

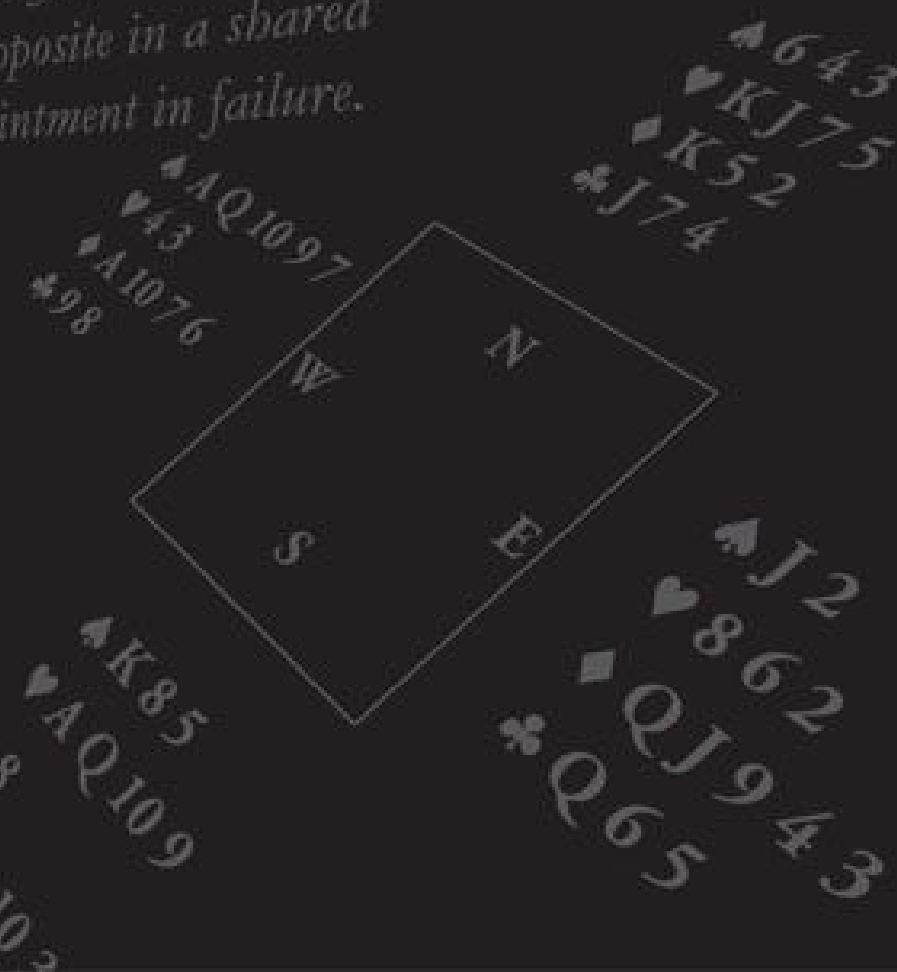


# Bridge *lessons*

by Andrew Robson

To defend well is to love the game and to have a full diary, with partners clamouring to sit opposite you. There is a thrill of combining with the person opposite in a shared mission; a joy in success and disappointment in failure.

## Defence



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## 1. Bidding for the lead

To defend well is to love the game and to have a full diary, with partners clamouring to sit opposite you. There is a thrill of combining with the person opposite in a shared mission; a joy in success and disappointment in failure.

The defence really begins in the bidding. It is here that you begin to shape the defence. When you suspect you'll lose the bidding, bid suits you want led; do not bid suits you do not want led.

*Exercise:* The bidding has begun (1♦) - P - (1♥) - ? Should you put in a (non-vulnerable) bid of 2♦ with these ?

(a)

♠ 6 2  
♥ A 8 5 2  
♦ K J 10 9 4  
♣ 8 6

(b)

♠ A J 3  
♥ Q 2  
♦ Q 9 7 5 4 2  
♣ Q 8

(c)

♠ A 2  
♥ Q J 7  
♦ J 9 7 4 3 2  
♣ K J

Only on (a) do you really want a diamond lead. So bid 2♦ with (a) and pass with the higher point-count (b) and (c). Note that partner's likely alternative lead (on the bidding) is a spade – you are happy with this on (b) and (c) but not (a).

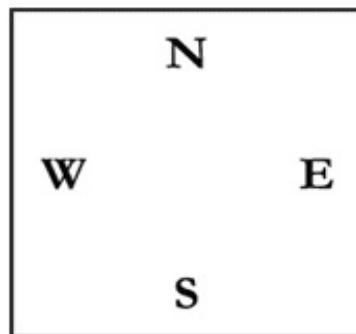
I once saw Italian World Champion Lorenzo Lauria put in a 2♦ overcall after (1NT) - P - (2♦\*) with ♠642, ♥75, ♦QJ1093, ♣863! Partner led a diamond against the resulting 3NT – the only lead to defeat the contract.

\*Stayman - asking for four-card majors.

---

♠ A Q 9  
♥ J 10 9 7 4  
♦ 6 3 2  
♣ 4 3

♠ 10 8 7 4 3  
♥ K 3  
♦ 7 5  
♣ K J 7 5



♠ 6 2  
♥ A 8 5 2  
♦ Q J 10 9 4  
♣ 8 6

♠ K J 5  
♥ Q 6  
♦ A K 8  
♣ A Q 10 9 2

---

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** North - South

| S   | W    | N  | E     |
|-----|------|----|-------|
| 1♣  | Pass | 1♥ | 2♦(1) |
| 3NT | end  |    |       |

---

(1) Skimpy, but East is desperate for a diamond lead v notrumps.

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♦7

If East stays silent on our featured deal, West would lead from his long spades. Declarer would win in hand and advance the queen of hearts, setting up three tricks with dummy's hearts (to go with three top spades, two top diamonds and the ace of clubs). Nine tricks and game made.

On the seven of diamonds lead (found because of East's bid) to East's nine, declarer was stuffed. If he won and (say) led the queen of hearts (crossing to a spade and finessing in clubs works no better on the layout), West would win the king and lead his second diamond, East clearing the suit with the ace of hearts entry to his diamonds.

Declarer ducked East's nine of diamonds (best). Realising the futility of another diamond (his partner would have no diamonds left so his suit would not set up for the lack of a second entry), East switched to the eight of clubs around to dummy's weakness.

Declarer's nine of clubs lost to West's jack. West switched to a spade and declarer won in hand and led the queen of hearts. West let his partner win this trick with the ace for a second club, declarer's ten losing to West's king and West cashing the king of hearts. Down one – all stemming from the 2♦ bid.

## **2. Best opening lead vs suits: Ace from ace-king**

The bidding is over and it is time for that most crucial card of the defence to be played – the opening lead. However the bidding must not be forgotten. There is much there to help the defenders with their lead and subsequent defence.

Did partner bid? If so normally lead his suit. What did the opponents bid? Normally avoid their suits. Sometimes, though, the bidding will be unrevealing, say (1♥) - P - (4♥) - end. The best lead against such a Suit contract is a *Sequence* (lead top) or a *Singleton* (not trumps). Note the “S’s” as an aide-memoire.

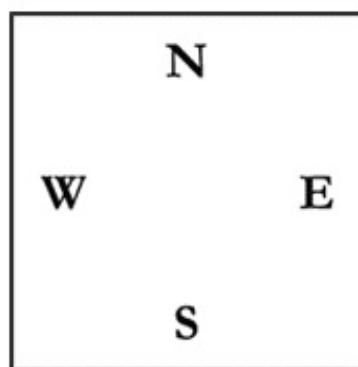
Best of all leads v a suit contract is Ace from Ace-King. This is because it gives the leader a free look at dummy. He retains the lead (assuming no one trumps) and can judge whether to continue the suit based on what he sees in dummy and how his partner signals (*more on this crucial area of defence later*).

The great Italian Benito Garozzo once said, “If you have an ace-king, you do not have a lead problem”. Even if that suit was bid by an opponent – see our deal.

---

♠ Q 9 6 4 2  
♥ K J 9  
♦ Q 3 2  
♣ A Q

♠ A K 8  
♥ 7 6  
♦ K J 9 4  
♣ 8 7 6 2



♠ 10 7 5 3  
♥ 8 5 2  
♦ A 8 5  
♣ 9 5 3

♠ J  
♥ A Q 10 4 3  
♦ 10 7 6  
♣ K J 4 2

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: East - West

| S     | W    | N  | E    |
|-------|------|----|------|
| 1♥    | Pass | 1♠ | Pass |
| 2♣(1) | Pass | 4♥ | End  |

(1) Showing five+ hearts and four+ clubs.

Contract: 4♥

Opening Lead: ♠A

West led the ace of spades v 4♥ though dummy had bid the suit. This gave him a free look at dummy and a chance for partner to signal. Trick One went ♠A, ♠2, ♠3, ♠J. East's two was (as we shall see) a discouraging signal and declarer's jack suggestive of a singleton.

West looked at dummy's strong clubs and weak diamonds. He reflected that declarer had bid clubs, too. The best chance of defeating the game was to hope his partner held the ace of diamonds. A diamond switch clearly offered the best chance – but which card?

Switch to a low diamond and declarer plays low in dummy, using the power of his ten to force out East's ace and promote dummy's queen as a third-round winner. Switch to the king and West will have no good second card when that wins.

West must switch specifically to the jack of diamonds (key play). If dummy plays low, the jack wins and West can lead over to partner's ace, and win the third round with the king. Say declarer covers with dummy's queen. Partner's ace wins the trick whereupon a second diamond sees West hold ♦K9 over declarer's ♦107 and he wins two more tricks. Down one. Clever – but don't worry – most good defensive plays are not that crafty.

### **3. Worst opening lead vs suits: from an ace**

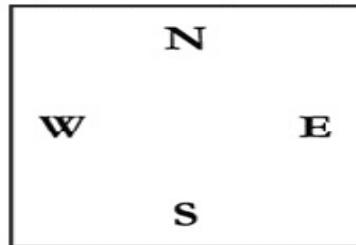
The best opening lead v a suit contract may be ace from ace-king but the worst is “leading away from an ace”.

| Dummy    |      |         |
|----------|------|---------|
| West     | ♠ 63 | East    |
| ♠ AJ954  |      | ♠ Q1072 |
| Declarer |      |         |
| ♠ K8     |      |         |

Left to his own devices, declarer will never be able to score a trick with his king. He will try a lead from dummy towards the king in the hope East holds the ace – the finesse. Not successful this time. However if West leads the suit, whether it be the ace or “away from the ace” (ie a low card of the suit) then declarer’s king will score.

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

♠ 8 5  
 ♥ A J 8 6  
 ♦ J 10 7  
 ♣ A 10 9 3



♠ 9 6  
 ♥ Q 10 5 3  
 ♦ 9 6 4 3  
 ♣ Q J 4

♠ A Q 10 7 4 2  
 ♥ K 7  
 ♦ K Q 8  
 ♣ K 5

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S  | W    | N     | E    |
|----|------|-------|------|
| 1♠ | Pass | 2♠(1) | Pass |
| 4♠ | End  |       |      |

(1) Choice between the “dustbin” 1NT and the supporting bid. Both show 6 - 9 pts but my experience is to support in preference to responding the nebulous 1NT when you have three cards, (unless they are three small cards in a very flat hand).

It is, in my view, a mistake to guarantee four-card support to bid 1♥/♠ - 2♥/♠; for bidding is much easier after the supporting bid. If, however, you insist on four cards to support then you will bid these N-S hands: 1♠ - 1NT - 3♠ - 4♠, where the jump to 3♠ shows 16+ pts and six spades.

**Contract: 4♠**

**Opening Lead: ♦J**

On our deal West must not lead a heart nor a club versus 4♦. The days of “I lead from my strongest suit and I want you to lead it back to me partner” are long gone I’m afraid. Instead West keeps his hearts and his clubs intact for a lead to come to him, instead leading the top of his diamond sequence. Much safer in the long run.

West’s jack of diamonds lead, promising the ten and denying the queen, is won by declarer’s queen. Declarer counts nine top tricks – six spades and three diamonds – and needs to promote one of his kings to make his tenth trick.

Declarer draws trumps finishing in dummy then leads towards one of his kings (say hearts). He hopes East holds the ace. No good – the trick goes ♦2, ♦3, ♦K, ♦A. West can now lead back a heart (or a diamond – unless declarer has removed those cards by leading out his top diamonds first). What he cannot do is lead from his clubs.

Declarer wins West’s (say) diamond in dummy and now leads a club, hoping to promote his king. “Please can West not have both aces...”

The club trick goes ♣2, ♣4, ♣K, ♣A and West leads a second club over to East’s winner. Down one – both West’s aces doing the job they were meant to do. Taking an opposing king.

## **4. MUD**

Did you know that about half of all contracts that start life in the balance are decided one way or the other by the opening lead? Here is a list of the various types of lead v a suit contract and their approximate effectiveness (0-10) assuming the suit has not been bid:

| Holding              | Effectiveness |
|----------------------|---------------|
| <u>A</u> K74         | 10            |
| <u>3</u>             | 9             |
| <u>K</u> QJ6         | 9             |
| <u>K</u> Q76         | 8             |
| <u>Q</u> J104        | 8             |
| <u>Q</u> J52         | 7             |
| <u>8</u> 3           | 5             |
| <u>8</u> 5 <u>2</u>  | 4             |
| <u>Q</u> 95 <u>2</u> | 4             |
| <u>J</u> 4           | 2             |
| <u>K</u> 75 <u>2</u> | 2             |
| <u>K</u> J5 <u>3</u> | 2             |
| <u>A</u> 1074        | 0             |

Note that the lead card has been underlined in bold, according to the following guidelines:

- (1) *Lead top of two+ touching high cards.*
- (2) *Lead low from a suit you like.*

*(3) Lead high from a suit you hate.*

*(4) Lead top of a doubleton.*

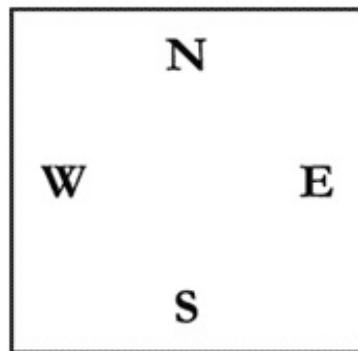
These four lead guidelines apply to the first round of each suit during the play. We will be focussing on them in detail in our series.

You will note that 852 has both the eight and the five underlined. Deliberately - as there is a slight conflict: you'd like to lead the eight [Point (3) - leading high from a suit you hate]; yet if you played eight-then-low your partner might think you were leading top of a doubleton [(Point (4))]. For this reason there is sound logic in leading the middle card (M) then the up-card (U), finally following with the down-card (D), sometimes known as "MUD". Yes, but it would be sadistic to lead the 3 from 932 – partner would think you were leading low for like [(Point (2))]. The eight from 982 is best though – as on our deal.

---

♠ K J 6 4  
♥ J 10 5 3  
♦ J 5  
♣ A Q 4

♠ 9 8 2  
♥ 6 4  
♦ A Q 7 6 2  
♣ J 3 2



♠ A Q 7 3  
♥ Q 2  
♦ 9 4  
♣ 9 8 7 6 5

♠ 10 5  
♥ A K 9 8 7  
♦ K 10 8 3  
♣ K 10

---

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

|       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| S     | W     | N     | E     |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 1♥    | Pass  | 3♥    | Pass  |
| 4♥(1) | End   |       |       |

(1) Six Losing Trick hand – worth game. Further, look at all the nice intermediate cards (e.g. tens).

**Contract: 4♥**

**Opening Lead: ♠8**

West led the eight of spades v 4♥, dummy playing low and East winning the queen. East cashed the ace and awaited West's card. If it had been lower than the eight, the inference would have been that he was leading top of a doubleton – and could ruff the third round. In fact West played the nine, so East knew he held a third spade.

East switched tacks – leading a (top from two) nine of diamonds around to dummy's weakness. Declarer tried a low diamond, but West won the queen, cashed the ace and, the Coup de Grace, led a third diamond. East could overruff dummy's jack of trumps with the queen and that meant down two.

## 5. Leading versus notrumps

The key to notrumps is length. Defenders should be trying to exhaust declarer of all their cards of a suit in order to score tricks with their long cards – even threes and twos.

The tried-and-tested lead strategy versus notrumps – assuming your partner has not bid (you would normally lead his suit) and the opponents have not bid your suit (in which case normally look elsewhere) is “Fourth highest of your longest and strongest suit”.

AQ742

KJ863

Q1082

The fourth highest card gives useful inferences e.g. the lead of a two indicates just four cards.

However it would be a mistake to lead fourth highest from these holdings:

QJ1073

97432

KQ1082

8752

KJ1065

AKJ4

Bearing in mind that you should lead (i) the top of a three-card sequence, (ii) the top of a two-card sequence within a suit containing three high cards and (iii) high from a suit containing no high card, the underlined card is correct:

QJ1073

97432

KQ1082

8752

KJ1065

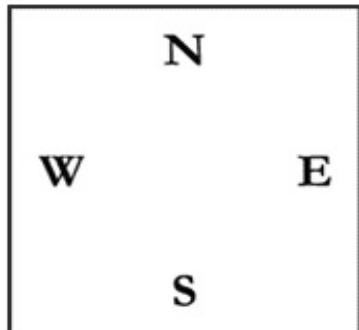
AKJ4

Leading the right card serves two key purposes. (a) It maximises the defensive trick potential and (b) it conveys the appropriate message to partner. Take our deal.

---

♠ K 7  
♥ A Q 9  
♦ 9 6 3 2  
♣ K J 8 2

♠ Q J 9 8 4  
♥ J 5 3  
♦ K 8  
♣ 9 7 5



♠ 6 3 2  
♥ 10 6 4 2  
♦ A 5  
♣ Q 10 6 3

♠ A 10 5  
♥ K 8 7  
♦ Q J 10 7 4  
♣ A 4

---

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

| S      | W     | N     | E     |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .....  | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 1NT(1) | Pass  | 3NT   | End   |

(1) Arguably too good for a 12-14 NT – with the fine sequential five-card diamond suit. Probably ought to open 1♦ and rebid notrumps, upgrading to 15-16 balanced.

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♠Q

Had West led a fourth highest eight of spades v the 3NT game, declarer would have let the lead run round to his ten, then peacefully knocked out the ace-king of diamonds, a tempo ahead of the opponents' attempt to set up spades. He would make 11 painless tricks – game made plus two.

West was not prepared to see declarer score a cheap trick with the ten of spades – given his near-three-card sequence – and so led the queen of spades (key play). Declarer did the best he could, winning dummy's king (preserving ♠A10) and leading a low diamond.

East rose to the occasion, realising the importance that he won the defence's first diamond to lead a second spade from his side of the table (a) through a potential ♠A10 and (b) whilst he still had spades. Up went the ace of diamonds (and, shortly, down went the contract).

Declarer played the ten of spades on East's second spade but West won the jack and cleared spades. Declarer won the ace and tried a second diamond (hoping East held the king), but West won and cashed two long spades. Down one.

## **6. The four lead guidelines – first round of each suit during the play.**

We move from the opening lead to the rest of the defence (*for more on the Opening Lead, see my Opening Lead booklet*). Recall the four lead-guidelines – which apply to the first round of each suit during the play:

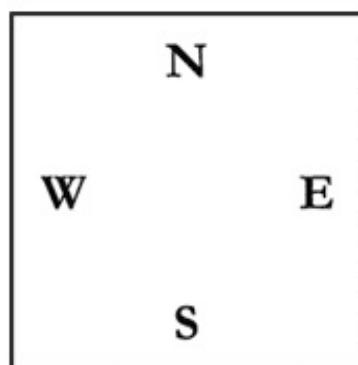
- (1) *Lead top of two+ touching high cards.*
- (2) *Lead low from a suit you like.*
- (3) *Lead high from a suit you hate.*
- (4) *Lead top of a (remaining) doubleton.*

The usefulness of every one of these four lead-guidelines is in evidence on this deal.

---

♠ 7 4 3 2  
♥ A J 9  
♦ 9 5 2  
♣ Q 9 2

♠ Q 8  
♥ K Q 10 5  
♦ 10 8 7 6  
♣ A J 5



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

♠ A K J 10 5  
♥ 6 3  
♦ K Q 3  
♣ 8 6 4

---

Dealer: West

Vulnerability: Neither

|       |     |      |      |
|-------|-----|------|------|
| S     | W   | N    | E    |
| ..... | 1NT | Pass | Pass |
| 2♠    | End |      |      |

Contract: 2♠

Opening Lead: ♥K

West led the king of hearts – top of his honour sequence promising the queen and denying the ace (*Rule 1*) – and declarer craftily ducked in dummy. This put the defence under pressure, for as soon as declarer won the lead, he would be able to finesse dummy’s jack of hearts and throw a loser on the ace.

Looking at dummy’s weakness in the suit, at Trick Two West switched to the eight of diamonds, leading high for hate (*Rule 3*). East won the ace but knew not to return a diamond, instead switching to the three of clubs, leading low for like (*Rule 2*).

West won the ace of clubs and knew to return a club, correctly selecting the jack, top of two remaining (*Rule 4*). If declarer had played low in dummy, West’s jack would have won the trick. In practice he covered with dummy’s queen.

East won the king of clubs and cashed the promoted ten of the suit. The defence now needed one more trick to defeat the 2♦ contract. Can you see how they garnered it?

As things stand, it appears declarer will win the remaining tricks – with his ♠AK felling West’s doubleton queen. Try the effect of East leading his lucky thirteenth club, however (key play).

If declarer ruffs with the ten of trumps, West overruffs. Ruffing high works no better – West merely discards and waits to score his now-promoted queen later. Down one.

Note that if West had led back the five of clubs (rather than the jack) at Trick Four, declarer rises with dummy’s queen which means that it is West who wins the third round of the suit (with the jack). This kills the Trump Promotion – East cannot lead that thirteenth card.

## 7. Why third hand plays high

We enter the nitty-gritty of sound defence. Partner leads (low) and you are playing third to the trick. The basic principle, whether notrumps or trumps, slams or part-scores, is to play high, otherwise declarer, playing fourth, will win a cheap trick.

| Dummy   |            |
|---------|------------|
| ♦ 852   | East (you) |
| ♦ 3 led | ♦ K104     |

You must play the king – otherwise you give declarer a cheap trick with the jack on this layout (across):

| Dummy    |            |
|----------|------------|
| ♦ 852    |            |
| West     | East (you) |
| ♦ Q973   | ♦ K104     |
| Declarer |            |
| ♦ AJ6    |            |

Play the underlined card in these situations:

Dummy

♠ 3 led

♠ 852

East (you)

♠ AQ4

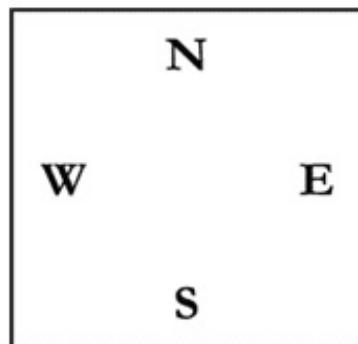
♠ KJ4

♠ Q104

♠ AJ10

♠ A K 6 5  
 ♥ 9 8  
 ♦ Q 10 6 4  
 ♣ A Q 6

♠ 4 3  
 ♥ A 10 6 4 2  
 ♦ 9 8 3  
 ♣ J 9 8



♠ J 10 9 7  
 ♥ K J 7  
 ♦ 5 2  
 ♣ K 5 3 2

♠ Q 8 2  
 ♥ Q 9 3  
 ♦ A K J 7  
 ♣ 10 7 3

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S     | W    | N     | E    |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1NT   | Pass | 2♣(1) | Pass |
| 2♦(2) | Pass | 3NT   | End  |

- (1) Stayman – requesting a four-card major.  
 (2) No four-card major.

**Contract: 3NT**

**Opening Lead: ♥4**

On our featured deal West led the four of hearts v 3NT. If East had mistakenly played the jack, declarer would have seized on the trick with the queen and promptly cashed eight more tricks – four diamonds, three spades and the ace of clubs. Game made.

East did not go wrong, however, playing a third-hand-high king of hearts at trick one (key play). His second hurdle came a trick two - which heart should he return?

East made no mistake, leading back the top of his two remaining hearts – an unblocking manoeuvre. It did not matter whether declarer covered East's jack of hearts at trick two – at the table he chose to (technically correct – East could have held ♦KJ10 in which case covering will block the suit). West beat declarer's queen with the ace, cashed the promoted ten and followed with ♦62. Down one.

Let us see why East needed to return the jack of hearts at trick two. Say he mistakenly returns the seven. Declarer flies in with the queen (key play) and now, after winning the ace and leading back a third heart\*, it is East who wins. West's two long cards go to waste.

Declarer still needs some fancy-footwork though. He wins East's jack of spades (best) at trick four, cashes the other top spades (no 3-3 split), then the four diamonds finishing in dummy. He now leads the fourth spade to East who must lead from his king of clubs into ♣AQ.

\*Declarer plays low on a club return.

## 8. Third hand plays cheaper of touching highest cards

When partner leads low and dummy plays low, third-hand should play high. But what about with touching highest cards?

| (A)     | Dummy | East (you) |
|---------|-------|------------|
|         | ♥ 952 |            |
| ♥ 3 led |       | (i) ♥ KJ4  |
|         |       | (ii) ♥ KQ4 |

In (i) you must play ♥K – otherwise declarer could win a cheap trick with ♥Q. In (ii) it does not matter – to you – as ♥K and ♥Q are equals. However playing ♥Q gives more information to partner. Say they have led from ♥Axxx (although they would not lead from an ace at Trick One to a trump contract); let us move across the table and see why, in (B) it makes a difference to partner whether you play ♥Q or ♥K:

| (B)        | Dummy |     |
|------------|-------|-----|
| West (you) | ♠ 952 |     |
| ♠ A763     |       | ♠ Q |
| (♠ 3 led)  | ♠ 8   |     |

You lead ♠3 and see the trick go ♠3, ♠2, ♠Q, ♠8. Who has ♠K – is it partner (East) or declarer? It must be partner, for otherwise declarer would have beaten ♠Q with ♠K.

To summarise: third hand plays high, but cheaper of touching highest cards (highest card “necessary”). As East in (C), play the underlined card with these:

(C)

Dummy

♦ 873

East (you)

♦ 4 led

♦ AK5

♦ AQ5

♦ QJ7

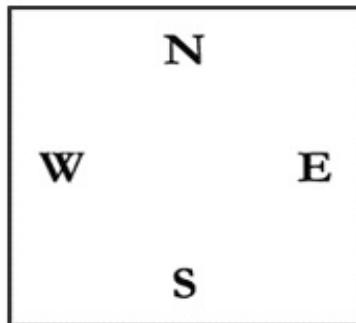
♦ QJ10

♦ KJ10

♦ KQJ10

♠ 7 3  
 ♥ 7 6 2  
 ♦ A K Q J  
 ♣ J 10 8 3

♠ A 10 6 4 2  
 ♥ 9 4 3  
 ♦ 10 8 4  
 ♣ K 4



♠ Q 8 5  
 ♥ A J 8 5  
 ♦ 6 5 3 2  
 ♣ 6 2

♠ K J 9  
 ♥ K Q 10  
 ♦ 9 7  
 ♣ A Q 9 7 5

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

| S      | W     | N  | E       |
|--------|-------|----|---------|
| 1♣     | 1♠(1) | 3♣ | Pass(2) |
| 3NT(3) | End   |    |         |

- (1) Minimum but acceptable bid as an overcall – ♠10 making the difference.
- (2) Would have bid 2♠ if able.
- (3) As ever, avoiding the minor-suit game.

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♠4

On our featured deal West led the four of spades v 3NT, Trick One going ♠4, ♠3, ♠Q, ♠K. West knew declarer held the jack, for East would have played the cheaper jack from ♠QJ. So when declarer crossed to dummy in diamonds, then ran the jack of clubs to West's king, West was not tempted to return a second spade (giving declarer the jack).

West realised that it was imperative for partner to lead the second spade from his side of the table, so switched to the nine of hearts (key play – leading high for hate so partner would not return a heart). East won the hoped-for ace and duly returned the eight of spades (top of his two remaining). West beat declarer's nine of spades with the ten, cashed the ace felling the jack, and followed with the two long spades. Down two.

## 9. Drawing inferences from partner's third hand plays

Third player plays high, but the cheaper of touching highest cards.

This latter point is made clear by an extreme example. Say partner led and you held AKQJ109 of the suit. Play the nine and, when partner sees it win the trick, he can deduce that you have the higher cards. By corollary, playing a high card in third seat denies the card immediately below.

(A) Which card do you play as East with these holdings?

Dummy

♠ 962

East (you)

♠ 5 led

(i) ♠ AKQ

(ii) ♠ AQJ

(iii) ♠ QJ9

(iv) ♠ KJ9

(v) ♠ KQ109

(vi) ♠ KQJ109

Answers: (i) ♠Q; (ii) ♠A; (iii) ♠J; (iv) ♠K;  
(v) ♠Q; (vi) ♠9.

(B) Switching across the table, what can you deduce about the missing high cards as the leader from the first round of the suit?

Dummy

West (you)      ♠ 962

♦ K753                 (i) ♦ 3, ♦ 2, ♦ 10, ♦ A

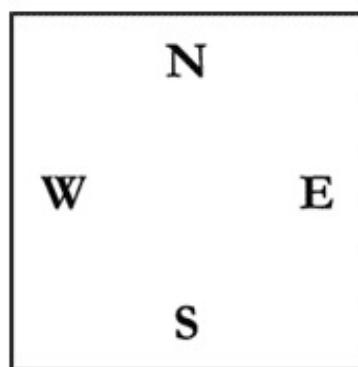
(ii) ♦ 3, ♦ 2, ♦ J, ♦ Q

(iii) ♦ 3, ♦ 2, ♦ Q, ♦ A

---

♠ A 2  
♥ J 9 7  
♦ K Q J 10 5 2  
♣ 7 5

♠ 10 8 5 3  
♥ A Q 3  
♦ A  
♣ J 8 6 3 2



♠ Q 9 7 6  
♥ K 8 4 2  
♦ 8 7 4  
♣ 10 4

♠ K J 4  
♥ 10 6 5  
♦ 9 6 3  
♣ A K Q 9

---

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

|       |       |        |       |
|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| S     | W     | N      | E     |
| ..... | ..... | .....  | ..... |
| 1NT   | Pass  | 3NT(1) | End   |

(1) Sound gamble based on the trick source.

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♣3

West led the three of clubs v 3NT to the ten and declarer's ace. West stopped to think. East would have played the queen or king (third-hand high) if he had it, so declarer was marked with ♣AKQ (that ace play was not foxing him!). Indeed declarer was also marked with the nine – East would play the nine from ♣109.

When at Trick Two declarer led a diamond and West won his bare ace, he knew a club continuation was mistaken (around to declarer's ♣KQ9. But which major to lead?

West could count five diamonds and the ace of spades in dummy and knew declarer had three club winners: nine tricks for declarer ready to run in the three suits outside hearts. West had to switch to hearts, hoping his partner's hearts were good enough to win five defensive tricks first. He cashed the ace of hearts, followed with the queen (top of two – to unblock) then his third heart over to East's king and his long card. Down one.

## 10. Third-hand retains a high card to beat dummy's unplayed picture

When dummy has only low cards, third hand plays high but cheaper of touching high cards. How about when dummy has an (unplayed) picture card?

*Principle:* When dummy has an unplayed picture card, generally retain your highest card to beat that picture, instead (if significant) playing your second highest card (cheaper of equals).

*Exercise:* After ♣3, ♣2, which card do you as East play?

| Dummy   | East (you)   |
|---------|--------------|
| ♣ Q62   |              |
| ♣ 3 led | (i) ♣ KJ4    |
|         | (ii) ♣ KJ10  |
|         | (iii) ♣ AJ4  |
|         | (iv) ♣ AJ109 |
|         | (v) ♣ K104   |
|         | (vi) ♣ A94   |

*Answers:*

(i) ♣J. Clearly there is no point playing the third-hand-high ♣K with ♣Q visible in dummy. ♣K and ♣J are equals for the trick – play the cheaper.

(ii) ♣10. Between ♣J and ♣10, play the cheaper.

(iii) ♣J. Partner has led a low card – for like – therefore presumably holds ♣K. Win with the cheaper ♣J not ♣A, giving the defence three top winners and preventing dummy's ♣Q from becoming a third-round winner.

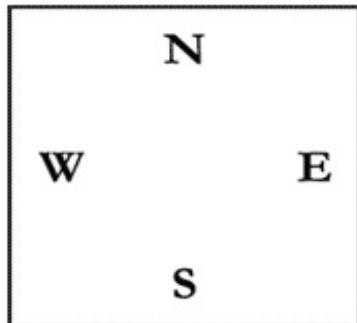
- (iv) ♣9. Cheaper of ♣AJ109, withholding ♣A because of ♣Q.  
(v) ♣10. Clear when you think of it – the principle being to keep a high card to beat a picture in dummy. Look at the layout below. Either ♣10 or ♣K forces out declarer's ♣A, but play ♣10 and dummy's ♣Q never scores:

| Dummy  |       |        |
|--------|-------|--------|
| West   | East  |        |
|        | ♣ Q62 |        |
| ♣ J953 |       | ♣ K104 |
|        | ♣ A87 |        |

- (vi). ♣A. Third-hand high. ♣9 is not significant enough for ♣A to be retained.

♠ K Q 4  
 ♥ Q 7 2  
 ♦ Q 6 2  
 ♣ K J 10 2

♠ 8 2  
 ♥ J 6 5 3  
 ♦ A J 8  
 ♣ 9 7 6 4



♠ 10 7  
 ♥ K 10 9  
 ♦ 9 7 4 3  
 ♣ A 8 5 3

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

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S  | W    | N  | E    |
|----|------|----|------|
| 1♠ | Pass | 2♣ | Pass |
| 2♠ | Pass | 4♠ | End  |

Yes - a bludgeoning 3NT response from North (on the first or second round) would work well here. In spite of the nine-card spade fit, 3NT is the superior game.

**Contract: 4♠**

**Opening Lead: ♥3**

On our deal West led the three of hearts v 4♦ (dummy had bid clubs and his diamonds were headed by the ace). Dummy played low and East inserted the nine (key play), retaining the king to beat dummy's queen and playing the cheaper of his ♦109.

Declarer drew trumps and led the queen of clubs, but East won the ace and switched to a high for hate nine of diamonds. West won the ace and reverted to the five of hearts. East held ♦K10 over ♦Q7 and could beat the queen with the king and cash the ten. Down one.

## 11. After winning, which card in the suit to lead back

Third hand plays high – the principle being to force out a higher card in declarer's hand or to win the trick. Say you as third hand do win the trick and a look at dummy plus partner's lead indicate that you should lead back the same suit (more likely best at notrumps than trumps). Which card should you lead back?

*Principle:* The card you lead back on the second round indicates how many cards you have left. Lead top of two remaining, low from three remaining and third from four left.

| (A)     | Dummy |                |
|---------|-------|----------------|
| West    | ♦ 82  | East (you)     |
| ♦ 4 led |       | (i) ♦ A103     |
|         |       | (ii) ♦ A1073   |
|         |       | (iii) ♦ A10763 |

In (A) the contract is (say) 3NT and the first trick goes ♦4, ♦2, ♦A, ♦5. Which card do you lead back?

*Answers:*

- (i) ♦10. Top of two remaining.
- (ii) ♦3. Low from three remaining.
- (iii) ♦6. Third from four remaining.

You can group (ii) and (iii) together as the “original fourth highest”.

We switch across the table in (B)

## Dummy

West (you)    ♠ 75  
                  ♠ AJ83

You lead ♣3 vs 3NT and Trick One goes ♣3, ♣5, ♣K, ♣4.

(i) Trick two goes ♣2, ♣10, ♣J, ♣7. Should you now cash ♣A?

(ii) Trick two goes ♣9, ♣10, ♣J, ♣7. Should you now cash ♣A?

Answers:

(i) Yes. See layout below. Partner has led low, indicating three remaining. Your ♣A will fell ♣Q and there is a long card:

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| ♠ 75   | ♠ K962 |
| ♠ AJ83 | ♠ Q104 |

(ii) No. This will be the layout:

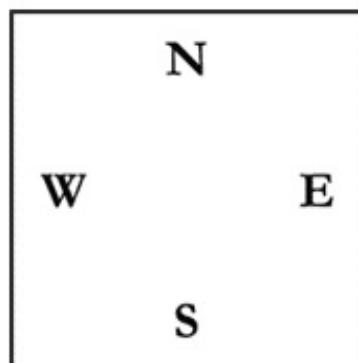
|        |         |
|--------|---------|
| ♠ 75   | ♠ K92   |
| ♠ AJ83 | ♠ Q1064 |

Partner has led top of two remaining, marking declarer with ♣Qx left. Try to put partner back on play for a third spade through ♣Q6 to your ♣A8 – same principle as our deal.

---

**♠ 8 7 5  
♥ 6 4  
♦ K Q 4  
♣ A K J 7 3**

**♠ J 9 4  
♥ K 10 8 3  
♦ 10 5 2  
♣ 9 6 5**



**♠ A 10 6 2  
♥ A J 2  
♦ 8 7 3  
♣ 8 4 2**

**♠ K Q 3  
♥ Q 9 7 5  
♦ A J 9 6  
♣ Q 10**

---

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

|       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| S     | W     | N     | E     |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 1NT   | Pass  | 3NT   | End   |

**Contract: 3NT**

**Opening Lead: ♥3**

West led a heart v 3NT, East winning the ace. Trick Two went ♠J, ♠Q, ♠K, ♠6. Reading the layout correctly – East returning top of two remaining – West saw the need to put East back on lead for a third heart. He switched to a high-for-hate nine of spades (dummy's weakness).

East duly won his hoped-for ace of spades and returned the two of hearts. West held ♠108 over declarer's ♠97 and those two further heart tricks meant down one.

## 12. Why second plays low (on a low card)

A defender playing third to the trick must play high, to prevent declarer from winning a cheap trick. Conversely, a defender playing second to the trick can normally play low (on a low card); their partner still has to play to the trick so declarer, playing third, cannot win a cheap trick.

(A)

Dummy

♥ A102

East (you)

♥ Q83

Dummy's ♥2 is led (during the play). You should play second-hand low – not ♥Q. Say this is the layout:

♥ A102

♥ J976

♥ Q83

♥ K54

Play ♥Q and declarer can win ♥K (the card he was playing whether or not you played ♥Q) and can now lead to ♥10, making a third trick. Simply play ♥3 and relax. partner is still there.

(B)

Dummy

West (you)

♠Q63

♠ K974

Declarer leads ♠ 2

You should play ♠4, second-hand low. Say this is the layout:

**♠ Q63**

**♠ K974**

**♠ A108**

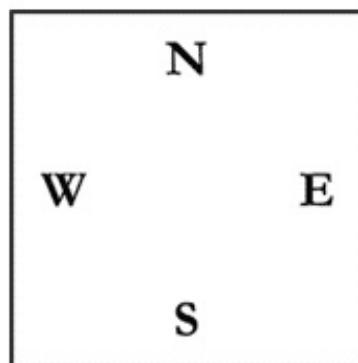
**♠ J52**

Play ♠K (on nothing) and declarer can use ♠Q and ♠J as equals against ♠A to score a trick. Play low and dummy's ♠Q will lose to partner's ♠A and you have ♠K over ♠J. Declarer wins no tricks.

---

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

♠ Q J 5 2  
♥ 6 5 2  
♦ K 9 3  
♣ J 9 4



♠ 10 9 8  
♥ 8  
♦ A 10 4 2  
♣ Q 10 8 6 3

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

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

| S  | W    | N  | E    |
|----|------|----|------|
| 1♥ | Pass | 3♥ | Pass |
| 4♥ | End  |    |      |

3NT would be easier. Tough to bid, though.

Contract: 4♥

Opening Lead: ♠Q

On our deal, declarer won the queen of spades lead with the king, drew trumps, then led a low diamond towards dummy. If West had erroneously played the king, declarer would have scored a third-round diamond trick (the queen and jack being equals against the ace). When West played low, declarer was sunk. East beat dummy's queen with the ace, led back a second spade and the defence came to a spade and (West with ♦K9 poised over ♦J8) three diamonds. Down one.

Sound defence – yes – but what of declarer's play? Not so good: he can guarantee his game by playing king-ace-ruff a club after drawing trumps, thus eliminating the suit. He then cuts loose with ace and a third spade. Whichever defender wins the trick faces the unenviable choice of leading a black card, allowing declarer to ruff in one hand and discard a diamond from the other; or open up diamonds (now declarer must make a trick by playing second-low). Only two diamonds are lost – game made.

## 13. Cover an honour with an honour

Second hand defender normally plays low on a low card. Things are different when an honour is led:

|     |       |            |
|-----|-------|------------|
| (A) | Dummy | East (you) |
|     | ♦ Q64 |            |
|     |       | ♦ K83      |

Dummy's ♦Q is led. You suspect declarer holds ♦A. Should you play ♦K and see it lose to ♦A? Yes. To see why, look at a likely layout:

|         |       |
|---------|-------|
| ♦ Q64   |       |
| ♦ 10752 | ♦ K83 |
| ♦ AJ9   |       |

Let ♦Q win (by playing low) and declarer now leads ♦4 to ♦J and wins ♦A to score all three tricks. You must cover ♦Q with ♦K. Declarer wins ♦A and ♦J, but can't score a third trick. Sacrificing ♦K to draw ♦Q and ♦A together is a good trade. It promotes lower cards for you and partner.

|     |        |            |
|-----|--------|------------|
| (B) | Dummy  | East (you) |
|     | ♣ 10 3 |            |
|     |        | ♣ Q64      |

Dummy's ♣10 is led. Again, you should cover with ♣Q. Say this is the layout:

(i)

♣ 10 3

♣ 9872

♣ Q64

♣ AKJ5

Erroneously play low on ♣10 and it wins, followed by ♣3 to ♣J and ♣AK. All four tricks for declarer. Cover ♣10 and yes, declarer beats ♣Q with ♣K and scores ♣AJ. But that's just three tricks – you stopped ♣10 from scoring. Or this:

(ii)

♣ 10 3

♣ K9872

♣ Q64

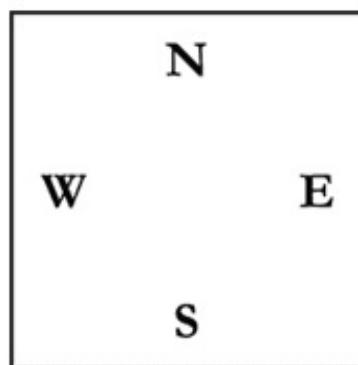
♣ AJ5

Play low on ♣10 and it runs to ♣K whereupon a second lead from dummy enables declarer to finesse ♣J. Cover ♣10 with ♣Q and declarer never wins a second trick.

*Principle:* Cover an honour with an honour.

♠ 10 6 5  
 ♥ K J 7 6  
 ♦ J 4  
 ♣ A K J 7

♠ K J 8 4 2  
 ♥ 9 3  
 ♦ 9 7 6 2  
 ♣ 5 3



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

♠ A 9  
 ♥ Q 8 5  
 ♦ A Q 10 3  
 ♣ Q 8 6 2

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

| S     | W     | N     | E     |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 1NT   | Pass  | 2♣(1) | Pass  |
| 2♦(1) | Pass  | 3NT   | End   |

(1) Stayman – any four-card majors? (No).

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♠4

On our deal West a spade to East's queen, ducked, and East returned the seven of spades. Declarer won perforce and cashed four rounds of clubs finishing in dummy, both opponents throwing hearts. He now led the jack of diamonds. Key moment.

If East had played low, the jack would have won, followed by a diamond to the ten, the ace of diamonds felling East's king, then the queen. Four diamond tricks and game made. However East made no mistake, covering dummy's jack with the king. Declarer could win ♦AQ10 but, without ♦J, that was just eight tricks – down one.

*Footnote:* If at any stage declarer leads a low heart from dummy, East must fly in with the ace to lead his last spade (so second-hand doesn't always play low on a low card).

## 14. When not to cover an honour with an honour

The basic principle is to cover an honour with an honour – to promote lower cards. Here are three situations where it would be a clear mistake to do so (on each occasion dummy's queen is led):

- (A) There are two touching honours – wait and cover the second:

| Dummy    |       |            |
|----------|-------|------------|
| West     | ♥ QJ9 | East (you) |
| ♥ 10832  |       | ♥ K64      |
| Declarer |       |            |
| ♥ A75    |       |            |

Cover ♥Q with ♥K and declarer can win ♥A then finesse dummy's ♥9. Play low on the ♥Q, but cover the ♥J (if it comes next) and partner's ♥10 will win the third round.

- (B) You clearly cannot promote a lower card:

| Dummy    |        |            |
|----------|--------|------------|
| West     | ♠QJ109 | East (you) |
| ♠8732    |        | ♠K642      |
| Declarer |        |            |
| ♠A7      |        |            |

Cover ♠Q with your ♠K and you can see that dummy's ♠J109 will be promoted. With no lower cards for you or partner to promote, play low and declarer's ♠A will have to win the second round, promoting your ♠K.

(C) Declarer is not intending to finesse. In this example, declarer opened 3♦ (seven-card suit, weak hand):

| Dummy      |        |            |
|------------|--------|------------|
| West       | ♦ Q753 | East (you) |
| ♦ -        |        | ♦ K6       |
| Declarer   |        |            |
| ♦ AJ109842 |        |            |

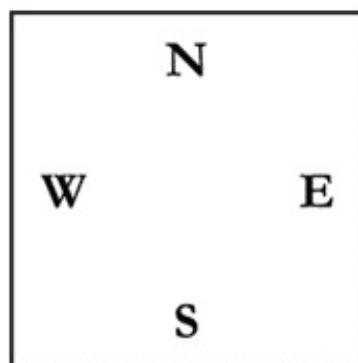
Declarer is leading dummy's ♦Q to tempt you into an injudicious cover. Missing just two cards, he is not intending to finesse; if you play low (smoothly) he will rise with ♦A.

In a sense (B) and (C) are two sides of the same coin – where covering cannot gain because there are no lower cards to promote. In (B) the evidence is on the table; in (C) the evidence is in the bidding.

---

♠ Q J 8 7  
♥ 6 4 3  
♦ Q J 9  
♣ A K 3

♠ 10 6 3  
♥ Q 10 8 7 5  
♦ 10 8 5  
♣ 8 5



♠ K 5 2  
♥ K J 9  
♦ K 3 2  
♣ Q J 10 4

♠ A 9 4  
♥ A 2  
♦ A 7 6 4  
♣ 9 7 6 2

---

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

S            W            N            E  
.....  
1NT(1)    Pass        3NT(2)    End

- (1) Worryingly “aces and spaces”.  
(2) Too flat for Stayman.

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♥7

On our deal West led a heart to East's king, declarer then winning East's jack. He crossed to a top club and tried the queen of diamonds. If East had covered, declarer would have won the ace, finessed the nine, cashed the jack, ran the queen of spades and, with the long diamond, made nine tricks.

East played low on the queen of diamonds and on the queen of spades that followed (cover with the king and declarer wins the ace and runs the nine to score all four spade tricks). Declarer vainly tried the jack of spades next, hoping to pin West's ten. East covered this time and all declarer could do after winning the ace was give West the ten and let him cash hearts. Down one.

## 15. Introducing the basic signal

Bridge and defence in particular is all about communication. Say partner leads an ace. Clearly it doesn't matter to the winning of the trick whether you play a two or an eight. Yet it makes sense for the card to convey a helpful meaning. Given that what partner wants to know is whether or not you want him to continue, you signal as follows:

“Throw Low means No,  
Throw High means Aye”\*

\*Do not confuse this with leading (Lead low for like; Lead high for hate).

*Exercise:* Defending a heart contract (in which you as East hold trumps), how would you signal on partner's ♠A lead (from ♠AK)?

| Dummy      |       |            |
|------------|-------|------------|
| West leads | ♠ 753 | East (you) |
| ♠ A        |       | (i) ♠ Q92  |
|            |       | (ii) ♠ 962 |
|            |       | (iii) ♠ 92 |

(i) ♠9. Throw high means aye. Your ♠Q is an *equal honour* (key expression) to partner's presumed ♠AK. Encourage him to cash ♠K and lead a third round.

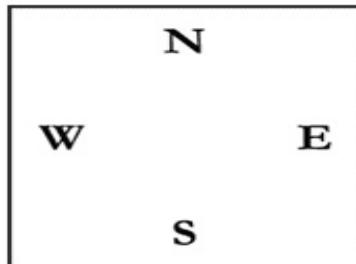
(ii) ♠2. Throw low means no. A three-card holding without ♠Q will discourage partner's ♠A lead.

(iii) ♠9. The point here is that you can trump the third round. If you had no trumps or it was a notrump contract, you would discourage by playing ♠2.

In short, you should encourage partner's ace lead when you have “*third-round control*” ie either the queen or a doubleton.

♠ Q 9  
 ♥ Q J 7 4  
 ♦ Q 6 4  
 ♣ K Q 9 7

♠ 8 5  
 ♥ 8 6 2  
 ♦ A K 9 8 7  
 ♣ A 10 6



♠ 10 6 4  
 ♥ 10 9 5  
 ♦ 10 5  
 ♣ 8 5 4 3 2

♠ A K J 7 3 2  
 ♥ A K 3  
 ♦ J 3 2  
 ♣ J

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: East - West**

| S     | W       | N     | E    |
|-------|---------|-------|------|
| 1♠    | Pass(1) | 2♣(2) | Pass |
| 3♠(3) | Pass    | 4♠(4) | End  |

- (1) Not a sound 2♦ overcall – too flat on a hand well-suited to defence (three quick tricks). Much better to hold ♦KQJ10xx and “out”: more tricks in a diamond contract and fewer tricks v an opposing contract.
- (2) Cheaper of fours.
- (3) Six+ spades and 16+ pts.
- (4) 3NT would work well here, but North knows they have an eight-card spade fit and is understandably worried about diamonds.

**Contract: 4♠**

**Opening Lead: ♦A**

On our featured deal, West led the ace of diamonds v 4♦. Which card should East play?

East must play the ten – an encouraging “throw high means aye” card because he has third-round control. West knows East is ruffing the third diamond because the other reason he would encourage, possession of the queen, is ruled out by dummy.

West cashes the king of diamonds and is just about to lead a third diamond when he reflects that East might not know what to lead back\*. So West made the key play of cashing the ace of clubs before leading the third diamond. East duly ruffed and that meant down one.

\*For sophisticated signallers – as we shall become – this third diamond can tell partner which suit to lead back.

## 16. When to use Attitude signal

When partner leads and your card will influence the winning of the trick, it becomes a signal. Throwing high (eg an eight) says you like partner's lead and you want him to continue; throwing low (eg a two) says you do not want him to continue; rather to switch.

These are the basic "Attitude Signals". They apply to the first round of each suit, whether it be a slam or a part-score; notrumps or trumps.

In (A), a notrump contract (say), dummy's ♦5 is won by dummy's ♦A. Your card?

| Dummy    |           |            |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Partner  | ♦A74      | East (you) |
| leads ♦5 | (i) ♦K92  |            |
|          | (ii) ♦962 |            |
|          | (iii) ♦93 |            |

(i) ♦9. "Throw high means aye". Note that if dummy's played ♦4, you would of course have to play ♦K, not a signal.

(ii) ♦2. "Throw low means no".

(iii) ♦3. Discouraging. Note that you do not play top to indicate a doubleton, a common fallacy\*. Say this was the position:

| Dummy     |       |            |
|-----------|-------|------------|
| Partner   | ♦ 754 | East (you) |
| leads ♦ A |       | ♦ 93       |

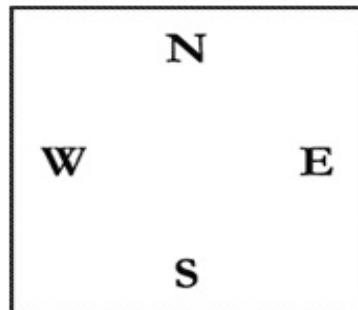
If it remained a notrump contract, you would again signal with a discouraging ♦3. Only if it was a trump contract and you were able (and wanted) to trump

would you signal with ♦9.

\*You always *lead* top of two cards, but not necessarily follow suit with top of two.

♠ A 10 7  
 ♥ A K 9 8 2  
 ♦ 9  
 ♣ J 7 5 2

♠ J 9 6 4 2  
 ♥ 10 5 4  
 ♦ A K  
 ♣ K 10 3



♠ 8 3  
 ♥ Q J 6  
 ♦ 6 5 4 2  
 ♣ Q 8 6 4

♠ K Q 5  
 ♥ 7 3  
 ♦ Q J 10 8 7 3  
 ♣ A 9

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: East - West**

| S      | W       | N     | E    |
|--------|---------|-------|------|
| 1♦     | Pass(1) | 1♥    | Pass |
| 2♦     | Pass    | 3♣(2) | Pass |
| 3NT(3) | End     |       |      |

- (1) Might bid 1♠ but (i) his suit is emaciated (ii) his shape is barren (iii) he is vulnerable.
- (2) Might bid 2NT to limit his hand.
- (3) With spades well covered.

**Contract: 3NT**

**Opening Lead: ♠4**

On our deal West led his fourth highest spade v 3NT and declarer won dummy's ace for two good reasons: firstly to disguise his spade strength (he wanted more spades led) and secondly to retain ♠KQ entries to his diamonds. East signalled, crucially, with the three (not top of his doubleton because he didn't like them).

Declarer led the nine of diamonds to (his ten and) West's king and West realised that the only suit with an future (given East's trick one signal) was clubs. He found the devastating (and only winning) switch to the ten of clubs (key play) – in case declarer held his actual ♣A9. This went ♣10, ♣J, ♣Q, ♣A (ducking in dummy no better). West won the second diamond and played the king of clubs and a third club, East holding ♣86 over dummy's ♣75. Down one. You may care to lay out the clubs and see why no other club lead at trick three but the ten secured three defensive tricks.

## 17. The Equal Honour Signal

When should you give an encouraging “throw high means aye” signal on your partner’s lead?

*Answer:* When you have an “equal honour”.

To an ace lead (implying ace-king), the queen is the equal honour. To a king lead (implying king-queen), the ace and jack are the equal honours. To the queen lead (implying queen-jack), the king and ten are the equal honours.

| (A)       | Dummy       |            |
|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Partner   | ♥ 754       | East (you) |
| leads ♥ A | (i) ♥ Q83   |            |
|           | (ii) ♥ 1083 |            |
|           | (iii) ♥ 83  |            |

*Answers:* (i) ♥8; (ii) ♥3; (iii) ♥8 (for the third-round ruff).

| (B)       | Dummy        |            |
|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Partner   | ♠ 754        | East (you) |
| leads ♠ K | (i) ♠ A83    |            |
|           | (ii) ♠ J83   |            |
|           | (iii) ♠ 1083 |            |

*Answers:* (i) ♠8; (ii) ♠8; (iii) ♠3.

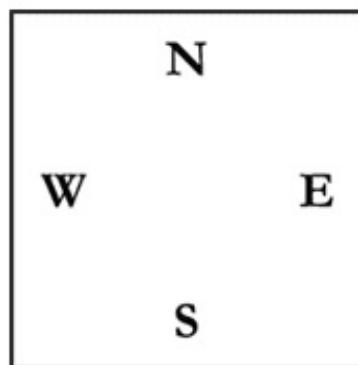
|           |       |             |
|-----------|-------|-------------|
| (C)       | Dummy |             |
| Partner   | ♦ 754 | East (you)  |
| leads ♦ Q |       | (i) ♦ K83   |
|           |       | (ii) ♦ 1083 |
|           |       | (iii) ♦ 983 |
|           |       | (iv) ♦ A83  |

*Answers:* (i) ♦8; (ii) ♦8; (iii) ♦3. (iv) ♦A: partner's ♦Q lead indicates that declarer holds ♦K; in a trump contract you should play ♦A on partner's ♦Q – perhaps that ♦K is singleton...

---

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

♠ 10  
♥ 8 5 3  
♦ K Q 10 5  
♣ Q J 7 3 2



♠ 8 5  
♥ K 7 6 2  
♦ 8 6 3  
♣ A 9 8 5

♠ K Q 9 7 6 4 2  
♥ 10 4  
♦ A J 4  
♣ K

---

Dealer: North

Vulnerability: Neither

|       |       |     |      |
|-------|-------|-----|------|
| S     | W     | N   | E    |
| ..... | ..... | 1NT | Pass |
| 4♠    | End   |     |      |

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♦K

On our deal West led the king of diamonds v 4♦ and Trick One went ♦K, ♦2, ♦3, ♦4. Clever duck by declarer that, hoping for a second diamond into his ♦AJ (this is curiously known as the Bath Coup). However West knew from his partner's throw-low-means-no signal that declarer had both equal honours to the king-queen. At trick two he switched to the queen of clubs, dummy's weaker suit. Over to East.

Knowing declarer held the king of clubs, possibly singleton, and keen to win the trick (for the diamond play), East rose with the ace of clubs on his partner's queen (key play). Down fell the king.

At trick three East switched to a diamond, crucially through declarer's ♦AJ. Declarer rose with the ace, drew trumps, then led and ran the ten of hearts. The finesse failed, however, East winning the king and leading a third diamond to West's queen. Down one.

Note that East winning the ace of clubs would have been just as necessary if declarer had had a club more and a spade fewer: setting up the third diamond before it went on dummy's hearts. Note also West's switch to a club, not to the stronger hearts (I hate that motto: lead through strength – yuk!).

## **18. “High” and “low”: the relative not the absolute value**

I am often asked (as applies to a signal), “What is “high” and what is “low”?” I know they want an answer not a political dodge, so I normally say, “Well, a two, three and four are normally low; and a seven, eight and nine are normally high”. But I feel a fraud, because the reality is that signalling is a relative business not an absolute one.

Take these positions:

|           |        |            |
|-----------|--------|------------|
| (A)       | Dummy  |            |
| Partner   | ♠ 1065 | East (you) |
| leads ♠ A |        | (i) ♠ Q32  |
|           |        | (ii) ♠ 987 |

In (i) you would have to encourage by playing ♠3 – hardly a very throw-high-means-aye card. In (ii) your throw-low-means-no signal would be the ♠7. Hmm.

In (B) try to work out whether partner is encouraging you:

|            |       |                    |
|------------|-------|--------------------|
| (B)(i)     | Dummy |                    |
| West (you) | ♦ 764 |                    |
| ♦ AK53     |       | ♦ A, ♦ 4, ♦ 8, ♦ 2 |

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| (B)(i)     | Dummy              |
| West (you) | ♦ 1086             |
| ♣ AK94     | ♣ A, ♣ 6, ♣ 3, ♣ 5 |

Answers:

(B)(i). Partner's ♦8 looks high – until you scrutinise all the spot cards you can see. In fact all cards below ♦8 can be seen; ♦8 is partner's lowest – he is discouraging. This might be the layout:

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| ♦ 764  |        |
| ♦ AK53 | ♦ J108 |
| ♦ Q92  |        |

Erroneously follow with ♦K and you promote declarer's ♦Q. Better to switch and await partner's lead of ♦J through declarer's ♦Q.

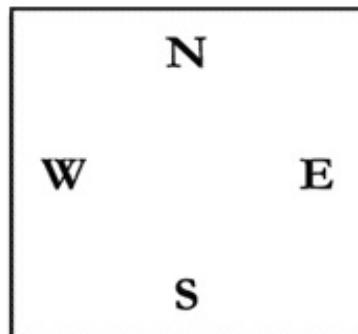
B(ii). Partner's ♣3 looks low, but where is ♣2? Unless declarer has it and is foxing, partner is encouraging. This might be the layout:

|        |       |
|--------|-------|
| ♣ 1086 |       |
| ♣ AK94 | ♣ Q32 |
| ♣ J75  |       |

To stress: It is the relative value of partner's card that is important, not the absolute value.

♠ 10 9 4  
 ♥ 9 7 6  
 ♦ A Q J 5 2  
 ♣ A J

♠ J 6 5  
 ♥ A K 5  
 ♦ 10 7 6  
 ♣ Q 10 8 4



♠ 7 3  
 ♥ Q 4 3 2  
 ♦ 9 8 4 3  
 ♣ 9 5 3

♠ A K Q 8 2  
 ♥ J 10 8  
 ♦ K  
 ♣ K 7 6 2

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S  | W    | N     | E    |
|----|------|-------|------|
| 1♠ | Pass | 2♦    | Pass |
| 3♣ | Pass | 4♠(1) | End  |

(1) Partner's 3♣ promised five+ spades. Yes, 3NT would have made but tough to reach as no one has a heart stopper.

**Contract: 4♠**

**Opening Lead: ♥A**

On our deal, West led the ace of hearts and saw ♠A, ♠6, ♠4, ♠8. The four looked low, but where were the two and three? Deducing that partner held them (or at least one) and that the four was high, relatively speaking, he continued with the king and a third heart. East won the queen and, with no tricks coming outside trumps (looking at dummy), led a fourth heart. Whether or not declarer trumped high, West's jack of trumps was promoted. Down one.

## 19. Declarer scrambling signals

We are talking signals. Not of the nodding and winking variety you understand, rather the poker-faced playing of cards.

The basis is this: a high spot card encourages; a low spot card discourages. However this is all relatively speaking, for you, on partner's (say) king-lead, have to play the three from A32 and the 8 from 1098.

[Which reminds of the story of the player who wanted to discourage holding 1098; he dropped his eight on the floor and was asked, as he (slowly) bent to pick it up, what it was. "Oh, a small one," he replied!! Droll if (of course) entirely unacceptable].

Does declarer watch passively as the signalling takes place...?

|          |       |       |
|----------|-------|-------|
| (A)      | Dummy |       |
| West     | ♥ 975 | East  |
| ♥ AK104  |       | ♥ J63 |
| Declarer |       |       |
| ♥ Q82    |       |       |

West leads ♥A and the trick goes ♥A, ♥5, ♥3 and... If declarer plays ♥2, then West knows East's ♥3 is his lowest. However if declarer plays ♥8 (and it doesn't matter to him) then might not West think East held ♥Q32 and was encouraging?

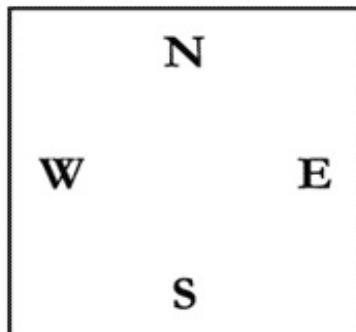
|         |          |       |
|---------|----------|-------|
| (B)     | Dummy    |       |
| West    | ♦ 975    | East  |
| ♦ AK104 |          | ♦ Q63 |
|         | Declarer |       |
|         | ♦ J82    |       |

After ♦A, ♦5, ♦6, declarer must not do anything clever this time. He should simply play ♦2 and hope that declarer puts East with ♦J86.

*To summarise:* declarer should try to scramble the defensive signals. This he does by working out whether he wants the defence to continue the suit; if he does, then he plays a card just higher than the signal; if he does not, then he plays his lowest card. It's as though he is signalling to the leader.

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

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



♠ 10 9 7  
 ♥ 8 4  
 ♦ 9 6 4 2  
 ♣ A 8 3 2

♠ Q 8 3  
 ♥ A Q 7 5  
 ♦ K Q 7  
 ♣ K 10 4

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S      | W    | N     | E    |
|--------|------|-------|------|
| 1♥     | Pass | 3♥(1) | Pass |
| 3NT(2) | Pass | 4♥(3) | End  |

- (1) The small doubleton is worth an extra point.
- (2) Suggesting the nine-trick game.
- (3) Too weak in the blacks to reject 4♥.

**Contract: 4♥**

**Opening Lead: ♠A**

On our deal, West led the ace of spades v 4♥ and East played the seven, the best he could do to discourage. If South had played the three, West would have known East's seven was his lowest. He would have switched to the queen of clubs to East's ace for a second spade through declarer's queen. Down one.

South did not play the three of spades, instead scrambling the signal with eight. Thinking his partner held ♠Q73, West now played king of spades at trick two. Goodnight defence – a later club lead towards the king securing his game.

## 20. How to signal with a doubleton on partner's ace lead

*Exercise:* You are East defending (say) a spade contract. How do you signal on partner's ♠A lead (from ♠AK) given your desire to ruff the third round?

| Partner   | Dummy | East (you)  |
|-----------|-------|-------------|
| leads ♠ A | ♥ 864 | (i) ♥ J3    |
|           |       | (ii) ♥ Q3   |
|           |       | (iii) ♥ QJ3 |

*Answers:*

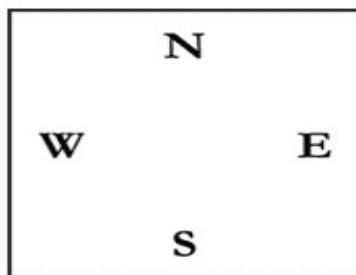
(i) ♠J. Throw high means aye – you can afford to spare any card up to the jack. Partner will continue with ♠K and then a third round for you to ruff.

(ii) ♠3. You cannot afford to play the queen so must play low. Awkward, but the queen is just too valuable a card to spare. Plus (or perhaps because of this) dropping the queen under partner's ace-lead means something entirely different...

(iii) ♠Q. Dropping the queen under partner's ace-lead indicates the jack (or a singleton). It gives partner the option of underleading his king, enabling you to win your jack (or ruff). This might be necessary if partner wishes to put you on lead. Take our deal.

♠ J 2  
 ♥ 5 3 2  
 ♦ 10 8 5  
 ♣ A K 9 8 6

♠ 10 8 7  
 ♥ A K 6 4  
 ♦ A Q  
 ♣ 10 7 3 2



♠ 9 5  
 ♥ Q J 10  
 ♦ 9 6 4 3 2  
 ♣ J 5 4

♠ A K Q 6 4 3  
 ♥ 9 8 7  
 ♦ K J 7  
 ♣ Q

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S           | W              | N      | E     |
|-------------|----------------|--------|-------|
| .....       | .....          | .....  | ..... |
| 1♠<br>2♠(3) | Pass(1)<br>End | 1NT(2) | Pass  |

(1) Close to a take-out double given the opening values with four cards in the other major. However three small spades is hardly ideal and never forget that the double of 1♠ forces partner to name a suit at the Two-Level. Hence the moto “Don’t fight the spade suit”.

(2) Insufficient strength for 2♣.

(3) Two-and-a-half Spades. South was soon glad he bid just Two...

**Contract: 2♠**

**Opening Lead: ♥A**

West led the ace of hearts v 2♦. Which card should East play?

The queen – indicating the jack (or a singleton – impossible here). Because he was very keen for a diamond lead to come from across the table, through declarer's putative king, at trick two West led a low heart.

East won the second heart with the ten, winning with the cheaper of equals. Back came a high-for-hate lead\* of the nine of diamonds, West winning the queen then cashing the ace to void himself.

At trick five West underled his hearts again, leading low to East's jack (you see the rationale behind his winning the second heart with the ten – win with the jack and he'd deny the ten). And East knew what to do next: a third diamond came whizzing across the table, ruffed by West. The defence had taken the first six tricks and, although declarer won the rest, he was down one.

*\*Let me stress again:*

*1st card to a trick (lead):*

*Lead high for hate; lead low for like.*

*3rd card to a trick (signal):*

*Throw high means aye; throw low means no.*

## 21. Reacting to partner's signal

This page we look at how you react to partner's signal. In each example spades are trumps

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| (A)        | Dummy              |
| West (you) | ♥ 864              |
| ♥ AKQ3     | ♥ A, ♥ 4, ♥ 2, ♥ 7 |

Ignore partner's discouraging ♥2 – you have the third-round control (♥Q) yourself. Play ♥K then ♥Q.

|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| (B)        | Dummy               |
| West (you) | ♣ 84                |
| ♣ AK753    | ♣ A, ♣ 4, ♣ 10, ♣ 2 |

Given dummy's doubleton, the only reason partner could be encouraging (with ♣10) is that he wants you to play ♣K and a third club: he can overtrump dummy.

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| (C)        | Dummy              |
| West (you) | ♦ Q1094            |
| ♦ AK53     | ♦ A, ♦ 4, ♦ 8, ♦ 2 |

Partner's encouraging ♦8 indicates third-round control, but given that

dummy holds ♦Q, partner must be short and ruffing the third round.

(D)

Dummy

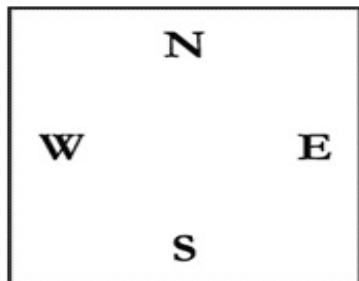
|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| West (you) | ♦ J1097             |
| ♣ AK86     | ♣ A, ♣ 7, ♣ 5 , ♣ 2 |

The first thing to note is that partner's murky-looking ♣5 signal is encouraging – ♣J109876 are all visible. Has he ♣5x or ♣Q5x? If ♣5x, playing ♣K and a third club (ruffed) is strong defence; if ♣Q5x, playing ♣K then a third club will see partner's ♣Q get ruffed and set up a fourth-round winner in dummy; weak defence.

As a rule of thumb, partner should assume you have AKxx for your ace-lead; he should not encourage when holding Qxx if dummy has four+ cards, only if dummy has three.

♠ J 10 9 7  
 ♥ K Q 5  
 ♦ A K J 8  
 ♣ 9 7

♠ A K 8 5 4  
 ♥ 10 9 7  
 ♦ 9 5  
 ♣ A Q 3



♠ Q 2  
 ♥ J 2  
 ♦ 10 6 4 3 2  
 ♣ 8 6 5 4

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

**Dealer: West**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S     | W       | N       | E     |
|-------|---------|---------|-------|
|       | 1NT(1)  | Pass(2) | 2♦(3) |
| 2♥(4) | Pass(5) | 3♥(6)   | End   |

- (1) Contentious, but most top players open 1NT not 1♥/♠ when 5332 these days.
- (2) 16 points to double.
- (3) Weakness take-out (pleased not to be playing Transfers).
- (4) Bold, but East has shown weakness.
- (5) Partner could have nothing.
- (6) Game invite, cutting South some slack.

**Contract: 3♥**

**Opening Lead: ♠A**

When reacting to partner's signal, there is no substitute to analysing each possibility. Take our deal, West leading the ace of spades v 3♥ and seeing trick one go ♠A, ♠7, ♠2, ♠3.

East would have played the six from ♠62, so either he had a singleton, or ♠Q62, or ♠Q2 doubleton. In either case (and especially the last) a low spade at trick two was best. East won his queen and switched to a high-for-hate eight of clubs. West won the queen, cashed the ace and then, the Coup de Grace, led a third (low) spade. East ruffed with the jack – and though declarer could overruff, West's ♥1097 had to score a trick. Down one.

## 22. TOP Defence

Three facets of defence I would urge you to focus upon especially – and then you'll become a “TOP” Defender:

*T for Trick Target* – how many tricks do you need to defeat the contract? If you need just one more and have an ace, lead it.

*O for Observe Dummy*. Ever played Whist (Bridge without a dummy) – it's far too tough! Your whole defensive strategy will be based on what you see in dummy.

*P for Partner*. What (on earth?!) is he doing? What messages has he been sending me, with his bids, leads and signals? In case of any confusion, let me reiterate...

Leads (first round of each suit, opening lead & during play): *lead low for like, lead high for hate*.

Signals (on partner's lead\* when you cannot contribute to the winning of the trick): *throw high means aye; throw low means no*.

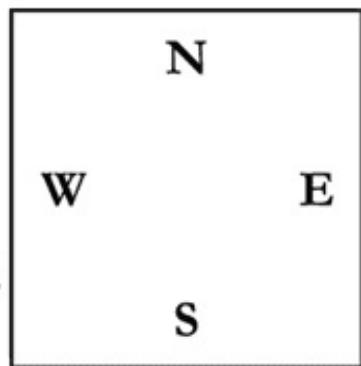
\*Also when discarding – more anon.

One another thought relating to “P”: things are never the same across the table; if you can see a way to defeat the contract, dictate the defence – take our deal.

---

♠ Q 6 5 2  
♥ 7 4  
♦ K J 7  
♣ K J 9 3

♠ 8  
♥ K Q 10 6  
♦ 9 6  
♣ 10 7 6 5 4 2



♠ A 3  
♥ A 8 5 3 2  
♦ 8 5 4 3 2  
♣ 8

♠ K J 10 9 7 4  
♥ J 9  
♦ A Q 10  
♣ A Q

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

| S  | W    | N  | E    |
|----|------|----|------|
| 1♠ | Pass | 3♠ | Pass |
| 4♠ | End  |    |      |

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♥K

West led the king of hearts v 4♦ and...and what?

Say East lets the king win, perhaps playing an encouraging eight. West will lead a second (low) heart, East winning his ace. He will then switch to his singleton club in the hope of a second-round ruff. Will he get it?

Nope. Declarer will win the club and lead a trump, East winning the ace. East might try a diamond in the hope of putting partner on play (meaning that the game would be down in any event) for a club ruff. To no avail – declarer would win the diamond, draw his other trump and claim his game.

The way for the defence to defeat the game is for them to switch to a club at trick two. Now East can reach his partner via the queen of hearts for the club ruff. But East mustn't blame West for failing to switch to a club – for only East knows he has a singleton.

East must think "T". He can count three defensive tricks (assuming declarer has a second heart) – two hearts and a trump. He knows he can win the first trump to secure his club ruff. He also knows his partner has the queen of hearts (for his king lead).

The scene is set. East overtakes the king of hearts with the ace (key play) to switch to his singleton club. He wins the first trump with the ace, leads a second heart to his partner's queen and now receives the club ruff – down one.

## **23. Observing dummy**

When defending, there is one set of clues that offers more guidance than any other: the very reason why finding a good opening lead is a far tougher than any other defensive card.

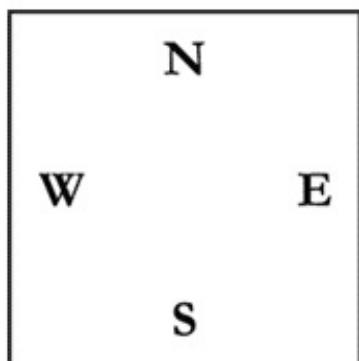
Dummy.

The primary threat of a dummy is a long strong suit, one that will provide declarer with discards for his losers. If you as a defender see such a threat in dummy, you must attack. Try to take your tricks quickly. Dally, and (trumps drawn – I am assuming it is a trump contract) declarer will soon throw his losers on that suit.

---

♠ A Q  
♥ 5 4 3 2  
♦ K Q 10 9  
♣ Q 10 8

♠ 8 4  
♥ Q J 9 7  
♦ J 8 7  
♣ K 7 5 2



♠ 9 6 2  
♥ A 10 6  
♦ 5 4 3 2  
♣ A J 3

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

---

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

| S  | W    | N     | E    |
|----|------|-------|------|
| 1♠ | Pass | 2♦    | Pass |
| 2♠ | Pass | 4♠(1) | End  |

---

(1) Partner will usually have six cards.

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♥Q

On our featured deal West leads the queen of hearts v 4♦. Over to East. East scrutinises dummy. Those diamonds are not that long, or that strong, but the problem is that, relative to dummy, East's diamonds are so feeble (his highest being lower than dummy's lowest).

Divide the missing five diamonds in almost any way and dummy's diamonds will provide declarer with at least one discard.

e.g.

♦KQ109

♦AJ7

♦5432

♦86

Here partner's diamonds are pretty strong and declarer's pretty weak, but after leading twice towards dummy, declarer will have two discards.

Back to the deal. Say East plays low on West's queen of hearts – or – better (but not good) – wins the ace returns a second heart. Declarer wins the king (a card he was known to have given West's top-of-a-sequence lead of the queen). Declarer now draws trumps and runs diamonds. With the jack falling, he has four winners and two discards. Away go two clubs – 11 tricks made.

East must rise with the ace of hearts – this he would do regardless of whether there was a threat in dummy, because declarer is marked with the king and it may be singleton. However East must not meekly return a heart back. Seeing the threat of dummy's diamonds, he must hope his partner holds the king of clubs.

At trick two East returns the three of clubs (key play). West wins the king and leads back the two of clubs (low from three remaining). East beats dummy's ten with the jack and cashes the ace, felling dummy's queen. Down one.

East's club switch was risky and would not work well if declarer held the king. But the point is that the risk must be taken because of the threat of dummy's diamonds.

## 24. The primary threat: a suit providing declarer with discards

If dummy has a suit that will provide declarer with discards for his losers, a defender must attack, trying to take (or set up) tricks as quickly as possible. Gauging the degree of that threat in dummy involves looking at your holding in the suit relative to dummy's.

*Exercise:* Hearts are trumps. As East, rate the degree of the threat of dummy's spades providing discards for declarer (and therefore your keenness to attack the other suits). 10 is a big threat; 0 is no threat:

Dummy

♠AQ97

East (you)

(i) ♠ KJ102

(ii) ♠ K1032

(iii) ♠ 10432

(iv) ♠ 5432

*Answers:*

(i) 0/10. With your honours all sitting over dummy, there can be no discard (unless declarer is void).

(ii) 2/10. Your ♠K10 is very powerful, preventing a discard unless declarer holds, say, ♠Jx [after running ♠J to your ♠K, there would be a third-round discard].

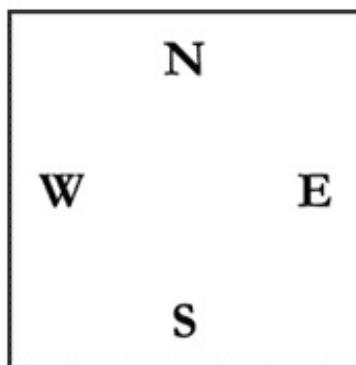
(iii) 6/10. There is a fair threat, but your ♠10 will prevent declarer winning a fourth trick (unless he holds ♠KJx).

(iv) 10/10. Ugh. Pretty much however you divide the other spades, there will be discards. Attacking the other suits immediately will be imperative here.

---

♠ J 10 7 2  
♥ Q 10 5  
♦ Q 10  
♣ A Q 10 8

♠ Q 3  
♥ A 9 2  
♦ 9 8 5 3 2  
♣ K 9 4



♠ 4  
♥ K J 8 3  
♦ A J 4 3  
♣ 7 5 3 2

♠ A K 9 8 6 5  
♥ 7 6 4  
♦ K 7  
♣ J 7

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

|       |       |       |        |
|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| S     | W     | N     | E      |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | .....  |
| 1♠    | Pass  | 3♠    | End(1) |

(1) South showing admirable discipline, knowing of the ten-card spade fit.

Contract: 3♠

Opening Lead: ♦8

On our featured deal, West led a “high-for-hate” eight of diamonds v 3♦. Dummy played the ten. Plan the defence as East.

Recognising the lead as high-for-hate, East won the ace and was not tempted to lead back a diamond (see how powerful the “lead low-for-like, lead high-for-hate” mantra is). He looked at dummy and saw that all of dummy’s four clubs were higher than his; any finesse declarer wished to take against his partner would succeed. With clubs certain to provide declarer with discards for his losers (in fact they would provide two via a successful finesse against West’s king), East needed to attack.

At trick two East switched to a low-for-like three of hearts (key play), hoping his partner held the ace. West duly won the ace, returned a top-of-two nine of hearts and East could beat dummy’s ten with the jack, cash the king, then, with no trick coming outside trumps, attempt a Trump Promotion by leading the thirteenth heart. Whether declarer trumped high or not, West’s queen of trumps had to score a trick. Down one.

## 25. The secondary threat: a ruffing value

The primary threat of a dummy is a suit that will provide declarer with discards for his losers. If he does, you must attack, trying to win quick tricks. Say dummy does not have such a suit – what then?

The secondary threat of a dummy is a ruffing value: the possession of a short suit which declarer can void and then trump his losers. Is there way for a defender to thwart such a plan? Yes – he must lead trumps, attempting to remove dummy's trumps before they can be used to trump declarer's winners.

*Exercise:* In both (A) and (B), West leads ♦Q v 4♠. You correctly win ♦A. Now what?

|               |        |            |
|---------------|--------|------------|
| (A)           | Dummy  |            |
|               | ♠ Q42  |            |
|               | ♥ AQ97 |            |
|               | ♦ 32   | East (you) |
|               | ♣ 7532 | ♠ 63       |
|               |        | ♥ 5432     |
| ♦ Q led v 4 ♠ |        | ♦ A97      |
|               |        | ♣ KJ94     |

|               |        |            |
|---------------|--------|------------|
| (A)           | Dummy  |            |
|               | ♠ Q42  |            |
|               | ♥ AQ97 |            |
|               | ♦ 32   | East (you) |
|               | ♣ 7532 | ♠ 63       |
|               |        | ♥ 5432     |
| ♦ Q led v 4 ♠ |        | ♦ A97      |
|               |        | ♣ KJ94     |

*Answers:*

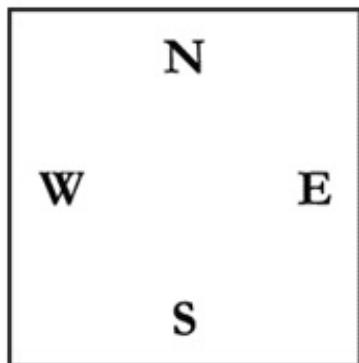
(A). Switch to ♣4. Dummy's hearts – relative to yours – are bound to provide declarer with discards. You must try to win quick tricks. There is no point in leading back a diamond – partner's top-of-a-run lead denies ♦K. Instead switch to clubs, leading low for like.

(B). Switch to ♣3. There is no threat from dummy's hearts, as you are sitting over with very powerful hearts. The only threat from this dummy is declarer ruffing diamonds. Switch to a trump, hoping to remove dummy's trumps before they can be used to ruff declarer's losing diamonds.

---

♠ J 4  
♥ K J 7  
♦ 8 6 4 2  
♣ K J 8 3

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



♠ A K 10  
♥ 9 6 4  
♦ Q 9  
♣ A Q 10 6 4

♠ 9 7 5  
♥ A Q 10 8 5 3 2  
♦ A K  
♣ 2

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

| S  | W    | N  | E  |
|----|------|----|----|
| 1♥ | Pass | 2♥ | 3♣ |
| 4♥ | End  |    |    |

Contract: 4♥

Opening Lead: ♣7

On our deal West led a second-top-of rubbish seven of partner's clubs [the danger of the high-for-hate nine is that partner might think he has a doubleton; better to go ♣7, ♣9, ♣4 see *deal 4*]. East beat dummy's jack with the queen and could see no suit that would provide declarer with discards. There was a potential ruffing value, though, the doubleton spade.

At trick two East switched to a trump (key play). Declarer won in dummy (West discarding) and led a spade, but East won and led a second trump. East won the second spade that followed and led a third trump. Dummy's trumps were gone and declarer now had to lose a third spade – down one.

## 26. Primary threat or secondary threat?

Observe dummy for threats.

*Primary Threat:* A long, strong suit that will provide declarer with discards for his losers. If there is one, the defence must attack, trying to win tricks quickly.

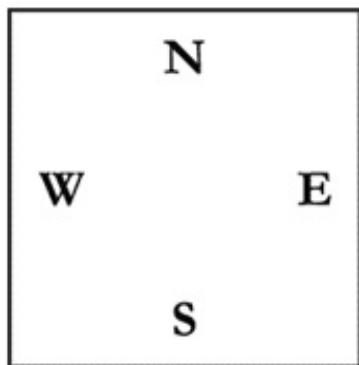
*Secondary Threat:* A ruffing value. If there is no primary threat but there is such a ruffing value, the defence must lead trumps.

Sometimes things will be clearer from one side of the table than the other. In that case that defender must take control – witness our deal. West led the king of spades v 4♥. What should the defence be?

---

♠ 7 5  
♥ J 7 4  
♦ 10 8 6  
♣ A Q 10 4 2

♠ K Q 10 4  
♥ K 9 6  
♦ J 5 2  
♣ 8 6 5



♠ A J 8 2  
♥ 2  
♦ 9 7 4 3  
♣ K J 9 7

♠ 9 6 3  
♥ A Q 10 8 5 3  
♦ A K Q  
♣ 3

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

| S     | W     | N     | E     |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 1♥    | Pass  | 2♥    | Pass  |
| 4♥    | End   |       |       |

Contract: 4♥

Opening Lead: ♠K

Let us consider the situation from both sides of the table. From West's perspective, dummy appears to have a primary threat – the long, strong clubs. His plan would therefore be to try to take tricks quickly – in spades and (hopefully) diamonds.

East, on the other hand, knows from his strong clubs sitting over dummy that there is no such threat. The only possible threat – and a very real one – is the ruffing value in spades. East must assume captaincy, for only he knows that the defenders are observing a secondary threat dummy, not a primary threat dummy.

The key play is for East to overtake the king of spades with the ace – and this he can afford to do as the defenders have the four top spades – and switch to a trump. Furthermore, note that the trump switch has to come from East's side, through declarer's ace.

Say declarer plays low on East's trump – hoping East holds the king. West wins the king and knows from partner's defence that he need not worry about clubs. Following his partner's strategy, he leads back a second trump.

Declarer wins the second trump (East discarding) and leads a second spade, voiding the dummy preparatory to ruffing his third spade. He will not be able to, however, for West wins the second spade and leads his third trump, removing dummy's last trump.

Declarer cannot avoid losing a third spade now (down one) and indeed may take his only remaining chance of making his game – leading a club to the queen hoping West holds the king. He will now go down two.

*Quiz:* Swap East's minors so he has ♦KJ97 and ♣9743. How should he defend 4♥ on ♠K lead?

*Answer:* Seeing the threat of dummy's clubs, East must overtake with ♠A and switch to ♦J, best if declarer holds ♦Qxx.

## 27. Dummy has no threat – go passive

When dummy has no long, strong suit that will provide declarer with discards, nor a ruffing value, there is no need for a defender to do anything. Sit back – relax.

It is important to realise that leading a suit, playing the first and third cards to the trick, is not nearly as good as having the opponents lead. They say that broaching a new suit costs about half a trick (ie it costs a full trick about half the time). Take this suit:

| Dummy    |       |  |
|----------|-------|--|
| West     | East  |  |
| ♦ A103   |       |  |
| ♦ Q842   | ♦ J75 |  |
| Declarer |       |  |
| ♦ K96    |       |  |

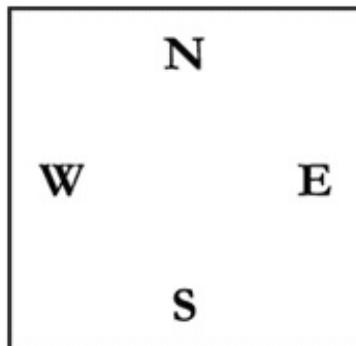
If either East or West leads this suit, declarer will score all three tricks. If declarer or dummy leads, only the ace-king will score.

The moral is this: if you have to attack new suits – because dummy has a trick source and declarer will throw losers on it – then do so: out of necessity not out of desire. But if there is no such threat, go passive. This means leading a suit that gives declarer nothing (that he couldn't have done for himself).

---

♠ K J 6  
♥ K Q  
♦ K J 7 4  
♣ Q 9 5 2

♠ 2  
♥ J 9 6 4 3 2  
♦ 9 3  
♣ 10 8 6 3



♠ Q 10 7  
♥ A 8 5  
♦ Q 10 8 5  
♣ K J 7

♠ A 9 8 5 4 3  
♥ 10 7  
♦ A 6 2  
♣ A 4

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

| S  | W    | N     | E    |
|----|------|-------|------|
| 1♠ | Pass | 2♣(1) | Pass |
| 2♠ | Pass | 4♠    | End  |

- (1) Avoiding a leap in notrumps; bidding the cheaper of fours.

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♥4

Our featured deal is a good example of the passive defence. As East defending 4♦, the first trick goes ♦4, ♦Q, ♦A, ♦7. What next?

Looking at dummy, there is no threat – you have both minors well covered. The key is to give nothing away, to let declarer lead to you. The only passive play at trick two is a second heart – the lead of any other suit will promote dummy's ♠J/♦J/♣Q.

Declarer wins the second heart and starts on trumps, leading to his ace (preserving ♠KJ) then back to dummy. West discards so he rises with the king and, keen to have East lead a minor, exits with a third trump.

East wins the queen of trumps and, again with passivity his objective, leads the only passive card in his hand: his third heart. He does not worry that declarer ruffs, for those trumps declarer will always win.

Declarer now cashes the ace of diamonds and leads a second diamond to dummy's jack. He is, reasonably, hoping West holds the queen or that the suit splits 3-3. East wins the queen and returns a passive third diamond, again giving away nothing.

Declarer wins dummy's king of diamonds and must lose a second club to the king at the end. Down one. Yes, there are winning lines, but declarer was given absolutely no help.

## 28. What is passive defence?

I suspect that more contracts are let through when the defence are over-active than the converse. If dummy does not pose a threat (no long, strong suit; no ruffing value) then go passive. Make plays that give declarer nothing that he could not do for himself.

| (A)        | Dummy |
|------------|-------|
| West (you) | ♥ AK3 |
| (i) ♥ J73  |       |
| (ii) ♥ Q73 |       |

As West in (A), leading a heart from ♥Jxx is passive – dummy's ♥AK are always going to score and your lead cannot promote a heart in declarer's hand. Leading from ♥Qxx is not passive however, as the lead could run to declarer's ♥J from, say ♥Jxx.

Now try these – which are passive leads and which are not?

| (B)        | Dummy  |
|------------|--------|
| West (you) | ♠ AK10 |
| (i) ♠ J73  |        |
| (ii) ♠ Q73 |        |

*Answer:* Both are passive, for if in (ii) declarer holds ♠J, he can always lead to ♠10 himself.

|              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| (C)          | Dummy |
| West (you)   | ♦ AQ4 |
| (i) ♦ K103   |       |
| (ii) ♦ J73   |       |
| (iii) ♦ KJ10 |       |

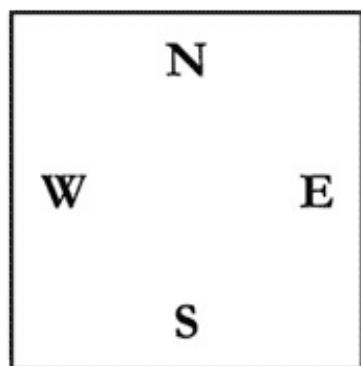
*Answer:* In (i) declarer could run ♦3 round to ♦J, an unnecessary trick. In (ii) the danger is declarer holding ♦10 and partner ♦K, declarer playing low from dummy, partner winning ♦K but promoting dummy's ♦Q. Neither (i) nor (ii) are passive plays but (iii) is passive because declarer can always lead to dummy's ♦Q himself.

Examples of other passive strategies include making declarer ruff in the long hand, leading trumps (when not picking up partner's queen) and leading around to nothing in dummy.

---

♠ A Q 10 3  
♥ A 5 3  
♦ Q 4 3  
♣ J 6 3

♠ 7 4  
♥ 10 9 8 6  
♦ J 9 8 7  
♣ 10 8 2



♠ 8 6 2  
♥ K Q 2  
♦ K 10 5  
♣ Q 9 7 4

♠ K J 9 5  
♥ J 7 4  
♦ A 6 2  
♣ A K 5

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

S W N E  
-----  
1♠ Pass 4♠ End

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♥10

On our deal West led the ten of hearts v 4♦, dummy ducking (best) and East winning the queen. There were no threats in dummy, so East sought to be passive. The only passive play for him at trick two was a trump. Declarer drew trumps then reasonably led a diamond to dummy's queen. East beat the queen with the king and now his passive play was the (top from two) ten of diamonds (leading around to nothing).

Declarer rose with the ace of diamonds and exited with a third diamond (he was being passive too). West won and led a second heart. Declarer did best, rising with the ace of hearts and leading a third heart. East won the king but was finally endplayed – to lead away from his queen of clubs around to dummy's jack of clubs. Down one, though.

## **29. Defending notrumps – counting declarer's tricks**

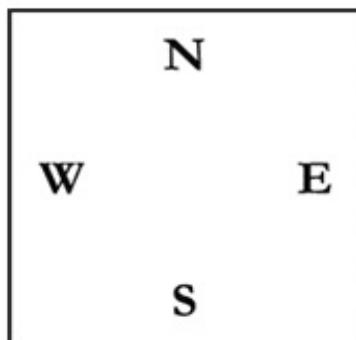
Observing dummy is just as important defending a notrump contract as it is defending a trump contract. The emphasis of notrumps is much more on tricks: the winning of them. The defenders need to win five tricks before declarer wins nine. It is a race – simple as that (but see footnote).

The defender must try to count up declarer's tricks. If declarer has nine tricks ready to run in three suits, a defender must attack the fourth suit. Right away.

---

♠ A K Q  
♥ K 8 3  
♦ A K 10 9 4  
♣ 8 5

♠ 8 6 4 2  
♥ J 9 7 5 2  
♦ 8 7  
♣ Q 4



♠ 10 7 3  
♥ A 4  
♦ 6 5 3 2  
♣ A K J 6

♠ J 9 5  
♥ Q 10 6  
♦ Q J  
♣ 10 9 7 3 2

---

Dealer: North

Vulnerability: Neither

| S      | W    | N   | E    |
|--------|------|-----|------|
|        |      | 1♦  | Pass |
| 1NT(1) | Pass | 3NT | End  |

(1) 6- 9 points without a four-card major or four-card diamond support.

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♥5

On our deal, West led the five of hearts v 3NT, dummy playing low. You as East win the ace and...

Before you woodenly return partner's lead, observe dummy and count declarer's tricks. Three top spades and a promoted top heart are obvious but East should also count five diamond tricks. Provided declarer has at least two diamonds (95% likely on the bidding), they can be two small cards and he will still score five diamond tricks (in that scenario West holds ♦QJ doubleton, falling under ♦AK).

In short, East can count nine tricks for declarer: three spades, one heart and five diamonds. And when a defender can count nine tricks for declarer in three suits, he must attack the fourth suit as the only chance to win the race of getting to five tricks before the defence get to nine. Clubs.

*Question:* To which club should East switch at trick two?

*Answer:* The six. The bidding has told East that declarer has at least four clubs – his 1NT bid denied a four-card major or four-card diamond support. East therefore needs to hope his partner holds the queen. That queen could easily be doubleton, in which case leading a top club will block the suit.

At trick two East switches to the six of clubs (key play). West wins the queen and returns his second club, East winning the ♣AKJ. Down one.

*Footnote:* Defensive strategy is rather different at matchpointed duplicate where, against a normal contract, a defender must not merely focus on beating the contract, instead trying to restrict overtricks and maximise undertricks. Whilst at rubber (teams) you must ask yourself what you need from partner to defeat the contract then play for it, at matchpoints you should ask yourself what you think partner does hold, the most likely layout, and play for that. [See Deal 56]

## **30. Discarding to signal – throw low means no**

There is one major area of defence we have thus far neglected: discarding. What you throw away when you cannot follow suit.

There are two issues:

(a) Conveying a message to partner in terms of what you want (and do not want) them to do – signalling with your discard.

(b) Keeping the correct cards – to prevent declarer from making more than his due.

The two issues are inextricably involved but as a rough guide, you should focus more on (a) when partner is on lead and more on (b) when declarer is on lead.

The Attitude Signal maxim:

*Throw High mean Aye*

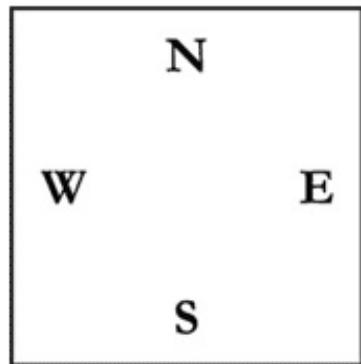
*Throw Low means No*

applies equally to discarding as it does to signalling on partner's lead when you are following suit. When discarding, however, you have a choice. You can either throw high in the suit you want partner to lead; or low in a suit you do not want partner to lead. Whilst it is undoubtedly clearer to partner to discard high in a suit you want, sometimes it costs a trick and the message is better imparted negatively.

---

♠ J 8 5  
♥ J 8 5  
♦ K Q J  
♣ K Q 10 4

♠ K 6  
♥ 9 4 3  
♦ 9 5 4 3  
♣ A 8 6 3



♠ A Q 10 9  
♥ Q 7 6 2  
♦ 10 7 2  
♣ 9 2

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

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

S W N E  
-----  
1NT Pass 3NT End

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♣3

On our featured deal West led the three of clubs v 3NT. Declarer beat East's nine with the jack and led back a second club. West played low, delaying winning his ace of clubs for one good reason: he wanted to see a discard from East. Declarer won in dummy and, needing another club trick, led a third club from dummy.

Crunch time – East had the opportunity to make a signal with his discard. Clearly very keen for a spade, the one thing East could not do is throw a high spade: for that would cost him a spade trick. Instead he had to throw low in another suit and hope West could work out to lead a spade (with all East's spades in tact). Which red-suit deuce should he throw?

The two of hearts. The point is that West, looking at dummy, will never lead a diamond. West is choosing between spades and hearts, dummy's two weak suits. Say no to hearts and West will lead a spade.

After East's throw-low-means-no two of hearts discard, West switches to the king (top of two) and a second spade (something he would be loath to do without the signal). East's wins ♠AQ10 and that's down one.

*Quiz:* Say East had equal preference in the majors – what would he discard then?

*Answer:* Logically, a diamond.

## **31. Discarding to signal – throw high means aye**

When you are discarding\*, you can signal to partner what you want led. Like signalling on partner's lead, you use the mantra: "throw high means aye, throw low means no". You have a choice: you can throw high in the suit you want led, or low in a suit you don't want partner to lead.

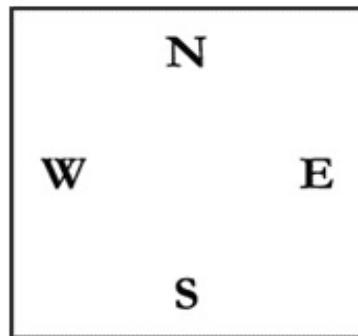
Here are some general pointers on signalling-with-the-discard:

- (a) Only the first card in each suit sends a message. The first discard of all sends the strongest message – make it count.
- (b) Don't tell partner something he already knows. Ie if dummy is very strong in, say, hearts, there is no point in discarding a low heart.
- (c) Although a high card is the clearest signal, it can cost a trick (especially in notrumps). It may well be better to throw low in a suit you don't want (one that partner might otherwise lead).
- (d) Remember that declarer is watching too. Particularly if declarer is on lead and you do not think partner will win the lead again, keep your assets hidden.
- (e) Try to delay winning a card to give partner a chance to signal with the discard.

\*Discarding means not following to the suit led. Try not to use it casually to mean following suit.

♠ A K 3  
 ♥ J 9 6 5  
 ♦ J 8  
 ♣ K J 9 7

♠ J 7 6 4 2  
 ♥ 10 3  
 ♦ A Q 10 4 3  
 ♣ 2



♠ 10 9 5  
 ♥ 2  
 ♦ 9 6 5  
 ♣ A Q 6 5 4 3

♠ Q 8  
 ♥ A K Q 8 7 4  
 ♦ K 7 2  
 ♣ 10 8

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: East - West**

|       |         |       |       |
|-------|---------|-------|-------|
| S     | W       | N     | E     |
| ----- | -----   | ----- | ----- |
| 1♥    | Pass(1) | 4♥    | End   |

(1) Might bid 1♠ in spite of the grotty suit and the adverse vulnerability; or, if available, 2♥ Michaels showing five spades and five-card minor.

**Contract: 4♥**

**Opening Lead: ♣2**

On our deal West led his club v 4♥, the singleton opening lead only generally bettered by ace from ace-king. East won with the queen and, knowing West would have led top from two and therefore was the player with the singleton, cashed the ace at trick two. What should West discard?

A nice, clear ten of diamonds was the order of the day. The card could be spared [(c) didn't apply] and it didn't matter if declarer also got the message [(d) didn't apply].

East now knew not to lead a third club for an overruff (an otherwise attractive-looking defence), rather to switch to a high-for-hate nine of diamonds [remember leads are low-like high-hate]. Declarer played low (perhaps East held the queen even if West held the ace), but West won the queen and cashed the ace. Down one.

*Quiz:* What would West have discarded holding ♠J7642, ♥Q3, ♦A10432, ♣2?

*Answer:* ♦2. Discourage the diamond switch so that partner will lead a third club. Your ♥Q is promoted, whence you can cash ♦A.

## **32. Discarding to keep the right cards**

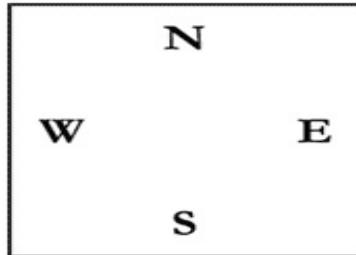
There is much more to discarding than sending a message to partner. You must make sure you keep the right number of cards in each suit to avoid giving declarer unnecessary extra tricks.

I am afraid there is no substitute for counting (sorry!), but here are some general pointers to help you to retain the right cards:

- (a) Keep equal length with dummy – provided your highest card is higher than dummy's lowest card.
- (b) Do not throw from four-card suits. The most likely suit-pattern around the table (like hand-pattern) is 4432 – by far. Keep your four to match the opponent's four.
- (c) Throw from long, weak suits. Players are wont to keep hold of long suits in notrumps even when they have no vestige of an entry. Don't bother – it's pointless.
- (d) Do not void yourself in a suit when you have no trumps. When you show out, the suit will become an open book for declarer.

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

♠ J 10 6  
 ♥ QJ 10 6  
 ♦ 9 8 4 3  
 ♣ 7 4



♠ 8 5 4 2  
 ♥ K 9 4  
 ♦ J 10 6  
 ♣ 8 5 3

♠ A 9  
 ♥ A 7 5  
 ♦ K Q 7 2  
 ♣ A Q 9 6

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S      | W    | N      | E    |
|--------|------|--------|------|
| 1♦     | Pass | 1♠     | Pass |
| 3NT(1) | Pass | 4NT(2) | Pass |
| 6NT(3) | End  |        |      |

- (1) Balanced 19 points, or possibly a tad less based on good diamonds.
- (2) Quantitative notrump slam invite (not ace-asking following notrumps). North knows that the partnership are one shy of the 33 point 6NT guideline, but likes the honour structure in his two four-card suits.
- (3) Why not bid 6♣ – in case partner has four cards? Here the 4-4 fit 6♣ would make 12 tricks – the extra ruffing trick making the difference.

**Contract: 6NT**

**Opening Lead: ♥Q**

On our deal, West led the queen of hearts v 6NT and declarer correctly ducked, winning the ten of hearts continuation with the ace. He counted 11 tricks and had to hope for a bad discard or a squeeze for his twelfth.

Declarer cashed four rounds of clubs. It would have been all-too easy for West to let go one of those four grotty diamonds. However discarding from a four-card suit is not a good idea [point (b) above], all the more so when declarer bid the suit. West let go a spade and a heart. It would have been all-too easy for East to let go a spade but that, too, would have been fatal. However East could see that his eight of spades would beat dummy's seven on the fourth round [point (a) above] and let go a diamond.

There was nothing declarer could do but cash his ace-king-queens in spades and diamonds. Down one.

*Footnote:* If either defender voids hearts, then their partner will be subject to a squeeze between hearts and their four card suit.

### 33. Introducing the Count Signal

By far the most important type of defensive signal is Attitude – throw high means aye, throw low means no. This is used when partner is leading, or when discarding, on the first round of each suit. It does not answer all the questions though, one being how many cards everybody has in a suit.

Say the contract is 3NT and dummy is entryless (outside diamonds):

| Dummy    |          |            |
|----------|----------|------------|
| West     | ♦ QJ1064 | East (you) |
| ♦ 952    |          | ♦ A87      |
| Declarer |          |            |
| ♦ K3     |          |            |

Declarer leads ♦K and you as East need to know when to win ♦A. Win it on the first round and declarer has a second card to reach all dummy's winners. Ducking the ace twice (and winning it on the third round) is better, but still you give declarer an unnecessary second trick. Best is to win ♦A on the second-round because it is declarer's last card. But how do you know declarer has two cards?

The answer is that your partner has to tell you how many cards he has – whether he has an even number or an odd number – and from that you can work out how many cards declarer holds and therefore when to win ♦A. The acronym to remember is *HELO or high-even, low-odd*.

Here West would play ♦2 (low-odd) and East, presuming West for three (if he held one, East could not hold ♦A up enough times), could work out declarer held two. He would know to win ♦A on the second-round.

Say East saw this:

Dummy

♦ QJ1064

East

♦ 9 played

♦ A87

♦ K led

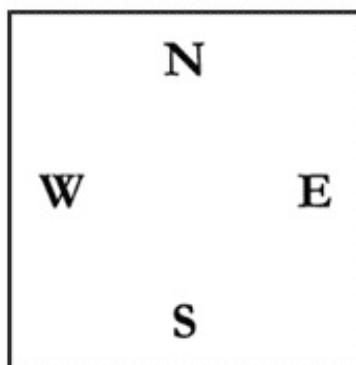
This time he places West with two diamonds (high-even) therefore declarer has three. He must delay winning ♦A until the third -round.

This is the *Count Signal*, used when declarer is leading and it is important to tell partner how many cards you hold – as on our deal.

---

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

♠ 8 5  
♥ K J 9 5 2  
♦ J 9 4  
♣ 7 6 4



♠ 10 7 4 2  
♥ Q 10  
♦ Q 10 8 6  
♣ A 9 3

♠ A K Q J  
♥ 8 7 6 3  
♦ A K 3  
♣ K J

---

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

|       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| S     | W     | N     | E     |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| 2NT   | Pass  | 3NT   | End   |

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♥5

West led his fourth highest heart v 3NT, dummy ducking (best) and East winning the queen and hurriedly leading back a heart to remove the entry to dummy's clubs. Declarer led a club to his king, East playing low and watching partner's card intently.

West played the four of clubs – low-odd – so East, presuming West for three and therefore declarer for two, knew to win the second club (the jack that followed). Now there was no ninth trick for declarer – down one.

## 34. More Count: HELO

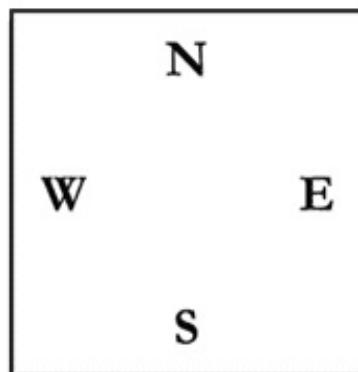
The Count Signal is vitally important when declarer is leading and a defender needs to know the count of the suit – how many cards partner – and therefore declarer – holds. Remember the mantra: *HELO – high-even number; low-odd number.*

Some partnerships use the Count Signal a lot (including when partner is leading – where I would strongly advocate using Attitude), but it must be borne in mind that declarer is also watching. Wiser to restrict it to those situations where the count is imperative – take this fascinating deal.

---

♠ 8 5 2  
♥ 3  
♦ J 10 3 2  
♣ K J 6 5 2

♠ J 9 7 3  
♥ K J 6 4  
♦ 8 5  
♣ 10 9 4



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

♠ A K Q 6  
♥ A 10 9 7  
♦ A Q 7  
♣ Q 8

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

S W N E  
.....  
2NT Pass 3NT(1) End

(1) Don't even think about Five-of-a-Minor.

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♥4

West led the four of hearts v 3NT, declarer rightly beating East's queen with the ace (as his ♠1097 offered good chances of a second stopper). At trick two he led the queen of clubs, West following low (low-even). Which round of clubs should East win?

Presuming West for three clubs (where East's play mattered), East could work out declarer held just two clubs. Ducking the queen, he won a second club to dummy's jack.

Correct – had East erroneously ducked a second time declarer would have an unnecessary second club trick. Declarer would also be in dummy to run the jack of diamonds and pick up three tricks in the suit via a successful finesse against East. He would romp home.

After winning the second club, East led back the two of hearts (low from three remaining), West beating declarer's nine (yes, the seven would have worked better here) with the jack, but rightly not continuing hearts (and giving declarer the ten). West switched to a small spade (best).

Declarer beat East's ten of spades with the queen and next led the queen of diamonds. This was good play – hoping an opponent would win the king, giving him access to dummy and the clubs. It was West's duty to give another count signal, playing the eight (high-even). East now knew declarer held three diamonds, presumably ♦AQx. He therefore let the queen win.

Declarer was running out of options and cashed the ace-king of spades hoping for a 3-3 split. No good and he forlornly exited with a fourth spade. West won and could now play king and another heart, leaving declarer in hand to lead from his diamonds. East won the last trick with his king – down one.

## **35. When Attitude, when Count**

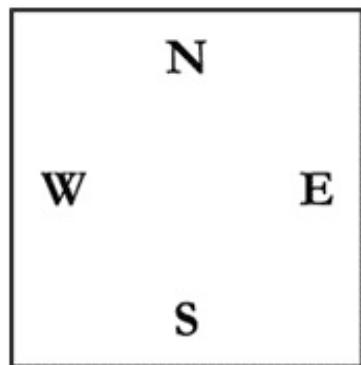
Let us be clear. Use the Attitude Signal (throw high means aye, throw low means no) when partner is leading or when discarding.

Use the Count Signal (HELO: high-even, low-odd) when declarer is leading and the count of the suit is important.

---

♠ Q 7 5  
♥ Q 7 5  
♦ J 10 9 5 2  
♣ 6 4

♠ 10 9  
♥ 8 4 2  
♦ A 7 4  
♣ J 8 7 3 2



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

♠ A K J  
♥ 10 6 3  
♦ K Q 6  
♣ A K Q 9

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

S            W            N            E  
-----  
2NT        Pass        3NT        End

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♣3

Our featured deal brings together many important defensive themes. West led the three of clubs v 3NT, the trick proceeding ♣3, ♣4, ♣10, ♣A. What can West deduce from this trick?

As third player, East is playing high. But if the ten is East's highest card, then declarer has ♣AKQ – winning with a deceptive ace is not going to fool this West! Furthermore East would play the cheaper of equals (ie the nine from ♣109) so declarer is marked with ♣AKQ9.

At trick two declarer leads the king of diamonds. West plays low and watches his partner's diamond eagerly. He wants to win his ace on declarer's last card, in case declarer cannot reach dummy (and the long diamonds). East plays the eight (high-even) so West, presuming East for a doubleton, can work out declarer holds three. He ducks the queen of diamonds that follows and wins a third diamond with the ace.

Another important benefit in West delaying winning his ace of diamonds until the third round is that East has the opportunity to signal with his discard. What should East throw on the third diamond?

The two of spades. East is clearly desperate for a heart but he cannot afford to throw a high-means-aye heart or he would be discarding the setting trick. Instead he throws a low spade – the other suit West might be tempted to lead in the hope of finding East at home.

West now knows to switch to hearts: clubs have been eliminated by what he saw at trick one; and spades by the throw-low-means-no spade discard. West switches to a high-for-hate eight of hearts [*let me re-stress that leads operate on a lead low-like; lead high-hate basis*].

A worried declarer plays low from dummy, East winning the jack, cashing the ace-king and following with the nine. Down one.

**Quiz:** Which heart would West have switched to from ♥KJ92 looking at ♥Q75 in dummy?

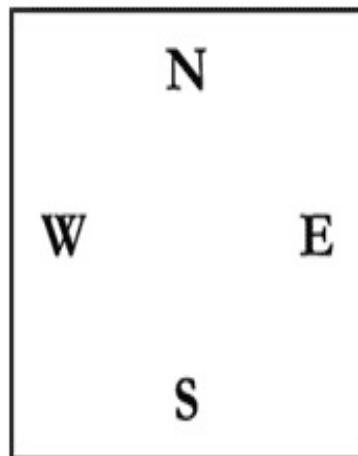
**Answer:** ♥J. Only this card would pick up the suit if declarer holds his ♥1063

## 36. Suit Preference Signal in ruffing situations

Take this defensive dilemma:

♠ A Q 9 7  
♥ J 7 4  
♦ K 8 4  
♣ K 8 4

♠ 10 8  
♥ 2  
♦ J 9 7 5 2  
♣ J 9 7 5 2



♠ 3  
♥ A 10 9 8 5 3  
♦ A 10 3  
♣ Q 10 3

♠ K J 6 5 4 2  
♥ K Q 6  
♦ Q 6  
♣ A 6

Contract: 4♠  
Lead: ♥2

West leads ♥2 to ♥A. Suspecting ♥2 to be singleton (it could not be top from two), East is going to return a heart. Can he tell West to return a diamond at

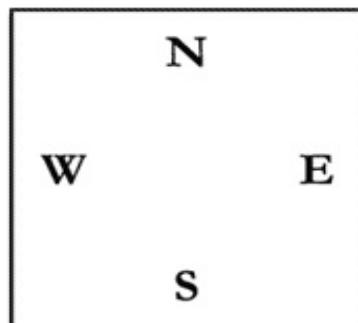
trick three so that he can regain the lead for a third heart and a second ruff?

Yes – enter the *Suit Preference Signal*. Mainly used when leading a suit for partner to trump, it works like this: lead back a low card to ask for the lower-ranking side-suit; lead back a high card to ask for the higher-ranking side-suit. Note that there are ever only two possible suits – after trumps plus the suit led for the ruff are eliminated.

In the above example the two suits are diamonds and clubs. East must return ♠10 at trick two, asking for the higher-ranking of those two ie diamonds. West ruffs, duly leads back a diamond, whereupon East wins the ace and leads a third heart for West to ruff. Down one. Without the Suit Preference Signal, West would have a blind guess as to which minor to lead.

♠ K J 10  
 ♥ J 10 5 2  
 ♦ Q 10 7 4  
 ♣ 6 2

♠ 7 5 4 3 2  
 ♥ 7 6 4  
 ♦ 3  
 ♣ J 9 8 7



♠ A Q  
 ♥ 8 3  
 ♦ A 9 8 5 2  
 ♣ 10 5 4 3

♠ 9 8 6  
 ♥ A K Q 9  
 ♦ K J 6  
 ♣ A K Q

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S   | W    | N     | E    |
|-----|------|-------|------|
| 2NT | Pass | 3♣(1) | Pass |
| 3♥  | Pass | 4♥    | End  |

(1) Normal to look for a 4-4 major-suit fit via the Stayman convention given the club weakness for notrumps, although here a simple raise to 3NT would have worked better.

**Contract: 4♥**

**Opening Lead: ♦3**

On our featured deal, West leads his singleton diamond v 4♥, East winning the ace and declarer following small. It is certain West's lead is a singleton – he would lead top from two and cannot hold three or that would leave the 2NT opener with one. Which diamond should East lead back?

The nine. East is desperate for a spade return – the higher-ranking suit between spades and clubs. West ruffs the diamond and duly returns a spade. Declarer tries dummy's king – his only hope being that West holds the ace as he cannot afford East to win the lead.

No good (either way). East beats the king of spades with the ace, cashes the queen to void himself, then leads the eight of diamonds, a further Suit Preference Signal for the higher-ranking spades. West ruffs again and leads a third spade, East ruffing. Down three – and nothing declarer could do.

## **37. Suit Preference Signal to show where your entry lies**

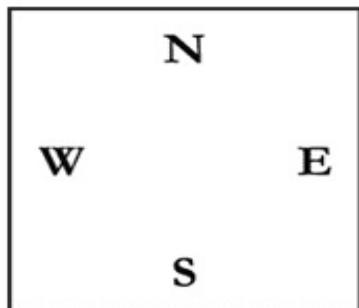
The Suit Preference Signal – sometimes referred to as McKenney – is an essential defensive tool when giving partner a ruff. Lead back an unnecessarily high card and you are asking for the return of the higher ranking suit; a low-card return asks for the lower-ranking suit.

Some players use McKenney (Suit Preference) as a discarding method, but I would recommend against that, preferring (as we have seen) a more natural Attitude approach (throw high means aye, throw low means no). I like my discard to say something about the suit I am throwing, not about another suit. [Not to mention issues such as whether the card is a command or a suggestion; and not having the right card to send the appropriate message.]

There are a couple of non-ruffing situations where I would recommend using the Suit Preference principle. Say you are clearing your long suit in a notrump contract. You can indicate where your entry lies – a low card showing the entry in the lower-ranking suit and a high card in the higher-ranking suit. Take our deal.

♠ K Q 7 5  
 ♥ J  
 ♦ K Q 10 6 3  
 ♣ Q 8 4

♠ A 10 3  
 ♥ 9 6 3  
 ♦ 5 2  
 ♣ K 9 5 3 2



♠ 8 6 4 2  
 ♥ 8 7 5 4 2  
 ♦ A 8  
 ♣ A 6

♠ J 9  
 ♥ A K Q 10  
 ♦ J 9 7 4  
 ♣ J 10 7

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

| S       | W    | N     | E    |
|---------|------|-------|------|
| 1NT     | Pass | 2♣(1) | Pass |
| 2♥      | Pass | 3NT   | Pass |
| Pass(2) | Pass |       |      |

- (1) Stayman – a request for four-card majors.
- (2) South would know to convert to 4♠ if he was 4-4 in the majors – North must have four spades on the bidding.

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♣3

West led his fourth highest club v 3NT, East winning the ace and returning the six. He would return top of two remaining so West knew he had none left [had East held a third club it would be good defence – especially without the ace of spades entry – for West to duck the second club].

West won the second club with the king and was going to lead a third club to clear the suit, setting up his two long cards. Clearly it didn't matter to him whether he led back the nine or the two. Enter the Suit Preference Signal.

West's entry lay in the higher-ranking suit spades (between spades and hearts – eliminating diamonds looking at dummy's powerful suit and in any event expecting declarer to broach diamonds himself). He therefore led back the nine of clubs at trick three (key play).

Declarer won and, as expected, led a diamond. East won the ace and knew from his partner's signal not return the more obvious heart (looking at dummy) which would have given declarer nine tricks, rather a spade. West won the ace and cashed his two long clubs – down one.

## **38. Suit Preference Signal when dummy has no losers**

The Suit Preference Signal is used when the holding in the suit itself is irrelevant. An unnecessarily high card asks for the higher-ranking other suit; a low card asks for the lower-ranking other suit (normally there are only two plausible suits).

The most important Suit Preference (SP) situation is leading a suit for partner to ruff, announcing which suit you would like him to return after he has ruffed [*Deal 36*]. Another SP situation occurs when you are clearing your suit in notrumps, giving up a trick to set up long cards. Using the familiar SP principle you can indicate where your side entry lies [*Deal 37*].

Both the above are leads. A third SP situation is a signal on partner's lead: where dummy, in a trump contract, has no losers in the suit partner has led, making a continuation very unlikely to be best. The principle is the same (high: high suit; low: low suit) and the logic is the also the same – your holding in the suit itself is irrelevant so you have the opportunity to show something about another suit.

Examples (hearts trumps):

(A)

Dummy

♠ A led

♠ 5 (singleton)

East's ♠ is SP

(B)

Dummy

♦ 4 led

♦ A (singleton)

East's ♦ is SP

(C)

Dummy

♣ 6 led

♣ AK

East's ♣ is SP

but not...

(D)

Dummy

♣ 6 led

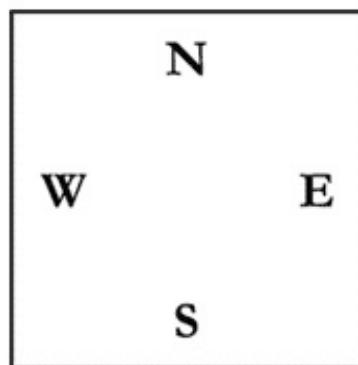
♣ AK2

East's ♣ is Att.

---

♠ A Q 8 4  
♥ 6  
♦ Q 8 6 2  
♣ 9 8 6 2

♠ 6  
♥ A K 10 8 3  
♦ K 9 7 3  
♣ J 10 7



♠ 9 5 3  
♥ J 7 5 2  
♦ A 4  
♣ Q 5 4 3

♠ K J 10 7 2  
♥ Q 9 4  
♦ J 10 5  
♣ A K

---

Dealer: West

Vulnerability: Both

| S     | W    | N    | E   |
|-------|------|------|-----|
| ..... | 1♥   | Pass | 2♥  |
| 2♠    | Pass | 4♠   | End |

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♥A

On our deal, West led the ace of hearts v 4♦. Which heart should East play? Because dummy has no hearts, it would be silly for East's heart card to be Attitude, for West is hardly going to want to play another heart. It is Suit Preference.

East plays the jack of hearts (key play). This asks for the higher-ranking suit between diamonds and clubs (discounting trumps).

West, who would otherwise have been reluctant to switch from his king, switches to a low diamond. East wins the ace, returns the four to West's king and receives a third-round ruff. Down one.

*Quiz:* What heart should East play if he has equal preference between the minors (or wants a heart continuation)?

*Answer:* A middle one.

## 39. The timing of ruffs (1)

Scoring ruffs (trumping) as a defender can be a lucrative and pleasurable affair. The timing is all important though. Take this example deal:

♠ Q 10 9 8  
♥ A Q 3  
♦ K Q  
♣ K J 10 6

|                  |   |   |   |               |
|------------------|---|---|---|---------------|
|                  |   | N |   |               |
| ♠ 4 2            |   |   |   | ♠ 6 3         |
| ♥ 10 7 6         |   |   |   | ♥ 9 5 4 2     |
| ♦ 10 7 6 5 4 3 2 | W |   | E | ♦ A           |
| ♣ 3              |   |   |   | ♣ A 9 7 5 4 2 |
|                  |   | S |   |               |

♠ A K J 7 5  
♥ K J 8  
♦ J 9 8  
♣ Q 8

Contract: 4♠

Lead: ♣3

East wins West's club lead with the ace and knows it is a singleton (West would lead top from two). Does he therefore return a low club (Suit Preference Signal for the lower-ranking diamonds)? Say he does lead a club:

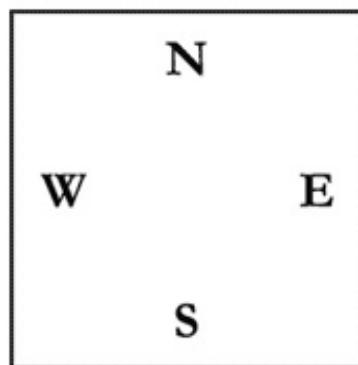
West ruffs, leads a diamond to East's ace, but that's the end of the road with declarer able to ruff a third club high and draw trumps. Game made.

East needs to score a diamond ruff. He wins the ace of clubs but must cash the ace of diamonds at trick two (key play), before leading a low club (Suit Preference for diamonds) at trick three. West ruffs and leads a diamond but this time East scores a ruff. Down one.

---

♠ K  
♥ Q 10 7 6  
♦ K Q 10 8 6  
♣ Q 7 5

♠ J 9 7 3 2  
♥ 3 2  
♦ 2  
♣ K 10 8 6 3



♠ Q 8 6 5  
♥ A 9 4  
♦ A 7 5 3  
♣ 9 2

♠ A 10 4  
♥ K J 8 5  
♦ J 9 4  
♣ A J 4

---

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

| S   | W    | N     | E    |
|-----|------|-------|------|
| 1NT | Pass | 2♣(1) | Pass |
| 2♥  | Pass | 4♥    | End  |

(1) Stayman – asking for four-card majors.

Contract: 4♥

Opening Lead: ♦2

Timing is everything. Can you work out how the defence can defeat 4♥ after West leads his singleton diamond lead to East's ace on our main deal?

West's lead is certain to be a singleton – he would lead top of two and cannot have three as that would leave declarer with just one for his 1NT opener. Say East returns a diamond. West ruffs and, with no good return, leads (say) a spade. Declarer wins in dummy and leads a trump. East can fly in with his ace and try to give West another diamond ruff but West has no more trumps. Declarer draws trumps, throws his club losers on the diamonds and claims his game.

East knows that West has just two trumps (declarer has four). He can therefore only give his partner one ruff. The crucial point is that, because East has the ace of trumps, he can delay giving that ruff.

In case his partner has the king of clubs (a card that will otherwise run away), East should switch to the nine of clubs at trick two (key play). Declarer has to play low (hoping East holds the king) and West wins the king and leads another club. Declarer wins and leads a trump, but East wins and now gives his partner the diamond ruff. He gets a bonus too, for he can now ruff a third club to defeat the game by two tricks.

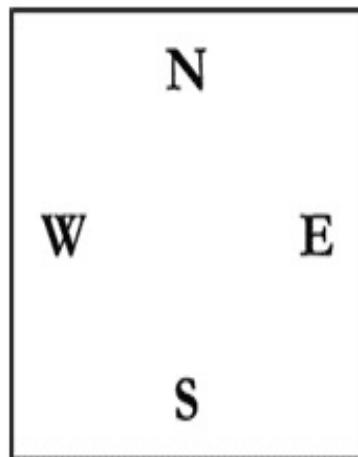
## **40. The timing of ruffs (2)**

Think about the number of tricks you need to defeat the contract. Sometimes you have to put the autopilot card back in your hand, especially in the realm of giving and receiving defensive ruffs.

Take this example deal:

♠ J 9 6 3  
 ♥ 10 7  
 ♦ A Q  
 ♣ A K J 8 6

♠ 10 8  
 ♥ K Q 5 3  
 ♦ 10 9 7  
 ♣ 9 7 3 2



♠ A 5  
 ♥ A 8 4 2  
 ♦ J 6 5 4 3 2  
 ♣ 5

♠ K Q 7 4 2  
 ♥ J 9 6  
 ♦ K 8  
 ♣ Q 10 4

Contract: 4♠

Lead: ♥K

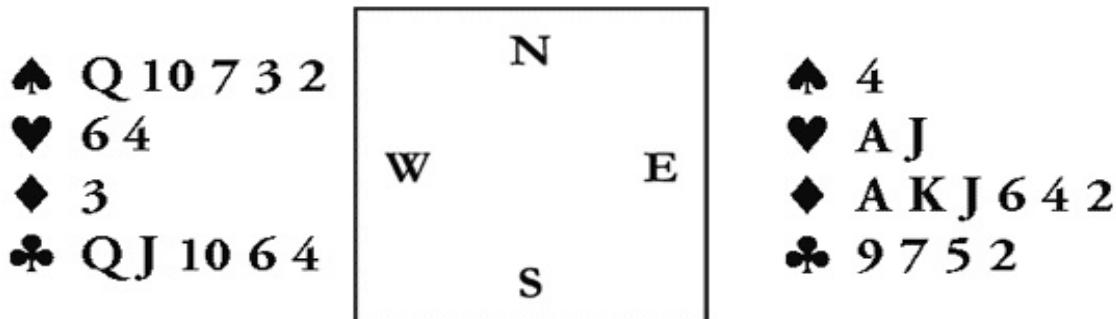
Plan the defence as East on partner's king of hearts lead (showing the queen). How are you going to win four tricks?

You need to score a club ruff and would like a club switch at trick two. Discourage the heart lead by playing the two (throw low means no) and partner will surely switch to a diamond, hardly to dummy's long strong clubs. What you must do is overtake the king of hearts with the ace and switch to a

club yourself (key play).

Declarer will win the club and lead a trump but you win the ace, lead a second heart to your partner's known queen and receive a club ruff (if partner fails to lead a club after this blatant defence, you must fetch him a double espresso). Down one.

♠ A J 8 5  
 ♥ 10 9 7 2  
 ♦ Q 7 5  
 ♣ A K



♠ K 9 6  
 ♥ K Q 8 5 3  
 ♦ 10 9 8  
 ♣ 8 3

**Dealer: North**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S    | W    | N       | E   |
|------|------|---------|-----|
|      |      | 1NT     | 2♦  |
| 2♥   | Pass | Pass(1) | 3♦  |
| Pass | Pass | 3♥(2)   | End |

- (1) Partner's bid is not game-invitational.  
 (2) But competing is fine given his maximum with four-card heart support.

**Contract: 3♥**

**Opening Lead: ♦3**

On our main deal, West led his singleton diamond v 3♥. East could read it as a singleton too – West would lead top of two and middle/high from three small. He could therefore see four tricks in the form of ♦AKJ and the ace of trumps. Where was the fifth trick coming from?

The answer is the spade ruff. East wins trick one cheaply with the jack of diamonds and can cash a second top diamond. He must not cash a third top diamond however, for that is the way to reach his partner for a second-round spade ruff gone. Instead he switches to his singleton spade.

Declarer beats West's queen of spades with dummy's ace and leads a trump. East rises with the ace and now, to make sure his partner ruffs the third diamond, leads a low diamond (not a high one). West ruffs and leads a second spade. East ruffs – down one.

## 41. Trump Promotion

Say this is the trump suit around the table:

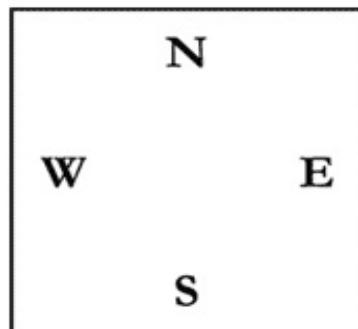
| Dummy    |        |      |
|----------|--------|------|
| West     | ♠ J975 | East |
| ♠ Q3     |        | ♠ 42 |
| Declarer |        |      |
| ♠ AK1086 |        |      |

In the normal course of events, declarer will be able to pick up trumps without loss, cashing ♠AK and felling West's ♠Q. But say East leads a suit in which West is void. Even if both declarer and dummy are also void, West's ♠Q must now score a trick. If declarer ruffs low or not at all, West ruffs with ♠Q; if declarer ruffs with ♠A/K, West discards (another suit) and must score ♠Q later. This defensive strategy is known as Trump Promotion.

If a defender leads a suit in which everybody is void willy-nilly, though, there is the danger that declarer will get rid of losers; the attempted Trump Promotion will lose a trick not gain one. The rule of thumb is only to attempt a Trump Promotion when all side-suit winners have already been taken and the only remaining defensive tricks lie in trumps. Take our deal.

♠ Q J 8 5  
 ♥ 10 3 2  
 ♦ A K 8 5  
 ♣ Q 6

♠ 9 4  
 ♥ J 8 7  
 ♦ 10 6 3 2  
 ♣ 9 7 5 3



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

♠ 10 2  
 ♥ A K Q 9 6 5 4  
 ♦ Q 4  
 ♣ K J

**Dealer:** East

**Vulnerability:** Neither

| S  | W    | N     | E    |
|----|------|-------|------|
|    |      |       | 1♠   |
| 2♥ | Pass | 2♠(1) | Pass |
| 4♥ | End  |       |      |

(1) Unassuming cue bid – three+ card support for partner's hearts and 10+ points.

**Contract:** 4♥

**Opening Lead:** ♠9

West led a top-of-two nine of partner's spades v 4♥, East winning the king and cashing the ace. What next?

There are two attractive lines of defence: a club switch, hoping for partner to have the king; and a third heart hoping for a Trump Promotion. What to do?

It is correct to lead the ace of clubs at trick three on both counts. First of all partner will give a signal to tell you whether he has the king and wants a second club. But cashing the ace is essential even if as here, after West's discouraging low club signal, East reverts to a third spade.

If East has not cashed the ace of clubs, declarer can ruff a third spade high, cash the the two top trumps, then the three top diamonds letting go one club, then a master spade letting go the other club as West ruffs. Game made.

Ace of clubs at trick three and a third spade at trick four promotes the jack of trumps into the setting trick – down one.

*Quiz:* How would West signal on ♣A holding both the king of clubs and ♥Jxx?

*Answer:* He would discourage again. He knows 100% that a third spade will promote ♥J; he doesn't know a second club will live.

## 42. Don't overtrump with a trump that will win anyway

When the defence have won all their tricks outside trumps, they should try to promote extra trump tricks by leading suits in which partner is void, even if the opponents are also void.

(A)

Dummy

♠ -

West

♥ 9875

East

♠ -

♠ led

♥ J63

♥ 4

Declarer

♠ -

♥ AKQ102

In (A) hearts are trumps and nobody apart from East has any spades. The lead of a spade from East will promote West's ♥J into a trick, a card that would otherwise have fallen under declarer's ♥AKQ. [If declarer ruffs low / not at all, West ruffs with ♥J; if declarer ruffs high, West discards (another suit).]

(B)

## Dummy

♦ -

|        |        |       |
|--------|--------|-------|
| West   | ♣ 9875 | East  |
| ♦ -    |        | ♦ led |
| ♦ K103 |        | ♣ 4   |

## Declarer

♦ -

♣ AQJ62

In (B) clubs are trumps and nobody apart from East has any diamonds. East leads a diamond and declarer ruffs with ♣Q. Should West overruff?

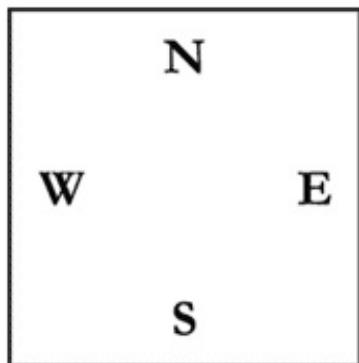
No! If West overruffs ♣Q with ♣K, that is his last trump trick. If he discards (another suit), not only will he score ♣K (that card was always going to win) but he will also score ♣10. Two trump tricks if he does not overruff; one if he does.

*Principle:* Do not overruff with a trump that will win anyway and you might win two later.

---

**♠ 8 6 4 2**  
**♥ K J 10 8 4**  
**♦ A K**  
**♣ J 7**

**♠ A J**  
**♥ 3**  
**♦ 10 8 5 4 2**  
**♣ Q 10 8 4 2**



**♠ 10**  
**♥ A Q 7 6 2**  
**♦ J 9 6 3**  
**♣ 9 5 3**

**♠ K Q 9 7 5 3**  
**♥ 9 5**  
**♦ Q 7**  
**♣ A K 6**

---

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S  | W    | N     | E   |
|----|------|-------|-----|
| 1♠ | Pass | 4♠(1) | End |

---

- (1) No point in mentioning hearts given the known eight+ card spade fit

**Contract: 4♠**

**Opening Lead: ♥3**

On our featured deal, West led his heart v 4♦, East winning the queen and, knowing the lead was singleton as West would lead top from two, cashed the ace. What should West discard?

West is desperate for a third heart but knows his partner might be tempted to lead a club around to dummy's weakness. He therefore throws a low (means no) club. East now knows to lead a third heart and declarer does best, ruffing with the queen. Should West overruff?

No. If West overruffs with the ace, that is his last trick (his jack will fall under declarer's king). He therefore discards (key play) and waits to score his ace and his promoted jack later. Down one.

## 43. The uppercut

Say this is the trump suit around the table:

| Dummy    |        |      |
|----------|--------|------|
| West     | ♥ 9875 | East |
| ♥ Q3     |        | ♥ J2 |
| Declarer |        |      |
| ♥ AK1064 |        |      |

In the normal course of events, the defence will not score a trick, declarer's ♥AK felling the ♥QJ.

However say East leads a suit in which West is void. Even if declarer and dummy are both void too, West will score his ♥Q. If declarer ruffs low / not at all, West ruffs with ♥Q; if declarer ruffs high, West discards and his ♥Q scores later. A classic Trump Promotion (note East's ♥J was not needed).

What if it is West on lead, with declarer able to overruff East? Here East's ♥J is needed. Say West leads a suit in which both East and declarer is void. East ruffs with that otherwise useless ♥J and, although declarer can overruff, it is at the cost of a high trump. Now West's ♥Q is promoted.

The strategy of ruffing in with a high card to force a higher card and so promote a trump for partner is known as an Uppercut (you see the boxing analogy).

Look at this two-suit layout with spades trumps and West on lead:

Dummy

♠ 9876

West

♠ J32

♦ led

♦ -

East

♠ 104

♦ -

Declarer

♠ AKQ5

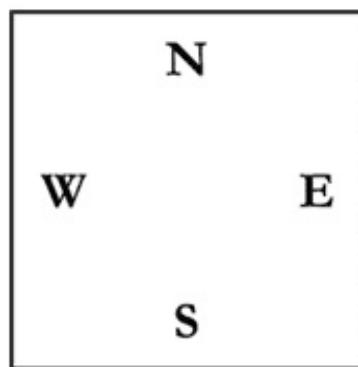
♦ -

West leads a diamond and East ruffs with ♠10. Bye bye to declarer picking up trumps without loss. Forced to overruff with ♠Q, West's ♠J is promoted.

---

**♠ 9 7**  
**♥ A K J 7**  
**♦ A K 6 4**  
**♣ J 6 2**

**♠ J 4**  
**♥ Q 6 3**  
**♦ J 9 7 3**  
**♣ K Q 9 5**



**♠ Q 5**  
**♥ 10 8 5 2**  
**♦ Q 10 5 2**  
**♣ A 8 3**

**♠ A K 10 8 6 3 2**  
**♥ 9 4**  
**♦ 8**  
**♣ 10 7 4**

---

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

S ..... W ..... N ..... E .....  
.....  
3♠ Pass 4♠ End

**Contract: 4♠**

**Opening Lead: ♣K**

On our featured deal, West led the king of clubs v 4♦, East signalling with a throw-high-means-aye eight. West led low from his three remaining clubs (note), East winning the ace and returning his third club to West's queen.

Looking at dummy, West could see no vestige of a trick outside trumps. But a trump lead would achieve nothing – as you see the ♠QJ would fall under the ♠AK. West led his thirteenth club and it was East's turn to shine. His queen of trumps was not going to be worth anything...unless he ruffed in with it now. This uppercut forced out declarer's king and promoted West's jack. Down one.

*Quiz:* Say West's clubs were ♣KQ9 and East's ♣A853. How should the defence go now?

*Answer:* ♣K, then ♣Q (key play – top of two), then ♣9 over to ♣A and finally East's last club for a Trump Promotion.

## 44. Interpreting partner's lead in notrumps

Let us return to defending notrumps. Partner has led a card from his longest suit (unless the bidding dictated otherwise) according to these guidelines:

– Top of three touching or near-touching cards eg **KQJ62**, **KQ1062**, **KJ1062**.

– High for hate eg **97532**, **8532**.

– Fourth from the top eg **KJ752**, **Q1063**, **AQ62**.

You as the leader's partner can draw inferences from this card (many of these inferences apply in trump contracts too).

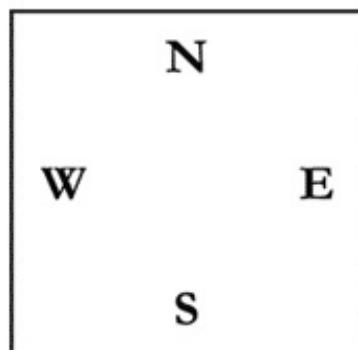
(i) The lead of an honour (A, K, Q, J, 10) promises the card immediately below and denies the card immediately above. There will also be a third high card near in rank.

(ii) The lead of a high spot card (eg an eight) will usually indicate a long, weak suit eg 98432 (but beware of, say, KJ982).

(iii) The lead of a two indicates precisely four cards in the suit – it is partner's fourth highest, also his lowest. Similarly, if partner leads a three he has just four cards if you can see the two elsewhere.

♠ A 8 7 5  
 ♥ 8 2  
 ♦ A K 10 2  
 ♣ A K J

♠ J 10 4 3  
 ♥ A 9 6 3  
 ♦ 8 5  
 ♣ 8 7 5



♠ K Q 6  
 ♥ K 4  
 ♦ 9 6 4 3  
 ♣ 10 6 3 2

♠ 9 2  
 ♥ Q J 10 7 5  
 ♦ Q J 7  
 ♣ Q 9 4

**Dealer:** North

**Vulnerability:** Neither

|          |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>S</b> | <b>W</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>E</b> |
| .....    | .....    | 1♠       | Pass     |
| 1NT(1)   | Pass     | 3NT      | End      |

(1) 6-9 pts “dustbin bid” – a hand with insufficient strength to bid a two-over-one.

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♥3

On our deal West led the three of hearts v 3NT. East's king won the trick and he was just about to return a heart when he reflected on something. Can you see what?

West's three of hearts was his fourth highest and dummy held the two. Ergo West began with just four cards – leaving declarer with five cards. It was surely a bad idea to return a heart. As you see, had East returned a heart at trick two, to declarer's ten and West's ace, declarer would have made all the remaining 11 tricks – including three promoted hearts.

It was clear for East to switch suits and, looking at dummy, the only suit with any future for the defence was spades. At trick two East switched to the king of spades (key play). Declarer ducked in dummy and East continued with the queen (top of two remaining – necessary to unblock the suit and also catering to declarer holding ♠Jx). Declarer ducked a second time and won a third spade (to West's ten) with dummy's ace.

With just eight tricks outside hearts, declarer led a heart in the hope that the defender with the ace of hearts (presumably West) would not hold the jack of spades. It was not to be – West won the ace and cashed that jack. Down one.

## 45. Using the Rule of 11

The Rule of 11 is a mathematically foolproof guideline used at trick one in notrumps when the lead is fourth highest. It is most commonly thought of as an aid for declarer.

| (A)     | Dummy          |      |
|---------|----------------|------|
| West    | ♣ AQ102        | East |
| ♣ 7 led | Declarer (you) |      |
|         | ♣ 853          |      |

Taking the lead from 11 tells you how many cards are higher than the lead in the other three hands (apart from the leader). In (A) there are  $11 - 7 = 4$  higher clubs than the lead in dummy + East + you. You can see two of those three hands (three higher clubs in dummy and one higher club in your hand). Ergo – there are no higher clubs than ♣7 in East’s hand. You can play low from dummy, safe in the knowledge that (assuming the lead is fourth highest), your ♣8 will win the trick.

Now let us look at things from East’s perspective, the Rule working in exactly the same way:

| (B)     | Dummy  |            |
|---------|--------|------------|
| West    | ♥ K103 | East (you) |
| ♥ 6 led |        | ♥ AQ9      |

After ♥6, ♥3, you as East can play ♥9. There are five higher hearts than ♥6 in dummy + you + declarer. Dummy has two higher and you have three higher. Ergo declarer has none higher and your ♥9 will win the trick, retaining ♥AQ over ♥K10.

|         |       |            |
|---------|-------|------------|
| (C)     | Dummy |            |
| West    | ♠ K42 | East (you) |
| ♠ 7 led |       | ♠ AJ95     |

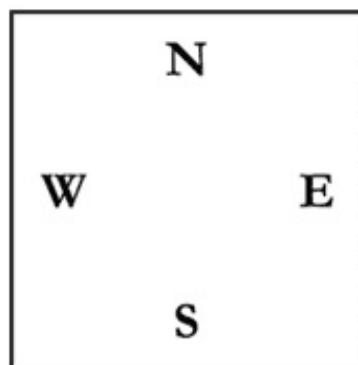
In (C) trick one goes ♠7, ♠2. Which spade do you as East play?

*Answer:* ♠5. The four higher spades than ♠7 are all in your hand (3) plus dummy (1): none higher than ♠7 in declarer's hand. Let partner's ♠7 win so he can lead a second spade through ♠K.

---

**♠ K J 7**  
**♥ 8 4**  
**♦ A J 7**  
**♣ A J 7 4 2**

**♠ A 6**  
**♥ 10 7 6 2**  
**♦ Q 10 8 6 3**  
**♣ 9 5**



**♠ 10 9 5 3**  
**♥ J 9 3**  
**♦ K 9 4**  
**♣ Q 10 8**

**♠ Q 8 4 2**  
**♥ A K Q 5**  
**♦ 5 2**  
**♣ K 6 3**

---

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

S            W            N            E  
-----  
1NT        Pass        3NT        End

**Contract: 3NT**

**Opening Lead: ♦6**

On our deal West led the six of diamonds v 3NT, declarer dubiously playing dummy's seven (his only real hope of a second trick is to play the jack, hoping West has underled ♦KQ). And East?...

Using the Rule of 11 East knows that there are  $11 - 6 = 5$  higher diamonds than partner's six in the other three hands. He can count five between his hand and dummy so knows to win trick one with the nine (key play). He follows with a top-of-two king (ducked) and a third diamond, West playing a Suit Preference queen to indicate an entry in the higher-ranking suit.

Declarer won the ace, crossed to the king of clubs and led back a club, trying the jack. East won the queen and shot back a spade, West winning the ace and cashing the two long diamonds. Down one.

## 46. Third-hand plays low positions

The principle for the defender playing third is to play high (cheaper of touching highest).

| (A)      | Dummy |                       |
|----------|-------|-----------------------|
| West     | ♠ 864 | East (you)            |
| leads ♠3 |       | (i) ♠ <u>AJ</u> 5     |
|          |       | (ii) ♠ AK <u>5</u>    |
|          |       | (iii) ♠ Q105          |
|          |       | (iv) ♠ QJ <u>10</u> 5 |

After ♠3, ♠4, as East play the underlined card above.

Retain a high card to beat a picture in dummy, though:

| (B)      | Dummy |                       |
|----------|-------|-----------------------|
| West     | ♥ Q64 | East (you)            |
| leads ♥3 |       | (i) ♥ AJ <u>5</u>     |
|          |       | (ii) ♥ AJ <u>10</u>   |
|          |       | (iii) ♥ K <u>10</u> 5 |
|          |       | (iv) ♥ K10 <u>9</u> 8 |

After ♥3, ♥4, as East play the underlined card above.

Sometimes, however, when partner is leading your suit, it pays to duck the

first round in order to retain communication with partner, perhaps to run your suit in notrumps...

(C)

Dummy

West

♣ 963

East (Entryless)

♣ 104

♣ AK852

Declarer

♣ QJ7 (Notrumps)

After ♣10, ♣3, play ♣8 (encouraging) so that partner still has a club to reach your ♣AK and two long cards.

...Or perhaps to give partner a third-round ruff in a suit contract.

(D)

Dummy

West

♦ 963

East (Entryless)

♦ 104

♦ A8752

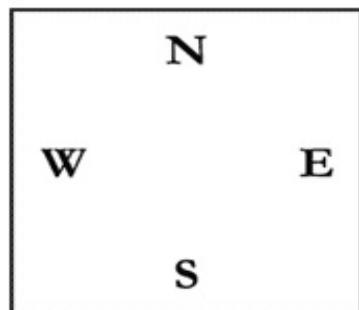
Declarer

♦ KQJ (Spades trumps)

After ♦10, ♦3, play ♦8. [See deal.]

♠ A 6 4 2  
 ♥ 10 8 3  
 ♦ A K  
 ♣ Q J 10 4

♠ K 7 3  
 ♥ Q 9 6 2  
 ♦ Q 9 8 2  
 ♣ 9 3



♠ J 10  
 ♥ J 5  
 ♦ 10 7 6 5 3  
 ♣ A 8 5 2

♠ Q 9 8 5  
 ♥ A K 7 4  
 ♦ J 4  
 ♣ K 7 6

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S     | W    | N     | E    |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1NT   | Pass | 2♣(1) | Pass |
| 2♥    | Pass | 3NT   | Pass |
| 4♠(2) | End  |       |      |

- (1) Stayman – asking for four-card majors.
- (2) Partner must have four spades and his Stayman bid says, “If we have a 4-4 major fit, I prefer it to notrumps”. 4♠ is duty-bound.

**Contract: 4♠**

**Opening Lead: ♣9**

West led the nine of clubs v 4♦. I am not a great fan of the doubleton lead, but it is better when you hold a top trump (winning the lead before trumps are drawn). Should East win and return a club (best if the lead was a singleton)? Or duck to maintain communication (best if the lead was top-of-two)?

Declarer had advertised four spades and four hearts. If West held just one club, declarer would have four. This would leave room for just one diamond – impossible as he had opened 1NT. Ergo West had a doubleton club.

East ducked trick one (key play), playing an encouraging eight. Declarer played ace and another trump to his queen and king. West led his second club to East's ace, ruffed a third club and waited for his queen of hearts. Down one.

## 47. Second-hand plays high positions

Second normally plays low on a low card. This page – and next – we rule-break. Second plays high when...

- (a) You have enough tricks to defeat the contract.
- (b) Duck and declarer has enough tricks for his contract.
- (c) You need to win to preserve partner's entry.
- (d) You need to remove a dummy entry in the suit.

Look across at our first deal, illustrating (a). East won trick one with the queen and led back a top-of-two ten, West brightly playing the king to let East know that the suit was ready to run. Declarer won dummy's ace and led a low heart...

If East ducks his ace it's goodnight Vienna (declarer has nine tricks). East must rise with the ace and lead his third spade over to West's three winners. Down one.

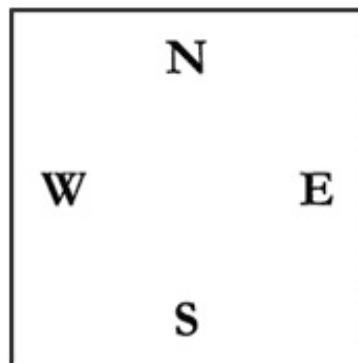
Note that rising with the ace would be right if declarer's majors were ♠Kxx and ♥QJx, East needing to win the defence's first heart to preserve partner's king of hearts entry to his spades – (c) above.

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

♠ A 2  
♥ 10 8 5 2  
♦ A K 7 5  
♣ J 10 5

♠ K J 9 6 3  
♥ 7 4  
♦ 8 6 2  
♣ 9 4 2



♠ Q 10 4  
♥ A 9 6 3  
♦ Q J 10 4  
♣ 8 6

♠ 8 7 5  
♥ K Q J  
♦ 9 3  
♣ A K Q 7 3

| S   | W    | N   | E    |
|-----|------|-----|------|
| 1♣  | Pass | 1♦  | Pass |
| 1NT | Pass | 3NT | End  |

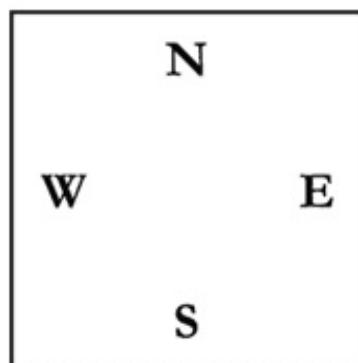
**Contract: 3NT**

**Opening Lead: ♠6**

---

**♠ K 4  
♥ Q 10 6  
♦ A K Q J 7 3  
♣ K 2**

**♠ Q 9 7 6 3  
♥ A 3  
♦ 8 6  
♣ A 8 5 3**



**♠ J 8 2  
♥ K J 8 7 2  
♦ 5 2  
♣ 10 7 6**

**♠ A 10 5  
♥ 9 5 4  
♦ 10 9 4  
♣ Q J 9 4**

---

**Dealer: North**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S     | W     | N   | E    |
|-------|-------|-----|------|
| ..... | ..... | 1♦  | Pass |
| 1NT   | Pass  | 3NT | End  |

**Contract: 3NT**

**Opening Lead: ♠6**

Our second deal illustrates (b). West leads the six of spades v 3NT and declarer, hoping he has led from ♠QJ, rides the lead to his ♠A10. East plays the jack, so declarer has to win with the ace. Needing to sneak a club trick to add to his six diamonds and two spades, he leads the four of clubs at trick two. And West?...

If West is in “second-hand-plays-low autopilot mode” he will soon be writing down a minus score. And the evidence is in front of him – for he can see nine tricks for declarer (♠AK plus six diamonds) if he also gives him the king of clubs. His only chance is to rise with the ace of clubs and switch to hearts, hoping partner has the goods there.

Ace and a second heart sees partner beat dummy’s ten with the jack. He cashes the king felling dummy’s queen and follows with his two long cards. Down two.

## **48. More second-hand plays high positions**

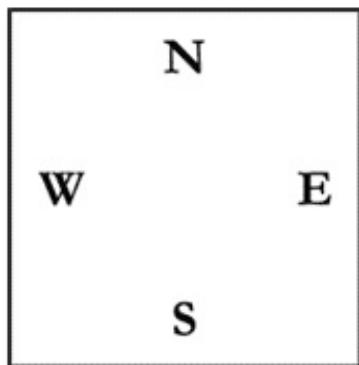
More second-hand plays high rule-breaking. Here are two further occasions where you must not find yourself in “second-hand-plays-low autopilot mode”...

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

♠ K J 7 4  
♥ K 5 2  
♦ A K J 7 5  
♣ 7

♠ 6 5 3  
♥ Q 8 7 4  
♦ 2  
♣ 9 6 4 3 2



♠ A 8  
♥ J 9 6 3  
♦ 10 8 6 3  
♣ A J 5

♠ Q 10 9 2  
♥ A 10  
♦ Q 9 4  
♣ K Q 10 8

| S   | W    | N     | E    |
|-----|------|-------|------|
| 1NT | Pass | 2♣(1) | Pass |
| 2♠  | Pass | 4♠    | End  |

(1) Stayman – asking for four-card majors.

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♦2

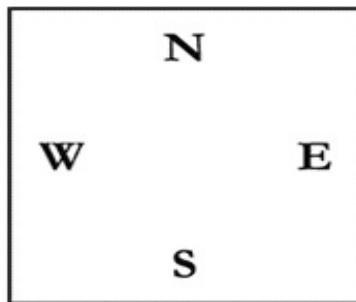
West led his singleton two of diamonds v 4♦. Declarer won in dummy and led a low trump...

East must be alert. His partner's lead must be singleton – it cannot be top-from-two and he cannot have three for that would leave declarer with just one for his 1NT opener.

East rises with the ace of trumps (key play) and leads a second diamond – a low one as a Suit Preference Signal for the lower-ranking clubs. West ruffs, duly switches to a club and East wins with the ace to lead a third diamond. West ruffs again and that's a swift down one. If East plays low at trick two, he is only able to give his partner one ruff and the game makes.

♠ A J 10  
 ♥ 4 2  
 ♦ 9 7 4 2  
 ♣ 8 6 5 2

♠ K 8 4 2  
 ♥ 9 7  
 ♦ Q J 8 6  
 ♣ K J 7



♠ Q 9 6 3  
 ♥ 6 5  
 ♦ 10 5 3  
 ♣ 10 9 4 3

♠ 7 5  
 ♥ A K Q J 10 8 3  
 ♦ A K  
 ♣ A Q

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S     | W    | N     | E    |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 2♣(1) | Pass | 2♦(2) | Pass |
| 3♥(3) | Pass | 3♠(4) | Pass |
| 6♥    | End  |       |      |

(1) 23+ points or any game force.

(2) Negative – up to seven points.

(3) Jumping to show solid hearts, setting the suit as trumps and asking partner to cue-bid an ace, here spades (4).

**Contract: 6♥**

**Opening Lead: ♦Q**

West led the queen of diamonds v 6♥, declarer winning in hand and drawing trumps. At trick four he advanced a spade...

Say West woodenly plays low. Declarer fineses dummy's ten and loses to East's queen. Playing for split spade honours, he refuses the club finesse on East's club return, instead rising with the ace (perhaps running all his red-suit winners) and leading a second spade, finessing dummy's jack (West's king will pop up if he has run all those red winners). Slam made.

It is entirely different if West rises with the king of spades at trick four (key play). Dummy's ace is removed prematurely and he is forced to try a club to the queen. Down one.

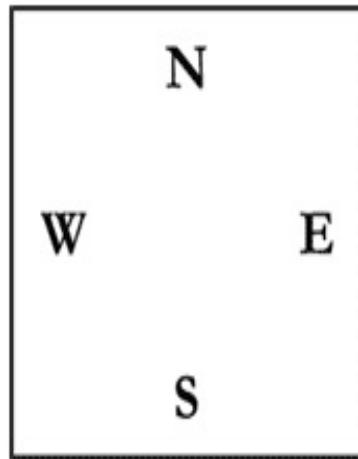
## **49. Attitude signals – looking beyond the suit itself**

Be in no doubt – the most important signal by far is Attitude: throw high means aye, throw low means no. Normally you will signal encouragement on partner's lead when you have an equal honour (the queen on an ace-lead, the jack or ace on a king lead etc).

Sometimes you like partner's lead, but want him to switch even more. Or, the converse, you don't much like partner's lead but want him to switch even less. You need to look beyond your holding in partner's suit, but at the whole hand.

♠ 10 4 2  
♥ K J 9  
♦ J 10 4  
♣ K Q J 9

♠ J 9 7  
♥ 7 3 2  
♦ A K 8 5 2  
♣ 7 2



♠ 8  
♥ A Q 10 8  
♦ Q 9 3  
♣ 8 6 5 4 3

♠ A K Q 6 5 3  
♥ 6 5 4  
♦ 7 6  
♣ A 10

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♦A

As East, do not encourage partner's ace of diamonds lead – in spite of holding the equal honour. For although you like diamonds, you are desperate

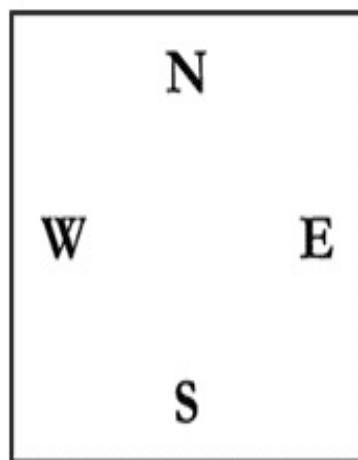
for a heart switch. Play a discouraging three of diamonds and, looking at dummy, partner is bound to switch to a heart. You beat dummy's (say) jack of hearts with the queen and lead back the nine of diamonds (low from two (unusually) to put partner back on play).

West wins the king of diamonds and leads a second heart. You beat (say) the nine with the ten, cash the ace felling dummy's king and now try the thirteenth heart [in truth it is a bit of a guess whether to try for this Trump Promotion or to cash the queen of diamonds]. Whether or not declarer ruffs the heart high, West's jack of trumps is promoted. Down three.

Note that if East encouraged the ace of diamonds at trick one and West played king and a third diamond (hoping East could ruff), declarer would ruff, draw trumps, and cash clubs. 10 tricks made.

♠ Q 8 6  
 ♥ K J 7  
 ♦ A Q 8 2  
 ♣ A Q 3

♠ A K 10 5 3  
 ♥ 6  
 ♦ J 9 7  
 ♣ J 10 9 6



♠ 9 4 2  
 ♥ A Q  
 ♦ 10 6 5 3  
 ♣ 7 5 4 2

♠ J 7  
 ♥ 10 9 8 5 4 3 2  
 ♦ K 4  
 ♣ K 8

Contract: 4♥

Opening Lead: ♠A

If you as East looked no further than your three small spades, you would discourage partner's ace of spades lead, playing the two. West would likely

switch to the jack of clubs and declarer would quickly cash clubs throwing his second spade and lose just two trumps and one spade. Game made.

East may not like spades, but he certainly does not want a switch. Even more to the point, he has two certain trump tricks ( $\heartsuit\text{AQ}$  over dummy's king). If he can get his partner to cash the king of spades, the game will be defeated.

East plays an encouraging nine of spades at trick one (key play), so West cashes the king. He'll lead a third spade and be a tad surprised East doesn't ruff, but soon understand.

## 50. Sending messages when switching suits

When switching to a new suit, the general guidelines are:

- (i) the lead of an honour (A, K, Q, J 10) shows the card immediately below and denies the card immediately above.
- (ii) the lead of a low card requests the return of the suit (“lead low-like”).
- (iii) the lead of a high card requests the return of a different suit (“lead high-hate”).

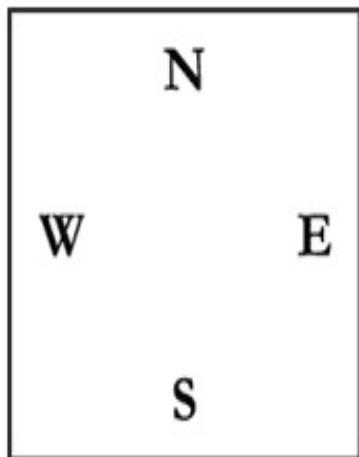
Perhaps, in (ii) and (iii) “requests” should read “commands”. At trick one you’d lead low from a picture card eg Q862, J852. After dummy is tabled you know more. Ask yourself, when switching, whether you want partner to lead it back should they win the trick. If the answer is yes, lead low; if the answer is no, lead high (even if you have an honour).

Look at our first deal (see across). Trick one sees declarer beat East’s ten of hearts with the king, cross to a top club and run the queen of diamonds (hoping East holds the king). The finesse loses, West winning the king. It is clear from trick one – East’s highest heart is the ten – and a look at dummy’s strong minors, that West must switch to a spade.

When at trick four West switches to the two of spades to East’s ace, East must realise that, although his partner led hearts initially, that the two of spades lead commands him to return a spade. Back comes the six of spades and West can win with the jack, cash the king felling declarer’s queen and then the nine. Down one.

♠ 10 4 3  
♥ 8 5  
♦ Q J 10 4  
♣ A K J 9

♠ K J 9 2  
♥ J 9 7 3 2  
♦ K 2  
♣ 7 2



♠ A 6 5  
♥ 10 6 4  
♦ 6 5 3  
♣ 8 6 5 4

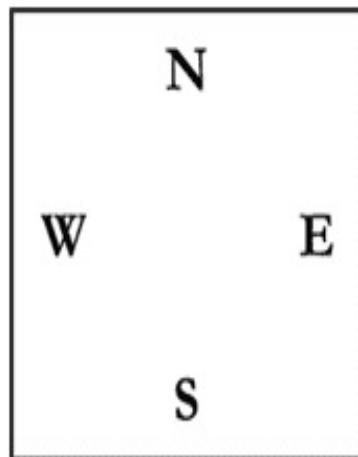
♠ Q 8 7  
♥ A K Q  
♦ A 9 8 7  
♣ Q 10 3

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♥3

♠ 7 5  
 ♥ K Q J  
 ♦ 8 6 2  
 ♣ A Q J 5 2

♠ A 10 6 3 2  
 ♥ A 2  
 ♦ J 9 7 3  
 ♣ 9 4



♠ Q 8 4  
 ♥ 8 7 5 2  
 ♦ A 5 4  
 ♣ 10 8 6

♠ K J 9  
 ♥ 10 9 5 3  
 ♦ K Q 10  
 ♣ K 7 3

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♠3

Trick one sees declarer beat East's queen of spades with the king and lead a heart. There is little point in West ducking given dummy's sequence. He wins

and reflects that partner's trick one play of the queen of spades marks declarer with the jack. Unless it is alone (unlikely), West must put his partner on play for a spade crucially through declarer's jack. Given dummy's strong clubs (if East holds the king of clubs, he will always win the lead), he must try a diamond. But which diamond?

West must switch to the nine of diamonds (key play). Lead the two and East will return a diamond. Lead the nine and East will win and revert to spades (top-of-two eight). West beats declarer's nine with the ten, cashes the ace felling the jack and tables the two long cards. Down two.

## 51. The surrounding play and other fantastic switches

Sometimes, when switching suits, the normal card (low for like, high for hate, top of honour sequence) will simply not get the job done.

|          |        |            |
|----------|--------|------------|
| (A)      | Dummy  |            |
| West     | ♠ 1085 | East (you) |
| ♠ A72    |        | ♠ KJ93     |
| Declarer |        |            |
| ♠ Q64    |        |            |

As East you must switch to ♠J in order to scoop up the suit. Lead ♠3 and declarer can play low, using the power of dummy's ♠10 to force out West's ♠A, thus promoting his ♠Q. Lead ♠J, on the other hand and declarer cannot win a trick. If he plays low, ♠J wins and ♠3 to ♠A then a third spade back to ♠K9 soon follow; if he covers ♠J with ♠Q, West wins ♠A and returns ♠7, East sitting over dummy's ♠108 with ♠J9.

Because East's ♠J9 surround dummy's ♠10, this technique is called a *Surrounding Play*. You need the card immediately above dummy's highest card, the card below (if, here, you hold ♠KJ8x, you should still switch to ♠J in the hope that partner holds ♠9), plus a higher card (you would not switch to ♠J from ♠J9xx).

|            |        |         |
|------------|--------|---------|
| (B)        | Dummy  |         |
| West (you) | ♦ A965 | East    |
| ♦ KJ83     |        | ♦ 10742 |
| Declarer   |        |         |
| ♦ Q        |        |         |

As West in (B) defending notrumps, if you can count declarer for just one diamond, you should switch to the king, pinning declarer's singleton (which may be the queen, as here).

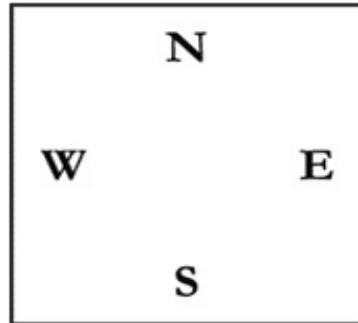
And most fantastical of all...

|            |        |         |
|------------|--------|---------|
| (C)        | Dummy  |         |
| West (you) | ♣ 8643 | East    |
| ♣ A92      |        | ♣ K1075 |
| Declarer   |        |         |
| ♣ QJ       |        |         |

As West, the only way to run all four club tricks is to switch to an unblocking ♣9. East wins ♣K, leads back ♣5 to ♣A, and West's ♣2 comes through ♣86 to ♣107.

♠ J 8 3  
 ♥ A K J 10  
 ♦ K Q J 10 6  
 ♣ 10

♠ 7 5 4 2  
 ♥ 9 8  
 ♦ A 8 4 2  
 ♣ Q 7 4



♠ A Q 10  
 ♥ 7  
 ♦ 9 7 5  
 ♣ A K J 8 5 3

♠ K 9 6  
 ♥ Q 6 5 4 3 2  
 ♦ 3  
 ♣ 9 6 2

**Dealer: North**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S     | W   | N      | E    |
|-------|-----|--------|------|
|       |     | 1♦     | 2♣   |
| Pass  | 3♣  | Dbl(1) | Pass |
| 4♥(2) | End |        |      |

(1) Take-out.

(2) Facing short clubs and some hearts, South's hand has become very powerful.

**Contract: 4♥**

**Opening Lead: ♣4**

On our 4♥ deal, East won West's club lead. Given the threat of dummy's diamonds, it was clear to switch to spades. To surround dummy's jack, he made the key play of leading the queen (no other spade works).

Declarer won the king of spades, drew trumps and led his diamond, but West flew in with the ace (in case the lead was singleton) and led a second spade. East held ♠A10 over ♠J8 – down one.

## 52. Helping partner and concealing from declarer

Good defence is all about conveying information that will be more useful to partner than declarer.

| (A)        | Dummy    |        |
|------------|----------|--------|
| West (you) | ♠ 63     | East   |
| ♠ J9842    |          | ♠ 1075 |
|            | Declarer |        |
|            | ♠ AKQ    |        |

You lead ♠4 v notrumps. Declarer beats ♠10 with (say) ♠Q and loses the lead to East, who returns ♠7, declarer winning ♠A. Which card should you play?

*Answer:* ♠J. This must logically show a ♠J-high suit; if you hold ♠KJ9xx you can afford ♠K.

The converse is true: you must hide information that will be more useful to declarer than partner.

| (B)        | Dummy    |      |
|------------|----------|------|
| West (you) | ♦KJ3     | East |
| ♦Q104      |          | ♦865 |
|            | Declarer |      |
|            | ♦A972    |      |

Declarer leads ♦2, the trick going ♦2, ♦4, ♦J, ♦5. His finesse successful, the second round begins: ♦K, ♦6, ♦7, ?... What should West play?

*Answer:* ♦Q – the card he is known to hold. If West follows with ♦10,

declarer will lead ♦3 towards his ♦A9 and will know West holds ♦Q (his finesse of ♦J succeeded). He will rise with ♦A, felling that ♦Q and table ♦9. If, however, West follows with ♦Q under ♦K, declarer may finesse ♦9 on the third-round, playing West for ♦Q4 and East ♦10865.

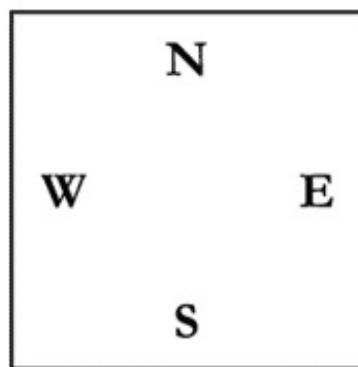
(C)                      **Dummy**  
West (you)    ♣ AQ1092    East  
♣ KJ5                      ♣ 643  
  
**Declarer**  
♣ 87

In (C) spades are trumps and declarer is setting up dummy's clubs. He finesses ♣Q and cashes ♣A. West must drop ♣K, the card he is known to hold. If he plays ♣J, declarer knows he can ruff a third round low to set up the suit. Drop ♣K and declarer may run ♣10 on the third-round, the winning play if East holds ♣J643 and West ♣K5. It costs nothing to try.

---

♠ A 2  
♥ K 10 3  
♦ K Q 4 2  
♣ J 6 5 2

♠ J 9 8 5 4  
♥ J 9 5  
♦ 9 8  
♣ A 9 8



♠ Q 10 6 3  
♥ A 7 4  
♦ 7 5 3  
♣ K 10 7

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

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

S            W            N            E  
-----  
1NT        Pass        3NT        End

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♠5

On our deal, West leads a spade v 3NT, declarer beating the queen with the king and leading a heart to dummy's ten (best). East wins the ace and returns the three of spades to dummy's ace. Declarer now cashes the king of hearts...

West must play the jack, the card he is known to hold. Declarer will lead towards his ♦Q8 and may finesse the eight, playing for West to have ♦J5 and East ♦A974. He may not, but at least you have given him a losing option. Play the nine on the second round and he'd for sure lead to his queen, knowing you have the jack because dummy's ten drew East's ace.

## 53. Working out declarer's shape

The key to bridge is shape. When I defend, my primary goal is to work out declarer's shape.

I start in the bidding. If declarer bids two suits, he is 5-4, if he repeats a suit he (likely) has six etc. I also (at my own risk) take into account his tempo – a reluctantly repeated suit may be just five cards. Knowing his shape helps enormously in deciding what to lead and how to defend subsequently.

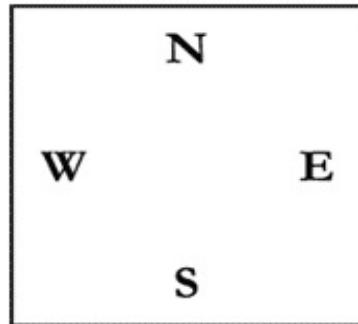
Then dummy is tabled. If dummy has a long, strong suit, I expect declarer to set it up early. If he doesn't touch it, I suspect it is ready-to-run (needing no setting up). If dummy has a ruffing value, I expect declarer to void dummy and ruff losers. If he does not, I assume he has no losers to ruff.

I am constantly constructing hands for declarer and asking myself whether declarer would play the hand in the way he is if he held my construction. If the answer is no, then he does not have that hand (naturally I take into account how experienced declarer is – and the possibility that he is misplaying!). I hope to be fairly sure of declarer's shape by the second or third trick.

As West, how quickly can you work out declarer's shape on our featured 3NT deal?

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

♠ J 9 7 2  
 ♥ Q 9 6  
 ♦ K 3  
 ♣ J 9 8 3



♠ 10 5 3  
 ♥ A 10 8 4  
 ♦ 6 4 2  
 ♣ A 10 2

♠ K 8 6 4  
 ♥ J  
 ♦ A Q 9 7 5  
 ♣ K Q 6

**Dealer:** South

**Vulnerability:** Neither

| S      | W    | N     | E    |
|--------|------|-------|------|
| 1♦     | Pass | 1♥    | Pass |
| 1♠(1)  | Pass | 3♦(2) | Pass |
| 3NT(3) | end  |       |      |

- (1) Showing his five ♦— four ♠ shape.
- (2) 10-12 points and three+ diamonds.
- (3) Good clubs and 25 partnership points.

**Contract:** 3NT

**Opening Lead:** ♣3

You as West lead the three of clubs to East's ace and receive a top-of-two remaining ten of clubs return. Declarer wins the king and you follow with the jack, helpfully indicating to partner that you do not have the queen (if you could afford the jack you could afford the queen). Do you know declarer's shape yet?

Yes you do. Partner's ten of clubs return indicates an initial holding of three cards, leaving declarer with three. Declarer advertised five diamonds and four spades in the bidding. Therefore he has just one heart.

Declarer crosses to the ace of spades at trick three, then leads and passes the jack of diamonds. You win the king and know to switch to hearts, declarer's singleton suit. In case that singleton is the jack, you place the queen of hearts on the table (key play).

Say declarer ducks and the queen wins. You follow with the nine (top of two – to retain the lead) and, if that is also ducked, the six, partner holding ♠A10 over ♠K7. Four heart tricks, a diamond and a club mean down two.

## 54. Working out declarer's points

To be a good defender, you need to count. In three main areas – Tricks, Shape Points [think TeaSpoon].

*Tricks* – how many tricks does declarer (and dummy) have. If you can count enough tricks for his contract in three suits, you must attack the fourth suit. Right away.

*Shape* – can you infer declarer's shape? Think of the bidding and the play to date.

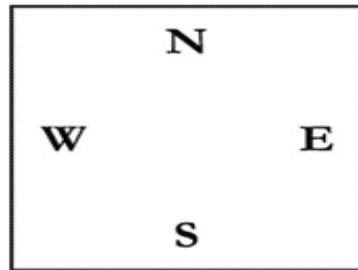
*Points* – this page's focus. How many points does declarer have? If he limited his hand in the bidding, this line of thinking will likely be more fruitful. Say he opened 1NT: he has 12-14 points; if (during the play) he has already revealed 11 points, then your partner has an unaccounted-for ace.

As soon as dummy is tabled you know how many points are missing. Knowing how many partner has tells you how many declarer has; knowing how many declarer has tells you how many partner has.

Say you have 4 points (sorry) and dummy has 10: there are 26 missing points to be divided between partner and declarer. If partner dealt and passed then he has at most 11 points. That means declarer has at least 15. If declarer showed a minimumish hand in the bidding (say 1♥ - 1♦ - 2♥) then he has precisely 15 (with 16 he'd jump to 3♥). All this you can work out at trick one!

♠ K J 8  
 ♥ A K 5 4 2  
 ♦ Q J 9 4  
 ♣ Q

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



♠ 7 4 2  
 ♥ Q 3  
 ♦ A 6 5 2  
 ♣ 9 7 6 2

♠ Q 10 9 6 3  
 ♥ 10 8  
 ♦ 10 8 7  
 ♣ A K 3

**Dealer: North**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S     | W    | N     | E    |
|-------|------|-------|------|
|       |      | 1♥    | Pass |
| 1♠    | Pass | 2♦    | Pass |
| 2♥(1) | Pass | 2♠(2) | Pass |
| 4♠    | End  |       |      |

(1) 6-9 points and two or three hearts. Note that South will normally revert to hearts with two hearts and three diamonds, the so-called “false-preference”: a 5-2 fit is easier to handle than a 4-3 fit, plus bidding gives partner another chance.

(2) Showing his exact shape and implying extra values; with a minimum 3♠5♥4♦1♣ North will raise 1♠ to 2♠.

**Contract: 4♠**

**Opening Lead: ♣J**

As West on our featured deal, you lead the jack of clubs v 4♦ and see dummy's queen win the first trick. Declarer now leads the king of trumps from dummy – plan the defence.

Declarer has advertised 6-9 points with his 2♥ bid. Trick one revealed that he has both ♣AK – partner could not beat dummy's queen. There is no room for declarer to have the ace of diamonds.

Win the ace of trumps and lead the king of diamonds (key play), knowing partner holds the ace. This wins as expected, so follow with your second diamond and see East win the ace and lead a third diamond. You ruff and that's down one.

## 55. Drawing inferences

The ultimate goal in your defensive quest is complete hand reconstruction – working out declarer's exact hand in terms of its shape and points. This you do from the bidding and the way declarer is playing the hand (and partner defending).

See if you as West can draw the right inferences in these exercises:

(A)                          **Dummy**  
West                          ♠ AQ2  
                                ♥ K10753

Spades (say) are trumps and you lead ♥5.

- (i) Declarer wins dummy's ♥A.
- (ii) Declarer finesses dummy's ♥Q.

*Answers:*

- (i) Declarer likely has a singleton – why else spurn the finesse?
- (ii) Partner must hold ♥J, or declarer would have run the lead to his ♥J (then finesse dummy's ♥Q).

(B)                          **Dummy**  
West                          ♣ QJ109  
                                ♦ K863

Spades (say) are trumps and declarer leads ♦2 towards dummy. Who holds ♦A?

*Answer:* Partner. If declarer held ♦A, he would take a finesse by crossing to dummy and running ♦Q, hoping for East to hold ♦K.

(C)

Dummy

West

♦ A104

♦ K85

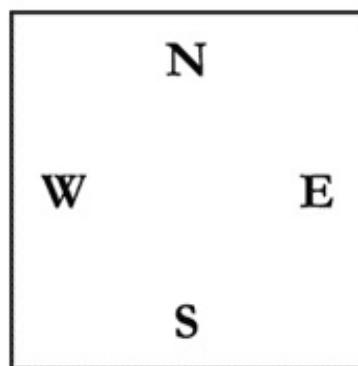
Declarer leads dummy's ♦4 to his ♦Q and your ♦K. Who holds ♦J?

*Answer:* Partner. With ♦QJ in hand declarer would run ♦Q, not lead towards it. Leading a second diamond through ♦A10 would be strong defence at this point.

---

♠ 5 2  
♥ 9 6 3  
♦ K Q J 10 9  
♣ A Q 3

♠ 10 6  
♥ A J 8 5  
♦ 8 6  
♣ J 9 6 5 2



♠ A J 9 7 4  
♥ Q 10 2  
♦ 7 5 4  
♣ 10 7

♠ K Q 8 3  
♥ K 7 4  
♦ A 3 2  
♣ K 8 4

---

Dealer: South

Vulnerability: Neither

| S   | W    | N   | E    |
|-----|------|-----|------|
| 1♠  | Pass | 2♦  | Pass |
| 2NT | Pass | 3NT | End  |

Contract: 3NT

Opening Lead: ♣5

You are East on our featured 3NT deal. Declarer wins partner's club lead with dummy's ace and leads the two of spades. And you?

*Inference No 1:* declarer would have finessed dummy's queen of clubs at trick one (or let the lead run to his jack) without the king. Rising with the ace is almost sure sign he holds the king.

*Inference No 2:* Declarer is not playing diamonds because he holds the ace – otherwise his first task would surely be to force it out.

You can count eight top tricks for declarer – five diamonds and three clubs – and must not let him sneak a ninth. You must rise with the ace of spades and switch to hearts – but which heart?

Not the two! Lead the ten (or queen) of hearts in order to retain the lead should declarer duck. Say the ten wins; you now follow with the queen (top of two) and, whether or not declarer plays the king, the defence will scoop all four quick heart tricks. Down one.

## **56. Defensive tactics at Duplicate Pairs**

Defending at Duplicate Pairs is in many ways very different to Rubber / Teams.

Playing Rubber / Teams, your objective is to defeat the contract. So it is when defending against an unusual contract at Pairs (eg 3NT when the opponents clearly don't have the values for it – making exactly or with overtricks will be a bottom; defeated by one, two, or nine tricks will be a top). Not so when the contract is universal.

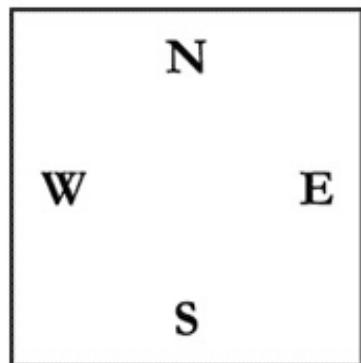
Say declarer opens 1NT and dummy raises to 3NT, tabling a flat 13-point hand. All your fellow East-West pairs will be defending 3NT, so overtricks and undertricks will be important; just as important, indeed, as the contract.

Defending a universal contract at Pairs, your line of thinking should not be, "What do I need partner to have to defeat the contract?" (however unlikely) then play for it. Instead it should be, "What do I think my partner is likely to have?", and play for that.

---

**♠ 7 6  
♥ J 6 4 2  
♦ K 5 4  
♣ A K Q 10**

**♠ J 10 8 4 2  
♥ K 9  
♦ Q 7 3  
♣ J 9 7**



**♠ 5 3  
♥ 10 8 7 3  
♦ A 10 8 6  
♣ 6 5 3**

**♠ A K Q 9  
♥ A Q 5  
♦ J 9 2  
♣ 8 4 2**

---

**Dealer: South**

**Vulnerability: Neither**

| S   | W    | N   | E    |
|-----|------|-----|------|
| 1♠  | Pass | 2♣  | Pass |
| 2NT | Pass | 3NT | End  |

**Contract: 3NT**

**Opening Lead: ♠J**

Our featured 3NT deal from Duplicate Pairs illustrates this principle of giving up on an unlikely chance of defeating a universal contract, when to attempt to do so will result in extra overtricks.

West's opening lead is not without interest. Spades looks obvious but it is declarer's suit. At Rubber / Teams you might well try a small diamond, trying to find partner at home. Playing Pairs you must be more passive, trying to restrict overtricks, hence leading top of the spade sequence.

East discourages the spade lead, declarer wins, crosses to a club, then leads a heart to his queen. You win the king and reflect that your only realistic chance of beating the game is to find partner with ♦AJ10x or better. At Rubber / Teams you should switch to the queen of diamonds.

The trouble with the queen of diamonds switch is that, when partner's diamonds are rather less good, you will have presented declarer with unnecessary diamond tricks. Only overtricks – but they are as crucial as the contract at Pairs. Best is to exit passively with as second heart (or a club).

On a passive exit, declarer will have to work hard to make more than nine tricks. On the queen of diamonds switch to the king and ace followed by a diamond back, declarer fineses the nine and makes 11 tricks – a near-zero for

E-W.

## 57. Round-up

I hope you have enjoyed this book on defence; and I hope you enjoy defending at the table. The more you play bridge, the more you'll enjoy defence relative to the other parts of the game. You'd better – because you defend twice as often as declare (half the time you're dummy). Some key pointers:

*TOP defence*: Focus on Trick target; **Observe dummy**; reflect on what (on earth) **Partner** is doing – their lead, how they signalled.

*Leads*: Lead top of an honour sequence, lead low for like, asking for the return; lead high for hate.

*Third-hand Plays*: High, cheaper of touching highest cards, but keep a high card to beat an unplayed picture in dummy.

*Second-hand Plays*: Low on a low card, but cover an honour with an honour if a lower card can be promoted.

*Attitude Signal*: On partner's lead – throw high means aye; throw low means no. Same for discards, but tend to throw low in a suit you don't want rather than high in a suit you do.

*Count Signal*: On declarer's lead when partner needs to know how many cards declarer has – HELO: high-even; low-odd.

*Suit Preference Signal*: Mainly when leading a suit for partner to ruff – high asking for the higher-ranking suit; low for lower-ranking suit.

*Active Defence*: Trying to take tricks quickly. Suit Contracts: when dummy has a suit that will provide declarer with discards for his losers. Notrump Contracts: when declarer has enough tricks for his contract in three suits, attacking the fourth suit.

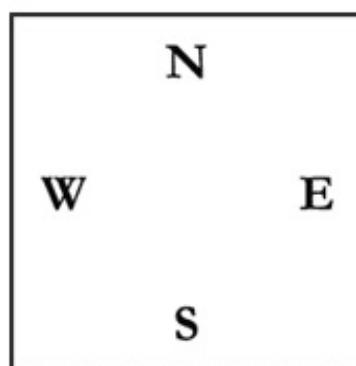
*Leading Trumps*: to cut down ruffing in dummy. Also to be passive.

*Passive Defence*: When dummy has no threat (long, strong suit or ruffing value), not opening up new suits and giving away unnecessary tricks. Particularly valid at Pairs.

---

♠ 9 8 7 6  
♥ 9 8 7 5  
♦ 9  
♣ A K J 8

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



♠ J 3  
♥ Q 4  
♦ A 8 7 3 2  
♣ 7 6 3 2

♠ A K 10 5 2  
♥ K 10  
♦ J 10 4  
♣ Q 9 4

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Dealer: West

Vulnerability: Neither

| S     | W    | N     | E   |
|-------|------|-------|-----|
| ..... | 1♥   | Pass  | 1NT |
| 2♠    | Pass | 4♠(1) | End |

(1) Loving his singleton diamond.

Contract: 4♠

Opening Lead: ♦K

On our deal West leads the king of diamonds v 4♦. A sleepy East plays low and declarer makes plus one, trumps drawn without loss and a heart loser going on dummy's fourth club.

An alert East overtakes the king of diamonds with the ace so he can switch to hearts through declarer. The top-of-two queen of hearts is (say) covered by king and ace. West cashes the jack then leads a third heart. East (still alert) ruffs with the jack and, though declarer overruffs, West's queen of trumps is promoted. Down one.