one more trick to the ♣A, but he will make his game contract.

Now let's see what happens if West shifts to the ♦J (top of a sequence) instead of playing the ♠K. South is forced to finesse the queen and East will win the king. The defense will

then have two tricks, and they will still make the ♠K and the ♣A to defeat declarer one trick.

One of the hardest — but most necessary — things for a newer player to learn is that after he leads the ace from an ace-king he does not always continue with the king. This is especially true if, as in the deal above, the queen is in the dummy and partner has failed to start a high-low. In this case the defender should play the king after the ace only if he can definitely see that he will lose his king if he doesn't take it (for example, dummy may have a long suit, which declarer will use for discards).

Here is another time it would be unwise to continue with the king after the ace is led:

	North										
	♠ 7 6 5										
	♥ J 10 9 8										
	♦ A Q J 9										
	♣ 4 2										
West	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		East
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ A K J 3		♠ 9 8 2									
♥ 7 5 4		♥ 2									
♦ 6 3 2		♦ 10 8 7 4									
♣ Q J 9		♣ A 10 8 7 3									
	South										
	♠ Q 10 4										
	♥ A K Q 6 3										
	♦ K 5										
	♣ K 6 5										

South is declarer in 4♥ and West leads the ♠A. East has neither a doubleton nor an equal honor so he plays the two, his lowest spade.

West should realize that South must have the ♠Q and if he plays the king now he will make South's queen good. However, if West can put East on lead in another suit and East returns a spade, West will be able to capture South's queen

with the king; or, if South does not play the queen, West will be able to win the trick with the jack and then cash the king.

West tries to put East in with a club. (Notice that West does not lead through the strength in diamonds because he will simply be helping declarer to set up diamond tricks.) West leads the ♣Q (top of a sequence) and East, knowing from West's lead of the queen that South must have the king, takes the trick with the ace.

East now returns the ♠9 and South is in trouble. If South plays the ten, West will win the jack and then take the king to set the contract. If South plays the queen, West wins the king and then takes the jack. In either case South is defeated one trick because West was smart enough *not* to play his ♠K at Trick 2.


Here is an example of the 'equal honor' high-low:

	North	
	♠ 7 4 3	
	♥ A Q 5	
	♦ A K Q J	
	♣ 8 4 2	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W E</div> <div style="margin-top: 5px;">S</div> </div>	East
♠ A K 8 5		♠ Q 9 2
♥ 4 3 2		♥ 7 6
♦ 7 6 5		♦ 10 9 8 4
♣ A 6 5		♣ Q J 10 9
	South	
	♠ J 10 6	
	♥ K J 10 9 8	
	♦ 3 2	
	♣ K 7 3	

This time South settles in a contract of 2♥ and West leads his ♠A. East has an equal honor, the queen, and begins his signal (echo) by playing the nine. West realizes that East must have either a doubleton or the queen and in either case it must be right to lay down the king and play the suit a third time.

East wins the third spade with the queen and logically shifts to the ♣Q. After taking the first three spade tricks, the defense then collects the next three club tricks. Once again, accurate defense defeats the contract one trick.

A few words on the high-low signal: A defender is most apt to give this signal when partner leads the ace, which is by far the most common of all leads against suit contracts. There is, however, one occasion when the high-low is not given with a doubleton:

	Dummy	
	♠ 9 7 4	
		
West	Declarer	East
♠ A	?	♠ Q 6

This is when you don't signal with a doubleton: when you have the doubleton queen and your partner leads the ace. In this case, play your little one. The play of the queen under the ace has a special meaning, which we are about to look at right now.

THE QUEEN FROM QUEEN-JACK SIGNAL

When your partner leads the ace and you have the queen or the queen-jack, you know that your partner has led from the ace-king. Sometimes it is imperative that your partner know that he can put you on lead immediately. Look at this deal:

	North	
	♠ 7 4	
	♥ A Q 7 6	
	♦ A K Q J 10	
	♣ 3 2	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W E</div> <div style="margin-top: 5px;">S</div> </div>	East
♠ A K 9 6 3		♠ Q J 5 2
♥ 3 2		♥ 5
♦ 6 5 4		♦ 9 8 7
♣ A Q 8		♣ J 10 9 7 6
	South	
	♠ 10 8	
	♥ K J 10 9 8 4	
	♦ 3 2	
	♣ K 5 4	

South is declarer in 4♥ and West leads the ♠A. East knows immediately that West has the ace and king. Both defenders should realize when looking at that long, strong diamond suit in dummy that they must take their tricks in the black suits as quickly as possible before declarer throws away his losers on the long diamonds.

East plays the *queen* at Trick 1. This is a specialized signal guaranteeing the jack. In effect, it is equivalent of talking across the table to your partner. It says, ‘Partner, I know from your lead of the ace that you have the ace and king. I have the queen and jack, and it may be important for you to know this. For example, you may want to put me on lead early in the hand. It is entirely safe for you to lead a low spade, as I can take the second trick with my jack.’

Now, let’s look at the hand from West’s point of view after he sees the ♠Q played on the first trick. West has the ♣AQ. It is dangerous to lead the ace when you have the ace-queen because declarer may have the king and you will be presenting him with a free trick to which he is not entitled. On the other hand, if your partner leads a club *through* declarer you will take at least two tricks with your ace and queen.

Well, you can put your partner on lead if you wish by leading a low spade at Trick 2 to your partner's *guaranteed* ♠J. When East returns the ♣J through South, West will make two club tricks; again, the contract is defeated. If West plays anything other than a low spade at Trick 2, declarer makes 4♥ easily.

Note that the play of the queen under the ace does not say, 'Partner, I want to be on lead!' It merely says: 'If you want me to be on lead, here's how to make that happen.' The play of the queen guarantees the jack or a singleton queen.

THE SUIT-PREFERENCE SIGNAL

Finally we come to a signal used when leading a card that you think partner is going to ruff.

	North	
	♠ Q J 8 7	
	♥ K Q J	
	♦ K Q 3	
	♣ 7 4 2	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">E</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">S</div> </div>	East
♠ 6 4 3		♠ 2
♥ 2		♥ A 10 9 7 6 3
♦ 8 7 4 2		♦ A 9 5
♣ J 10 9 5 3		♣ Q 8 6
	South	
	♠ A K 10 9 5	
	♥ 8 5 4	
	♦ J 10 6	
	♣ A K	

South lands in 4♠ and West leads his singleton ♥2, hoping his partner has the ace and will return the suit so he can ruff. East does have the ♥A and can recognize the lead as a singleton. The lead of one's lowest card promises either an honor or a singleton, and since East can see all the honor cards in the suit, he knows it is the latter in this case.

Once East recognizes the lead of the deuce as a singleton, he might, in his excitement, return the suit immediately and

allow West to ruff. West will then have to guess which suit to return so he can get another heart ruff. In this case, West must return a diamond to East's ace in order to get East in to lead another heart. But what if East had the ♣A instead of the ♦A? Then it would be important that West shift to a club at Trick 3 in order to get partner in for another heart ruff before declarer draws trumps.

Obviously, West will not know which suit to return after trumping the heart *unless East tells him*. As you know, talking across the table is strictly forbidden. Conveying information by way of looks and gestures is considered the lowest imaginable transgression against bridge ethics. Even raising or lowering your voice during the bidding to convey information is illegal. Clearly, we are going to have to tell our partner to return a diamond *by legal means* — with a signal — and we have a signal just for this purpose. It is called the **suit-preference signal**. Actually, the signal is easier to remember than the name.

It works like this: When your partner leads a short suit or what you have reason to believe is a short suit, you are going to try your hardest to return it as quickly as possible before declarer has a chance to draw partner's trumps. When you return this suit, you can tell your partner by the size of the card you return which of the remaining two suits (excluding the trump suit) you would like him to return after he ruffs.

If you want the higher-ranking suit returned, you should return the highest card you can afford in the suit you are leading for your partner to ruff. In the example above, the two possible suits for your partner to return are clubs and diamonds, and diamonds is the higher-ranking of the two. So you would return the *ten* of hearts, asking for a diamond from partner after he has ruffed the heart.

On the other hand, if you wanted a club back, you would return the ♥3, the lowest heart you can play, asking your partner to return the lower-ranking of the two remaining suits after he ruffs your heart lead.

But what if you have no preference which suit your partner returns after he ruffs the card you are playing back? In that case, return a neutral middle card, saying, 'Use your judgment partner. I am not sure which suit I want you to return after you ruff this card.'

Would you like to see this signal in action again?

	North	
	♠ Q 8 6	
	♥ K 10 2	
	♦ A K Q 10 7	
	♣ 5 4	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="display: flex; width: 100%; justify-content: space-between;"> W E </div> <div style="margin-top: 5px;">S</div> </div>	East
♠ A K J 9 4		♠ 10 2
♥ 7 6 3		♥ 5 4
♦ —		♦ J 9 8 3 2
♣ 9 8 7 6 2		♣ Q J 10 3
	South	
	♠ 7 5 3	
	♥ A Q J 9 8	
	♦ 6 5 4	
	♣ A K	

This is a deal that I try on my classes time and again, and they seldom find the winning defense.

South winds up in 4♥ and West leads the ♠A. East signals with the ten and West continues with the king and a third round of spades, which East ruffs. My students invariably return the ♣Q and South takes the rest of the tricks rather easily after drawing trumps.

If East returns a diamond rather than a club at Trick 4, West can ruff and the contract is defeated one trick. But how should East know to return a diamond rather than the more normal ♣Q? *West should tell East which suit to return.* West knows that East is going to ruff the third spade, and West, aware of his own void in diamonds, should return the *jack* of spades when giving East a ruff. East should recognize the jack as a very high card and should return the higher-ranking of the two remaining suits after ruffing. If East trusts West he will return a diamond at Trick 4 (providing West returns the ♠J at Trick 3), and the contract will be defeated.

Now, if you will remember what you have just read you will be armed with the three most important signals we have against suit contracts. They are:

- The echo, or high-low, to show either a doubleton or an equal honor. It is used most often when partner leads the ace.
- The queen from the queen-jack. This is used exclusively when partner leads the ace. It indicates possession of the jack (or perhaps a singleton queen) and tells the opening leader that it is safe to underlead his king if he wishes.
- The suit-preference signal. This is used when giving partner a ruff. If you lead an unnecessarily high card for partner to ruff, you are asking partner to return the higher-ranking of the two other non-trump suits. If you lead a low card for your partner to ruff, you are asking for the lower-ranking suit to be returned after partner ruffs. If you return a middling card, you are telling partner to use his judgment.

TEST YOURSELF

Now we are going to test your defense. When defending, you get to see only your hand and the dummy, so that will be the case here. You will be told the contract, the bidding and the lead, and you will have to decide what to play.

1.

Dummy

♠ A K Q 9 7

♥ J

♦ 10 5

♣ 9 7 6 5 4

West

♦ A



East (You)

♠ J 10 8

♥ 7 5 2

♦ Q J 6 3

♣ J 10 8

West

1♦

All pass

North

1♠

East

Pass

South

4♥

West, your partner, leads the ♦A.

- a) Which diamond do you play? (Don't read further until you have decided.)
- b) At Trick 2 your partner leads a low diamond (you did play the queen at Trick 1, didn't you?), and you win the second trick with the ♦J. Which suit do you play now?

2.

Dummy

♠ A Q J 10

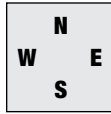
♥ A Q 4 3

♦ 7 5

♣ 7 5 4

West

♠2



East (You)

♠ K 9 8 7 3

♥ 6 2

♦ J 9 8

♣ A J 10

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	all pass	

West, your partner, leads the ♠2. Dummy plays the ten and you win with the king, with declarer playing the four.

a) Which suit do you return? Why?

b) Which card in that suit do you return? Why?

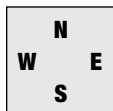
3.

Dummy

♠ A J 10 4
♥ Q J 6
♦ 3 2
♣ A Q 4 3

West

♥A



East (You)

♠ 3
♥ 9 3
♦ J 10 9 8 5
♣ J 9 8 6 5

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
dbl	2♠	Pass	4♠
All pass			

West leads the ♥A.

- Which heart do you play? Why?
- Assume that West continues the ♥K and then the ♥2, which you ruff. Which suit do you return? Why?

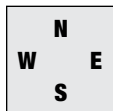
4.

Dummy

♠ Q 10 2
♥ 7 4 3
♦ 10 5 4
♣ K Q J 10

West (You)

♠ 6 4 3
♥ 9 5 2
♦ A K J 3
♣ 9 8 2



East

♦2

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
All pass			

This time you lead the ♦A. East plays the deuce.

- a) Do you continue diamonds at Trick 2? Why?
- b) If you do, which card do you play? If you don't, which suit do you shift to? If you shift, which card do you play in the suit to which you shift?

5.

Dummy

♠ K J 10 3

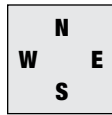
♥ A K

♦ J 10 7

♣ Q 10 9 3

West

♦ A



East (You)

♠ A 7

♥ J 8 7 3 2

♦ K 8 3 2

♣ A 5

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	all pass	

Partner leads the ♦A.

- a) What do you know about partner's diamond holding? What card do you play at Trick 1?
- b) Suppose partner plays another diamond at Trick 2, and you win with the king. What card do you play next? (Careful — there's tricky trap here!)

Solutions

1.

	North										
	♠ A K Q 9 7										
	♥ J										
	♦ 10 5										
	♣ 9 7 6 5 4										
West		East									
♠ 4 3 2		♠ J 10 8									
♥ 8 6		♥ 7 5 2									
♦ A K 9 8 2		♦ Q J 6 3									
♣ A Q 2		♣ J 10 8									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	South										
	♠ 6 5										
	♥ A K Q 10 9 4 3										
	♦ 7 4										
	♣ K 3										

- a) Under the ♦A you should play the queen to show the jack.
- b) When partner leads a low diamond to your jack at Trick 2, you should return a club — specifically, the jack. The spade suit is quite threatening, and you should try to get your club tricks before declarer discards them on his good spades after drawing trumps. Notice that a club shift by East through declarer's king defeats the contract one trick.

TIP: If you are part-way through a hand and don't know what to lead, use this guideline: 'When dummy's on your right, lead to the weakest suit in sight!'

2.

	North										
	♠ A Q J 10										
	♥ A Q 4 3										
	♦ 7 5										
	♣ 7 5 4										
West		East									
♠ 2		♠ K 9 8 7 3									
♥ K 5		♥ 6 2									
♦ 10 6 4 3 2		♦ J 9 8									
♣ Q 9 8 6 3		♣ A J 10									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	South										
	♠ 6 5 4										
	♥ J 10 9 8 7										
	♦ A K Q										
	♣ K 2										

- a) You should return a spade, because your partner's lead of the deuce indicates a singleton or low from an honor. As it can't be low from an honor (you can see all the honors between your hand and dummy), it must be a singleton.
- b) You know that your partner is going to ruff your spade return, so you should return your *three of spades* to ask your partner to play a club after ruffing the spade. Remember, when you return a low card for your partner to ruff he is supposed to return the lower-ranking suit, which in this case is clubs. You will then return another spade, and partner's second ruff will defeat the contract one trick.

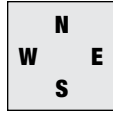
3.

North

♠ A J 10 4
♥ Q J 6
♦ 3 2
♣ A Q 4 3

West

♠ 9 6 2
♥ A K 8 5 2
♦ K Q 7 6 4
♣ —



East

♠ 3
♥ 9 3
♦ J 10 9 8 5
♣ J 9 8 6 5

South

♠ K Q 8 7 5
♥ 10 7 4
♦ A
♣ K 10 7 2

- a) You should play the ♥9 to show a doubleton.
- b) You should return a club, because your partner has asked you to. Your partner knew you were going to ruff the third round of hearts, so he didn't have to return the deuce. If he wanted you to return a diamond after ruffing the heart, he would have returned a higher heart.

Bridge is an unusual game. With all the points the opponents have, they cannot make 4♠ against a good defense; yet your side can make 5♦ with no trouble.

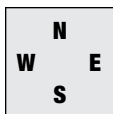
4.

North

♠ Q 10 2
 ♥ 7 4 3
 ♦ 10 5 4
 ♣ K Q J 10

West

♠ 6 4 3
 ♥ 9 5 2
 ♦ A K J 3
 ♣ 9 8 2



East

♠ 7 5
 ♥ A J 10 8 6
 ♦ 7 6 2
 ♣ 7 5 4

South

♠ A K J 9 8
 ♥ K Q
 ♦ Q 9 8
 ♣ A 6 3

- a) You should not continue with diamonds at Trick 2 because your partner's play of the two has denied either a doubleton or the queen. As declarer must have the queen, you must try and put your partner in to lead through the declarer in order to capture the queen.
- b) You should shift to a heart, because the clubs are too strong in the dummy. If your partner has the ♣A he will always get in to play a diamond through declarer. But if declarer has the ♣A, you must put your partner in immediately in hearts before declarer uses the club suit to discard losers from his hand.

You should shift to the ♥9 (top of nothing) to tell your partner you have no interest in that suit. East will win the ace and return a diamond, allowing you to take a total of three diamond tricks and one heart to defeat the contract. If you lead the ♦K at Trick 2 you will make only two diamonds and one heart, and declarer will make his contract.

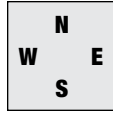
5.

Dummy

♠ K J 10 3
♥ A K
♦ J 10 7
♣ Q 10 9 3

West

♠ 6 4 2
♥ 10 9 5 4
♦ A 4
♣ J 6 4 2



East (You)

♠ A 7
♥ J 8 7 3 2
♦ K 8 3 2
♣ A 5

South

♠ Q 9 8 5
♥ Q 6
♦ Q 9 6 5
♣ K 8 7

- a) Play the ♦8. When partner leads an ace, without holding the king, he will usually have a short suit. You want to encourage him to continue because you have the ♦K.
- b) After winning the ♦K, lead the ♣A. You need to take six tricks — you have control of trumps (the ♠A) and you want to get a ruff yourself. Partner will discourage of course, but this time you ignore him (because you can see how to beat the contract!) and continue with the ♣5. Declarer wins this and plays a trump. You win with the ♠A and *now* give partner a diamond ruff, leading the ♦2 to ask for a club return. Partner mutters under his breath, 'It's about time!' If West does not lead a club back after ruffing the diamond, it is time to get a new partner!

Note that if you lead back a diamond at Trick 3, West gets his ruff right away. He can now lead back a club, which you win, but even if you lead back another club now, there is no way to get your partner in to give you a club ruff. Declarer will make the contract.

KEY POINTERS

- Signaling at the bridge table amounts to cheating — legally. You can make the cards speak for you if you use the proper signals and your partner understands them. The reason this is legal is that your opponents are entitled to ask what kind of signals and leads you make.
- The most important signaling comes at Trick 1, but signals are used by the defense throughout the hand. Without accurate signals defenders are usually in the dark as to what to play. Signals are your seeing-eye dog, your lantern in the dark!
- The most important signal at suit contracts is the echo or high-low signal, used most often when partner leads an ace, to indicate a doubleton or an equal honor. (In this case, the equal honor will be the queen.) The defender who leads the ace must watch his partner's card carefully to ascertain whether a high-low is in the making, or a low-high. A low-high signal indicates no doubleton or equal honor in the suit being led.
- A special signal is used when partner leads the ace and you have both the queen and the jack. As partner almost always has the king also, you needn't worry about wasting honors. You should play the *queen* to indicate possession of the jack. Frequently partner will be able to play low to your jack and you will be able to lead another suit through declarer and enable your partner to make an extra trick or two.
- When giving partner a ruff you must remember that you can tell him which suit to return after he ruffs. This is done by simply leading your lowest card if you want partner to return the lower-ranking suit (outside of trumps) and the highest card you can spare for partner to ruff if you want the higher-ranking suit (outside of trumps) returned. Assume for a moment that diamonds are trumps and you are leading a heart, which you know your partner is going to ruff. If you want your partner to return a club (the lower-ranking suit), you should return a low

heart for him to ruff; if you want a spade back (the higher-ranking suit), you should return a high heart.

- In addition to these signals, the defenders also use many of the signals that were discussed in Signaling vs. Notrump.
 - » The count signal is used against suit contracts. Whenever declarer attempts to establish his long suit in dummy, the defender with weakness in that suit is supposed to play high-low with a doubleton or low-high with three cards.
 - » The discard signal is also used against suit contracts. When you are discarding (perhaps when declarer is drawing trumps), a high discard in a suit indicates strength in that suit, and a low discard indicates weakness. If one can make two discards in the same suit, a high-low discard (perhaps the seven followed by the three) indicates strength in the suit, but a low-high discard (perhaps the seven followed by the eight) indicates weakness.
- As a general rule for signaling you should remember this: If your partner leads an honor card to a trick and you like the suit he has led, encourage your partner to continue the suit by giving him as high a spot-card as you can afford. If, on the other hand, you wish him to play something else, play a low card.

No doubt you are beginning to think that there are too many signals for you to remember. Don't worry about remembering all the signals at once; it's almost impossible unless you play quite a bit. Most players confuse signaling with leading. When you *lead* a low card, you are promising strength in the suit.

Maybe this chart will help:

Leading:	A low card indicates strength
Discarding:	A low card indicates weakness
Leading:	A high spot-card indicates weakness
Discarding:	A high spot-card indicates strength

CHAPTER 6

SECOND-HAND PLAY

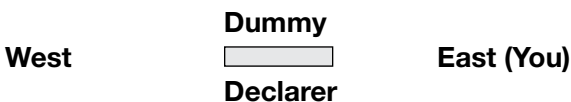
The principles of third-hand play are based upon the relations of the partners' hands to each other, while those of second-hand play rest almost exclusively on the strength or weakness of the hand itself... R.F. Foster

What you're going to learn:

- » Second hand usually plays low when a low card is led
- » How to recognize when you must not play low
- » When to cover an honor with an honor
- » When not to

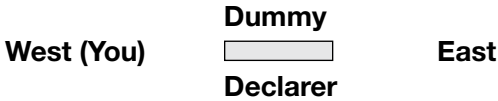
You have just arrived at the turning point of your defensive career! If you can understand second-hand play, then in one fell swoop you will have overtaken 90% of the world's bridge players.

Why is second-hand play so difficult? Mainly, because you have to think. However, don't worry. There are a few rules that will eliminate most of your problems (but not all!). For a start, you must keep in mind that when you are second to play, either the dummy or the declarer will be the first. When dummy leads a suit first we have this situation:



In this situation, you are second to play and you cannot see the hand that plays after you.

Alternately you may be sitting in the West position:



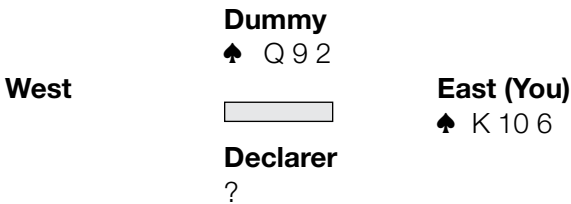
In this case, declarer leads the suit first and you can see the hand that plays after you. It goes without saying that it is easier to know what to do in this situation.

In all the following examples you are to assume that South is the declarer and the contract is notrump. (This is just for simplicity — second-hand play varies slightly between notrump and suit contracts, but any variance will be mentioned.)

Finally, an excellent move to make before attacking this chapter is to remove the spade suit from any nearby deck of cards. Lay out all the diagram positions in front of you and follow the explanations card for card. The extra time required to do this will be refunded a hundredfold when you are actually at the bridge table.

DUMMY IS TO YOUR RIGHT

We will begin by assuming that the dummy is to your right and that declarer is leading from dummy. You are East, second to play. For the sake of simplicity the suit will always be spades.



Assume that the dummy leads the deuce and you are next to play. Which card should you play — the six, ten, or king?

Rather than be tormented every time this type of situation comes up you should remember the general rule:

Rule: When dummy is to your right and declarer leads a low card from dummy, second hand should also play a low card.

Therefore, the correct play with the East hand is the six. Perhaps you have heard the expression, ‘Second hand low’. It is to this type of play that the expression refers.

However, if dummy leads the queen, East should cover with the king.

Rule: When an honor is led from dummy, second hand covers an honor with a higher honor if he has one.


(You will remember that the ten or higher is considered an honor).

Simply remembering these two rules (*second hand low and cover an honor with an honor*) will allow you to survive in most bridge games until you learn when these rules don’t apply.

TIP: There is no bridge rule without an exception.

It might be added here that most players follow these two rules without ever knowing why. However, once you know why, your second-hand play will become a little more polished.

All right. Why does second hand play low when a low card is led from dummy? Study this example closely:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 9 2	
West		East (You)
♠ J 8 7 3		♠ K 10 6
	Declarer	
	♠ A 5 4	


Dummy leads the two and you are second to play. Remember, *you cannot see the declarer's hand*. First, notice what happens if you play your king. Declarer, who was going to play the ace anyway, now captures your king, which automatically makes the queen in dummy high.

Next let's see what happens if you play your ten. Declarer wins the ace and might decide to lead a little one back and finesse the nine. This will force your king and again make dummy's queen good — two tricks for declarer.

Now let's do it right. You play your six and declarer wins the ace. You still have the K10 hovering over dummy's Q9, and declarer takes only one trick, the ace.

A typical statement at this point is: Fine, I can see that I should not play my king if declarer has the ace, but how do I know that? What if my partner has the ace?

All right. We are going to give your partner the ace and see what happens:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 9 2	
West		East (You)
♠ A 8 7 3		♠ K 10 6
	South	
	♠ J 5 4	

Dummy leads the deuce. If you play the king, it takes the trick. Your partner takes a second trick with the ace, but the

opponents still make one trick with the queen. However, if you play the six, declarer will play the jack and your partner will win the ace. Now you still have the K10 over dummy's queen and your side will take three tricks to declarer's none.

You can see that even if your partner has the ace, it still pays to play low. *Honor cards were put on this earth to capture or to cover other honor cards.*

Another important point is that when dummy leads a low card, you normally play low and do not play a middle card, such as a nine or ten, to signal your partner that you are strong in the suit. We only signal that we have high cards when partner is leading a suit, *not* when declarer is leading the suit. Nines and tens are too important to squander. Very often you will be throwing away a trick. For the time being, either play your lowest card or cover an honor with an honor.

To return to the second rule, why cover when an honor is led from dummy? The average beginning player sees covering as simply wasting an honor. When a queen is led from dummy the beginner hesitates to cover for fear that the king will be lost to the ace.

This is the type of thinking that you must eliminate immediately! Look:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 3	
West	▬	East (You)
♠ 9 8 7 5 2		♠ K 10 6
	Declarer	
	♠ A J 4	

If dummy leads the queen and East covers (correctly), South wins the ace. South also wins a trick with the jack, *but East wins the third spade trick with the ten.*

Now let's see what happens if East plays the six (incorrectly) under the queen. Declarer plays the four and the queen takes the trick. Dummy now leads the three and South still

has the AJ over East's K10. South simply covers the ten with the jack and takes all three tricks. In this case covering the queen with the king will *promote* the ten to a third-round winner for you. This is the reason for covering in the first place: *To promote lower cards (tens and nines) for either you or your partner.*

The foregoing statement should also answer your next question, 'But what if I don't have the ten?' The answer is that you are covering in hopes your partner has the ten.

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 3	
West	▬	East (You)
♠ 10 8 7		♠ K 5 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A J 9 6 2	

If you cover the queen with the king, your partner will eventually make a trick with the ten. If you do not cover, declarer will take five tricks instead of four. (Declarer will play low on the queen and then finesse the jack.)

If your partner does not have the ten it doesn't matter whether you cover or not because your king will never take a trick anyway. You might as well cover and pray.

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 3 2	
West	▬	East (You)
♠ 8 7 6		♠ K 5 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A J 10 9	

Dummy leads the queen. If you cover, South takes the king with his ace and the jack, ten and nine are all good. However, if you don't cover, the queen takes the trick. Then a low card is led to declarer's ten, the ace catches your king, and you still don't take a trick.

The whole point is to show you that you are not wasting your honor when it is used to cover another honor. Let your kings die valiantly! Remember that your kings won't rebel if you use them to smother queens! They will even be proud to come to rest on jacks and tens. For that matter, queens also like to smother jacks and tens.

	Dummy	
	♠ J 5	
West	▬	East
♠ 9 4 3 2		♠ Q 7 6
	Declarer	
	♠ A K 10 8	

Assume that you are East and the jack is led from dummy. You should cover with the queen — and watch what happens now. Declarer takes your queen with the king or ace. His ten is also high, but in the end your partner takes a trick with the nine! If you had not covered the jack, it would have taken the trick, your queen would have fallen under the ace, and declarer would make all four tricks instead of the three to which he is entitled.

TIP: Don't be stingy if an honor is led from dummy.

Now that you are sold on covering an honor with an honor you must be told that there is one huge exception!

When dummy has two or more equal honors, second hand should cover the *last* equal honor that is led.

	Dummy	
	♠ Q J 9	
West	▬	East (You)
♠ 10 8 7 6		♠ K 3 2
	Declarer	
	♠ A 5 4	

If dummy leads the queen or jack, you must cover not the first honor but the second one. Why? Observe what happens

if you cover the queen. South will take your king and can, if he wishes, play a small spade and finesse dummy's nine, giving him all three tricks in the suit.

Now let's see what happens if you cover the second (or last) equal honor. The queen is led and ducked all around. Next the jack is led, which you cover. Declarer wins the ace, but your partner's ten stands up for a third-round trick.

If declarer had had the ten, it wouldn't have mattered which honor you covered as you would have been unable to take a trick in any case. However, proper technique is to *cover the last equal honor being led from dummy*.

Here's the other reason why we only cover the last honor.

	Dummy	
	♠ Q J 10 9	
West	▬	(You) East
♠ 7 6		♠ K 8 4 2
	Declarer	
	♠ A 5 3	

Declarer leads the ♠Q from dummy. If you cover with the ♠K, declarer wins the ♠A and now gets four tricks in the suit. Look what happens if you do not cover. Declarer plays the ♠Q, you play low and he plays low. Now comes the ♠J. You play low again and so does he. Now the ♠10. Once more you play low, but declarer has run out of low cards in his hand and must now play the ace. He only gets three tricks in this suit as his ♠9 is *not* a winner — you still have your ♠K. Note that because dummy's ♠10 and ♠9 are sitting in conjunction with the ♠Q and ♠J, we treat them both as honor cards here.

TEST YOURSELF

For purposes of a quiz, assume that you are East:

1.

Dummy

♠ J 10 3

East (You)

♠ Q 7 6

- a) If dummy leads the jack first which card do you play?
- b) If dummy leads the ten first which card do you play?
- c) If dummy leads the three, which card do you play?

2.

Dummy

♠ Q 8 3

East (You)

♠ K 9 2

- a) If dummy leads the queen, which card do you play?
- b) If dummy leads the eight, which card do you play?
- c) If dummy leads the three, which card do you play?

Solutions

1. a) Play the six. Prepare to cover the last equal honor.
b) Play the six. Same reason as above.
c) Play the six. When dummy plays a low card, you play a low card.
2. a) Play the king. Cover an honor with an honor unless there is an equal honor in dummy.
b) Play the two. As a general rule, spot cards are not covered.
c) Play the two. When dummy plays a low card, you play a low card.

In none of the examples given so far did second hand have the ace. What should second hand do with the ace — take the trick, or play low?

At this point the reader is gently reminded that any ‘rule’ dealing with either the bidding, play, or defense is simply a guide. Each deal is different, and for that reason one is always developing at the game of bridge.

Until now, our general rule for second-hand play has been to play low if dummy plays low and to cover an honor with an honor unless there are two or more equal honors in dummy. Remember that when you have the ace of the suit being led, you cannot lose it if you play low (remember, this is notrump). You will simply make it later. In a suit contract the situation is not always as clear, however, and even the best players have been known to err.

As a general rule, *do not play your ace the first time the suit is led unless it happens to be the setting trick or you can use it to cover another honor.* Naturally there are exceptions to this. One notable one is at notrump when you are anxious

to return your partner's original lead. In this case you might play the ace in order to get in right away and lead partner's suit. However, it is generally right to play low the first time declarer or dummy leads a suit in which you have the ace (unless you are capturing an honor). This deal will help you to understand why:

	North	
	♠ A Q 10 2	
	♥ 5 4 3 2	
	♦ A K Q	
	♣ A 2	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	East
♠ 4		♠ 6 5
♥ Q 10 8 7		♥ A 9 6
♦ 4 3 2		♦ 8 7 6 5
♣ Q J 10 9 8		♣ 7 6 5 4
	South	
	♠ K J 9 8 7 3	
	♥ K J	
	♦ J 10 9	
	♣ K 3	

South is declarer in 6♠, and West leads the ♣Q. Looked at from South's point of view, this hand has losers in exactly one suit — hearts.


Sooner or later South must lead a heart from dummy (weakness to strength). If East panics and flies up with the ace, South will be quite pleased. South will play the jack under the ace, the king will be good, and he will make his slam easily.

But what if East casually plays the six when dummy leads a low heart? Unless East is sitting too close to the table, South will not know who has the ♥A. He may decide West has it and insert the jack hoping to drive out the ace — a reasonable play, but not on this hand. West will win the queen, and the next time hearts are played East would fly up with the ace because it will then be the *setting trick*. Also, if the contract is 7♠ or 7NT, East should fly up with the ♥A the first time

the suit is led because, again, it would constitute the setting trick.

Now you know the reason for ducking with an ace the first time the suit is led. You may force declarer to guess if he has both the king and the jack.

Still another reason for ducking with an ace can be seen by studying this layout:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 3 2	
West		East (You)
♠ 10 7 6 4		♠ A J 5
	Declarer	
	♠ K 9 8	

Assume dummy leads the ♠2. If you play the ace, declarer makes two tricks, the king and the queen. If you play low, declarer will win with the king but later you will make both your ace and jack and declarer will be held to only one trick. In other words, your ace should capture a big card, not a tiny one. If you hop up with your ace, experts call this ‘capturing air’. By holding it back one time you will be able to capture dummy’s queen later in the play. Notice also that it would be a serious error to play the jack the first time. Declarer would win the king and then could finesse the nine and drive out your ace.

Tip: Be ready to play low QUICKLY (some call that smoothly). To hesitate and then play low gives the whole show away. It is important to mention here that when you have cards like 752 and therefore have no reason to hesitate, you may be trying to fool declarer but this is unethical and illegal. In the same way, never hesitate with a singleton.

The idea of giving declarer problems (or puzzles) arises in a somewhat similar situation:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 3 2	
West	▬	East (You)
♠ J 9 8 7		♠ K 5 4
	Declarer	
	♠ Q 10 6	

Assume that North leads a low card from dummy and you, East, are second to play. You can see the ace in dummy, so you know your king will take the trick; but should you play the king?

This is a most difficult question to answer. Suffice it to say that half the time it is right to duck and half the time it is right to win the king! This is one of the aspects that makes bridge a challenging game. In the diagram situation it would be better for East to play low. South does not know who has the king (unless East has given away the show by thinking about what to play) and will almost always finesse the ten, hoping to drive out the king. In this case, the ten would lose to the jack and you would make your king later, scoring two tricks instead of one. Again, if the king were the setting trick you would play it at your earliest opportunity.

Now we move into a different area. If second hand has two or three equal honor cards and wants to ensure that he takes a trick, which honor should be played?

	Dummy	
	♠ 4 3 2	
West	▬	East (You)
♠ 9 7 6		♠ K Q J 8
	Declarer	
	♠ A 10 5	

Dummy leads a low card. East is naturally afraid to play the eight for fear declarer might win a trick with the ten. East can assure himself of at least two tricks in the suit by simply playing one of his equal honors. Whenever a defensive player decides to play from equal honors he should play his *lower* or *lowest* equal.

When playing from equals it is easiest to remember that you play the same honor in second seat that you would if your partner had led the suit to you. For example, in the diagram situation, if *West* leads the nine and dummy plays low, East should play the jack. Similarly, if dummy leads the suit first East should again play the jack. Only if *East* leads the suit originally should the king be played.

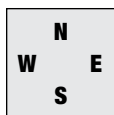
Again, as a general rule, a defender should tend to play one of his equal honors when he has three or more equal honors and not play an honor at all with only two equal honors.

TEST YOURSELF

Which card should East play in the following situations when a spade is led from dummy?

North (Dummy)

♠ 4 3 2



East (You)

1. ♠ J 10 6
2. ♠ J 10 9 7
3. ♠ Q J 6
4. ♠ Q J 10 7
5. ♠ K Q 6
6. ♠ K Q J 8 5
7. ♠ A K 5

Solutions


1. You should play the six because you have only two equal honors. However, it should be stated that there are times (usually later in the hand) when you will wish to play one of your two equals. If this is the case you should play your ten (the lower equal).
2. With three equal cards, a defender should play his lowest equal. The nine is the correct card.
3. The six is correct with only two equals. However, later in the hand you might decide to play your jack (if for example, the ace has already been played and you want to ensure that you take one trick).
4. The ten is the correct card here — lowest of equals.
5. This presents a choice. If you want to gamble for two tricks you can play low. If you want a quick trick you should play your queen, which will force out the ace and promote your king. At notrump you usually play low the first time in this situation, but defending against a suit contract you usually play your queen.
6. The jack — lowest of equals. You have three equals.
7. The king, even though you have only two equals. It would be a little far out to play low in this case unless you felt you absolutely needed three tricks in the suit.

You have just covered the most difficult aspect of second-hand play — when declarer plays *after you and you cannot see his hand*.

WHEN DUMMY IS TO YOUR LEFT


Just think how much clearer the situation becomes when you can see the cards in the hand that plays after you. That is precisely the situation when dummy is to your *left* and declarer leads up to dummy. In this case you are West.

Notice the difference in this simple example:

	Dummy	
	♠ A	
West (You)		East
♠ K Q J 4		♠ 5 3
	Declarer	
	♠ 10 9 8 7 6 2	

Assume that South leads a small spade up to dummy's ace. If you couldn't see the lone ace you would play your jack (lowest of three equals), to make sure you make at least two tricks. But in this case you needn't waste your jack because you can see that the ace is going to be played anyway. You eventually take three tricks instead of two.

Now consider this familiar situation:

	Dummy	
	♠ K J 10	
West (You)		East
♠ A 8 7 6		♠ Q 5 4 3
	Declarer	
	♠ 9 2	

Assume South leads a low spade towards dummy and you can see the KJ10. What should you do? That's an easy one. Any time you can see two or three honors in the dummy with a 'hole' (broken strength or broken honors such as KJ10, Q108, AJ9 or A1074, as opposed to solid strength such as QJ10 or KQJ) you should unhesitatingly play *low*, even if you have a card that can take the trick.

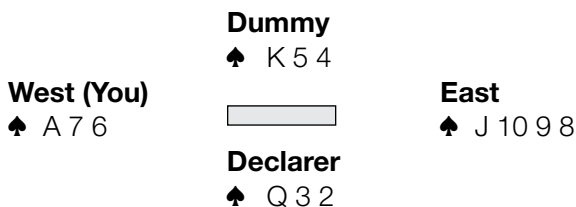
Declarer is very apt to insert a lower honor such as the nine, ten or jack, which your partner might be able to win. The next time the suit is led you can take your ace. This idea of ducking even though you can take the trick is very important, and unless the trick you can take is the setting one, don't panic. Simply play low; it will usually result in the gain of a trick!

Study this diagram:



Assume that South leads the five towards the dummy. You should play low in the West position without hesitation. Remember, you don't want to give away the fact that you could have taken the trick. Declarer with broken strength in dummy (a hole) is very apt to be taken in by your nonchalance. He will probably figure East for the king, as you made no effort to take the trick. With this in mind, South will usually insert the ten — hoping to drive out the king. But you will have fooled South. Your partner has the jack and not the king. He will win the jack and you will take your king later. Even if declarer guesses correctly and plays the queen when you play low, most of the time you will still make your king later in the hand.

Here is another common situation:



South leads the deuce towards the dummy. This time declarer has no choice. There is no hole in the dummy, but you

should still play low and allow the king to take the trick. If you hop up with your ace, the king will still be a good trick, but the problem is that you will have established the queen in declarer's hand for a second trick. If you play low and allow the king to win, you will then be in a position to capture declarer's queen with your ace, and declarer will make one trick instead of two. (Partner's jack will score a trick also.)

By now you should see that when declarer leads up to an honor or an honor combination in dummy, it usually pays to play low the first time even if you can take the trick unless, of course, it is the setting trick, in which case you should not take any unnecessary risks.

One of the most serious errors that the beginning player can make when he plays before dummy is to play a high-ish card to force declarer to play a higher card from dummy. For example:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 9 6 5	
West (You)	▬	East
♠ K 10 2		♠ Q
	Declarer	
	♠ J 8 7 4 3	

Assume that South leads a low card up to the dummy. *When dummy has higher cards than you, simply play low.* In other words, do not play the ten to 'force' the ace out of the dummy. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, declarer had every intention of playing the ace anyway, and your ten might be a vital card. In this case it would be a trick.

Situations like this also cause the beginning player frustration:

	Dummy	
	♠ A Q J	
West (You)	▬	East
♠ K 4 3		♠ 10 9 8 6
	Declarer	
	♠ 7 5 2	

South leads a low card up to dummy, and you can see the AQJ. Do not, under any circumstances, play the king! Your only chance to take a trick with the king is to play low. Who knows what declarer is going to do! He may play the ace, making your king good. Even if declarer finesses the queen, you are better off than if you had played your king. You might manage to take a trick with it later in the play.

A defender simply must accept the inevitability of not being able to take tricks with honor cards if higher honor cards are sitting to his left. The only possible chance to come to a trick in cases like this is to play *low*.

	Dummy	
	♠ A Q 10 7	
West (You)	▬	East
♠ K J 5 4		♠ 9 8 6 2
	Declarer	
	♠ 3	

South leads a low spade. You should see at a glance that it will do you no good to play an honor because dummy will simply top it with a higher honor. Play low without hesitating and hope for the best. Declarer may play the ace.

Should second hand ever play high? Of course. Second hand may wish to split (play one of his equal honors), or he may wish to cover an honor with an honor.

Remember, we haven't discussed the situations in which declarer is leading an honor from the closed hand towards the dummy. In all these examples declarer has been leading a small card up to dummy's honor strength.

To cover or not to cover?

We said earlier that when an honor card is led from the *dummy*, second hand generally covers an honor with an honor in the hopes of *promoting a lower honor for either himself or his partner*. Do you remember that when you covered an honor led from the dummy and you couldn't see what the declarer

held, you had to *hope* that you were promoting something for your partner or for yourself?

Now you can see the dummy and you can decide whether there is any possible chance for promotion:

	Dummy	
	♠ A Q 10 9	
West (You)	<input type="text"/>	East
♠ K 7 6 2		?
	Declarer	
	J	

South leads the ♠J. Should you cover? No, definitely not! You can see *all* the remaining honors including the nine in dummy, so you cannot possibly promote anything for your partner. (And you are aware from your own holding that you cannot possibly promote anything for yourself.)

	Dummy	
	♠ A Q 9	
West (You)	<input type="text"/>	East
♠ K 4 3		?
	Declarer	
	J	

Once again, South leads the ♠J. Should you cover? This time you should. If you cover and partner has the ♠10, it will become a third-round winner. If declarer has the ♠10, you cannot get a trick whether you cover or not.

	Dummy	
	♠ A J 10 2	
West (You)	<input type="text"/>	East
♠ K 9 8 7		?
	Declarer	
	Q	

South leads the ♠Q. Do you cover? You should. If you cover you will take a fourth-round trick in the suit with your nine.

If you don't and declarer has three spades, you won't take any tricks. Study the entire layout:

	Dummy	
	♠ A J 10 2	
West	▬	East
♠ K 9 8 7		♠ 4 3
	Declarer	
	♠ Q 6 5	

If you duck the queen, it will take the trick, with dummy playing the deuce. South will continue with a small card and the best you can do is play low; the ten will be successfully finessed. South, if he can, will then come back to his hand in a different suit and lead his remaining small card, finessing dummy's jack, and you will not take a single spade trick.

If the dummy did not hold the ♠2, but simply ♠AJ10, then it would have been quite correct *not* to cover. *When there are four cards in dummy the nine is often a vital card.* Now try this one:

	Dummy	
	♠ A K 10 2	
West (You)	▬	East
♠ Q 5 4		?
	Declarer	
	?	

South leads the jack. Do you cover? Your answer is yes. You should hope that your partner has the nine with three other small cards. In that case, the nine will become a fourth-round trick.

Another tip when deciding whether to cover or not:

TIP: Ask yourself what the dummy will look like if you don't cover and declarer finesses the honor that he is leading.

Back to our previous example:

	Dummy	
	♠ A K 10 2	
West (You)	<input type="text"/>	East
♠ Q 5 4		♠ 9 8 6 3
	Declarer	
	♠ J 7	

As you recall, South led the jack. Sitting West, you should picture what the dummy will look like if you play low and dummy also plays low. The dummy will have the AK10. Your queen is sure to fall under the ace and king, and the ten will then be good. This means that declarer will take four tricks in the suit if you do not cover.

Now picture the dummy if you do cover. The A102 will be in dummy, and if your partner also started with four cards in the suit declarer will only score three tricks.

Now try this one:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 2	
West (You)	<input type="text"/>	East
♠ K 4 3		?
	Declarer	
	Q	

South leads the queen. Should you cover? It would be unwise. Notice that this time the dummy has a doubleton ace. If you play low and allow the queen to win, the ace will take the next trick but you will take the third spade trick with your king.

You must assume when South leads the queen and the jack is not in the dummy that declarer has the jack. It would be a bad play on the declarer's part to lead a queen without the jack to back it up, and we must assume that declarer knows what he is doing. By playing low you have saved a trick, because this was the situation:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 2	
West	▬	East
♠ K 4 3		♠ 9 8 7 6 5
	South	
	♠ Q J 10	

If you had covered, South would have taken three tricks. By playing low, you hold him to two.

This next situation is very common. It is called a two-way finesse, as declarer has two choices as to how to play this combination of cards.

	North	
	♠ A 4 3	
West	▬	East
♠ Q 6 5		♠ 7 2
	Declarer	
	♠ K J 10 9 8	

South leads the jack, trying to coax West to cover. If West is smart he will play low, because he will know that South has the ten and there is no point in covering. South might now think that East has the queen, play the ace, and finesse right into West. So West will actually take a trick with the queen in this situation nine times out of ten if he doesn't cover — providing he plays smoothly (without hesitating). A second cousin to the above diagram is this run-of-the-mill position that finds defenders losing hundreds of tricks during the course of their bridge careers:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 4 3	
West	▬	East
♠ Q 6 5		♠ K 9 8 7
	Declarer	
	♠ J 10 2	

South leads the jack, and West makes the foolish play of covering with the queen. This allows dummy to take the ace

and later lead low towards the ten. East wins the king, but South makes the ten for a total of two tricks. If West plays low when the jack is led, East will win the king and South will be held to one trick in the suit. (If South leads the ten the second time, West will cover.)

We finally must conclude that: *If declarer leads a queen or a jack from the closed hand and the immediate lower honor is not visible, declarer has that lower honor and you should not cover the first honor.*

Don't let this confuse you. In order to understand the above rule, all you have to do is turn yourself around and pretend you are East and can see the dummy:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q J 9	
West	▬	East (You)
♠ 10 8 7 6		♠ K 5 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A 3 2	

Remember we said that if the queen was led from dummy, you should not cover the first equal honor but the last. In this case, that means you should duck the queen but cover the jack. If you do this properly, partner will make a trick with the ten. If you cover the first honor, declarer will be able to finesse the nine and take three tricks.

Now turn yourself back around again and assume the West position:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 4 3	
West (You)	▬	East
♠ K 5 4		♠ 10 8 7 6
	Declarer	
	♠ Q J 9	

South leads the queen. What should you do? You should duck, on the assumption that South has the jack, and cover not the first equal honor but the last. Assume the jack is led

next. You are not sure who has the ten but you must cover in hopes it is your partner. If you could see that declarer had QJ10, you would not cover the jack either; but you can't, so you must hope partner has it.

What if the honor beneath the one that declarer is leading is visible in either your own hand or the dummy?

If the honor is in your hand you should cover:


	Dummy	
	♠ A 5 4	
West	[]	East
♠ K J 8 6		?
	Declarer	
	Q	

South leads the queen. You can see that if you cover you immediately promote your jack; that is reason enough.

However, when the next-lower honor is visible in dummy things are not always as clear:


	Dummy	
	♠ A 10 2	
West	[]	East
♠ K 9 8		?
	Declarer	
	J	

South leads the jack. Should West cover? The rule is that if the lower honor is visible in the dummy you should cover if there is any chance at all for promotion. In this case there is a good chance for promotion, as your partner might have the queen. This could easily be the position:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 10 2	
West		East
♠ K 9 8		♠ Q 7 6 5 4
	Declarer	
	♠ J 3	

If West ducks the jack, South makes two tricks by later finessing the ten. If West covers the jack, South makes only one trick.

Now try this one:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 10 9 8 7 6	
West		East
♠ Q 5 4		?
	Declarer	
	J	

South leads the jack. Should West cover? No. Even though the immediate lower honor is in dummy there isn't a hope of promoting a trick for your side and partner's king might be a singleton. Wouldn't you feel silly if you played the queen, dummy played the ace, and partner the king?

COVERING HONORS IN THE TRUMP SUIT

This is a very delicate subject; no matter how expert you are, you are bound to make some unfortunate decisions. (That's the term experts use when they make a mistake.)

When it comes to making a decision about covering an honor with an honor in the trump suit, the important point is to have some idea as to declarer's length in the suit. This comes from listening to the bidding. For example:

	Dummy	
	♠ J 3	
West	<input type="text"/>	East (You)
?		♠ Q 5 4
	Declarer	
	?	

Spades are trumps and dummy leads the jack. Should you cover? Before we can answer that question intelligently we must consider the bidding. Assume that South has opened 3♠.

We know that an opening bid of 3♠ shows a seven-card suit (once in a while a six-card suit). So your partner figures to have only one spade. If you remember that the only reason you cover an honor with an honor in the first place is to promote something for either yourself or your partner, in this case it would be clearly wrong to cover as you could not promote anything for yourself and you know your partner has a singleton. It would be foolish to cover. The suit may be divided like this:

	Dummy	
	♠ J 3	
West	<input type="text"/>	East
♠ 6		♠ Q 5 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A K 10 9 8 7 2	

South probably has no intention of finessing in spades, holding nine of them between the two hands. He is simply trying to bait you into covering. But you're too smart. You play low 'smoothly', as if you hadn't a care in the world. South will think that you don't have the queen; he will play the ace and the king and your queen will become a trick.

Now let's say the bidding has gone like this:

North	South
1♦	1♣
Pass	1♠

and the spade situation is somewhat similar, namely:

Dummy	East (You)
♠ J 3 2	♠ Q 5 4
<input type="text"/>	

Once again the jack is led from dummy. Should you cover? This time you should. South is playing the hand in his second suit, which is typically a four-card suit. If South has four spades, partner has three, and one of them might be the ten. Or he might even have better spades. The position may look like this:

West	Dummy	East (You)
♠ A 9 6	♠ J 3 2	♠ Q 5 4
	<input type="text"/>	
	Declarer	
	♠ K 10 8 7	

If you cover the jack with the queen, South will play the king and partner will win the ace. South's ten will be the highest trump, but partner's nine will take the third trick in trumps. All in all, by covering you will manage to take two trump tricks. If you don't cover, the jack will force the ace, and the next time declarer will lead low from dummy and finesse the ten. Your queen will fall under the king and declarer will lose only one trick instead of two.

TIP: Before covering an honor in the trump suit you must consider partner's probable length. If he has a singleton, you are not promoting anything for him if you cover. Therefore, if you are not promoting anything for yourself, don't cover.

Extending this principle a step further, we find that often we must be careful about covering an honor with an honor at notrump if declarer has shown considerable length in the suit during the bidding. Consider this bidding:

North	South
	1♣
1♠	3♣
3♥	3NT
Pass	

Let's assume that as East your club suit is:

	Dummy	
	♣ Q 5 4 3	
West	<input type="text"/>	East (You)
?		♣ K 2
	Declarer	
	?	

South has shown a six- or seven-card suit by jumping in clubs. If he leads the ♣Q from dummy, it is folly to cover. West has at most a singleton club and may even be void. If partner is void, declarer has seven clubs. With eleven clubs between the two hands declarer may not even be intending to finesse! *With this bidding*, a casual ♣2 played quickly would be best. On the other hand, if you cannot be sure of the club length in declarer's hand (the bidding may not have been so revealing), you should cover the queen in hopes of promoting a possible ten in your partner's hand.

At the risk of adding confusion, we need to look briefly at situations where declarer leads a ten. If declarer leads the ten, second hand must look to see if the jack is visible. If it is not, do not cover; if it is, cover only if there is a chance for promotion.

	Dummy	
	♠ A 4 3	
West	[]	East
♠ Q 7 6 2		?
	Declarer	
	?	

South leads the ten. West should not cover because the jack is not visible.

	Dummy	
	♠ A J 5	
West	[]	East
♠ Q 9 8		?
	Declarer	
	?	

South leads the ten. West should cover. Partner may have the king, in which case covering holds declarer to one trick. If West plays low, the declarer will finesse the ten and still have the ace-jack in dummy. This in turn will allow declarer to finesse a second time and make two tricks.

	Dummy	
	♠ A J 9 8 7	
West	[]	East
♠ K 6 5		?
	Declarer	
	?	

South leads the ten. The jack is visible, but West should not cover because there is no chance for promotion.

Now let's see how much you have digested. First, there is a quiz to see how you handle yourself when you are East and can't see the hand that plays after you (the closed hand). Then you move to West where dummy, or the exposed hand, plays after you. All the pertinent information, such as the bidding and whether you are defending a trump contract or notrump, will be given.

TEST YOURSELF, PART 1

You are East and dummy is on your right. You cannot see the hand that plays after you.

1. Declarer is leading a suit at notrump and you have no indication as to his length in the suit.

	Dummy	
	♠ J 10 4	
West	<input style="width: 100px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	East (You)
?		♠ K 7 5
	Declarer	
	?	

- a) If dummy leads the jack, which card do you play?
 - b) If dummy leads the ten, which card do you play?
 - c) If dummy leads the four, which card do you play?
2. It is again notrump, and there is no indication as to declarer's length. Declarer leads a low card from dummy. Which card would you play with each of the following holdings?

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 4 3	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> W E </p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> </div>	East (You)
?		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) ♠ K 9 6 2 b) ♠ Q J 10 c) ♠ A 8 5 d) ♠ J 10 9 8 2 e) ♠ Q J 5 2
	Declarer	
	?	

3. This time, you are dealing with the trump suit. You know from the bidding that declarer has either a five- or a six-card suit in the closed hand behind you. South leads the jack from the dummy. Which card would you play with each of the following holdings?

	Dummy	
	♠ J 4 3	
West	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">N</p> <p style="margin: 0;">W E</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">S</p> </div>	East (You)
?		a) ♠ K 10 9 b) ♠ Q 7 6 5 c) ♠ A 5 2 d) ♠ K 5 e) ♠ K 6 5 2
	Declarer	
	?	

Solutions, Part 1

- 1. a) ♠5 Cover the last of equal honors.
- b) ♠5 Cover the last of equal honors.
- ♠5 When dummy starts with a low card you generally play low also.
- 2. a) ♠2 Unless second hand has a specific reason for playing an honor he should normally play low when dummy leads a low card towards the closed hand.
- b) ♠10 The lowest of equal honors, just as if partner had led the suit to you.
- c) ♠5 Unless the ace would be the setting trick.
- d) ♠8 Lowest of equals.
- e) ♠2 Normally a defender must have three equals to put one up in this situation (the main exception being the ace and the king).

3. a) ♠K You are promoting the ten as a third-round trick for yourself.
- b) ♠5 Partner has at most a singleton, so you cannot promote anything for him by covering. Your own spot cards are so small that you cannot promote anything for yourself by covering, so you should play low. Partner might even have the singleton king.
- c) ♠2 Perhaps declarer is going to finesse the jack and your partner will win the queen. (In a side suit, an ace sometimes covers a jack, but not in the trump suit when partner is known to be short.)
- d) ♠K Partner has two or three cards in the suit, and if one of them is the ten there is a good chance for promotion.
- e) ♠2 Similar reason as 3(b).


TEST YOURSELF, PART 2

You are West and dummy is on your left.


1. Declarer is leading up to dummy in a notrump contract. He is evidently trying to establish this suit. In each case, declarer leads the ♠6. Which card would you play?

<p>West (You)</p> <p>a) ♠ A 10 8 7</p> <p>b) ♠ Q 5</p> <p>c) ♠ A 4 2</p>	<p>Dummy</p> <p>♠ K J 9 3</p>	<p>East</p> <p>?</p>									
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border: none; text-align: center; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> </div>				N		W		E		S	
	N										
W		E									
	S										
<p>Declarer</p> <p>♠6</p>											


2. Same situation as in (1). Declarer leads the ♠6 up to dummy in notrump. Which card would you play in each case?

	Dummy	
	♠ A 10 3	
West (You)		East
a) ♠ K 9 4 2		?
b) ♠ Q J 5		
c) ♠ Q 8		
d) ♠ K Q J 2		
	Declarer	
	♠6	

3. Again declarer is trying to establish a suit in a notrump contract. This time declarer leads the ♠J. Do you cover?

	Dummy	
	♠ A 10 9 8	
West (You)		East
a) ♠ K 4 3		?
b) ♠ K 4		
c) ♠ Q 4 3		
d) ♠ Q 4		
	Declarer	
	♠J	

4. It is notrump again, and declarer leads the ♠Q. Do you cover?

	Dummy	
	♠ A J 10 8	
West (You)		East
a) K 4 3		?
b) K 9		
c) K 9 4		
d) K 7		
	Declarer	
	♠Q	

5. Declarer leads the ♠Q in a notrump contract. Do you cover?

	Dummy										
	♠ A 4 3										
West (You)	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <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		East
	N										
W		E									
	S										
a) ♠ K 5 2 b) ♠ K J 10 c) ♠ K 6 5 2	Declarer	?									
	♠Q										

6. This time spades are trumps and declarer is known to have either a four- or five-card suit. Declarer leads the jack towards dummy. Do you cover?

	Dummy										
	♠ A 4 3 2										
West (You)	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <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		East
	N										
W		E									
	S										
a) ♠ Q 5 b) ♠ Q 7 5 c) ♠ K 7 5	Declarer	?									
	♠J										

Solutions, Part 2

1. a) ♠7 When dummy has a broken holding, second hand should play low in order to put declarer to a guess.
- b) ♠5 Same reason as 1(a).
- c) ♠2 Same reason as 1(a).
2. a) ♠2 Do not try to force honors out of the dummy unless you are sure to make a trick for yourself by doing so.
- b) ♠J In this case you are guaranteeing a trick for yourself by playing the jack. Your queen will

definitely be a third-round trick. If you play low, declarer might finesse the ten and you will not make any tricks in the suit. (But if dummy held AK10 originally, you should play low as you would not be guaranteeing a trick for yourself by playing the jack. Declarer would simply win your jack, return to his hand, and finesse the ten.)

- c) ♠8 No sense in wasting the queen here. Declarer may well be intending to play the ace and finesse into your queen. Remember that declarer cannot see that you have a doubleton.
- d) ♠J Here you should see that playing one of your equals (always the lower or lowest) will guarantee you two tricks.
3. a) No When dummy has all the intermediate spot cards it is impossible to promote anything for your partner. If you can't promote anything for yourself, don't cover.
- b) No Same reason as 3(a).
- c) No Same reason as 3(a).
- d) No Same reason as 3(a).
4. a) Yes In case your partner has four cards headed by the nine.
- b) No This time you can't promote anything for yourself or partner.
- c) No Same reason as 4(b). Your nine is going to fall the third time the suit is played, so there is no point in covering. The ♠8 is a very big card in dummy.
- d) Yes Same reason as 4(a).

5. a) No A good declarer will not lead the queen without the jack. Play low, and cover if the jack is led next.
- b) Yes This time you should see that you are going to promote the jack and ten by covering. Declarer is obviously a beginner to be leading the queen without owning the jack as well. He should be leading *towards* his queen instead.
- c) No This time there are two reasons for not covering. (1) Declarer must have the jack, so you should wait; (2) You have four cards and dummy has only three. It would even be correct to duck twice. The ace will be played the third time and your king will eventually become a trick. This could easily be the situation:

	Dummy	
	♠ A 4 3	
West (You)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"></div>	East
♠ K 6 5 2		♠ 8 7
	Declarer	
	♠ Q J 10 9	

Notice that if you cover either the queen or the jack with your king, declarer takes four tricks. However, if you duck twice, declarer takes only three.

6. a) No Declarer must have the ten, so there is no point in covering. Declarer probably has something like KJ109x and may be intending to play the ace and finesse into your queen.
- b) No Same reason.
- c) No If declarer has the queen you have lost nothing by playing low. For all you know, partner has the queen and it may be a singleton. If you cover, and the ace takes your king and partner's

queen at the same time, you had better be a fast talker.

Now for some practical applications. This time you will be shown the entire dummy.

TEST YOURSELF, PART 3

1.

Dummy

♠ Q J 10 9

♥ K J 9 3

♦ A K Q

♣ 3 2

West (You)

♠ K 3

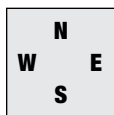
♥ A 6 4 2

♦ 7 5 4 3

♣ Q J 10

East

?



Declarer

?

South is declarer in 6♠, and you decide to lead the ♣Q. Partner plays the ♣4 and declarer wins the ace. At Trick 2, declarer leads a low heart. What do you play and why?

2.

Dummy

♠ A Q J 9

♥ K J 9 3

♦ A K Q

♣ 3 2

West (You)

♠ K 3

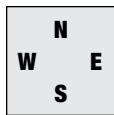
♥ A 6 4 2

♦ 7 5 4 3

♣ Q J 10

East

?



Declarer

?

Once again, you are defending a contract of 6♠ and you lead the ♣Q. Partner gives you the same ♣4, and declarer wins the ace. At Trick 2, declarer leads a low heart. What do you play and why?

3.

Dummy

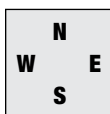
♠ A Q J 9
♥ K J 9 3
♦ A K Q
♣ 3 2

West (You)

♠ 8 7
♥ A 6 4 2
♦ 7 5 4 3
♣ Q J 10

East

?



Declarer

?

For the third and final time South plays in 6♠ and you lead your trusty ♣Q. Partner plays the nine and declarer wins the ace. At Trick 2, declarer leads a low heart. What do you play and why?

Solutions, Part 3

1. You should hop up with your ace, because you can see that for sure your ♠K will win a trick. In effect, your ♥A is the setting trick. It is true that with your possible trump trick (remember you didn't know where the ♠A was before you made your opening lead) you might have led the ♥A. However, the club lead was purposely forced upon you for two reasons. First, to see if you would realize that your ♥A was the setting trick upon seeing the dummy; second, to remind you to watch your partner's signals at Trick 1. In this case, partner's ♣4 denied possession of the king: otherwise, he would have signaled with a higher club.
2. This time you should play low rather than rise with your ace, and hope declarer has two hearts and will finesse dummy's jack. You can see that your ♠K is not going to take a trick, because it is under the ace and the finesse will work for declarer. Your best hope is that partner has the ♥Q as he obviously does not

hold the ♣K judging from his failure to play an encouraging spot card at Trick 1.

3. This time you should hop up with your ♥A and immediately play a club. Partner's signal with the ♣9 has indicated the king. Your ♥A and partner's ♣K are enough to defeat the slam.

KEY POINTERS

You have just studied one of the most difficult of all aspects of defense play — second-hand play. It is a phase of the game where even experts often come to grief.

- A few of the factors that will assist you in proper second-hand play are:
 - » The location of the dummy (to your right or to your left).
 - » Whether declarer (or dummy) leads a small card or an honor card.
 - » The bidding.
 - » Whether the play being made is in the trump suit or a side suit.
 - » The number of tricks needed in the suit to defeat the contract.
- The general rules to follow so that you don't hold up the game or give away too much information by hesitating are:
 - » When dummy is on your right:
 - ◇ Cover an honor with an honor unless you see equal honors, in which case you should cover the *last* equal honor.

- ◇ Play low if dummy leads a low card unless you can take the setting trick.
 - ◇ If you have three or more equal honors, e.g. QJ10, you should normally play your *lowest* equal.
 - ◇ With two equal honors, QJ74, you normally play low. However, if you feel that you should play one of your equals, you should play your *lower* equal. (There will be situations later in a hand in which you might want to play one of your equals even though you have only two.)
- » When dummy is on your left:
- ◇ Whenever declarer leads up to a broken holding in dummy (e.g. KJx, Q10x or K10xx), second hand should play low without hesitating, even though he can take the trick. Playing low will give declarer a chance to make an unfortunate guess. (His partner will call it a blunder.)
 - ◇ Do not try to force honors out of the dummy. If the dummy has higher cards than you have, simply *play low*.
 - ◇ If declarer leads either the queen or the jack towards a higher honor in the dummy, do not cover unless the honor beneath the one declarer is leading is visible. In that case, cover only if there is a chance for promotion of one of your cards or one in partner's hand.
 - ◇ If declarer leads the ten, second hand must look to see if the jack is visible. If it is not, do not cover; if it is, cover only if there is a chance for promotion.

- It is helpful if the defenders ask themselves a few key questions as they are confronted with each hand:
 - » How many tricks do I need to defeat this contract?
 - » How many can I see in my own hand?
 - » What has the bidding told me regarding the length of declarer's trump suit, or any suit for that matter?
- Keep in mind that to put into practice what you have read in this chapter takes the average player from five to ten years — but that's because he has had no one to teach him how to think. In any event, don't torture yourself with each play. In case you've forgotten, you are playing bridge to enjoy yourself. Perhaps this chapter wasn't excessively difficult for you. If it was, come back to it every month or so. It is bound to clear up and become a little more meaningful each time.

CHAPTER 7

FURTHER TIPS ON DEFENSIVE PLAY

If you want a certain number of tricks, always play as if the cards lay favorably for your success. R.F. Foster

What you're going to learn:

- » Use the bidding to gather information about the unseen hands
- » Watch partner's opening lead and signals
- » Count declarer's points and tricks, and defend accordingly

Now that you've come this far, undoubtedly you have been bitten by the bridge bug and want to improve your game even more. As was mentioned earlier, in order to be a good defensive player you must:

Remember the bidding.

From this you can piece together declarer's distribution and high-card strength.

Remember partner's opening lead.

From this one card you can often get a count on the suit and have an idea of the location of the missing honor cards.

Select the proper card when leading or signaling.

You must realize that the cards you are playing are influencing your partner's defense; therefore, you should try to lead and signal honestly, not carelessly.

Realize the importance of playing the correct equal honor

A less experienced player might think that because the QJ10 are all the same value, it doesn't matter which one is played. *Wrong!* When leading from a sequence, the highest one is played; at all other times, including taking tricks, the lowest card is used.

At this point we can proceed to two advanced stratagems of defensive play.

1. USING THE OPPONENTS' BIDDING TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

You are West, and hear the following bidding. What assumptions can you make?

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	Pass	1♠
All pass			2♠

The questions to ask yourself are:

- 1) How strong is declarer's hand?
- 2) What do I know about his distribution?

If the opening bidder becomes declarer, you should know from his bidding whether he has a minimum opening bid (13-15 points), an intermediate strength opening (16-18 points) or a powerful opening bid (19-21 points). Bear in mind that the opener's rebid will show his point count if his opening bid has not already done so. He must also clarify his distribution so that his partner can select the proper trump suit. As the opponents relay all this information, the defenders must tune in or they will be lost on defense.

In the example sequence, South is showing a minimum opening bid and presumably a six-card spade suit. You might wonder why South can't have a five-card spade suit. Of course he could; but when one receives a 1NT response, which is a weak response that denies support for opener's major[‡], opener should not *rebid* a five-card major suit. Therefore, you assume that opener has a six-card suit with a minimum hand.

Try this one:

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	all pass	

We should figure South for about 18-19 points in view of his jump to 2NT, which is a very common jump rebid. It also shows a balanced distribution. In other words, opener is unlikely to have any singletons or voids.

[‡] This assumes Standard bidding. If your opponents are using a system such as 2/1, for example, a 1NT response may not deny support for opener's major. Always make sure you know what system your opponents are using.

2. COUNTING DECLARER'S TRICKS

When you see your partner's lead and the dummy comes down, you should attempt to count declarer's tricks. Remember, when you are playing the hand, especially at notrump, you count *your* tricks. Sometimes, although not always, a defender can also count declarer's tricks. For example:

Dummy

♠ 3 2
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ A Q J 10 8 7
 ♣ A Q 2

East

♠ A 7 6 5
 ♥ Q J 10 9
 ♦ 4 3 2
 ♣ 4 3



The bidding:

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠Q.

If you are East, this is what you should be thinking. On the bidding, declarer has shown a balanced minimum hand of 12-14 points. Adding your points to dummy's, you get 20; along with declarer's 12, this makes a total of 32. In other words, West has a maximum of 8 high-card points. (There are 40 high-card points in the deck.)

Now to count declarer's tricks. From the lead, you know that declarer has the ♠K, so that's one trick. There is an imposing diamond suit staring you in the face, and either declarer has the king or partner's king can be finessed, so declarer must be credited with six diamond tricks. In clubs, if de-


clarer has the king he must make at least three tricks; and if partner has the king, it can be finessed. In any case, declarer has at least two clubs, six diamonds and one spade. What does this all mean? It means that if you woodenly win the ♠A and return a spade, declarer will take at least nine tricks. You know that for a certainty because you have just counted them! Your only chance to defeat this contract is to win the ♠A and return a heart, not a spade.

Your play is justly rewarded because this was the entire deal:

	North		
	♠ 3 2		
	♥ 7 5		
	♦ A Q J 10 8 7		
	♣ A Q 2		
West		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">N</p> <p style="margin: 0;">W E</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">S</p> </div>	East
♠ Q J 10 9			♠ A 7 6 5
♥ A 8 6 4			♥ Q J 10 9
♦ 5			♦ 4 3 2
♣ 10 9 8 7			♣ 4 3
	South		
	♠ K 8 4		
	♥ K 3 2		
	♦ K 9 6		
	♣ K J 6 5		

If you had ducked the first spade or won the ace and returned a spade, declarer would have rattled off the fastest eleven tricks you ever did see. However, with the heart shift the defense can take four heart tricks plus the ♠A to defeat the contract one trick.

Counting declarer's tricks is not always easy. You must be able to see relationships between your hand and the dummy. Consider this common situation:


	Dummy	
	K 10 9	
West		East (You)
		A Q J
	Declarer	

You are sitting over the king with the ace-queen-jack. You should be able to see that declarer will be unable to get a single trick out of this suit... unless you let him.

Assume that declarer leads a low card and finesses dummy's ten. You win with the jack. At this point, the average beginning player would play the ace 'to take the trick', but in doing so would make dummy's king good.

A defender must be very careful about taking tricks if by so doing he is setting up a card that would not have been good otherwise. If you win the ten with the jack (defenders take tricks with their lower equals) and play another suit, the next time the suit is led by either declarer or partner you will be in a position to capture dummy's nine with the queen and the king with the ace. Declarer will take no tricks in the suit.

This concept of exiting with another suit rather than taking a trick and thereby setting up a trick or more in dummy is vital to good defense. Study this layout:

	Dummy	
	Q J 9	
West		East (You)
8 7 6 5		A K 10
	Declarer	
	4 3 2	

Assume that this is a side suit in a trump contract, and West, your partner, leads the eight. Dummy plays the jack, which you win with the king (lower equal). At this point this is what you see:

Dummy

Q 9



East (You)

A 10

You must realize that if you now take the ace, dummy will play the nine and the queen will be good. But if you play a different suit and wait for either your partner or declarer to play the suit again, you will be able to capture the queen with the ace and your ten will be high.

As vital as it is not to set up tricks in dummy that would have been unavailable to declarer had you shown more patience, it is just as necessary not to be afraid to set up tricks for yourself even if dummy has the high card:

	Dummy	
	A J 9	
West		East
8 7 6 5		K Q 10
	Declarer	
	4 3 2	


Let's assume that West leads the eight and dummy plays the nine, which East wins with the ten. At this point East should return the king to drive out the ace and make his queen good.

TIP: Don't let an ace in dummy frighten you if you have the lower intermediates. Bridge is basically a game of developing tricks, not just taking them.

Contrast the above position with this slightly different one:


	Dummy	
	A J 10	
West		East
8 7 6 5		K Q 9
	Declarer	
	4 3 2	

Again, West leads the eight and dummy plays the ten. You take the trick with the queen (lower equal when taking tricks) and this is what you now see:

	Dummy	
	A J	
West		East (You)
		K 9
	Declarer	

This time you cannot afford to return the suit because you will be giving declarer an extra trick in the form of the jack. Again, you must demonstrate your patience by leading a different suit and waiting for either declarer or partner to lead the suit, in which case you will play after dummy and will be able to capture dummy's jack with your king.

Going further, if you see:

	Dummy	
	A K J 10	
West		East (You)
?		5 4 2
	Declarer	
	?	

you should assume that declarer can take four tricks in this suit. Either declarer has the queen, in which case four tricks will be easy to take, or partner has it. If partner has the queen he can easily be finessed, so declarer should wind up with four tricks regardless.

Now consider the case where dummy is the same but you, East, hold the Q32. In this case you should count only three tricks for declarer because you must make one trick with your queen *sitting over the ace and king*.

TEST YOURSELF

Now try this one:

	Dummy K Q J 9										
West ?	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		East (You) 1. A 10 4 3 2. A 8 5 4 3 2 3. 10 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	Declarer ?										

In each case, how many tricks would you figure declarer for in this suit?

Solutions

1. You should figure declarer for two tricks. You will take the king with the ace, and after the queen and jack are played your ten will be high. Notice that if you lead the ace instead of waiting to capture an honor, declarer will take three tricks in the suit.
2. In this case, declarer figures to take three tricks in the suit because either he has the ten, in which case there is no problem, or else partner's ten will fall under one of dummy's honors.
3. In this case, declarer has either three or four tricks depending upon who has the ace. If declarer has the ace he has an easy four tricks; if partner has the ace, your ten is going to fall, and declarer will be able to take three tricks rather easily.

TWO FINAL ADVANCED DEFENSIVE TIPS

1. As was mentioned in a footnote much earlier, we only really lead the ace from AKx(x) against suit contracts at Trick 1. In the middle of a hand, if you have the AKx(x) and decide to lead the suit, then you should actually lead the king. You should also lead the king if you have the KQx(x), but partner will be able to tell by the end of the trick whether you have the ace or the queen. For example, if your king wins the trick or if the queen is in dummy or in partner's hand, it is obvious that you also have the ace.

The reason for this switch is as follows. You may be on lead partway through the play and want to switch to a suit in which your only honor is the ace. Especially against a trump contract, it would be normal to start this suit by playing the ace. If you do so, partner will know that you do not have the king, since with both the ace and king, you would have led the king.

2. Holding three small cards, e.g. 952, we normally lead the nine (Top Of Nothing). If partner has bid that suit and you have supported his suit, then you will still lead the nine, as partner will know you have at least three of them. But if he has bid the suit and you have *not* raised him, then the danger if you lead the nine is that he may think you have a doubleton. So, the rule is that when leading partner's suit, when you have three or four small ones and you have *not* raised, lead your lowest card, in this case the two. It is more important for him to know that you do not have a doubleton than for him to know whether you have an honor in his suit. After all, he most likely has some honors in his own suit.

AFTERWORD

In closing, allow me to say that you are learning one of the most beautiful games ever created. The more you play, the faster you will learn. It is a game of mistakes. Play often and you will learn from your errors. Try to play against more experienced players, not always with players of your own level. You will learn faster that way.

My suggestion to you is that you do not purposely make any abnormal bids, plays or leads. Find yourself a congenial partner who is more interested in learning than criticizing. Above all, be a pleasant partner and opponent — which means making all of your bids in the same tone of voice, no beseeching looks across the table, and no teaching after the hand is over. The player who has made the mistake feels bad enough without being reminded.

Good luck!

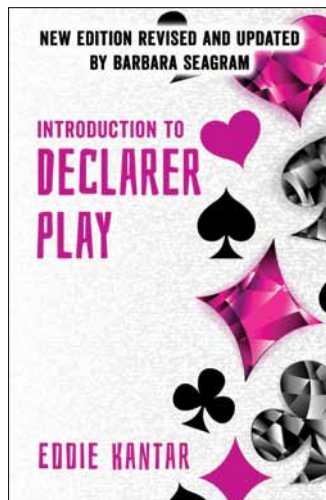
Eddie

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