

2nd Edition

Revised and updated for the first time in 30 years



FALSECARDS

A MIKE LAWRENCE

BRIDGE CLASSIC



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Master Point Press • Toronto, Canada

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5M 1H2 (416)781-0351
Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Websites: www.masterpointpress.com
 www.teachbridge.com
 www.bridgeblogging.com
 www.ebooksbridge.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Lawrence, Mike, 1940-, author
Falsecards / written by Mike Lawrence. -- Second edition.

"A Mike Lawrence bridge classic".

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-77140-010-7 (pbk.).--ISBN 978-1-55494-603-7 (pdf).--

ISBN 978-1-55494-489-7 (epub).--ISBN 978-1-55494-740-9 (mobi)

1. Contract bridge--Defensive play. I. Title. II. Title: False cards.

GV1282.42.L39 2014	795.41'5	C2014-900574-1
		C2014-900575-X

Co-editor	Karen Lawrence
Copyeditor	Sally Sparrow
Cover and interior design	Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

This book is dedicated to my many friends in the bridge world.

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INTRODUCTION

FALSECARDS IN GENERAL

Before getting into specific hands and circumstances, I would like to offer a bit of advice relating to falsecards.

A FALSECARD IS INTENDED TO FOOL DECLARER, NOT TO FOOL YOUR PARTNER.

In general, defense is the hardest part of bridge. It is difficult enough when you know what is going on. It's nearly impossible when you have to guess. If you insist on sending out a bewildering array of signals, you will nail an occasional declarer or two. But you will also nail your partner.

Bridge is a partnership game. One or two or three successes will not compensate for a confused, embarrassed, or upset partner.

Ever had an experience like this one?

♠ K J 3 2
♥ K J 4 3
♦ Q 5
♣ Q 8 2

♠ A 9 8
♥ Q 8 2
♦ J 6 3
♣ A K J 5

N
W E
S

North	South
	1♦
1♥	1♠
3♠ ¹	4♠
all pass	

1. Invitational.

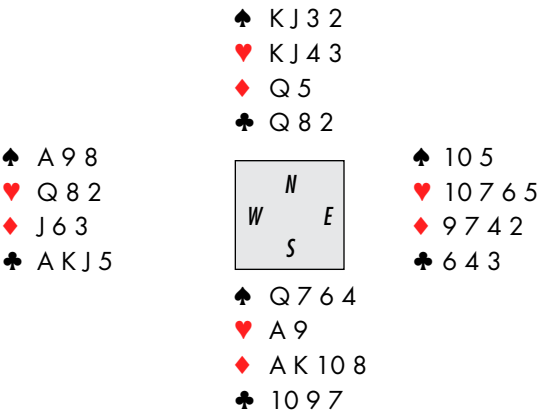
You lead the ♣K and partner plays the three. There's no way you are going to beat this on high cards, but there may be a way to promote a trump trick. Three things must happen:

1. Clubs must be 4-3-3-3.
2. Partner must have the ♠10.
3. Declarer must lead a spade from dummy to his queen.

If all this happens, you will win the first round of spades, and lead the thirteenth club. This will promote a trump trick. All this happening is against the odds, but something is better than nothing.

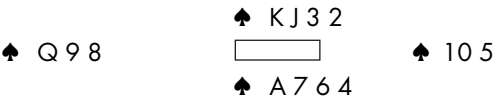
Putting it into practice, you continue with the ♣A and another club. Clubs turn out to be 4-3-3-3. Declarer wins and leads the ♠2 to his queen and your ace.

The good news is that partner has the ♠10. The bad news is that he has just played it. When you lead the ♣J (partner might have the ♠7), declarer guesses the position and makes the rest.



What went wrong? On declarer’s chosen line of play, 4♠ was going down. Why did partner ruin your plans?

The answer is that partner was falsecarding. He thought declarer might have the ♠A. Partner played the ten, hoping to discourage declarer from finessing in spades if the situation were as below.



This was the layout partner was hoping for. Partner was trying to do a good thing. It just happened that on this occasion, it cost a game contract.

You may form your own conclusion.

PART ONE

FALSECARDS BY THE
DEFENDERS

CHAPTER 1

FALSECARDS BY THE OPENING LEADER

There are a number of valid reasons for choosing to lead an unusual card. These reasons include:

1. You might lead third or fifth best in order to mislead declarer as to your length in the suit. (This assumes you normally lead fourth best.)
2. You might lead the 'wrong' card from a sequence in order to mislead declarer as to where the high cards are, i.e., lead the jack from QJx.
3. You might underlead an ace against a suit contract.

Note that you do not make an unusual lead simply because you feel like it. You do it because there is a specific, defined reason for it. Falsecards are dangerous because they mislead partner as well as declarer. If you falsecard ten times and get five good results, four normal results, and embarrass partner once, you can be sure partner will remember the tenth time. He won't like it, and worse, it may cause him to doubt your carding in the future.

LEADING FIFTH BEST OR THIRD BEST

Both vulnerable

♠ Q 8 2 ♥ 9 2 ♦ A 8 6 ♣ A Q 8 6 2

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

With a perfectly good club holding, it is right to lead one. Normally, you would lead the six, and unless you can find reason to do otherwise, you should do so. In this instance, you can anticipate that the spade suit will run. If declarer chooses to play on spades, you know that he will succeed.

But! If declarer doesn't fear the club suit, he may decide to knock out your ♦A. The entire hand might look like this:

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

If declarer thinks clubs are 5-2, he can't afford to lead diamonds. He will try for spades, and those will work. If declarer thinks clubs are 4-3, he will play on diamonds, expecting to lose three clubs and one diamond.

If you lead the ♣2 on this hand, declarer will expect clubs to be non-dangerous and will try the diamonds.

Conversely:

Both vulnerable

♠ 8 7 3 ♥ 9 4 2 ♦ A 8 6 ♣ A Q 6 2

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

You could, in theory, lead the ♣6. If declarer can be talked into believing you have five of them, he may try the spade finesse rather than knock out the ♦A.

ANALYSIS OF LEADING THIRD OR FIFTH BEST

These falsecards are unlikely to occur. The situation has to be just right and you run the risk that partner will do the wrong thing.

The necessary conditions are:

1. You must have nearly all the critical cards held by the defenders so that partner will not be taking an active part in the defense.

2. You must be able to clearly predict how the play of the hand will go and what effect your falsecard will have.

Leading fifth best may occur once a year, leading third best even less.

UNDERLEADING AN ACE VS. A SUIT CONTRACT

Considering the number of times this lead is attempted, one might believe it was more the rule than the exception. Some of the time it works. And some of the time it doesn't. There are two problems with underleading aces:

1. There is frequently a better alternative, including leading the ace instead of underleading it.
2. Even when it's right, it may not work if your partner misunderstands what you are doing.

For instance:

Neither vulnerable

♠ 8		♠ Q 6 2		♠ A 5 3
♥ A 5 2		♥ J 8 3		♥ K 10 9 6 4
♦ J 8 7 6 2		♦ Q 5		♦ A 9 4
♣ J 9 8 5		♣ Q 10 6 4 2		♣ 7 3
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS</div> </div>			
		♠ K J 10 9 7 4		
		♥ Q 7		
		♦ K 10 3		
		♣ A K		

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

This auction wasn't too accurate, but it could happen. And if the defense goofs, 4♠ can make.

How can the defense goof? Easy. If West leads the ♥2, East has to guess whether the lead is from Axx, in which case he has to play the king, or whether the lead is from Qxx, in which case the nine is correct. In this case, the king would be necessary.

Or:

North-South vulnerable

♠ 9 7

♥ Q 9 5

♦ J 8 7 5

♣ A 8 6 4

♠ 3

♥ A 6 2

♦ A Q 9 6 3

♣ K 10 5 2

♠ A 6 4 2

♥ K 10 8 4

♦ 10 2

♣ Q 9 7

W

N

E

S

♠ K Q J 10 8 5

♥ J 7 3

♦ K 4

♣ J 3

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

If West leads a heart, the contract goes down routinely. If West leads a cagey little club, the contract will succeed if East plays the ♣9 instead of the queen.

East should play the queen, you say? Perhaps. But if the hand is as follows, the queen will be a disaster:

♠ K 5

♥ Q 9 5

♦ J 8 7 5

♣ J 8 6 4

♠ 3

♥ A 6 2

♦ A Q 9 6 3

♣ K 10 5 2

♠ A 6 4 2

♥ K 10 8 4

♦ 10 2

♣ Q 9 7

W

N

E

S

♠ Q J 10 9 8 7

♥ J 7 3

♦ K 4

♣ A 3

Underleading aces can be quite dynamic, but it's also dangerous. The times when underleading an ace rates to be correct are just *not* that common.

The three common circumstances are:

1. Dummy, on your left, has bid notrump and:
 - a) Declarer has shown a weak hand
 - b) Declarer hasn't shown an unbalanced hand
 - c) You don't have a strong hand yourself
 - d) You are probably leading an unbid suit
 - e) *You don't have a better lead*

This auction suggests it would be okay to underlead an ace:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	2♠	all pass

This auction is not as clear-cut:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	2♥	all pass

With RHO showing two suits, you should think twice about underleading the ♦A.

♠ A 4 2 ♥ Q 5 ♦ J 9 3 ♣ Q 10 7 4 2

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♣	pass	1♥	pass
1NT	pas	2♥	all pass

The ♠2 is okay because of the auction and also because nothing else stands out. You should rarely feel that underleading an ace is a wonderful thing to do.

♠ J 7 2 ♥ A 4 2 ♦ J 10 9 3 ♣ K 5 4

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	2♠	all pass

The ♦J stands out. It's very rare that you would underlead an ace when you have a solid alternative.

2. The second common situation where you can underlead an ace is on one of these sequences when:

- a) You have opened the bidding
- b) LHO has doubled or overcalled 1NT
- c) Your partner has bid a new suit

West (you)	North	East	South
1 ♣	dbl	1 ♥	1 ♠
all pass			

You might underlead the ♥A.

West (you)	North	East	South
1 ♣	1NT	2 ♦	2 ♥
all pass			

You might underlead the ♦A.

On these sequences, LHO has implied some length and strength in the suit your partner has bid.

♠ A 3 ♥ Q J 6 2 ♦ K 8 5 4 2 ♣ K 5

West (you)	North	East	South
1 ♦	dbl	1 ♠	2 ♥
all pass			

The ♠3 could work here. Note that nothing else stands out. Underleading an ace is a last resort.

Similarly:

♠ A J 4 ♥ K 10 8 6 3 ♦ A 5 3 ♣ 10 3

West (you)	North	East	South
1 ♥	1NT	2 ♦	3 ♣
all pass			

The ♦3 is pretty clear-cut here. An entirely possible layout is this one:

ANALYSIS OF UNDERLEADING ACES IN EITHER OF THE ABOVE SITUATIONS

One more point. If you clearly identify the proper time for this play and if partner does also, then you won't have to worry that either:

- a) Partner underled at the wrong time, *or*
- b) Partner will do the wrong thing when you underlead.

Note that this entire discussion has centered around the opening lead only. Later in the hand, different considerations apply.

3. The third 'common' situation where you might underlead an ace is not really intended to fool declarer. Rather, you do it because it is imperative to get partner on lead immediately.

Neither vulnerable

♠ A 10 8 6 5 2 ♥ 7 5 3 ♦ K 7 6 2 ♣ —

West (you)	North	East	South
pass	1♣	pass	1♥
1♠	4♥	4♠	4NT
5♠	pass*	pass	6♥
all pass			

1. 1 or 3 keycards.

Lead the ♠2. There is an excellent chance your partner has the ♠K. If so, he will work out that you underled the ♠A for a reason. He should figure it out.

♠ J 3
♥ A Q 10 4
♦ A Q 3
♣ A Q 9 3

♠ A 10 8 6 5 2
♥ 7 5 3
♦ K 7 6 2
♣ —

♠ K Q 7 4
♥ —
♦ 10 9 8 5 4
♣ 8 7 5 4

♠ 9
♥ K J 9 8 6 2
♦ J
♣ K J 10 6 2

W N E
S

North-South vulnerable

♠ 4 2 ♥ A Q 7 3 ♦ A Q 6 2 ♣ 8 5 4

West (you)	North	East	South
	1♣	2♥	2♠
4♥	pass	pass	4NT
pass	5♦	pass	5♠
all pass			

Try the ♥3 or ♥7. Declarer should have the ♦K for his bidding. If partner has the ♥K, a diamond return will defeat 5♠.

ANALYSIS OF UNDERLEADING AN ACE WHEN YOU REQUIRE SOMETHING OF PARTNER

Remember these guidelines:

1. You need partner to make a specific return *and*
2. The setting tricks won't wait.

The rarest of all cases for underleading an ace is when the opponents have had a strong auction which *specifically pinpointed* a weakness. Usually, for this criterion to apply, the opponents will have climbed to the five-level.

Auctions like these are typical:

LHO

Chapter 1: Falsecards by the Opening Leader [19]

LHO	RHO
1 ♣	1 ♥
3 ♥	4 ♦
4 ♥	5 ♣
5 ♥	pass

This sequence isn't quite as specific but it sounds very much like they have losers in spades.

This next auction is not, repeat, *is not* in the same family as the above.

LHO	RHO
1♣	1♦
1♥	3♥
4♥	pass

The opponents have had a straightforward value auction. Nothing has been said or denied about spades. If a spade lead is correct, and it likely is, it's more or less an accident.

♠ A J 3 ♥ 8 6 4 ♦ Q J 9 7 5 ♣ 10 2

LHO	RHO
	1♥
2♣	3♥
4♦	4♥
5♥	pass

The 5♥ bid asked about spades and the pass showed no spade control. Not at all unreasonable to lead the ♠3.

♠ A J 3
♥ 8 6 4
♦ Q J 9 7 5
♣ 10 2

♠ 8 6 4
♥ Q 7
♦ A 6 4
♣ A Q J 8 3

♠ K 10 7 5
♥ 3 2
♦ 10 8 2
♣ 9 7 6 4

♠ Q 9 2
♥ A K J 10 9 5
♦ K 3
♣ K 5

Diagram illustrating a bridge hand layout. The central table shows the orientation of the players: North (N) is at the top, South (S) is at the bottom, East (E) is on the right, and West (W) is on the left. The hands are distributed as follows:

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

Thirteen tricks without a spade lead. Eleven tricks with the ♠A lead. And down one with the ♠3 lead. Against a strong sequence, you may not feel like underleading an ace. But given the actual auction, it is not just reasonable, it is almost called for. Note that if the opening leader had longer spades, it would still be right to underlead the ace.

	9 5 4	
A 8 6 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px;"></div>	K J 10
	Q 7 3	

If partner has the KJ10, you can get three tricks whether the queen is in the dummy or in declarer's hand.

	J 10 3	
A 8 6 5 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px;"></div>	K 4
	Q 9 7	

You might even give a ruff, which was not available if you led the ace. Note that when the auction *tells* you to lead a suit, you should even underlead the AQxx(x).

LEADING AN ABNORMAL CARD FROM A SEQUENCE

Neither vulnerable

♠ 8 6 2 ♥ K Q J 10 8 6 2 ♦ — ♣ J 7 3

West (you)	North	East	South
3♥	dbl	4♥	4♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♦
pass	6♠	all pass	

What you want to happen is to have partner win something and give you a diamond ruff. With partner raising hearts, this looks like the suit to lead. The trick is to lead a heart such that if partner wins it, he will return a diamond. The first thing to avoid, therefore, is leading the ♥K. Partner just might let you win the trick.

Which heart you should lead is unclear. I would choose the ♥10. Partner will win the ace if he has it. With luck, he will work out that I have done something unusual and will come to the right conclusion.

Incidentally, if my hand were:

♠ 8 6 2 ♥ K Q J 10 8 6 2 ♦ J 7 3 ♣ —

I would lead the ♥2. This is unlikely to cost a trick and should certainly alert partner that something unusual is going on.

Note that you are not trying to fool anyone with this lead. The thing to consider is that when you need partner to do something unusual, you have to make a lead which will wake him up¹. Not too difficult once you think of it. Obviously, since success will lead to a defeated contract, these unusual leads are quite worthwhile.

One point to make here. If you make one of these funny leads expecting that partner will do something for you, you'd better be sure you have a good reason for it. If your partner does something silly because you got cute with your lead, you will end up with a confused and insecure partner. In which case, nothing you do will be believed.

A pair of very unusual and dangerous falsecards by the opening leader are shown by the following two actual examples:

Both vulnerable

♠ Q 10 5 4 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ 3 ♣ A J 10 8 5

West (you)	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	2♦ ¹	pass	2♠
pass	3♠ ²	pass	4♠
all pass			

1. Game-forcing Stayman.

2. Slam try.

This hand has lots of defensive potential and even though the opponents looked for slam, you can hope to beat 4♠. What should you lead?

Spades are out, and you don't really want to lead a stiff diamond. Why try for a ruff with a natural trump trick?

Clubs are dangerous. You may have two tricks if you wait for them.

Hearts look far and away to be the best lead. The problem is that partner doesn't rate to have a heart honor. He may have one, but it's not likely. Best is to lead the ♥J.

The actual hand turned out to be:

1. Marshall Miles coined the term 'alarm clock leads.'

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

Declarer won the ♥A and led a club to the king, and ace. West continued the ♥8 and declarer felt he couldn't afford to finesse. Down one.

East-West vulnerable

♠ A Q 9 2 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ Q 4 2 ♣ 10 8 3

West (you)	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♥
pass	2NT	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

On this sequence, there is a fair danger that dummy has a diamond suit. It may (no guarantee) be necessary to get your defensive tricks established quickly.

From your hand, spades look to be your best possibility. Dummy rates to have the king, so you won't be giving declarer a trick he could never have gotten otherwise.

Which spade should you lead? I suggest the queen. Here's the layout:

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

The effect of the ♠Q in this case was spectacular. The queen won Trick 1. West led a second spade and declarer ducked to East's jack. Back to the ace. Now the final insult. West led the thirteenth spade and East ruffed it with the ♥J. West's ♥10 became the setting trick.

This lead worked out incredibly well. It need not have. It was, however, a reasonable effort.

Note that West chose this lead for a number of reasons.

1. The ♠K was marked in dummy, *and*
2. No other suit looked promising.

The above lead is more likely to be found in books on deception than at the table. More plausible is the lead of the queen from, say, AQJ8 or AQJ10.

♠	K 7 3
♥	Q 7 4
♦	A K J 7
♣	A Q 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠	10 6 4
♥	A K 9 6 5 2
♦	10 3
♣	K 7

If you were declaring 4♥ against the ♠Q lead, would you cover, or would you duck, hoping for a doubleton or singleton ♠A on your right?

If West led from ♠QJ952, you have to duck the first round. If West led from ♠AQJ52, you'd better cover. It's fair to say that declarer has a difficult guess. In practice, most declarers will duck in dummy, and that will be the proper play most of the time.

OTHER UNUSUAL LEADS

A curiosity in the world of opening leads is this hand.

Both vulnerable

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

West (you)	North	East	South
pass	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	2♥	pass	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

Any time you have a solid holding in declarer's second suit, you should consider leading a trump. Even with four trumps to the queen, it should be safe. It may gain by cutting down ruffs and since declarer won't expect you to have led from Qxxx of trumps, he probably won't guess the suit.

In fact, declarer is so unlikely to guess the trumps that you might try the lead solely to fool declarer.

North-South vulnerable

♠ Q 6 4 2 ♥ Q 8 3 ♦ J 9 5 ♣ 10 6 4

West (you)	North	East	South
pass	1♣	pass	1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	3♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	6♠
all pass			

It would not be a bad idea to lead a trump (not the queen!). Declarer has a 4-4 fit and with a trump lead will probably play your partner for the ♠Q. Here is a possible layout:

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

If you make a neutral lead, and on this hand I don't know what that would be, declarer will try to guess spades. This he will do fifty percent of the time. With a spade lead, he will probably guess wrong far more than half the time.

You might try this at Trick 2 as well.

East-West vulnerable

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

N

W

E

S

West (you)	North	East	South
			1♣
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	4♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♦	pass	6♠
all pass			

You cash the ♥K. Your partner plays the six, declarer the five. How do you continue?

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

N

W

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S

♠ A 10 9 5
♥ 5
♦ K 6 4
♣ A K Q 10 8

If you switch to a spade, declarer will misguess more often than not. He instinctively will assume you do not have the queen of trumps and likely will play your partner for it.

CHAPTER 2 DEFENDERS' FALSECARDS DURING PLAY

There are a variety of falsecards available to the defense. Some are even mandatory in that if you don't use them, you give declarer no losing option.

THE MANDATORY DEFENSIVE FALSECARDS

IMPORTANT NOTE:

In example diagrams, if a card is in bold face, it is the card led to the trick. The cards with an underline are the remaining cards played to that trick.

	A <u>J</u> 8 2	
K <u>3</u>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	10 <u>9</u> 4
	Q 7 6 5	

East hopes declarer will return to his hand in order to lead the queen. That will produce a trick for East's ten spot. If East fails to find the mandatory falsecard, declarer will have no choice but to play the ace next. East must play the nine or ten in order to give declarer a losing option.

This is the layout East wants declarer to think exists.

	A J 8 2	
K 4 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	10 9
	Q 7 6 5	

The following is a non-mandatory falsecard, in that declarer has a guess whether you play the five or the seven:

	A <u>J</u> 8 2	
K <u>3</u>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	10 <u>7</u> 5
	Q 9 6 4	

When faced with non-mandatory situations, you should follow some rules of thumb, such as:

1. Falsecard on even-numbered days
2. Falsecard only in the majors
3. Falsecard only in the red suits
4. Play the card nearest your thumb

The main thing is not to become stereotyped as always falsecarding or never falsecarding.

	A <u>J</u> 7	
<u>2</u>	<div></div>	K 10 <u>8</u> 3
	Q 9 6 5 4	

If East fails to play the eight, declarer may guess the position anyway, but the eight should encourage declarer to come back to hand and lead the queen. If East started with 108 doubleton, the queen would lead to no losers and if East started with the eight singleton, the queen would hold declarer's losers to one.

These positions are similar to the ones above. The high cards have been changed, but the theme has not:

	A <u>Q</u> 8 2	
K <u>3</u>	<div></div>	10 <u>9</u> 5
	J 7 6 4	

South may later lead the jack, hoping East has 109 doubleton.

	A <u>K</u> 8 2	
Q <u>3</u>	<div></div>	10 <u>9</u> 5
	J 7 6 4	

As above. If East plays the five, declarer will have no losing option. He will play the ace, and it will drop the queen.

The next three are all similar mandatory falsecards.

	K Q 10 2	
J <u>9</u> 7 5	<div></div>	<u>4</u>
	A 8 6 3	

When West plays the nine, it gives declarer the option of playing either East or West for Jxxx. If West had played the five, declarer would have no choice but to play West for J9xx (if the suit turned out to be 4-1). If East had J9xx, he would have a sure trick.

	A <u>Q</u> 9 2	
10 <u>8</u> 6 5	<div></div>	<u>K</u>
	J 7 4 3	

Likewise, when West plays the eight, he gives declarer the option of playing East for K1065. Had West not played the eight, declarer wouldn't play East for K108x

because it wouldn't be possible to pick up that combination. The idea with these holdings is to give declarer options that he *can* handle.

Likewise:

	<u>K</u> J 7 2	
<u>6</u>	<input type="text"/>	A 10 <u>8</u> 3
	Q 9 5 4	

Another well-known falsecard revolves around the specific defensive holding of Q10 or K10.

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

If East plays the ten, declarer will finesse the queen and eventually will run the suit with no losers. But...

	J 9 2	
10 8 6 <u>5</u>	<input type="text"/>	<u>K</u>
	<u>A</u> Q 7 4 3	

If East can convince declarer that this is the situation, then declarer may finesse the nine next. This will work if West started with 10865, but will fail if East started with K10. Again, the defender creates an extra option for declarer.

	J 9 5	
7 6 <u>3</u>	<input type="text"/>	<u>Q</u> 10
	A <u>K</u> 8 4 2	

This situation is virtually the same as when East held K10. If East plays the queen, South may lead to the nine, losing to the ten.

The K10 combination potentially works when the queen is in dummy instead of the jack.

	Q 9 5	
7 6 <u>3</u>	<input type="text"/>	<u>K</u> 10
	<u>A</u> J 8 4 2	

It may be a little more nervewracking for a defender to try the play, but it is still a sound effort. You will note that these falsecards require that you defend in tempo. If East fumbles with his cards and plays a tentative king, it will be a wasted effort.

To some degree, a defender can do these things when declarer's hand and dummy are reversed. In theory, this should work.

	Dummy	
	A <u>K</u> 8 4 2	
<u>Q</u> 10	<div></div>	7 6 <u>3</u>
	J 9 5	

When South leads the five to the dummy, West can play the queen for the same result as discussed above. The problem is that declarer doesn't always have the right holding.

If the layout were slightly different, say:

	Dummy	
	A <u>K</u> 8 4 2	
<u>Q</u> 10	<div></div>	9 7 6 <u>3</u>
	J 5	

It would be quite silly for West to play the queen.

You should be aware that not all of these Q10 falsecards work. Declarer sometimes has a different holding than the one shown in the above examples. Nonetheless, even when the situation is other than you hoped for, the trick often comes back.

	J 9 3	
K 7 <u>5</u>	<div></div>	<u>Q</u> 10
	<u>A</u> 8 6 4 2	

It looks here like declarer started with two losers and that your falsecard gave one back. In practice, declarer will not suspect the falsecard. He is more likely to lead to dummy's nine, hoping that East started with KQ doubleton.

	J 9 3	
<u>A</u> 4	<div></div>	<u>Q</u> 10
	<u>K</u> 8 7 6 5 2	

Again, it looks like declarer has two losers if the defense played straightforward cards. But as often happens, the trick comes back. Declarer will expect East to have started with a stiff queen and will finesse into the ten.

<u>A</u>	J 9 3	<input type="text"/>	<u>Q</u> 10
	K 8 7 6 5 4 2		

Okay. We pay off to this one.

Defensively, the Q10 combination offers all kinds of chances to falsecard.

7 6 <u>5</u>	A K J 9 4 2	<input type="text"/>	<u>Q</u> 10
	8 <u>3</u>		

If East can play the queen without thought, declarer is very likely to finesse later into the ten. It's true that if East followed with the ten, he might still score his queen, but then, maybe not. I think the falsecard is the winner more often than not.

7 6 <u>5</u>	A K J 9 3	<input type="text"/>	<u>Q</u> 10
	8 4 <u>2</u>		

Note that when dummy has a five-card suit, the queen falsecard is not as effective. If you drop the queen, declarer can play the king next to see if you were really serious. If so, he can still finesse against your partner's ten.

<u>Q</u> 10	A 2	<input type="text"/>	7 5 4
	K J 9 8 6 <u>3</u>		

This combination comes up quite frequently. Often it is the trump suit. The queen falsecard may fool declarer into finessing into the ten.

<u>Q</u> 10	<u>K</u> 7 3	<input type="text"/>	9 6 <u>2</u>
	A J 8 5 4		

Here the effect is the same except that declarer may try finessing against your partner's hypothetical 10962. This is the situation you are trying to imitate:

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

This is a possible extension of the previous:

	<u>K</u> 7 3	
<u>Q</u> 9	<div></div>	10 6 <u>2</u>
	A J 8 5 4	

I have never seen anyone try falsecarding in this situation with Q9 instead of Q10, but it's possible.

	<u>K</u> J 9 8 3	
<u>Q</u> 10	<div></div>	7 5 <u>4</u>
	A 6 2	

Once again, the play of the queen leaves declarer with the very real option of finessing against East's ten. If East started with 10754, it would be necessary.

Note that these falsecards only work when declarer has no clue as to your distribution. If, in the preceding example, West had opened 1NT, no declarer would go for this particular falsecard.

These positions are a little unlikely, but they have potential.

	10 8 2	
<u>A</u> 5 4	<div></div>	<u>Q</u> 9
	<u>K</u> J 7 6 3	

Declarer may finesse into East's nine.

	10 8 2	
K 5 <u>4</u>	<div></div>	<u>Q</u> 9
	<u>A</u> J 7 6 3	

If this is the setup, declarer will be less inclined to finesse into the nine. East's play of the queen could be from KQ9 so unless declarer suspects a bad break, he won't fall for this falsecard.

	10 8 2	
<u>A</u> 3	<div></div>	<u>Q</u> 9
	<u>K</u> J 7 6 5 4	

This would be a poor time to falsecard. You should try this only when you think declarer has a five-card suit.

Note that East can try the above falsecards from K9 as well as Q9.

Q 5 4	10 8 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div>	K 9
	A J 7 6 3	

East may score his nine if declarer misjudges.

THE J9 FALSECARDS

One of the more intriguing sets of falsecards occurs when a defender has the J9 of a suit.

Q 10 8 6 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div>
A 4

As declarer, you lead the ace, catching the three from West and the nine from East. When you lead the four, West plays the five. Should you play the queen or the ten? (Assume you need four tricks.)

If you believe the suit is divided 4-2, your correct play is the queen. If East has K9, you can't run the suit no matter what you do. If East has the J9, you can get four tricks by playing the queen. Go for the maximum.

Some years ago *The Bridge World* had a long article on what East should play on your ace if he holds K93. If he plays the nine, declarer may be lured into playing dummy's queen, on the rationale described above. It is true a good defender will play the nine from K93. It is also true that there aren't that many good defenders.

Let's go back to the original suit, i.e.

Q 10 8 6 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div>
A 4

Let's say that when declarer plays the ace, East drops the jack. Wouldn't you, as declarer, be inclined to finesse dummy's eight, hoping East has KJ?

If you agree, then you will also agree that an excellent play by East would be to play the jack from J9 doubleton.

These situations are examples of what a defender can do with J9.

K 7 5 3	Q 10 8 6 <u>2</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div>	J 9
	A 4	

East hopes declarer will finesse the eight.

Q 5 4 <u>2</u>	A 10 8 6 <u>3</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> K 7	<u>J</u> 9
----------------	---	------------

Again, East hopes declarer will finesse the eight. Without the falsecard, declarer might play the king, ace, dropping the J9, and can then concede one trick to West's queen.

J 5 4 <u>2</u>	A 10 8 6 <u>3</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> K 7	<u>Q</u> 9
----------------	---	------------

A possible extension of the previous example. This falsecard is a bit dangerous because declarer may have KJ5 (for example).

<u>J</u> 9	<u>Q</u> 3 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> A 10 8 7 5 4	<u>K</u> 6 2
------------	---	--------------

Again, hoping declarer will finesse into the nine.

<u>K</u> 7 5	A 8 3 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> <u>Q</u> 10 6 4 2	<u>J</u> 9
--------------	---	------------

Declarer may lose to East's nine. Note how easy it is for declarer to misguess these combinations. At the table, these falsecards are frequently overlooked. That's why most players are unfamiliar with them. That's a shame because they are very effective, and deservedly so.

<u>K</u> 5 3	10 7 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> A <u>Q</u> 8 6 4	<u>J</u> 9
--------------	---	------------

Will East score his nine?

J 9	A Q 8 6 4 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 5px auto;"></div> 10 7 2	K 5 3
-----	--	-------

It's dangerous for West to falsecard the jack. That would lose a trick whenever declarer had 102 and East K753. It could work, though. If West knows, somehow, that South has three cards in this suit, the jack will be a good try.

OTHER J9 COMBINATIONS

Sometimes you have a higher honor with your J9. Usually, for purposes of falsecards, it will be the ace. Here are a few additional falsecards.

A <u>J</u> 9	<u>K</u> 10 7 3 <div></div> Q 8 4	6 5 <u>2</u>
--------------	--	--------------

A <u>J</u> 9	<u>K</u> Q 7 6 4 <div></div> 10 8 5	3 <u>2</u>
--------------	--	------------

In these two combinations declarer may take a finesse into West's nine.

This next combination takes a little longer to develop, but it will eventually. Declarer may lead the queen to East's ace and finesse the eight on the third round of the suit.

5 3 <u>2</u>	10 8 7 6 <div></div> <u>K</u> Q 4	A <u>J</u> 9
--------------	--	--------------

Note that this won't work if declarer has enough entries to dummy to lead through East a second time. Especially note that West must be alert to what's going on. If he discards one of his small cards ("I had only three little ones, partner") then East's deception will be wasted.

6 5 <u>3</u>	K 8 4 2 <div></div> <u>Q</u> 10 7	A <u>J</u> 9
--------------	--	--------------

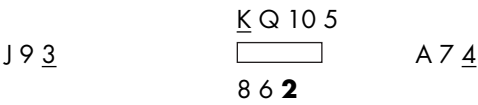
This combination also takes three tricks to develop. Dummy leads the two and East plays the jack. If there are limited entries to dummy, South may lead the ten next and later finesse into East's nine. West better hold on to his 653 in order to give the falsecard a fair chance.

FAKING YOUR HOLDING

One common and effective defensive falsecard is to mislead declarer as to your holding in a suit. This can be done in two ways.

- 1. You can refuse to win a trick when it was possible to have done so.
- 2. You can win with an unusual card, making it appear that you don't have a different card.

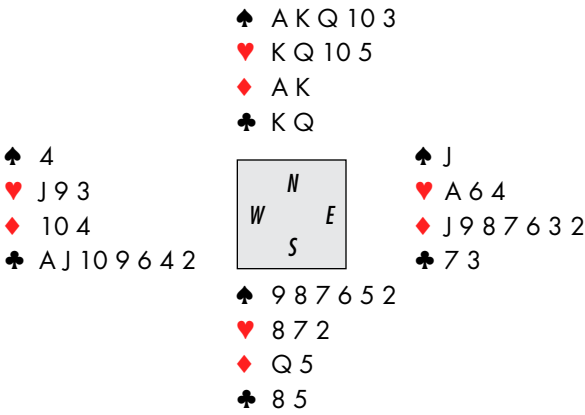
There are many reasons why you might try one of these tactics.



If there are entries to the South hand, by playing low on the first trick East is hoping that declarer will simply misguess the suit. If declarer later leads to the queen, the defense will come to two tricks when they might have gotten just one. In this case, you are hoping to mislead declarer, i.e., you are falsecarding.

You might duck the ace in the above combination for tactical reasons.

North-South vulnerable



West leads the ♣A and continues with a club to dummy's king. The trump ace draws trumps, followed by the ♦AK. Declarer comes to his hand for the last time with a spade and leads a heart in this position.

	♠ K Q 10	
	♥ K Q 10 5	
	♦ —	
	♣ —	
♠ —		♠ —
♥ J 9 3		♥ A 6 4
♦ —		♦ J 9 8 7
♣ J 10 9 6		♣ —
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; width: 100%;"> S </div> </div>	
	♠ 8 7 6 5	
	♥ 8 7 2	
	♦ —	
	♣ —	

If declarer thinks West has a doubleton heart, he should play the king, as it caters to West having Ax or Jx. If declarer thinks West has three hearts, he should hook the ten since there is no reentry for a second heart play.

In practice, declarer misguessed the position and played the king. Even with declarer's misguess, he would have succeeded if East had taken the trick as the defense would have been endplayed. But by refusing the trick, East left dummy on lead and there was no way now to avoid two heart losers.

Note that in the example hand, East was not trying to fool anyone by ducking. He was just using good technique.

Likewise:

Both vulnerable

♠ K J 8 7 2

♥ J 9 3

♦ 9 3

♣ K 10 7

♠ A 5

♥ K Q 10 5

♦ A K Q 8 4

♣ J 2

♠ 10 4 3

♥ A 6 4

♦ J 10 2

♣ Q 9 5 4

W

N

E

S

♠ Q 9 6

♥ 8 7 2

♦ 7 6 5

♣ A 8 6 3

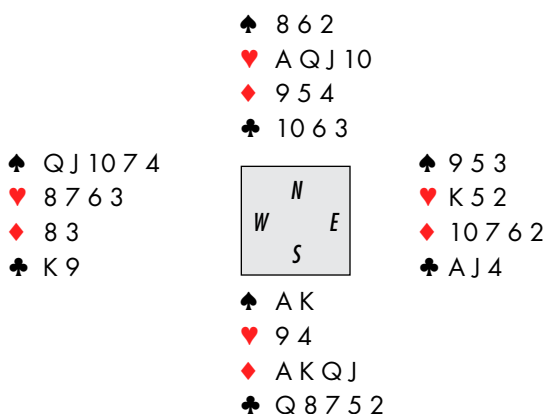
West	North	East	South
		pass	pass
pass	1♦	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠7 to declarer’s queen. If the diamonds break, declarer has nine tricks by establishing a heart trick. Declarer isn’t greedy so he leads to the ♥K rather than chance finessing the ten.

Sound technique now requires East to duck. Declarer can’t come back to his hand except in clubs, and that would establish three club tricks for the defense. If East takes his ♥A, he runs the risk that declarer will find some extra courage and risk finessing the ♥10, thus making an overtrick. Why give declarer an option that works?

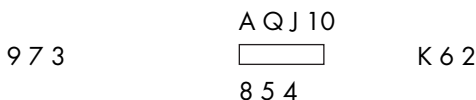
Conversely, if East held ♥AJ3, he should take the ace and clear the spades. Now declarer has the option of finessing in hearts, but it would be a losing option.

There are various reasons why you might duck when declarer takes a finesse.



South plays 3NT with the ♠Q lead. South wins and leads the ♥4 to the queen. If East and West use count signals, West will echo with the seven or eight and East will infer that declarer has exactly two hearts. By ducking the first heart, East will hold declarer to one or two heart tricks according to whether declarer finesses again.

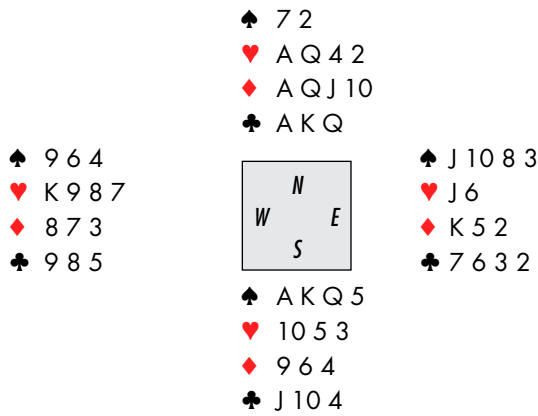
It's possible that East might refuse the trick twice!



If East is sure declarer has exactly three cards in this suit, he can duck the first two finesses and take the third. This will be effective more often than you might expect. Be sure of two things before you try this ploy.

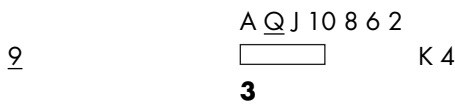
1. You must know declarer has three cards in the suit.
2. You must know declarer has enough entries to repeat the finesse three times. If declarer can't get back to his hand, then his only recourse will be to drop the king.

A third common reason for ducking is that you want declarer to misuse his entries.



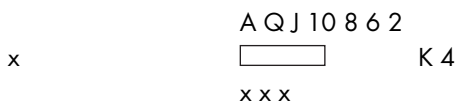
Against 3NT, West leads the ♣9. Declarer wins and enters his hand with a spade in order to finesse in diamonds. If East wins, declarer will use his last entry to take the winning heart finesse. If East ducks the diamond, declarer is likely to use his last entry to repeat the diamond finesse. Maybe he will, maybe he won't. At least he has the option.

An extension of this position is the following:

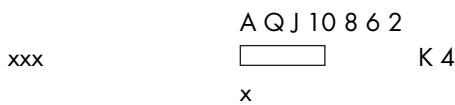


If dummy has no side entry, it would be wise for East to duck this trick. If South has a doubleton, he may come back to his hand in order to repeat the finesse.

Now, it would be foolish of East to duck if West had a singleton and it would be foolish to duck if West had three small.



or



Both of these circumstances would be embarrassing to East if declarer finessed the queen and East ducked. In order to avoid this problem, West must give count when he doesn't have the king so that East will duck when it's correct.

And when West does have the king, he should echo as if he has a doubleton.

	A Q J 10 8 6 <u>2</u>	
K <u>2</u> 3	<input type="text"/>	<u>5</u>
	9 4	

After the nine wins, declarer may be suspicious when he leads the four and West plays the three. Perhaps he will suspect East of ducking with K5.

Once in a while, this will be the setup and you will wish you had never read this book.

	A Q J 10 8 6 <u>2</u>	
<u>2</u>	<input type="text"/>	K <u>4</u>
	9 5 3	

East will think West had either 75 or 73 and East will duck smoothly on that assumption. Alas.

Other common suit combinations where a defender may refuse to win a trick are:

	A K <u>J</u> 10 2	
<u>8</u>	<input type="text"/>	Q 7 6 <u>3</u>
	5	

	A K J 10 <u>2</u>	
<u>4</u>	<input type="text"/>	Q 7 <u>3</u>
	9	

This last one is a bit nerve-wracking. Don't try this if dummy has a side entry. The main reason for ducking is to keep declarer from getting four tricks. If declarer has entries to dummy, it won't help East to duck his queen.

Incidentally, you should be sure when you refuse a trick that you have nothing better to do. For example:

East-West vulnerable

♠ 7 3
 ♥ 7 2
 ♦ A Q J 10 8 6 5
 ♣ K 4

N

W

E

S

♠ K 9 8 2
 ♥ 10 6 3
 ♦ K 9 2
 ♣ 8 5 2

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

Partner leads the ♥8 (fourth best) to your ten and declarer’s jack. Declarer finesses the ♦Q (7, 4, Q, ?). Do you duck?

You should grab it. This is not a good time to be tricky. Partner’s ♥8 tells you declarer has two higher hearts, one of which is the jack. Also, from the auction, you know declarer has three hearts or fewer.

Here are some possible heart combinations:

A K 9 8 4

7 2

Q J 5

10 6 3

Possible. Partner might lead the eight.

A Q 9 8 4

7 2

K J 5

10 6 3

Partner certainly would lead the eight.

A K Q 8 4

7 2

J 9 5

10 6 3

Nonsense. Can’t exist.

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

Not likely. The king would be led from this holding.

If you trust these observations, you can win the first diamond and return a heart. Partner's hearts are ready to run.

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

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

If the defense had been hung up on fooling declarer, he would have cashed out his nine winners.

	K Q 10 <u>2</u>	
<u>5</u>	<input type="text"/>	A J <u>3</u>
	9	

Slightly unusual, but almost sure to work.

	<u>K</u> Q 10 9 2	
<u>5</u>	<input type="text"/>	A J <u>3</u>
	4	

Far more common than the above and almost always defended correctly.

	A Q <u>10</u> 9 8	
<u>6</u>	<input type="text"/>	K J 4 2
	3	

Ducking here can hold declarer to two tricks. You shouldn't do this if declarer has no side entries to dummy. In that case, he is only getting one trick. No need to give him two.

Neither vulnerable

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

N

W

E

S

West	North	East	South
	pass	pass	1NT
pass	2♥ ¹	pass	2♠
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. Transfer to spades.

West leads the ♥10 to your queen and South’s king. South leads the ♠10, covered by West’s jack and dummy’s queen.

If you take this, declarer will later set up the spade suit and the ♥A will be an entry. By ducking, you can hold declarer to two spade tricks. This may or may not defeat declarer, but it will certainly make it more difficult for him.

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

N

W

E

S

♠	10 3
♥	K J 4
♦	A K J 7
♣	A 10 9 3

Declarer can make 3NT easily enough if he guesses everything. But he may not. Actually, if declarer played properly, he would make 3NT without guessing. If South just ducks when West plays the ♠J, he can bring home three spade tricks against any defense.

<u>3</u>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	K J 10 <u>9</u> 6 A Q 4
	2	

In this common position, the correct play usually is to win and go about whatever you were doing. There are exceptions, of course.

You might let declarer win the trick in order to hinder his establishing the suit.

♠ J 8 6 ♥ J 10 5 ♦ 8 7 3 ♣ K J 8 3	♠ A 4 2 ♥ 7 6 3 ♦ K J 10 9 6 ♣ 7 6 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 80px; margin: 10px auto; position: relative;"> <div style="position: absolute; top: 5px; right: 5px;">N</div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: 5px; left: 5px;">S</div> <div style="position: absolute; left: 5px; top: 50px;">W</div> <div style="position: absolute; right: 5px; top: 50px;">E</div> </div> ♠ K Q 9 ♥ A K Q ♦ 5 2 ♣ A Q 9 5 4	♠ 10 7 5 3 ♥ 9 8 4 2 ♦ A Q 4 ♣ 10 2
---	--	--

Declarer plays 3NT with the ♥J lead. His normal play is to finesse the ♦9. If East wins with the queen, declarer will be able to set up the diamonds and will come to at least ten tricks.

If East ducks the diamond, declarer won't have entries to set up and use the suit. He will probably end up with eight tricks.

<u>3</u>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	K J 10 <u>9</u> 6 A Q 4
	2	

The second possible falsecard with this combination is to win with the ace. There are a couple of reasons why you might do this.

1. If declarer thinks this finesse is working, he might try it again when he could have taken a different finesse instead.
2. Declarer, thinking this suit is running, might not hold up in a dangerous suit.

North-South vulnerable

♠ J 9 6
♥ 10 7 4 2
♦ 5
♣ Q J 9 8 5

♠ K 5 2
♥ K 3
♦ K J 10 9 7 4
♣ 10 3

♠ 10 8 7 3
♥ Q J 9
♦ A Q 6
♣ 6 4 2

♠ A Q 4
♥ A 8 6 5
♦ 8 3 2
♣ A K 7

Diagram of the table layout:

	N	
W		E
	S	

West	North	East	South
	2♦ ¹	pass	3NT
all pass			

1. Weak two-bid.

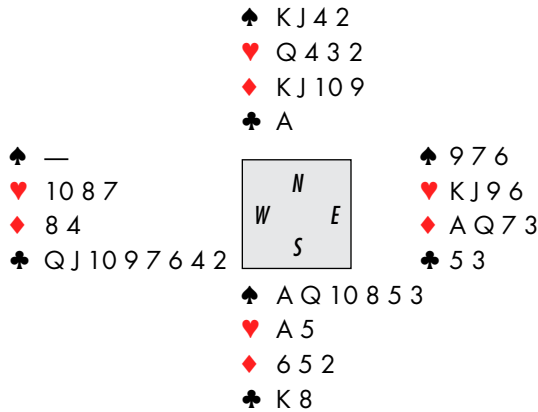
West leads the ♣Q to South's ace. At Trick 2, South leads the ♦8 to the five, four, and...?

If East wins the queen and returns a club, declarer will duck and win the next club. When he loses to the ♦A, the defense will be through because East will have run out of clubs. Ten tricks to South.

The result will be the same if East ducks the first diamond. When declarer leads the second diamond, he will see what has occurred and he will be forced into holding up in clubs. Again, ten tricks.

If East wins the first diamond trick with the *ace*, he may lull declarer into a false sense of security. Declarer may think the diamonds are all good. If so, he may win East's club return immediately, and that will be a disaster. Instead of twelve tricks (three spades, two hearts, five diamonds, and two clubs) declarer will find he has only one diamond trick and hence only eight tricks.

North-South vulnerable



West	North	East	South
		pass	1♠
4♣	5♣	pass	5♥
pass	5♠	all pass	

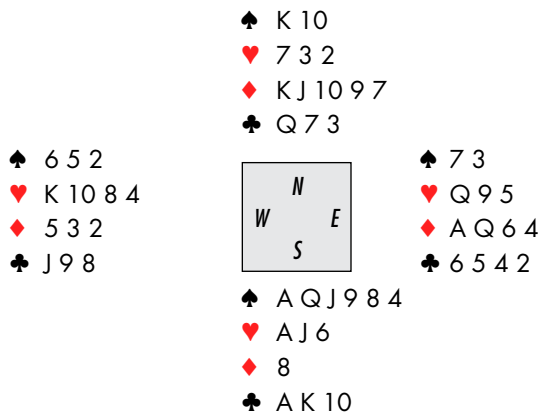
West leads the ♣Q to dummy's ace. South draws three rounds of trumps and finesses the ♦J (2, 8, J, ?).

Well? East knows declarer has six spade tricks, the ♥A, two diamonds (eventually), and two clubs. If East wins the ♦Q and leads a heart, declarer will have no choice but to finesse. But if East wins the ♦A and leads a heart, declarer may rise with the ace, thinking the diamonds will provide discards.

At IMPs, this should not work because declarer can guarantee eleven tricks by playing low on the heart switch. At matchpoints, though, greed does strange things to people and this falsecard should work.

Incidentally, it is not necessary for a defender to have AQx(x) in order to make this falsecard. If the falsecard is going to work, it should be just as effective if you have AQ alone.

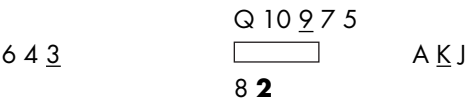
Here is a variation on this suit. Say South is playing in 6♠ on the following layout. A heart lead would defeat 6♠ but West instead leads a trump.



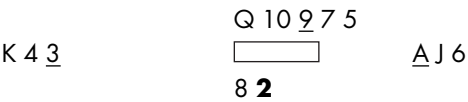
South needs a miracle. Winning the spade lead in his hand, he takes a diamond finesse. If East wins with the queen, South will win the return, whatever it is, and has the time to get to dummy with a spade in order to lead the ♦K. He will take a ruffing finesse against East's ace. A lucky 6♠ will come home.

But what if East wins the first diamond with the ace? Might South think the ♦Q is in the West hand? If so, South might try to ruff out West's ♦Q. If West started with two or three diamonds to the queen, this line would work. This play has come up but not often. Still, it serves to show that there are many bridge situations waiting to be discovered.

Other similar combinations where a falsecard can be effective include the following:



Declarer may think this suit can be established and will not work on another more favorable suit.



Likewise. West better duck smoothly the next time the suit is led.

8 7 <u>6</u>	Q 10 <u>9</u> 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<u>A</u> J 5
	K 4 3	

Declarer may be talked out of a different finesse, thinking this one is working.

5 4	A <u>Q</u> J 9 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	K 10 <u>8</u> 7
	6 3	

Declarer may not have the entries to set up this suit.

7 5 <u>4</u> (3)	A Q 10 <u>9</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<u>K</u> J 3 (or K J)
	8 6 2	

Another example of giving declarer a false sense of security. If he thinks he has three tricks in this suit, he may be talked out of a productive alternative.

6 4	A J <u>9</u> 8 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	K <u>Q</u> 10 5
	7 3	

Give declarer hope that the suit is coming home.

8 6 <u>4</u>	K J <u>10</u> 3 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	Q 9 <u>7</u>
	A 5 2	

If declarer now plays the ace and hooks the jack, you may hold declarer to two tricks if dummy has no entry.

A 5 <u>2</u>	K J <u>10</u> 6 3 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	Q 9 <u>8</u>
	7 4	

This may cause declarer to use an entry to finesse the suit when his entry could have been better used elsewhere. Also, it's possible declarer won't be able to set up the suit at all if dummy has insufficient entries (assuming declarer misguesses this suit when he leads the seven to dummy).

A small and relatively unknown family of falsecards occurs when declarer has played a suit correctly. Even though declarer is going to get the maximum number of tricks, you may be able to make him work a little harder to get them.

	K J 9 2	
Q 8 5	<div></div>	10 6 3
	A 7 4	

Declarer plays the ace and leads to the jack. If East drops the ten, declarer may use an entry back to his hand to take another finesse.

	Q 10 7 2	
K 8 5	<div></div>	J 9 4
	A 6 3	

Likewise. Declarer plays the ace and leads to the queen. This is declarer’s best guess, but there is no reason for the defense to go quietly. If East drops the jack on the queen, declarer may think the suit looks like this.

	Q 10 7 2	
K 9 8 5	<div></div>	J 4
	A 6 3	

If so, declarer will either look elsewhere or will squander an entry in order to lead toward dummy’s ten.

	<u>K</u> J 8 7 4 2	
A <u>10</u>	<div></div>	<u>Q</u> 9
	6 5 3	

Still another example of misrepresenting the actual lie of the cards. Declarer can lead a low card from dummy now, but it’s possible he will try something else.

	A K 10 3	
Q 9 5	<div></div>	J 8 4
	7 6 2	

If South plays the ace and king, it may slow South down if East drops the jack. West could have Q985 and South may not wish to risk leading low from dummy.

K <u>3</u>	A <u>Q</u> 10 8 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div> 7 6 5 4	<u>J</u> 9
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What declarer would trust this suit to divide if he could somehow repeat the finesse?

You could try this variation:

Both vulnerable

<p>♠ 10 9 7 6 3</p> <p>♥ 10 6 4</p> <p>♦ 9 7 2</p> <p>♣ 7 3</p>	<p>♠ J 2</p> <p>♥ J 7 3</p> <p>♦ A K</p> <p>♣ A Q 10 8 6 5</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> </div> <p>♠ Q 8 5</p> <p>♥ A K</p> <p>♦ J 10 8 5 3</p> <p>♣ 9 4 2</p>	<p>♠ A K 4</p> <p>♥ Q 9 8 5 2</p> <p>♦ Q 6 4</p> <p>♣ K J</p>
---	---	---

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

West led the ♥4 to South's king (4, 3, 8, K). South then finessed the ♣Q, which won! East's jack looked like a singleton so declarer came back to his ♥A and finessed clubs again. Down two.

9 5 2	A K Q 3 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div> 10 6 4	J 8 7
-------	---	-------

When dummy plays the ace and king, East throws the jack. Declarer, fearing 9852 with West, may come to his ten spot. This could create entry problems.

A classic and very effective falsecard, intended to talk declarer out of the winning line, is the following:

	Q 7 6 4 2	
K J 10	<div></div>	9 8 5
	A 3	

or

	Q 7 6 4 2	
K J 9	<div></div>	10 8 5
	A 3	

In either of these combinations, declarer leads the ace, intending to lead to the queen. If West drops the king on the ace, declarer may change his plan fearing J10985 with East.

Not exactly the same, but similar in layout is this position:

A 5 3
<div></div>
Q 9 7 6 2

You lead the ace and continue toward the queen. If RHO plays the jack or ten on the second round, it is possible to play low from your hand, hoping for Kx with West.

This opens up the possibility that East, with KJx or K10x, should duck the second trick. For example, in these positions:

	A 5 3	
10 4	<div></div>	K J 8
	Q 9 7 6 2	

	A 5 3	
J 4	<div></div>	K 10 8
	Q 9 7 6 2	

This play works more frequently than one might imagine. And, since this is a common layout, you will have many opportunities to use it.

Also similar is the following:

	Q 10 7 2	
K 8 6	<div></div>	J 9 3
	A 5 4	

On declarer's ace, West drops the king. He may do this for a couple of reasons. One reason might be to discourage declarer from pursuing the suit. Another reason might be that West wants to get his partner in. If East truly has Jxx, the jack will be an entry if declarer tries to set up the suit.

The same reasoning could apply here too:

	Q 10 7 3 2	
K 6	<div></div>	J 9 8
	A 5 4	

The last and extreme example in this format is this remarkable case:

	Q 10 8 4 2	
K J 6	<div></div>	7 3
	A 9 5	

West desperately wants his partner to get in and at the same time doesn't want declarer to pursue this suit. By dropping the king under the ace, West may convince declarer that East has the guarded jack. Here is a situation where West might do this.

Both vulnerable

	♠ 8 2	
	♥ A Q 10 3	
	♦ A J	
	♣ Q 10 8 4 2	
♠ A J 9 6 4	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	♠ 10 7 3
♥ J 8 2		♥ K 5 4
♦ 7 4		♦ 8 6 5 3 2
♣ K J 6		♣ 7 3
	♠ K Q 5	
	♥ 9 7 6	
	♦ K Q 10 9	
	♣ A 9 5	

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♦
1♠	dbl ¹	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

1. Negative.

West leads the ♠6 to the ten and queen. When declarer plays the ♣A, West drops the king. This gives declarer an eighth trick, but since it looks like East has the

♣J, declarer can't play clubs for his ninth trick. Instead, declarer tries the heart finesse. One down.

FAKING STRENGTH IN ORDER TO GAIN TRICKS

There are a few falsecards where your intention is to gain a trick rather than to hinder declarer's progress.

	<u>Q</u> 8 2	
<u>5</u>	<div></div>	K J 4 <u>3</u>
	A 10 9 7 6	

If declarer plays the ten to the queen, and East ducks, declarer may think the suit is splitting. He may play the ace next and thus lose two tricks.

	Q 10 <u>3</u>	
5 4 <u>2</u>	<div></div>	<u>K</u> J 6
	A 9 8 7	

This is quite likely to persuade declarer to take a second finesse against West's jack.

In very similar fashion:

	Q 10 4 3	
5	<div></div>	K J 6 2
	A 9 8 7	

If declarer ruffs something with the ten, East may gain a trick by overruffing with the king rather than the jack. South may play West for the jack.

North-South vulnerable

♠ J 9 8

♥ K J 4

♦ K Q J 9 7

♣ K Q

♠ 3

N

W E

S

♠ Q

♠ A 6 2

♥ A 9 3

♦ A 6 3 2

♣ A 10 7

West	North	East	South
pass	6NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♠3 to the eight, queen, ace. Where should you look for your twelfth trick? Should you hook the ♥J or the ♠9?

If you think the ♠9, here is the complete hand:

♠ 5 4 3

♥ Q 8 7 5

♦ 10 8 5

♣ J 6 3

♠ J 9 8

♥ K J 4

♦ K Q J 9 7

♣ K Q

♠ K Q 10 7

♥ 10 6 2

♦ 4

♣ 9 8 5 4 2

N

W E

S

♠ A 6 2

♥ A 9 3

♦ A 6 3 2

♣ A 10 7

I would finesse the spade too.

The same play can be made with a completely different purpose.

Both vulnerable

	♠ K 7 2	
	♥ A K J 10 3	
	♦ Q 6	
	♣ J 9 8	
♠ J 6		♠ Q 9 8 5 4
♥ 9 8 5 4		♥ 7 6
♦ A 5 4 3 2		♦ 8
♣ 5 2		♣ K Q 10 7 3
	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ A 10 3	
	♥ Q 2	
	♦ K J 10 9 7	
	♣ A 6 4	

West	North	East	South
			1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West had an awkward choice of leads. Deciding that East could have overcalled 1♠ with a decent suit, West led the ♣5. When East played the queen, declarer was quick to take the trick. Now when West won his ♦A, another club set the contract.

Had East played the ♣10 at Trick 1, declarer might have held up. After East's actual play of the queen, it would have been very dangerous for declarer to hold up. This could have been the layout of the club suit:

	J 9 8	
K 10 7 5 3	<div></div>	Q 2
	A 6 4	

Holding up in this situation would be a disaster.

Here is one last look at this falsecarding situation by East. There is an extension of it that should appeal to the larcenous side of all of us.

	♠ J 9 8	
	♥ K J 4	
	♦ K Q J 9 7	
	♣ K Q	
♠ K 5 4		♠ Q 10 7 3
♥ Q 8 7 5		♥ 10 6 2
♦ 10 8 5		♦ 4
♣ J 6 3		♣ 9 8 5 4 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; width: 100%;"> S </div> </div>	
	♠ A 6 2	
	♥ A 9 3	
	♦ A 6 3 2	
	♣ A 10 7	

South is in the same 6NT that I showed you a few hands ago. West, for whatever reason, led the ♠4. Dummy plays the eight and it is East's play. If East plays the ten, South wins and takes twelve tricks by taking the heart finesse at some time.

If East plays the queen, South may decide to put his faith in the spade suit. He is right to do so but if West plays low when South leads toward the jack, he will probably finesse the nine and East will produce the ten. South will be down in a cold slam.

THIRD HAND PLAY AFTER PARTNER'S OPENING LEAD

When your partner makes his opening lead, your play is generally straightforward. On a few occasions, though, you will be called on to do something unusual. Here are some examples:

Neither vulnerable

♠	A J 2		♠	K 9 3
♥	8 5		♥	A Q 4
♦	K J 9 7 4		♦	10 5 2
♣	Q 7 3		♣	A 9 6 5
<div><div></div><div><div>N</div><div>W</div><div>E</div><div>S</div></div></div>				

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT ¹

1. 15-17 HCP.

Partner leads the ♥6. Standard play here is to win the ace and return the queen. The problem with this is that declarer may hold up one round. Then when you get in, you will have no heart to return.

The solution is to play the ♥Q at Trick 1. Declarer will almost surely have to take this trick since he will be afraid your partner has the ♥A. Now, when you get in, you will be able to continue hearts by leading the ace and four.

Anytime you try a falsecard, you have to be aware of possible bad consequences. Are there any here? In this case, there are none. If partner has the ♥K, it doesn't matter whether you play A-Q or Q-A. Notice, incidentally, that on this hand, your partner has a maximum of 1 point if the opponents' 1NT is 15-17 as advertised. If partner's 1 point is the ♥J, you should get the heart suit going by playing the queen first. If partner's hearts are headed by the ten, so that declarer has KJx, then you weren't going to run them in any event.

Does this mean that with AQx of partner's lead you should always play the queen? Absolutely not. The key to this play is whether you think you or your partner will get in next. In the example hand, the auction and the dummy told you the opponents had at least 26 HCP. From your hand, you knew your partner wasn't getting in.

Compare this next hand with the hand above:

Neither vulnerable

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

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT ¹

1. 15-17 HCP.

West leads the ♥6 just like on the previous hand.

Your correct play here is the ace then the queen. If the heart suit is running, it doesn't matter how you play them, but if declarer has the king, you have to play the ace and then the queen so that partner will know what's happening when he gets in.

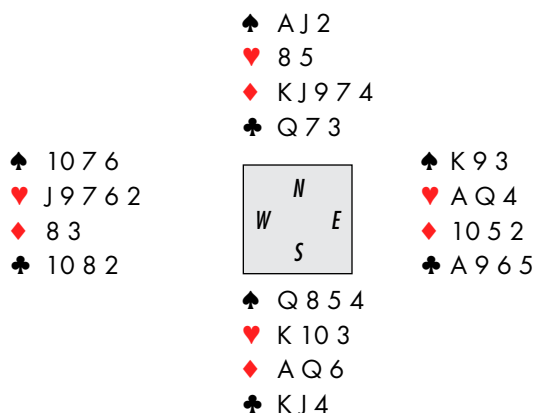
From partner's point of view, this might be the heart suit if you play the queen:

J 9 7 6 2	<div>8 <u>5</u> <div></div></div>	<u>Q</u> 4 3
	A <u>K</u> 10	

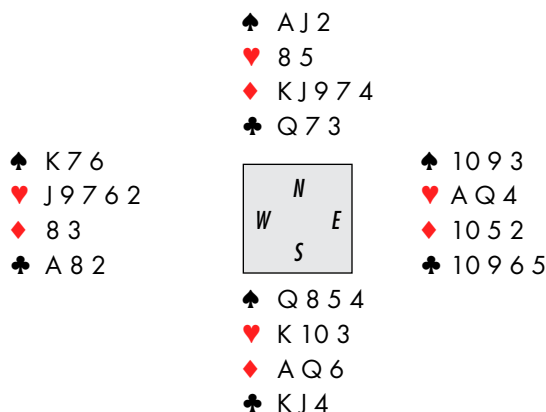
When partner gets in, he won't be sure a heart is safe. Declarer could have the AK10, which is consistent with what he has seen. If this is so, it would be silly to continue hearts.

Here are the two complete layouts:

Hand 1:



Hand 2:



Note the different considerations again. On Hand 1, East has the defensive entries, so he plays the queen in an effort to keep communications intact. On Hand 2, East has no entries, so he plays the ace and queen to clear up the position for West. If West has no fast entry, the 3NT contract isn't going down.

The AQx combination discussed above is a common one and is very useful when handled correctly. On very rare occasions, the same thing can be done with the AJx combination.

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

If the auction were as before, 1NT - pass - 3NT, then East should play the ♥J at Trick 1. He knows from the bidding that West has a maximum of 2 points so South is marked with the king. Declarer would have to take the trick since AQxx in West's hand is a distinct danger.

Usually, the only time you would try the jack from AJx is when you know partner can't have the king, which is the case in the above hand.

However, you might play the jack if you knew it would defeat the contract for sure.

There will be days where you have to decide how aggressive you need to be with the defense.

North-South vulnerable

♠ A J 2

♥ 9 3

♦ A J 10 9 5

♣ Q 10 4

N

W E

S

♠ 9 8 5

♥ A J 4

♦ K 6 4 2

♣ A 6 3

West	North	East	South
			1♣
pass	1♦	pass	2♣
pass	2♠	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

Partner leads the ♥6. South didn't bid hearts so you are pretty sure West has five of them. From your point of view, it doesn't matter if partner has K10xxx or Q10xxx. If you play the jack, declarer will win and play on clubs or diamonds. You will win something and play ace and another heart. If declarer has KQx, it's just unlucky.

At matchpoints, you have a difficult decision since the contract could be perfectly normal.

♠ A J 2

♥ 9 3

♦ A J 10 9 5

♣ Q 10 4

N

W E

S

♠ 10 7 6 4 3

♥ K 10 8 6 2

♦ 8 7

♣ 5

♠ K Q

♥ Q 7 5

♦ Q 3

♣ K J 9 8 7 2

♠ 9 8 5

♥ A J 4

♦ K 6 4 2

♣ A 6 3

If this is the layout, playing the ♥J will cost the trick. You will still beat 3NT by one trick, but the rest of the field will be beating it three tricks since your partner would win five heart tricks and then switch to a diamond. At rubber bridge, or at IMPs, the ♥J would be correct.

Can you tell what you should do at matchpoints?

An extension of this suit combination looks like this:

♠ J 9 8
♥ 10 7 4
♦ A 8 4
♣ 9 6 5 4

♠ 7 3
♥ K 8 5
♦ K Q J 10
♣ Q 10 3 2

♠ A Q 6 4 2
♥ Q J 6 2
♦ 9 7
♣ 8 7

♠ K 10 5
♥ A 9 3
♦ 6 5 3 2
♣ A K J

Diagram of a square table with four seats labeled N, S, E, and W.

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

If East plays the ace and returns the suit, South will hold up for one round and will eventually take ten tricks. When West gets in with the $\spadesuit A$ he won't be able to reach East's hand to cash his spade winners.

There is a convention called the Smith Echo that can help in some situations. In the above layout, at Trick 1, East plays the queen, not the ace. South wins the ♠K and leads a diamond. West likely will duck it. East will play the nine. This is not intended as a count card. It is a Smith Echo card saying that he likes spades. When West wins his ♦A, he knows that East is interested in spades.

Winning defense may require West to win the first diamond. That could happen if South had a hidden five-card suit and only needed one diamond trick to make 3NT. A defender's life is not always easy.

THIRD HAND FALSECARDS TO HELP PARTNER

There are times when third hand must falsecard in order to help the opening leader. This sounds like a contradiction, to be sure. Nonetheless.

Versus a notrump contract:

	8 6 <u>4</u>	
3	<div></div>	Q J 10

Looks like a good lead from partner. Is there anything to this other than playing the ten spot? That's the normal play, and believe me, normal play is right far, far more often than not. In this one specific instance, i.e., you have QJ10, it is right to play the jack. The reason can best be seen from your partner's point of view.

	8 6 <u>4</u>	
A 9 7 3	<div></div>	<u>10</u>
	<u>K</u>	

Your partner will worry that declarer has KQx. You can see you have QJ10, but partner can't.

If you play the jack instead, this is what partner will see.

	8 6 <u>4</u>	
A 9 7 3	<div></div>	<u>J</u>
	<u>K</u>	

In this version, your partner will think one of two things:

1. You have the queen and it's right to lead low.
2. Declarer has the queen. But, because of your falsecard, partner will also think declarer has the ten. Therefore, from partner's point of view, it won't cost to lead low again since if declarer has KQ10, he has a sure stopper anyway.

Another falsecard intended to help partner is where you appear to be weak in a particular suit. The idea is to get partner to switch to something more rewarding.

Both vulnerable

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

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

West leads the ♠10 to dummy's ace. What should East play?

East has a choice of plays. He might play the king as a suit preference, or he might play the three, which is not at all suit preference. The three would be interpreted as discouraging, and asking West to shift to something else.

Both the king and the three would be thinking plays. What East should not do is play an encouraging nine. East does not want spades led. He wants diamonds.

By changing a card or two, we get this hand:

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

	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
♠ A 10		
♥ K 9 8 7 6 4		
♦ 10 4		
♣ K 9 2		

West leads the ♠7 and East is in the same general position as before, i.e., he wants a diamond switch. The way East gets this across is by playing the ♠K. This creates the impression that declarer has the AQ and makes clear to West that there are no immediate spade tricks to be cashed. With luck, a thinking West will switch to the obvious suit, diamonds.

Next is a falsecard that looks like the above, but which is made for a totally different purpose.

East-West vulnerable

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

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

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♥2. How should the defense proceed? What will probably happen is that declarer will hold up until the third round in hope that the hand with four hearts does not have an entry. As you can see, that doesn't work on this hand.

It is possible for declarer to make his contract if he guesses to take the first or second heart and knocks out the ♦A. With the hearts blocked, the defense will be shut out of their thirteenth heart. How can declarer guess that the hearts are blocked? He can guess this is so if East tells him the hearts are blocked. If East plays the jack at Trick 1 and continues with the king, declarer may visualize the actual holding.

The way East avoids this is to do one of several things. At Trick 1, he plays the jack as before, but at Trick 2, returns the queen, trying to look like a man with the QJx, rather than the actual KQJ. Alternatively, East can play the queen and then the king, or he can play the king and then the jack. East can tell declarer has the ♥A from the auction and he knows declarer will probably hold up twice. Therefore, the one thing East must not do is give the show away by playing the jack and then the king.

If it turns out your partner has the ace, he may be momentarily surprised at what you are doing, but in the end, it will all be okay.

Sometimes your play in third hand is solely directed at stealing. Larceny, pure and simple.

Both vulnerable

♠ J 9 5 3

♥ 4

♦ J 9 8 5 3

♣ A 9 3

♠ 8 6 2

♥ A Q 9 6

♦ K 7 6 2

♣ Q 4

N
E

W
S

♠ Q 10 4

♥ K J 10 7 3

♦ A 4

♣ K J 8

♠ A K 7

♥ 8 5 2

♦ Q 10

♣ 10 7 6 5 2

West	North	East	South
			1♥
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠3, which East wins. This is a fairly standard situation that comes up frequently. East can tell the spades are 4-3-3-3 from West's lead. If

West has the queen, the defense can take the first three tricks. But if West has the jack, the defense has only two tricks. Unless you can con a trick from an unsuspecting South. If East wins the opening lead with the ace and returns the seven, South may misguess and finesse the ten.

You may worry that this will cost a trick. It shouldn't. If declarer has QJx, it leaves your partner with 109xx and he might have led the ten. If declarer has Q9x or worse, that leaves your partner with J10xx and your partner might have led the jack from this holding. With the spots being as they are, you can underlead the king rather fearlessly. Either your partner has the queen or declarer has the Q10x, which he will likely misguess.

Gotta watch those spots. If you lose one and it turns out partner has led from jack-fifth... trouble!

MIDGAME LEADS

Because the opening leader is often in the dark about the opponents' strength and distribution, there are constraints on what he can do. You would never, for instance, lead the king from KJ3, nor would you lead low from AK3, and you certainly wouldn't lead the ten of trumps from 10864. Once the dummy appears, though, all bets are off and as certain facts become available, almost anything may be right.

There are times when you have the option of opening up a suit and there are times when declarer has endplayed you and you *have* to open up a suit. According to the urgency, you may have to try some pretty drastic maneuvers.

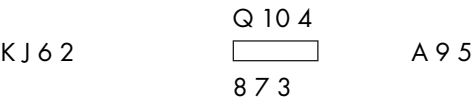
Q 10 4
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
8 7 3

This position looks rather dull. Declarer, sooner or later, will lead to the ten, hoping to find LHO with AJx or KJx. He could play LHO for AKx, but this is only half as likely as either AJx or KJx. If declarer has some compelling information, though, it could be correct to lead to the queen.

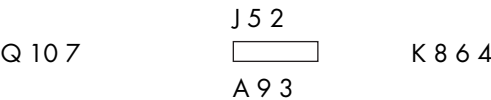
	Q 10 4	
A K 9 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	J 6 2
	8 7 3	

If declarer plays the suit himself, he will usually misguess unless the defense gives the show away. West himself may lead the suit (Trick 2 or later) before declarer does, and if he leads the five, he rates to steal a trick almost all of the time.

Once a declarer has been burned a couple of times with this swindle, he will be ripe for a defender who leads the six from KJ62 here:



On a theoretical level, West might even lead the king from AKx before leading low. In fact, against an expert declarer, this could work.



East in this diagram, if he chooses to lead the suit at all, should lead the king. If declarer believes this lead to be from KQ10, he will duck. This will lead to two or three tricks for the defense. There are two reasons East may do this. He may have been the victim of an endplay, in which case he is trying to get two tricks. Or he may be defending a notrump contract and has concluded that he needs three tricks from this suit.

East-West vulnerable

♠ 8 6

♥ Q 10 2

♦ 10 9 8 3

♣ J 9 7 3

♠ Q J 10 9 4

♥ J 9 3

♦ A J 4

♣ K 5

♠ A K 5 3

♥ K 7 6 5

♦ Q 6 5

♣ 10 4

N

W

E

S

♠ 7 2

♥ A 8 4

♦ K 7 2

♣ A Q 8 6 2

West	North	East	South
			1♣
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♦10 to the jack, queen and king. South leads a spade, won by East’s king. East can appreciate two things:

Chapter 2: Defenders’ Falsecards During Play [69]

1. Even if diamonds can be established, West won't get in soon enough to use them.
2. West is unlikely to have more than a queen.

Appreciating that the defense will have to set up heart tricks, East switches to the ♥K. Declarer can make his contract by taking either the ♥K or the second heart, but the odds are heavily in favor of the falsecard working.

If the defense is desperate, it can try this variation:

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

West can attack this suit by leading the king. A gullible declarer might decide West has the queen.

This one has excellent chances of being successful:

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

At some time after trick one, West might lead the two. It is likely that South will play the nine from dummy, which will be good for the defenders.

If West has been endplayed, or if time is short, the jack is the right card here:

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

Declarer will let this come to his king. Eventually, West will underlead the ace again.

Leading the jack is not always done as a falsecard. In this next combination, the jack must be led to keep declarer from getting a trick:

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

Here's another variation on this combination:

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

When the jack is led, declarer has to guess if West has AJx, Jxx or J10x. All of these holdings are possible. Bridge is not always an easy game. Positions like these bring a certain spark to otherwise dull hands. As my guru once told me... Go Guess!

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

This lead, unlike the others in this section, was looked at in the discussion on opening leads. The idea was to induce declarer to duck – first the queen, and then the five to East’s jack. There is another sound reason for this play other than deception. Say the suit is slightly different, and say that West has been endplayed so that he must open up this suit.

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

If West leads the ace or the five, declarer will get two tricks. If West leads the queen, the king will win, but declarer will still have two losers.

IF TRULY ENDPLAYED

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

There are some plays you would prefer not to have to make. At times they become unavoidable and you have to make do. In this setting, if either defender is obliged to lead this suit, he should lead his honor. If you lead low in this position, declarer will be forced to play for split honors.

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

If East is forced to lead this suit, he should lead the jack and hope declarer misguesses. This position comes up more often than you might think, certainly more often than you like. So it’s an important position to recognize.

When you think you have been endplayed, you should make sure it has really happened and that you haven't just been pseudo-endplayed.

North-South vulnerable

♠ 9 5
 ♥ A K Q 10 6
 ♦ K J 8
 ♣ J 5 2

♠ K J 4 3
 ♥ J 5 4
 ♦ Q 2
 ♣ K 10 8 7

♠ 2
 ♥ 9 8 7 2
 ♦ 10 7 6 5 3
 ♣ Q 4 3

N
 W E
 S

♠ A Q 10 8 7 6
 ♥ 3
 ♦ A 9 4
 ♣ A 9 6

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	3♠ ¹	pass	4♠
pass	pass	5♥	5♠
all pass			

1. Limit raise promising four or more trumps.

East’s unorthodox approach has pushed South to 5♠. Against this contract, West leads the two top hearts and South ruffs the second round. South plays the ♠AK, drawing trumps, and ruffs dummy’s last heart. Ace and a diamond puts West on play.

If West thinks he is truly endplayed, he should lead the ♣J, and this is what would happen frequently. But West should see that this endplay is not complete. West knows declarer has six spades, one heart and at least two diamonds. If East-West were giving count signals, declarer’s hand would have no mysteries at all. But even without these signals, the defense should succeed.

From West’s point of view, if declarer has four clubs so that a diamond gives a sluff and a ruff, it won’t hurt the defense since declarer will still have a club loser. West must be careful to lead a diamond and not a heart in this position, since if declarer did have only three clubs plus three diamonds, the heart lead would give a valuable ruff and sluff that the diamond lead would not.

[72] *Falsecards*

CHAPTER 3 FALSECARDS IN AND AROUND THE TRUMP SUIT

THREATENING A RUFF THAT ISN'T THERE

Often, when defending against a suit contract, the only way to defeat a contract is by getting a ruff. Declarer is well aware of that and his line of play must take defensive ruffs into consideration. Naturally, one of the techniques available to declarer is drawing trumps.

Sometimes when the defense threatens to get a ruff, declarer will respond by drawing trumps with excess urgency. For example:

North-South vulnerable

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

♠ K 8 6 2
 ♥ 4 3
 ♦ K Q 5
 ♣ A Q J 3

♠ Q 10 4
 ♥ A K Q 8 2
 ♦ 9 4
 ♣ K 6 2

♠ A J 9 7
 ♥ J 5
 ♦ A J 8
 ♣ 10 8 7 4

N
 W E
 S

West	North	East	South
	1 ♣	1 ♥	1 ♠
pass	2 ♠	pass	3 ♣
pass	4 ♠	all pass	

West leads the ♥10 and East takes the queen and ace. If West has the ♠J, the contract will be set routinely, but if declarer's spades are headed by the AJ, then there is little or no chance, unless declarer can be talked out of the trump finesse.

East can give declarer something to worry about by returning the ♣6. He knows from the auction that his club trick will still be available. If declarer can be talked out of the trump finesse for fear of a club ruff, the defense may get a club and a spade trick.

A little more likely to come up is a hand like the following:

Neither vulnerable

♠ A 10 7 5 2
♥ 7 3
♦ Q 2
♣ K Q 5 3

♠ 9
♥ 10 8 6 5 2
♦ 9 7 6 4
♣ 8 7 6

♠ Q J 6 3
♥ Q 9 4
♦ A K 8 3
♣ 10 4

N

W

E

S

♠ K 8 4
♥ A K J
♦ J 10 5
♣ A J 9 2

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	2♥ ¹	pass	2♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

1. Transfer.

West leads the ♦K and ♦A. In order to discourage declarer from taking a safety play in spades, West shifts to the ♣4. This threatens a club ruff, so South may play the ♠K and ♠A to shut off a ruff. There will be no ruff, but the contract will still fail.

It's possible to use this falsecard at Trick 1 as well:

Both vulnerable

	♠ 6 2	
	♥ A J 10 9 7	
	♦ Q 3	
	♣ A K J 4	
♠ 5	<div>W<div>N<div>E</div>S</div></div>	♠ Q 10 8 3
♥ 8 6 4 2		♥ 5 3
♦ 10 8 7 5		♦ K 9 6 4 2
♣ 10 9 7 5		♣ Q 2
	♠ A K J 9 7 4	
	♥ K Q	
	♦ A J	
	♣ 8 6 3	

West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	2♥	pass	3♠
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	4NT ¹	pass	5♣ ²
pass	5♦ ³	pass	5♠ ⁴
pass	6♠	all pass	

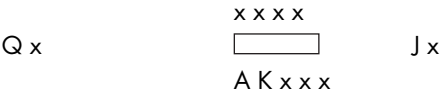
- 1. Roman keycard.
- 2. 0/3 Keycards.
- 3. Queen-ask.
- 4. No queen.

West leads the ♣10 and East drops the queen. I'll bet declarer doesn't take the spade finesse.

CAMOUFLAGING WHETHER A DEFENDER CAN RUFF — FAKING AN UPPERCUT

The falsecard has many forms. You may wish to pretend your side can ruff or you may pretend your side can't ruff.

One treasured weapon for the defense is the uppercut. It works in two basic ways.

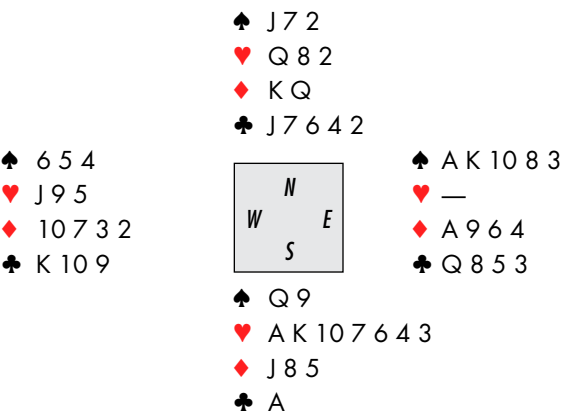


This is the trump suit and it appears declarer has no losers. If the defense can lead a side suit that East can ruff with the jack, declarer will lose a trick if he overruffs and, of course, loses the immediate trick if he doesn't.

The second way is if East leads a suit in which both South and West are void. Using the same diagram, if South ruffs high, the defense gets a later trump trick.

Sometimes the defense can persuade declarer a ruff is coming when in fact it isn't. Declarer may ruff high and then find out it was unnecessary and expensive.

East-West vulnerable



West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♥
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠6. East takes the ♠A, ♠K, and ♦A and leads another spade. If West plays his spade with no evident problem, i.e. in tempo, declarer may fear a ruff and will ruff high himself. The ♥J95 will become the setting trick.

Note that this falsecard depends on West's choice of leads. If he leads the six, South may be talked into ruffing high. If West has led the four, South is not likely to go wrong. I'm not suggesting you lead the top of three cards, just noting that it can benefit in unexpected ways. It can also be bad if your partner

East-West vulnerable

1. Limit raise promising four or more trumps.

Chapter 3: Falsecards In and Around the Trump Suit [77]

East-West vulnerable

♠ 8 3

♥ Q J 10 2

♦ K Q J

♣ A K J 7

♠ A K Q J 10 9

♥ K

♦ A 5 2

♣ 9 5 2

W N E

S

♠ 7 2

♥ 6 5 4

♦ 10 9 7 6 4 3

♣ 4 3

♠ 6 5 4

♥ A 9 8 7 3

♦ 8

♣ Q 10 8 6

West	North	East	South
	1NT	pass	2♥
2♠	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠K and East plays the seven. West can tell it's a singleton or doubleton, but does not continue spades because he knows East can't overruff dummy. West first switches to the ♣9. Declarer has no clear reason not to finesse the heart and does so. West now can take the setting tricks.

Had West played three rounds of spades, the heart position would have become known and declarer would have tried to drop the king. In this case, successfully.

The following hand is a more elegant example of hiding partner's exact trump holding:

Both vulnerable

♠ K Q J 10 9 6

♥ 8 4 2

♦ 9 3

♣ Q J

♠ 7

♥ 5

♦ K Q J 8 7 6 5 2

♣ 6 4 2

W N E

S

♠ A 5 4 3 2

♥ Q J 3

♦ A 10 4

♣ 7 5

♠ 8

♥ A K 10 9 7 6

♦ —

♣ A K 10 9 8 3

West	North	East	South
			1♥
4♦	4♠	5♦	6♣
pass	6♥	all pass	

Note East's final pass. An excellent decision. Double might gain 50 points but it risks telling declarer how to play the hand.

West correctly guessed there were no diamond tricks and led his stiff spade. When East won, he was able to reconstruct the hand completely. Since West had led a stiff spade, he had to have at least one trump, so declarer has a maximum of six hearts. West's 4♦ bid at this vulnerability ought to show eight diamonds, so declarer is void. Declarer, therefore, must have six hearts and six clubs, both suits headed by the ace-king.

If East returns a spade, declarer will ruff with some spot card and when West can't overruff, declarer will pick up the trump suit by finessing against the ♥QJ. Better is for East to try to cash the ♦A. This play won't look too suspicious and declarer will have less reason to play the hearts correctly. It's true that if West has the singleton ♥9, a spade return will set 6♥ via an uppercut. I think, though, that weighing the possibilities should lead to the falsecard play of the ♦A.

Another strategy is to make a play that seems to suggest your partner is not ruffing, when he really is.

Both vulnerable

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

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	3♦
pass	4♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♦	pass	6♥
all pass			

West leads his stiff spade. East wins with the ace(!) and returns a spade. Declarer may pitch a diamond rather than ruff high. Down one. If East had won the

queen and returned a small spade, declarer might have smelled a rat and ruffed high.

There's one falsecard I've been waiting for, for years. It requires a specific card combination, which probably explains its rarity. This is the trump suit. West has cashed an ace and is considering what to lead next:

	A J 9 2	
10 8 6 4	<div></div>	Q
	K 7 5 3	

If West decides he should lead a trump (Trick 2 or later), he should lead the ten. I doubt any South would have the awareness not to play the jack. This is the situation I mentioned obliquely on [page 68](#).

TO OVERRUFF OR NOT

A common defensive decision is whether to overruff or to discard.

	9 3	
Q 7 6	<div></div>	5 2
	A K J 10 8 4	

If declarer ruffs something with the jack, West might choose not to overruff for deceptive reasons. If declarer thinks the trump finesse is working, he might use a crucial entry to take the trump finesse rather than another finesse that would have worked.

There is very little danger to West if he makes this play when holding Qx or even a stiff queen of trumps. It takes courage not to overruff when holding Qx of trumps, but declarer is not likely to guess the situation. Would you?

Another, more significant reason for not overruffing is not that you are fooling declarer, but that you are gaining a trick via an uppercut. Sometimes the trick you gain is immediately visible:

	7 6 4 2	
A J	<div></div>	5
	K Q 10 9 8 3	

Declarer usually loses only one trick in this setting. But, if declarer is forced to ruff with the king or queen, West gains a trick by not overruffing.

Likewise,

	8 6 2	
K 10 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	7 4
	A Q J 9 3	

West should not overruff if declarer ruffs with the queen or jack.

	8 6 2	
K 9 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	10 7
	A Q J 5 3	

Here, if declarer ruffs with the queen, West should not overruff. East has the ten, which means West's nine becomes a winner if he waits.

Some trump promotions aren't so obvious:

East-West vulnerable

	♠ 7 5 3	
	♥ J 9 6	
	♦ K J 8 3	
	♣ A J 4	
♠ K 8 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; text-align: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> S </div> </div>	♠ 9 6
♥ 8 4		♥ A K Q 10 5 2
♦ 10 9 7 6 2		♦ A 5
♣ 7 6 2		♣ 9 8 3
	♠ A Q J 10 2	
	♥ 7 3	
	♦ Q 4	
	♣ K Q 10 5	

West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	1NT	2♥	pass
pass	2♠	3♥	3♠
all pass			

West leads hearts and East plays three rounds. Declarer ruffs with the queen and West, with no reason to overruff, discards a club. Declarer enters dummy with a club and finesses the ♠J. West wins this one, puts East in with a diamond, and now the fourth round of hearts produces the setting trick from the ♠8.

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

If, at an early stage, declarer ruffs with the jack and West overruffs, declarer will lose one additional trump trick. If West refuses to overruff, declarer may later finesse the ten into West's queen. Then, with luck, South will next finesse the eight, losing to the nine. Ergo, three trump losers.

There are many positions where overruffing is wrong both from a technical and a deceptive point of view.

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

If South ruffs something with dummy's ten, East does best not to overruff. Declarer may get the idea that West has the queen of trumps and try to drop it.

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

If declarer ruffs with the ten and East overruffs, that's the last trick for the defense. If East refuses to overruff, the defense gets two tricks.

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

Again, if declarer ruffs with the queen the defense gains a trick by not overruffing.

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

If South ruffs with the ten, West comes to two tricks if he shows patience.

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

With the 9642 of trumps, you might not have expected even one trick, yet if declarer is forced to ruff with the seven, West can get two tricks out of this by refusing to overruff.

CHAPTER 4 PLAYING THE CARD YOU ARE KNOWN TO HOLD

When you are declaring a hand, you will have to make many decisions. Two of the factors you must consider are the opponents' high cards and the opponents' distribution. As a defender, it is in your interest to confuse the issue as much as possible without confusing partner.

Playing the card you are known to hold means just that. Often you will have a choice of cards to play. If you are known to have a certain card and if you can afford to play it, you usually should do so.

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

Declarer finesses the jack and plays the king. If East holds on to his queen, declarer won't be hard pressed to go up with the ace on the third round. If East drops the queen (the card he is known to hold) on the king, declarer has a genuine guess and may finesse the nine.

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

After declarer finesses the ten to the ace, East must drop the jack when declarer later plays the queen. Declarer may choose to finesse into East's nine.

On the following layout, South is in a notrump contract and needs to get three tricks in this suit. On the lay of the suit, three tricks can be had if South does the right things.

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

He starts the suit by leading the three to East's eight and South's ten. This loses to the king. Later, South leads the four toward his hand. If East plays the nine, declarer will know that East started with the J98 and if East also has the ace, it means that South cannot get three tricks no matter how he plays. South will see that his only chance is for East to have the J98 only. Declarer will play low on the second round of the suit and West's ace will fall. Three tricks for South.

If East plays the jack on the second round, South may decide to play East for the AJ8, in which case he will go up with the queen. With West having the ace, this line won't work.

East-West vulnerable

♠ 7 5

♥ 8 6 5

♦ Q J 5

♣ A K 10 4 3

♠ Q 10 2

♥ 4 3

♦ K 9 7 3

♣ 8 7 6 2

♠ A 4

♥ K J 7

♦ A 10 8 6 4

♣ J 9 5

W

N

E

S

♠ K J 9 8 6 3

♥ A Q 10 9 2

♦ 2

♣ Q

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

West started with two top clubs and South ruffed. A spade to the queen went to East's ace. South ruffed the next club and drew trumps with dummy's ♠10. A heart to the queen was followed by the ace. If East has followed routinely with the seven and jack, declarer will ruff a heart for ten tricks. If East follows with the seven and king, declarer may lead the ♥10 and finesse it to East's jack.

These falsecards are as close as any falsecards are to being mandatory. Your partner can usually tell what is happening so there is not much to lose from fooling partner. But much is gained when declarer isn't given a free rein. Anytime you can give declarer an option, you have the chance that declarer will do something wrong.

10 8 6 3

4 2

K J 9 7

A Q 5

If declarer leads to his king, East should win the next trick with the ace rather than the queen.

	A Q 7 2	
K J 9 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	10 6 4
	8 3	

If declarer finesses the queen and then plays the ace, West should drop the king. Declarer may not realize he can ruff back to his hand in this suit. If he fears an overruff, he may concoct some way to lose a trick where no loser exists.

	A Q 10 6 2	
K J 9 7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	8
	5 4 3	

Declarer finesses the ten, which wins. When declarer repeats the finesse, West must play the jack. If declarer finesses the queen, he will get three tricks, but will not get four unless he has an extra entry to dummy. If West plays the nine on the second round, declarer may work out the suit is 4-1 and can duck the trick completely, thus maintaining communications.

Here is an example of playing the card you are known to hold that was available to a number of players in a tournament. Only one player saw the play. South plays in 7♠.

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

Against 7♠, West leads the ♥K. Declarer wins and cashes the ♠Q, noting the bad break.

The play continues: Trick 3 — ♦A; Trick 4 — Club ruff; Trick 5 — ♦K; Trick 6 — Club ruff; Trick 7 — Heart ruff, West drops the card he is known to hold, the ♥Q; Trick 8 — Club ruff; Trick 9 — Declarer can get to his hand with a heart ruff. But he doesn't know it. He will probably try to ruff a diamond instead.

In this final example of playing the card you are known to have, the defense has an opportunity that is commonplace but almost never recognized. Here is the layout.

♠ 10 9 6

♥ 8 6

♦ J 9 8 6

♣ J 9 7 2

♠ A Q 7 2

♥ Q 3 2

♦ 4 3 2

♣ Q 10 4

♠ J 8 4

♥ K J 9 5

♦ K 10 5

♣ K 8 5

N

W

E

S

♠ K 5 3

♥ A 10 7 4

♦ A Q 7

♣ A 6 3

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

North’s 3NT bid was predicated on the thinking that 4-3-3-3 hands should play in notrump, not in a suit. This approach gains in many ways. One of the ways it gains is that by not using Stayman, North gives West no information about the North-South hands. If, for instance, North had bid 2♣, South would bid 2♥. North would continue to 3NT but on this sequence, the defenders would know that South had four hearts and North had four spades. This information might help West with the opening lead and it would surely help both defenders during the play.

West led the ♠10. Dummy played low and East played the jack. Study the North-South spades. Might South not decide that the jack was singleton, in which case he could finesse the ♠7 in dummy? Note that East has the ♠8, which means that it is safe to play the jack. This falsecard is real enough that it will give a declarer something to think about.

[86]

Falsecards

CHAPTER 5 MORE MANDATORY FALSECARDS

Continuing in the family of mandatory falsecards is the following situation as seen by declarer:

	6	
<u>5</u>	<input type="text"/>	<u>3</u>
	<u>K</u> Q 9 8 7 4 2	

Declarer leads the six to his king. When West plays the five, declarer has only one option and that is to lead the two, hoping East started life with the A3 doubleton.

	6	
<u>J</u>	<input type="text"/>	<u>3</u>
	<u>K</u> Q 9 8 7 4 2	

If West follows with the jack or ten, declarer can still play East for the A3 doubleton. But he also has the added option of leading the queen, hoping for J10 doubleton in West's hand.

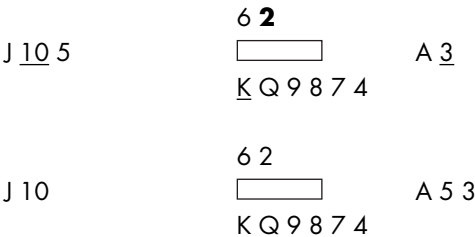
Since declarer has two possible plays, there is a measurable chance that he will sometimes make the wrong play.

There are many opportunities for a defender to misrepresent his holding to appear as something it isn't. This is the combination just discussed:

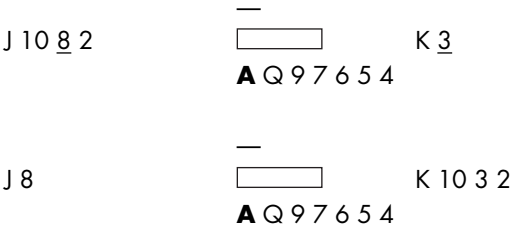
	6	
J <u>10</u> 5	<input type="text"/>	A <u>3</u>
	<u>K</u> Q 9 8 7 4 2	

West drops the ten, making it appear that he has the J10 doubleton. If declarer tries the queen next, the defense gains a trick.

This next layout is the same as the previous one, except that dummy has one of declarer's small cards. If dummy has no reentry, the defense is still obliged to find the falsecard.



In the first diagram, West plays the jack or ten, hoping declarer will play for the second layout and continue with the queen.



In the first layout, South's winning play is to lead the ace and then a little one, dropping East's king. If West drops the eight under the ace, South may think the second layout exists. If so, he must lead the queen on the second round of the suit.



Declarer leads the ace and king. If West plays as shown, declarer may decide the jack is his best play now. Certainly it is if the layout is as shown in the second diagram.

There is a world of situations like these that lend themselves to falsecards. Here are two more. In each case, South opened 1♠, which was passed out.

Layout One:

	♠ 2	
♠ 10 9 8 5	<div></div>	♠ K 6 4
	♠ A Q J 7 3	

In this layout, South gets to dummy to lead the ♠2. You can see that if South finesses the queen and follows with the ace and a small spade, the king drops and South loses just one trump trick.

Notice what happens if West plays the ♠8 and ♠9 on the first two spade tricks. This will be the position:

♠ 10 5	<div></div>	♠ K
	♠ J 7 3	

South can lead the three, which is successful, but if South is taken in by West's falsecard he may lead the jack, hoping to squish the ten in West's hand.

Layout Two looks much like the first:

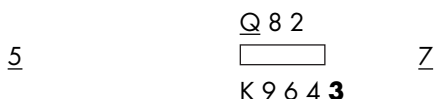
	♠ 2	
♠ K 6 5 4	<div></div>	♠ 10 9 8
	♠ A Q J 7 3	

When declarer finesses in spades, West must duck. If he takes the king, declarer will continue with the ace and jack and can draw the last trump with his seven, assuming he knows the seven is good.

If West lets the queen win, South will surely play the ace and a small spade, hoping East has ♠Kxx.

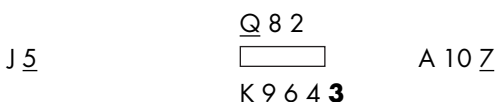
If you look for these falsecards, you will find them. It just takes an awareness that they exist.

CHAPTER 6 ENTRY-CREATING FALSECARDS

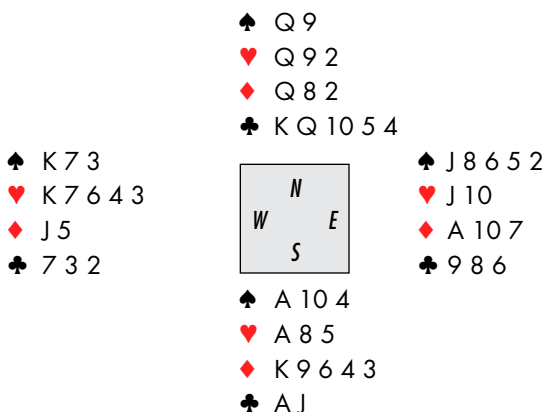


When declarer leads the three to the queen and it wins, his best play for only one loser is to lead to his hand next, ducking whatever East plays. If West started with A5 doubleton, declarer can run the suit with only one loser.

Trading on declarer's intentions to play the suit in the above manner, the defense can come up with some pretty swindles.



East ducks his ace, and then if declarer ducks on the way back, West takes his jack. If West is in need of an entry, this can be crucial to the defense.



How did South go down in 3NT? Not easy, but it was reasonable. West led a heart to the ten and ace. The ♦Q won and the diamond continuation went to West's jack. A second small heart went to East's jack as declarer reasonably misguessed that suit also. A spade return left declarer two down. Mercifully, the defense never did get its ♦A.

This variation is also possible. Declarer leads to the queen and East lets it win:

	<u>Q</u> 8 2	
10 <u>5</u>	<div></div>	A J <u>7</u>
	K 9 6 4 3	

When declarer now leads toward his king, East's jack will win unless declarer makes an inspired guess. This has the effect of giving East an extra entry.

It may look dangerous for East to duck with the AJ7, but it shouldn't be if he can duck smoothly. If declarer has K10xxx, he will finesse against East's jack, so there never was a second trick for East. Only if declarer has a six-card suit (K10xxxx) will East's play make a difference.

	<u>Q</u> 8 2	
J <u>10</u>	<div></div>	A 7 <u>5</u>
	K 9 6 4 3	

In this similar combination, East ducks as a point of technique. If East takes the ace, declarer is likely to drop the jack rather than finesse. East's duck pretty much ensures that declarer will go wrong.

CHAPTER 7 FAKING LENGTH OR SHORTNESS

MISREPRESENTING YOUR LENGTH IN A SUIT

Both vulnerable

	♠ 10 7 5 ♥ K 5 2 ♦ A Q 10 9 5 ♣ K J	
♠ K 8 6 4 2 ♥ A 6 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ 9 6 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; width: 100%;"> S </div> </div>	♠ A 3 ♥ 10 9 7 4 3 ♦ 6 3 2 ♣ 7 4 3
	♠ Q J 9 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ J 7 ♣ A Q 10 8 5	

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠4, won by East's ace. When East returns the three, West has a choice of winning and clearing the suit, or ducking.

If West wins and establishes spades, declarer will see the 5-2 division. Declarer may decide it's too dangerous to set up hearts and may choose to take the diamond finesse instead. If West ducks the spade return, and falsecards with the six, declarer may play the spade suit to be 4-3, i.e. ♠K864 opposite ♠A32. If spades are 4-3, declarer can guarantee 3NT by knocking out the ♥A.

Curiously, if West did *not* have the ♦K, he should play a third spade to show declarer the bad news. Now declarer might take the diamond finesse, which leads to down two when East wins and returns a heart.

Neither vulnerable

♠ A J 6 4
♥ J 5
♦ J 7 6 4 3
♣ 9 5

♠ K Q 10 8
♥ Q 8 6 4 3 2
♦ 10 2
♣ 8

♠ 9 7 5 2
♥ 9 7
♦ K 5
♣ 10 6 4 3 2

♠ 3
♥ A K 10
♦ A Q 9 8
♣ A K Q J 7

N

W

E

S

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♣
pass	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	3♦	pass	4NT
pass	5♦	pass	7♦
all pass			

Not your ideal contract, but it was reached in the final of a National event.

Declarer won the ♠K lead in dummy and led the ♦3 to the queen. With the ♦K about to fall, it looked like 7♦ was going to be a lucky make. When West followed with the ♦10, though, declarer suddenly had a new problem. It looked like East had three diamonds to the king, so another finesse was necessary.

How would you try to get to dummy? By ruffing a heart or by ruffing a club? Declarer tried to ruff a heart and that didn't work. One down.

Q J 9 5

Z A K 10 3 2

8 6 **4**

If declarer thinks this suit is breaking, he may come back and try it again.

K J 4

10 A Q 9 2

8 6 5 **3**

Likewise. If East lets the jack hold, South might lead the suit again. As mentioned elsewhere, it is crucial that when you make a play like this one, you do not huddle and give the show away.

In the next layout, if declarer leads this suit again, East can establish it to his benefit:

	K J 5 <u>2</u>	
<u>6</u>	<div></div>	A Q 8 7 <u>3</u>
	10 9 4	

PRETENDING TO BE OUT OF A SUIT

East-West vulnerable

	♠ A 10 9 2	
	♥ Q J 5 4	
	♦ A J 2	
	♣ A 7	
♠ 8 7 3	<div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div> </div>	♠ K 6 5
♥ 9 3 2		♥ 10 8 7 6
♦ 8 5 3		♦ K 6 4
♣ K J 5 3		♣ Q 10 2
	♠ Q J 4	
	♥ A K	
	♦ Q 10 9 7	
	♣ 9 8 6 4	

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West led the ♣3, won by East’s queen. The ♣10 was returned to the ace. Declarer came to his hand with a heart and finessed in spades to East’s king.

Had East returned a club, the defense would have taken four tricks, but that would have been the end of the defense.

Instead, East returned a spade, trying to look like a defender with no more clubs. Declarer now has the option of taking a diamond finesse for a possible eleven tricks.

Should this falsecard succeed? Possibly. Possibly not. If declarer is playing matchpoints he may well go for the extra tricks and end up going down in a cold contract.

The following is a peculiar falsecard for which there is no good guideline. It may, in fact, seem unbelievable except for the fact that the auction and play went as described in a match between two excellent pairs.

North-South vulnerable

♠ 5 4
♥ J 8 6
♦ J 9 3
♣ Q 8 6 5 4

♠ A 8 6 2
♥ 9 5 4 2
♦ A K 7
♣ K 2

♠ K 7
♥ Q 7
♦ 10 8 6 4 2
♣ J 10 7 3

♠ Q J 10 9 3
♥ A K 10 3
♦ Q 5
♣ A 9

Diagram showing a square with vertices labeled N (North), S (South), E (East), and W (West).

West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
pass	4♣	pass	4♥
pass	4NT	pass	5♠
pass	6♠	pass	pass
pass			

This auction used the Jacoby 2NT response to one of a major. North showed a game-forcing spade raise. South's 3NT bid showed around 16 points with no singleton or void. The rest was cuebidding followed by Keycard Blackwood.

This is a very good slam that has chances even when the spade finesse loses. This time, however, 6♠ looks to be going down. Declarer, somehow blessed with more than normal intuition, embarked on a double dummy line that was going to succeed.

Winning the club lead, declarer played in order: Trick 1 – ♣K; Trick 2 – ♦Q; Trick 3 – ♦A; Trick 4 – ♦K, pitching a heart; Trick 5 – ♣A; Trick 6 – ♥A; Trick 7 – ?

Declarer intended to play the ♥A and ♥K followed by the ♠A and a spade. If spades were 2-2, then if the hand with the ♠K had only two hearts, that hand would have to give a ruff and sluff.

At Trick 6, East dropped the ♥Q, giving declarer a new option. It looked dangerous to cash the ♥K, but if the ♥Q were either singleton or from QJ doubleton, then the original line was still intact.

Declarer, therefore, played the ♠A and another spade, which East won and then produced the ♥7 for one down.

CHAPTER 8 OTHER DEFENSIVE PLOYS

North-South vulnerable

♠ A 5

♥ K J 7 2

♦ Q 8 3

♣ J 8 6 3

♠ K 8 6 2

♥ 10 8 3

♦ A J 6

♣ Q 9 2

♠ 10 9 3

♥ Q 5 4

♦ 10 9 7 4 2

♣ 10 5

W

N

E

S

♠ Q J 7 4

♥ A 9 6

♦ K 5

♣ A K 7 4

West	North	East	South
		pass	1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

West starts the ♥2 on the theory that with no good lead, he might as well hope to find a card in partner’s hand that will at least be useful. Declarer wins the second heart and leads the ♠Q, won by the ace.

West judges that East can have no high cards outside the ♥Q. But East might have the ♠109.

West, therefore, cashes his heart trick and leads the thirteenth heart.

5

K 8 6

J 7 4

10 9

This is the trump position when West leads the last heart. East ruffs with the nine, forcing the jack. When declarer leads to the dummy, he finds himself having to guess whether to finesse for the ten or whether to drop it. This falsecard is rather rare and I admit I still have not found it, outside my imagination.

The situation below might be hard for West to find but if he uses the guideline that you do not automatically overruff, the following result might be achieved.

Both vulnerable

♠ K

♥ A 3

♦ J 9 4 2

♣ 10 9 8 5 3 2

♠ 5 4 2
♥ 9 7 6 5
♦ A K Q
♣ K Q 7

W
N
S
E

♠ A Q J 10 7 6
♥ 4 2
♦ 10 8 3
♣ J 6

♠ 9 8 3

♥ K Q J 10 8

♦ 7 6 5

♣ A 4

West	North	East	South
pass	2NT	pass	2♠
all pass			3♠

How did the defense come to two trump tricks against 3♠? This one bears looking at. The play went:

Trick 1 – ♥A; Trick 2 – ♥K; Trick 3 – Heart ruffed with the queen, allowed to win; Trick 4 – Diamond to the ace; Trick 5 – Trump finesse, losing to the stiff king; Trick 6 – Club to the ace; Trick 7 – Now the fourth round of hearts left declarer wondering whether to ruff high or to ruff low. At the table he misguessed and succeeded in going down one.

Here is a common suit that offers more than one line of play.

A J 9 8

6 4 2

Declarer’s percentage play in this suit is to finesse the nine and if it loses to the king or the queen, to repeat the finesse. A standard defensive ploy is illustrated in this setup:

Q 10 7

A J 9 8

6 4 2

K 5 3

When South leads the two, West must play the queen (or king if he has K107). Declarer may play West to have started with KQ7 and later guess to lead to the jack. This gives the defense two tricks where they were only entitled to one.

This falsecard is frequently found when the dummy has this high-card combination. Often overlooked by the defense is the same falsecard when the suit is reversed.

	6 4 2	
K 5 3	<div></div>	<u>Q</u> 10 7
	A J 9 8	

If East plays the queen here, it is extremely likely that declarer will misguess. Only when declarer has great length or where declarer is trying to guess the KJ combination does this falsecard work poorly. East has to determine each case of course, but on balance will come out ahead by playing the queen.

In the following layout, South needs four tricks but he has no outside entry to dummy.

	A J 10 9 8	
<u>K</u> 5	<div></div>	Q 7 4
	6 3 2	

South hopes to finesse the first round, expecting to lose to an honor, after which another finesse will give him four tricks. If West goes up with his king, South can't get four tricks. If he plays the ace and continues with the suit, East takes the third round, holding South to two tricks. If South allows the king to win, he will later lose a trick to East's queen. South will get three tricks but not four.

This situation is even more diabolical. South has one fewer card than before, and that makes a big difference.

	A J 10 9 8	
<u>K</u> 5	<div></div>	Q 7 4 3
	6 2	

Again, South hopes to finesse the jack and with luck, to take a later finesse that may earn four tricks.

All kinds of things can happen along the way.

1. East wins and South later gets his four winners.
2. East lets the jack win. Now South gets two winners.
3. West plays the king. Now:

If South wins the ace, he gets only one winner.

If South lets the king win, he later has two choices:

He can reject finessing on the next round. That gets him one trick.

He can take the finesse on the next round, which loses to the queen.

Playing this way, South gets no winners at all.

Other disruptive plays by the defense:

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

If South leads the nine or the ten, West must cover. Declarer, if he has no entry to dummy, has to let the queen win unless he is absolutely desperate for tricks. West, therefore, should consider playing the queen from Qxxx, Qxx, and Qx.

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

When South leads the eight, West can play the king, hoping to look like a defender with a singleton. Declarer, as in the previous example, may feel obligated to duck this so as to keep an entry to dummy.

A K J 7 6 5 2
<input type="text"/>
4 3

Declarer has a choice of safety plays here. He can finesse the jack, catering to all 3-1 or 2-2 splits, or he can duck the trick entirely, which caters to all 3-1, 2-2, plus 4-0 if it's onside. If West has Q1098, he can play the queen to tempt declarer. The following hand shows such a situation.

Neither vulnerable

♠ 6 4 3
 ♥ K J 9
 ♦ K Q J
 ♣ Q 10 9 8

♠ 9
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ 8 5 3
 ♣ A K J 7 6 5 2

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

♠ A Q
 ♥ A 6 4 3 2
 ♦ A 10 6 2
 ♣ 4 3

N
 W E
 S

West	North	East	South
4♠	4NT	3♠ all pass	3NT

West leads the ♠3 to East's king and declarer's ace. Since making 4NT should be an excellent result, declarer leads a club, intending to duck whatever West plays. That would ensure the contract as long as East doesn't have all four clubs.

West puts in the queen, testing declarer's resolve.

This is the kind of situation that tries one's nerves. Making 4NT is obviously a fine result but overtricks are always nice. Should South duck the queen and take the certain game or should he go for an overtrick? What would you do?

THE IDIOT'S DELIGHT

There is a family of falsecards appropriately named to describe the feelings of a declarer who has fallen victim to one.

In general, the theme is always the same. Declarer's suit is dividing favorably and has no losers through normal play. The defense, however, by squandering its honors, may create a finessing position where one really shouldn't exist.

This is easier to show by example than by description.

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

West drops the queen on the ace. When declarer leads the three, it appears that he has a finesse versus drop choice. Hardly. This shouldn't work, but since it is free, it can't hurt to try.

Something the defense can do that is guaranteed to irritate a declarer is this:

	K 10 8 6 <u>2</u>	
<u>Q</u> J 9	<input type="text"/>	<u>3</u>
	A 7 5 4	

Declarer will suspect the dreaded 'Idiot's Delight' and will reject it by going up with the king. The defense won't gain a trick by this, but you can imagine the satisfaction of watching declarer simmering away.

Be careful though, that the suit is not distributed thusly:

	K 10 8 6 <u>2</u>	
<u>Q</u> J 9	<input type="text"/>	—
	A 7 5 4 3	

Oops!

In the next position, the only finesse after the first trick should be in declarer's mind. But it has been known to work.

	A <u>K</u> 10 8 6 2	
<u>J</u> 4	<input type="text"/>	Q <u>5</u>
	9 7 3	

Here's a slight change as the defense leads the suit first:

	K 9 7 <u>4</u>	
J 2	<input type="text"/>	<u>Q</u> 10
	A 8 6 5 3	

This coup position may work because it is barely possible that West would lead the jack from J102.

This next one takes an extra trick to develop:

	K <u>Q</u> 8 2	
J 9 3	<input type="text"/>	10 7 5
	A 6 4	

Declarer leads the king and ace, fetching the jack and nine from West. Now it appears to declarer that he has a finessing position.

Even more believable, from declarer's point of view, is for West to lead the jack to declarer's ace and then to play the nine when declarer leads to dummy.

Not quite in the family of 'Idiot's Delight' but still related is this one:

7 5 4	Q 9 8 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> A K 3	J 10 6
-------	--	--------

When declarer leads the two from dummy, many defenders go up with the ten, hoping declarer has A43 or K43 instead of AK3. If East can tell that declarer has AK3, it is more effective for the defense to play the six in the East position.

However, if East has Jx or 10x, as in this next combination, East has a very effective falsecard available:

10 7 5 <u>4</u>	Q 9 8 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> A <u>K</u> 3	<u>J</u> 6
-----------------	--	------------

When declarer next plays the ace and leads to dummy, he is likely to credit East with J106 rather than J6, since most defenders would have J106 for the play of the jack.

East must be quite sure of the position to try this falsecard since it can be costly if declarer has Axx, Kxx, or Kxxx:

A 10 5 3	Q 9 8 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <u>K</u> 7 4	<u>J</u> 6
----------	--	------------

The defense has two tricks unless East plays his jack prematurely.

PART TWO

FALSECARDS BY DECLARER

However many falsecards were available to the defenders, and however complex they may have been, they were limited in their scope by the sad fact that each defender has a partner. As effective as a falsecard may have been, it always ran the danger that partner could be caught up in its deceit as easily as declarer.

Declarer is bound by no such considerations. The only people looking at these cards and drawing conclusions from them are the enemy and they are fair game.

How sweet it is to know that your web will snare only gullible opponents and never a trusting partner!

CHAPTER 9 FALSECARDS AT TRICK 1

It has often been said that hasty play at Trick 1 is the most frequent declarer error. Certainly true. What has not been said is that failure to falsecard at Trick 1 is the specific error most frequently made.

From the above, you might think that defensive falsecards are not as important as declarer's falsecards. Not true. On the average, a defensive falsecard is more likely to gain something than a falsecard by declarer. But this is fully compensated for by the fact that declarer can falsecard from five to ten times as often as a defender.

When does declarer have to start thinking about falsecards? At Trick 1, of course. I would estimate that a conniving declarer will perform as much deception at Trick 1 as in the rest of the hand. The number of things declarer can do are amazing.

At Trick 1, declarer's decisions will include, among others, whether to win the trick in dummy, whether to win the trick in hand, what card to win with, or perhaps whether to win the trick at all.

Some of the time, declarer has no option, i.e., he'd better win or else.

	A 8 <u>2</u>	
7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>J</u>
	Q 5 4	

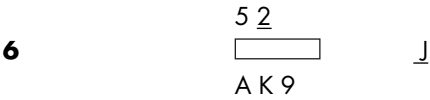
If declarer doesn't win his queen, he doesn't get it.

	4 <u>2</u>	
5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>Q</u>
	K 7	

Again, no choice.

Frequently, though, declarer will have a real option. Here are a few of them. Note that the following discussion is of a general nature. Note also that your correct play will vary according to whether you are playing in notrump or a suit contract.

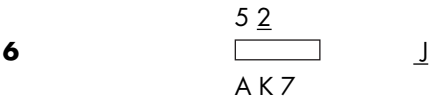
IN A NOTRUMP CONTRACT



If declarer chooses to win the trick, he should usually win with the king. Whenever declarer wins the first round of a suit with the ace, the defenders may question why declarer isn't holding up. The answer tends to be that declarer has a second stopper, i.e. the AK, or even AKQ.

If declarer wins with the king, the defense can't be as confident about declarer's holding. If declarer had Kx opposite xxx, he would have no choice but to win.

IN A SUIT CONTRACT



If declarer wins with the king, it will announce that he also has the ace. Why? Because if East had it, he would take the trick, and if West had it, he would not underlead it. If declarer wins with the king, each defender will know for the above reasons that declarer has the ace. If declarer wins Trick 1 with the ace, the defenders may suspect strongly what is going on, but they won't know. They will only think they know. Somewhere in the back of their minds, there will be the seed of doubt.

On some hands the defenders can use logic to overcome a falsecard. The next two layouts show the thinking that may be needed. In both of these hands, the bidding is the same.

West	North	East	South
			2♠
pass	4♠	pass	pass
pass			

Partner leads the ♥2. Here is what East can see in both cases:

LAYOUT ONE

♠	K Q 6 4
♥	6 4
♦	K J
♣	K Q J 10 9
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 0 10px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div> <div style="margin: 0 10px;"> ♠ 3 ♥ J 9 8 3 ♦ A Q 8 4 ♣ A 7 6 4 </div> </div>	

You play the jack and South wins his ace. At Trick 2, South leads the ♣3 to the king and your ace, West playing the ♣2. It isn't hard to appreciate that South has a singleton club.

Your goal is to get partner in to return a diamond. How do you do that?

Instinctively, most defenders in this seat return a heart. This is not effective. If West has a heart entry, he must have started with the ♥KQ, and that's impossible. He would have led the king instead of the two. If South has the ♥AK, almost assured, then West is likely to have the ♠A. If you fear that South has the ♠A and the ♥AK, you should cash the ♦A. But that is hard to do. Follow your interpretation of the heart suit and lead back a spade. Here is the complete hand for Layout One.

♠	K Q 6 4
♥	6 4
♦	K J
♣	K Q J 10 9
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;"> ♠ A 2 ♥ Q 10 5 2 ♦ 10 7 5 2 ♣ 8 5 2 </div> <div style="margin: 0 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> ♠ J 10 9 8 7 5 ♥ A K 7 ♦ 9 6 3 ♣ 3 </div> </div> <div style="margin: 0 10px;"> ♠ 3 ♥ J 9 8 3 ♦ A Q 8 4 ♣ A 7 6 4 </div> </div>	

If you find the spade return, your partner will know what to do. His diamond return gets you down one. Only if declarer has the ♥AK along with the ♠A is this not a good plan.

Are you thinking that you would not open 2♠ with declarer's hand? It may not be your style but for others it may be routine. Here is a hint you can live with:

Hint

Just because you would not bid or play the way your opponents are bidding or playing does not mean they are wrong. They are just marching to a different drummer. Sometimes you have to consider this possibility.

Things are a bit different in Layout Two. In this layout, everything is the same except that you have the ♥Q instead of the jack.

LAYOUT TWO

♠ K Q 6 4

♥ 6 4

♦ K J

♣ K Q J 10 9

W

N

E

S

♠ 3

♥ Q 9 8 3

♦ A Q 8 4

♣ A 7 6 4

Declarer takes your ♥Q with the ace and leads a club to dummy’s king and your ace.

Here, you can’t tell for sure what is going on. Interestingly, the better declarer is, the easier it is for you to know what to do.

Against most declarers, you can return a heart, expecting South to have the ♠A and not the ♥K. This defense will work most of the time. If you are playing against a wide-awake expert, you should return a spade.

How can you tell?

If South is an expert and has the ♠A and the ♥A but not the ♥K, he will let you have the first trick. This way if you have the ♣A and the diamond honors, you won’t be able to get your partner in to switch to diamonds. As before, if you are sure South has the ♠A and the ♥AK, you have to cash your ♦A or not get it at all.

Continuing with standard Trick 1 falsecards by declarer:

7

4 2

K Q 5

J

This combination occurs only at notrump. It’s normal to win with the king, trying to induce West to lead the suit again if he gets in. West may think East has the queen.

	4 <u>2</u>	
7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>J</u>
	K Q	

Usually, you win the queen. The idea is to show West you have the king. Hopefully he will try to get his partner in for a lead through your king. In practice, you can win with the king or the queen when holding KQ or KQx.

Both plays will give West something to think about.

	A 6 <u>2</u>	
7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>10</u>
	<u>Q</u> J 5	

Win with the queen. Leave West guessing who has the jack.

	A K 4 <u>2</u>	
3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>9</u>
	J 10 6	

Win with the jack. West may talk himself into leading the suit again, giving you a fourth trick.

	4 <u>2</u>	
7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>J</u>
	A K Q	

In a suit contract, it's generally best to win the ace on the standard theory that the defense knows you have it. At notrump, you should win with the king.

There is a useful principle here. When you have a three-card sequence, and can win the trick at Trick 1, you should win with the middle card.

	6 4 <u>2</u>	
7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>10</u>
	K <u>Q</u> J	

If you win with the queen, West may not know he can safely continue the suit. If you win with the jack, he will know you have the king and queen too.

A 9 8 7	6 4 <u>2</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div> K <u>Q</u> 3	J <u>10</u> 5
----------------	--	---------------

This is the combination you want West to think exists. If West believes this to be the case, he may switch, giving you time.

5	7 <u>2</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div> A <u>Q</u> J	<u>10</u>
----------	--	-----------

Declarer must falsecard with the queen. If LHO gains the lead, he will often continue this suit in the hope that East has the jack.

K 9 6 5 3	7 <u>2</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div> A <u>Q</u> 8	J <u>10</u> 4
------------------	--	---------------

This could easily be the situation from West's point of view. Not an easy guess for West to make.

There are many falsecards available to declarer and there are almost as many reasons for making a falsecard. Among the most common are:

1. The opponents have led your best suit.
2. You wish to discourage your opponents from shifting to a dangerous suit.
3. When a ruff is threatened.
4. To fake a holdup.
5. To camouflage a stiff ace.
6. The anti-falsecard falsecard.
7. To fake weakness in the suit led.
8. To disrupt the defenders' signals.

THE OPPONENTS HAVE LED YOUR BEST SUIT

5	8 <u>2</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px auto;"></div> A K J <u>Z</u> 3	<u>Q</u>
----------	--	----------

Your side bid 1NT - 3NT and LHO surprised you by leading this suit. If you intend to establish this suit yourself, you can duck the queen. East may continue the suit to your advantage.

The reason you play the seven, rather than the three, is that you want East to think West has a five-card suit.

10 9 6 5	<div style="display: inline-block; text-align: center;"> 8 <u>2</u> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div> A K J 7 <u>3</u> </div>	<u>Q</u> 4
-----------------	---	------------

If South plays the three, East will know declarer has five since the five will be readable as from a four-card suit. If declarer plays the seven, East can easily come to the conclusion that West has the three, and consequently a five-bagger.

<p>♠ J 9 8 5</p> <p>♥ Q 9 5 2</p> <p>♦ 4 3 2</p> <p>♣ A 9</p>	<p>♠ 4 2</p> <p>♥ A 8 6</p> <p>♦ K Q 6</p> <p>♣ Q 10 4 3 2</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 10px auto; position: relative;"> <div style="position: absolute; top: 5px; left: 40px;">N</div> <div style="position: absolute; top: 5px; right: 40px;">E</div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: 5px; left: 40px;">W</div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: 5px; right: 40px;">S</div> </div> <p>♠ A Q 7 6 3</p> <p>♥ K 7 4</p> <p>♦ A J 5</p> <p>♣ K 6</p>	<p>♠ K 10</p> <p>♥ J 10 3</p> <p>♦ 10 9 8 7</p> <p>♣ J 8 7 5</p>
---	--	--

South opened 1NT, hiding his spade suit, and North raised to 3NT. This action by South could have been wrong. But not this time, as West chose to lead the ♠5, East playing the king.

Declarer has no sure route to nine tricks, although there are lots of possibilities. The problem with ducking the spade is that the defense may switch to hearts. Nonetheless, declarer did duck the spade, falsecarding with the six, as in the previous example. When East continued spades, declarer had time to establish a long spade plus a club trick.

Note again the importance of South's falsecard in spades. If South had played the three, East would have recognized that South had five spades. East might have decided to shift and he might have found a heart shift.

There is a second family of hands where the opponents attack one of your strong holdings. It may be possible for you to make them think they have found your weak spot when, in fact, your real worry is elsewhere.

Combinations like the following are reasonably common:

Neither vulnerable

	♠ A 6 2										
	♥ K Q 5 2										
	♦ K J 3										
	♣ 7 5 3										
♠ K J 8 3	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 9 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 4		♥ 10 9 8 3									
♦ Q 6		♦ 8 7 5 4									
♣ Q 9 8 4 2		♣ 10 6									
	♠ 10 7 5										
	♥ J 7 6										
	♦ A 10 9 2										
	♣ A K J										

West	North	East	South
			1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♣4. Declarer has nine tricks if he can guess the diamonds or if the hearts are worth three tricks. There is no guarantee of nine tricks though, except via a good guess.

South decided on a simple subterfuge. Winning the first trick with the king, he followed with a diamond to the king and a finesse into West's ♦Q. West, expecting his partner to have the ♣J, continued clubs, which gave South his original three club tricks.

In addition, this gave South time to get his heart tricks. Had declarer won the ♣J at Trick 1, West might have shifted to a spade, and that would have been an effective defense.

There are many, many such combinations where declarer can hide his true strength in the suit led.

	8 2	
6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>	J
	A K Q	

This one we've seen before.

6	A <u>5</u> 2	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>	<u>J</u>
	<u>K</u> Q 4	

Routine, but often overlooked.

6	A 5 <u>2</u>	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>	<u>10</u>
	<u>K</u> J 4	

Use this when West is going to get in.

7	J <u>10</u> 3	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>	<u>5</u>
	A <u>K</u> 4	

Likewise.

7	J <u>10</u> 4	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>	<u>5</u>
	A <u>Q</u> 2	

Likewise.

7	Q <u>10</u> 4	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 2px 0;"></div>	<u>5</u>
	A <u>J</u> 3	

And likewise.

In all these cases, the defenders may be able to see through your falsecard if their signaling methods are worked out. But even in high-level bridge, defenders are prone to careless play when they think they know what's going on.

Both vulnerable

♠ K J 8 6 3
♥ K 7 5
♦ A 9 2
♣ A 2

♠ 7 5 2
♥ J 9
♦ J 10 8 3
♣ K 10 7 4

♠ 9
♥ Q 8 6 4 3 2
♦ 7 6 5
♣ 6 5 3

♠ A Q 10 4
♥ A 10
♦ K Q 4
♣ Q J 9 8

N
W E
S

West	North	East	South
1♠ all pass	2♣	pass	1♣ 3NT

West had no reason not to lead a spade and so started with the ♠6, to East’s nine and declarer’s queen. West took the first club trick, thinking his partner had the ♠10, and tried to set up the spade suit by leading the king.

Declarer had no problems now and ended up with nine tricks. Had declarer won the ♠10, West would have no choice but to hope for a miracle. A heart shift, though made in desperation, would have resulted in down three.

YOU WISH TO DISCOURAGE YOUR OPPONENTS FROM SHIFTING TO A DANGEROUS SUIT

5

6 2
[]
A Q 4

J

This and the next falsecard can be found in every book on falsecards. There is, at the end of this book, a hand featuring Tim Seres using it to swindle his world class opponents. The idea, as usual, is to give West the wrong impression and hope that the defense errs.

5 6 2
 □ J
 A Q

Something like this is also possible.

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q
 ♥ 9 5 4
 ♦ K Q J 3
 ♣ A 10 9 6

The contract is 3NT by South.

If you win the queen and later take a losing club finesse, the defense may switch to hearts. The brave declarer can win the ♠A, lead the ♦J to the ace, and take the club finesse. If West wins, he is supposed to lead a small spade to his partner's queen.

Looks good in spirit. Might even be good at the table. Memory doesn't serve me too well (disasters are easily forgotten), but when I tried this ploy, the East-West hands were something like this.

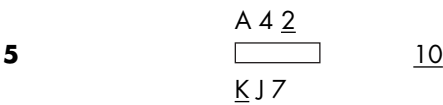
♠ K 10 8 7 3 ♠ 9 2
 ♥ A 2 ♥ J 6 3
 ♦ 5 2 ♦ A 10 8 6 4
 ♣ K 8 4 2 ♣ Q J 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

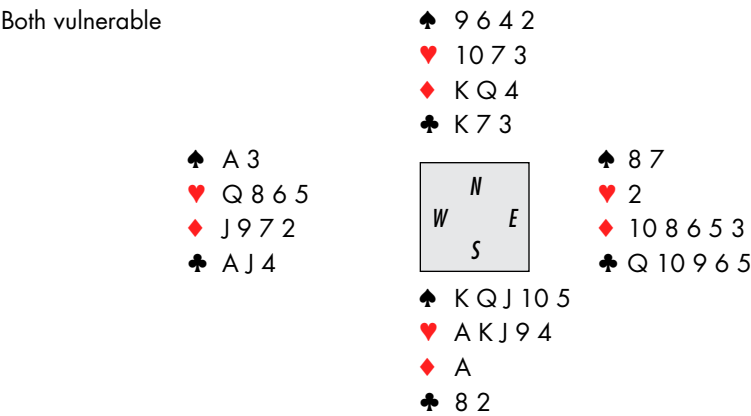
♠ A Q ♠ J 6 5 4
 ♥ 9 5 4 ♥ K Q 10 8 7
 ♦ K Q J 3 ♦ 9 7
 ♣ A 10 9 6 ♣ 5 3

West took his ♣K, the ♠K, three more spades, and five more hearts. Down six!

Some falsecards similar to the above, but not as blatant, may seem to give up a trick, but seldom do.



If West gets in next, he is very likely to lead this suit again, thinking East has the jack.

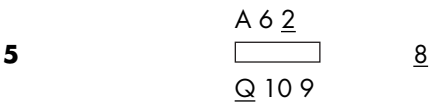


West	North	East	South
	pass	pass	1♠
pass	2♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥5. Declarer, fearing a ruff but not knowing for sure which opponent has the singleton, can try this: play dummy’s ten and when not covered, overtake with the jack.

Now lead the ♠J or ♠Q.

West will have to see through two falsecards. He will have to take his ♠A (risking that East has a stiff king) and then he will have to lead another heart.



This falsecard may cost you a trick, but if you can’t stand for the defense to switch suits, it can be a good investment.

Even stranger is this one:

Neither vulnerable

♠ Q 9 5

♥ K 8 2

♦ J 9 8 7 5

♣ 6 2

♠ A 10 6

♥ A 7 4

♦ A K 6 4 2

♣ K 10

N
E

W
S

♠ J 4 2

♥ Q 10 3

♦ 3

♣ Q J 9 8 7 3

♠ K 8 7 3

♥ J 9 6 5

♦ Q 10

♣ A 5 4

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

West didn't want to lead a diamond since North had bid them. Instead, he guessed to lead the ♥2.

Declarer ducked in dummy, hoping East would win with the king. This would have left the ♥Q as a later entry to the clubs. When East played the jack, declarer no longer had his entry so he tried some thievery instead.

South let the jack win. When East continued with the ♥5, South played the ten and West covered, thinking East had the ♥Q. Now South had an entry to his clubs. This led to ten tricks for South, where he might have been held to six.

Finally, some odd combinations with lots of potential to confuse.

Q 7 6 **2**

10 5 4

A K 9

J 8 3

This works nicely in both suit and notrump contracts. The effect of playing the ten is that when West gets in, he won't know who has the nine. It might be right for West to continue. It might be wrong. The potential for error exists.

	10 5 <u>4</u>	
Q 7 6 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>	<u>J</u> 8 3
	A <u>K</u> 9	

If declarer errs and plays the four from dummy, West will know it is not safe to continue this suit.

	<u>J</u> 9 3	
5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>	<u>2</u>
	K <u>10</u> 4	

Against opponents who don't have clear definition in their signals, West may try to drop your king rather than put East in for a lead through.

	Q 9 <u>8</u>	
4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>	<u>10</u>
	<u>K</u> J 3	

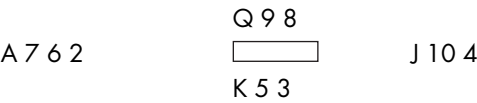
This falsecard is intended to induce West to underlead his ace when he gets in.

North-South vulnerable

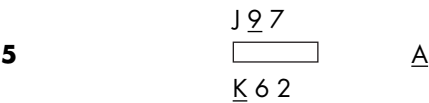
		♠ Q 9 8	
		♥ K Q 5	
		♦ A Q 2	
		♣ 10 9 6 3	
♠ A 7 6 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ 10 5 4	
♥ A 4 3		♥ 9 8 7	
♦ J 10 8 5		♦ 9 7 6 3	
♣ 7 4		♣ J 8 5	
		♠ K J 3	
		♥ J 10 6 2	
		♦ K 4	
		♣ A K Q 2	
West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♠2 to the ten and king. Declarer has twelve likely tricks, but he also has two losers. However, if he can steal a spade trick (after knocking out the ♥A), he may still get twelve tricks.

As it is, when West wins the ♥A, he is likely, with some justification, to under lead the ♠A again, hoping for this layout:



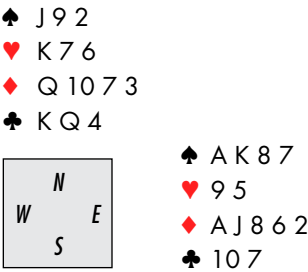
If this did exist, declarer might duck, thus losing three spades.
 If declarer had won Trick 1 with the jack, there would have been no chance of twelve tricks.
 A curious falsecard exists where you imply greater strength than you really have with the objective of getting the opponents to switch.



At a notrump contract, West’s five looks like it’s from Q1085(x) and the suit will be established if East returns it. If South drops the king, East may credit declarer with KQx and shift. South might also make this play if he desperately needs an entry to dummy. After playing the king, he should be able to get to dummy with the jack if West has the queen that South expects him to have.

WHEN A RUFF IS THREATENED

Both vulnerable



West	North	East	South
		1♦	1♥
pass	2♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♦5. East elects to take the ace. How should East continue?

The answer to this depends on what declarer plays. If South plays the four, then the five can be a singleton and a diamond return would be reasonable. If declarer plays the nine, then the five could have been from 54 doubleton or it could still be a singleton. East's guess!

This problem is one which I guarantee will come up at least once per session. Whether East solves it depends on good guesswork *unless* declarer gives the defense a free ride.

Here's the complete hand:

	♠ J 9 2	
	♥ K 7 6	
	♦ Q 10 7 3	
	♣ K Q 4	
♠ 10 6 5 4 3		♠ A K 8 7
♥ 8 3		♥ 9 5
♦ 5		♦ A J 8 6 2
♣ 9 8 6 5 3		♣ 10 7
	<div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div> </div>	
	♠ Q	
	♥ A Q J 10 4 2	
	♦ K 9 4	
	♣ A J 2	

This situation comes up repeatedly. From declarer's point of view, a potential singleton is led. The rule for declarer is always: *If possible, conceal a spot card smaller than the one led.*

On this hand, the rule directs declarer to play the nine. East will wonder where the four is, but since he can't tell for sure, he will often do the wrong thing. Here, if East switches to the ♠K the contract will become unbeatable.

Below are many such falsecards. In each of the examples, the card led is known or suspected to be a singleton and declarer wants to persuade East otherwise.

	Q 10 6 <u>3</u>	
4	<div></div>	A J 9 8 7 5
	<u>K</u> 2	

If the four and two were exchanged, this play should not work.

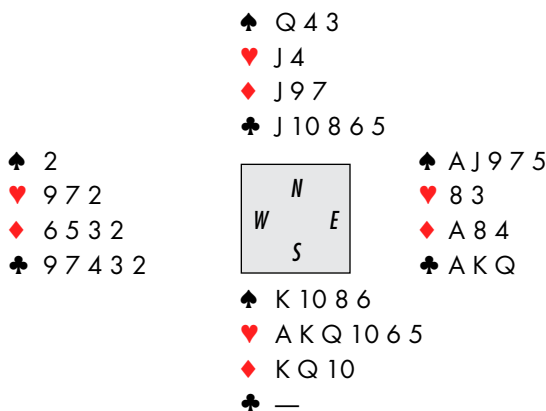
	Q 10 6 <u>3</u>	
2	<div></div>	A J 9 8 7 5
	<u>K</u> 4	

You can try playing the king but East shouldn't be fooled very often. From East's point of view, West can't have the four, since that would mean he had led the two from 42.



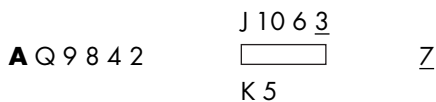
This is extreme, but perhaps necessary. If East has opened with 1♠, and you play in a suit contract, you know for sure that West's two is a singleton. If you play the king, it may fool East into switching. Without this falsecard, the defense might get two ruffs. Here is a possible layout:

East-West vulnerable



West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♠ dbl	4♥ all pass

In this setting, South must falsecard else the defense get two aces and two spade ruffs.



Here, West has opened 2♠ and is leading the ace against your 4♥. If you can afford to play the king, West will surely be talked into switching. If you play the five, West will give East a ruff.

	J 10 6 <u>3</u>	
A Q 9 8 4 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>5</u>
	K 7	

Now South's little card is larger than East's singleton. It won't help South to play the king. West will note that the seven is missing and South must have it. Holding the 75 doubleton, East would play the seven at Trick 1.

	K 8 5 4	
6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	A <u>Q</u> 7 3 2
	J <u>10</u> 9	

The ten is a mandatory falsecard. Declarer is trying to imply that West has J96, which would be consistent with the opening lead. If South plays the nine or the jack, it would mean West had led the six from J106 or 1096. Since the correct lead from J106 is the jack, and from 1096, the ten, East would work out that the six was a singleton.

	K 7 6 <u>2</u>	
5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	A 9 8 4 3
	Q <u>J</u> 10	

Exactly the same considerations apply as in the previous example. South must play specifically the jack. East can believe that West would lead the five from Q105. If South played, say, the queen, East would not believe the falsecard since that would mean West had led from J105. With this holding he would have started with the jack.

TO FAKE A HOLDUP

When the defense gets off to its most effective defense, declarer is sometimes able to borrow time by using a rather unusual holdup. For example:

	J <u>10</u> 7	
8 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	K <u>Q</u> 9 4 3
	A 6 <u>2</u>	

If declarer wins the first trick with the ace, the defenders will run the suit when West gets in to lead it.

But if declarer ducks the opening lead, the defenders will experience difficulty getting the suit going. East won't be able to lead the suit himself. He will have to wait until West can lead the suit again and even then, East will require an additional entry. Time. A tempo. This is what declarer gains by this holdup.

There are many such situations where declarer can gain time. In each of the following diagrams, declarer can gain a tempo by playing as indicated. East, in each case, will be unable to continue the suit without losing a trick.

8 4	Q <u>10</u> 3 <div></div> A 6 <u>5</u>	K <u>J</u> 9 7 2
10 7	<u>J</u> 9 4 <div></div> A 5 <u>3</u>	K <u>Q</u> 8 6 2
7 4	Q 6 <u>2</u> <div></div> A 8 <u>3</u>	K J 10 <u>9</u> 5
9 6	<u>K</u> 10 5 <div></div> Q 4 <u>3</u>	<u>A</u> J 8 7 2

Here is a layout where the holdup is necessary:

Both vulnerable

	♠ K 10 4	
	♥ K 3	
	♦ K Q 10 8 7 5	
	♣ A Q	
♠ 6 3	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	♠ A J 9 8 5
♥ 10 8 7 6 4		♥ A 9 2
♦ A 4 2		♦ 3
♣ 10 6 2		♣ 9 7 4 3
	♠ Q 7 2	
	♥ Q J 5	
	♦ J 9 6	
	♣ K J 8 5	

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

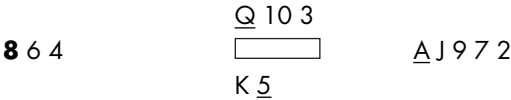
West leads the ♠6.

If declarer plays the four or ten, East will just cover. Say, for example, that declarer plays the four. East will play the eight, losing to declarer’s queen.

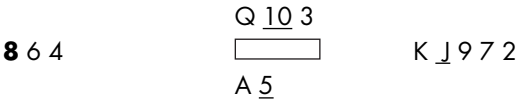
When West takes the $\heartsuit A$, another spade will lead to down two.

By comparison, if South plays the king, East will win, but he will not be able to continue spades. West will take his $\heartsuit A$ but the spades won't yet be good. Ten tricks for declarer. A swing of three tricks for declarer's tempo-creating play.

So far, none of these examples have been falsecards. They have been examples of technique. Sometimes there is a very fine line between a falsecard and a point of technique. Let's go back to the diagrams and make some tiny changes.



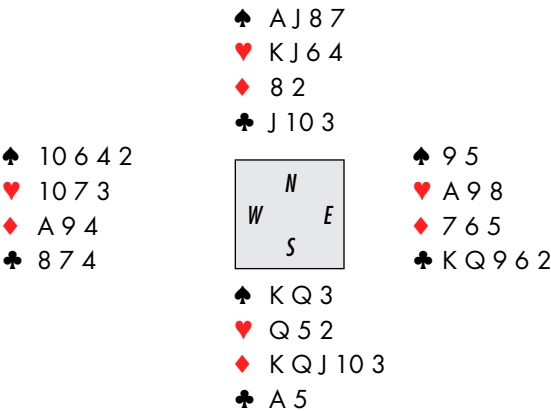
Ducking may gain some time for declarer if East decides to switch. If East believes South has K54, he can't afford to continue spades.



This position is similar. It looks like declarer is making a foolish play by ducking. It may, in fact, turn out to be ridiculous. But if East can be talked into believing that declarer has A65 rather than A5, the defense may not do the right thing.

An aside here. These falsecards rate to be effective because many players in the West seat will lead the top card both from 864 and from 84. East won't usually have a way to tell how many cards West has and how many cards South has.

North-South vulnerable



West	North	East	South
		pass	1NT
pass	2♣	dbl	2♦
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♣8. At Trick 1, dummy plays the ten and East the queen. If declarer takes this, he will go down for sure. West will get in eventually and a second club lead would do it.

If South ducks the first club, East can set 3NT by leading a small club. But will he? How can he tell? Quite likely, he won't be able to work out the situation and will switch to a diamond. Nine tricks for South.

There are quite a few of these phony holdups. Here is a partial list:

	Q <u>10</u> 3	
8	<input type="text"/>	J
	A <u>6</u>	
	Q <u>7</u> 2	
5	<input type="text"/>	<u>8</u>
	A <u>4</u>	

You would need to know from the auction that East had the length in this suit.

	K 10 4	
9	<input type="text"/>	A
	Q <u>4</u>	

Will East know he can continue with a small card?

TO CAMOUFLAGE A STIFF ACE

When you have a singleton ace in the suit led by the defense, you will often have the opportunity to mess with the opponents' signaling. Look at the following setup from West's point of view:

	10 4 <u>3</u>	
K 7 6 5 2	<input type="text"/>	<u>8</u>
	A	

West can see that East has QJ98 and declarer, therefore, a singleton ace. When West gets in, it may be important to know that the defense has or does not have a trick coming in this suit.

Compare with this setup:

	<u>10</u> 4 3	
K 7 6 5 2	<input type="text"/>	J
	<u>A</u>	

What can West tell about this suit?

It looks like East has the queen, but the eight and nine can be anywhere. East's holding can be any of the following:

Q J
Q J 9
Q J 8
Q J 9 8

Four possible holdings; four chances, therefore, for the defense to misjudge and do the wrong thing.

Remember, if you offer enough bait, you will eventually catch something. What this means is that when you are declaring a hand and the opponents lead your singleton ace suit, you shouldn't routinely play dummy's small card.

These are all possible plays which may cause the defense to err:

	<u>10</u> 4 2
7	<input type="text"/>
	A

This play, as just seen, may prevent the defense from getting an early count in this suit.

	<u>J</u> 6 2
7	<input type="text"/>
	A

Likewise.

	<u>Q</u> 6 2
7	<input type="text"/>
	A

If you have no possible use for the queen, this play may (if East covers) convince the defense you have a loser in this suit.

Both vulnerable

	♠ Q 6 2	
	♥ 10 8 5 4	
	♦ K J 8 2	
	♣ 6 4	
♠ J 9 8 7 3		♠ K 10 5 4
♥ J 7 2		♥ Q 3
♦ Q 9 5 3		♦ A 7 6 4
♣ 7		♣ 9 5 2
	<div>W<div>N S</div>E</div>	
	♠ A	
	♥ A K 9 6	
	♦ 10	
	♣ A K Q J 10 8 3	

West	North	East	South
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	pass	6♥
all pass			

The bidding could have been better. I've certainly seen worse, however.

West leads the ♠7. If declarer plays without thought and follows with dummy's two, East will use the rule of eleven and will play the five. When West gets in with his heart trick, there's little chance he will try to cash a spade trick. After all, wouldn't South play the queen if he had a second spade?

If declarer plays dummy's queen at Trick 1, East will have no option but to cover and West will have no obvious reason to do the right thing.

	Q J 2
7	<div></div>
	A

If declarer can afford it, he can try playing the jack or queen. East might cover. If you have entries, however, it might be better to play the two. This will allow you to set up a trick later.

	J 10 4
7	<div></div>
	A

If East covers, you have achieved a stopper where none should exist. In the following hand, that might be crucial.

Neither vulnerable

♠ 9 8 5 4
♥ Q 9 8 7 2
♦ A 5
♣ A 2

♠ K 7 2
♥ J 10 3
♦ Q 10 4 2
♣ K 8 3

♠ 3
♥ K 6 5 4
♦ 9 7 6
♣ 10 9 7 6 5

♠ A Q J 10 6
♥ A
♦ K J 8 3
♣ Q J 4

N

W

E

S

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

West leads the ♥7. It looks like declarer should make eleven tricks routinely by drawing trumps and conceding two aces. With trumps being 4-1, things aren't quite so easy.

If declarer plays dummy's three, East can use the rule of eleven and conclude to play low to declarer's ace. Now when West wins his aces, he can lead hearts, forcing declarer to ruff, thus establishing another trick for the defense.

If declarer plays dummy's jack, East may cover. This will create a second heart stopper, which means the defense won't be able to tap declarer.

Note that I have commented on two previous hands that the rule of eleven was helping the defenders. If the defenders were using different lead methods, the suggested falsecard will still contribute to the defensive difficulties.

8

J 9 3 2

A

If you play the nine, East will cover with something and West won't always be sure what is happening. You could also play the jack, which adds a little to the defensive confusion.

8

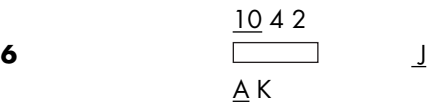
Q 10 9 2

A

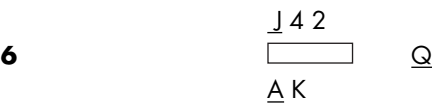
Play the nine. You expect East has the KJ and some others. If you play the nine, East will cover with the jack unless he knows for sure that you have a singleton

ace. After winning this trick, you may later go to dummy to lead the queen. East will have to cover this and you will ruff it. Entries permitting, you will get a second trick from this suit. You could also play the queen. If East covers, you will win. Whether playing in a suit or in notrump, you can set up an additional trick in this suit.

The principles above can be extended to include situations like these:

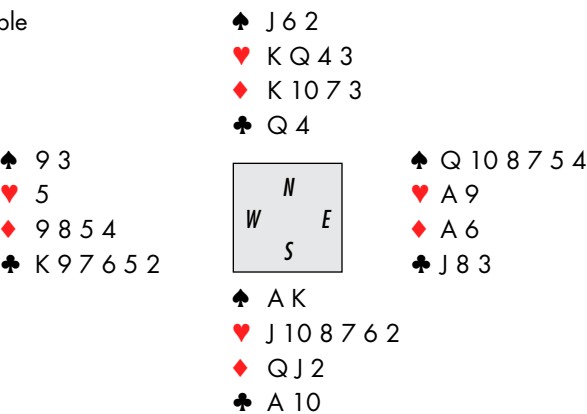


The play may give the defense hope, psychologically or logically, that you have losers in this suit.



Likewise.

East-West vulnerable



West	North	East	South
pass	3♥	pass	1♥
all pass			4♥

West starts with the ♠9. If declarer puts up the jack, East will cover and declarer will win. When East takes his ♥A, he will have a tough decision. A spade continuation could be right, but so could a club shift. I'm inclined to think that if South plays the ♠J, East will return a spade most of the time. On this hand, it would be wrong.

THE ANTI-FALSECARD FALSECARD

In the section on defenders' falsecards, this specific situation was noted:

	9 5 <u>4</u>	
J 8 6 3	<div></div>	<u>A</u> K 7
	Q <u>10</u> 2	

Against a suit contract, the defense can give declarer a headache if East wins his ace and returns the seven. Declarer will misguess more often than not.

Declarer can sometimes produce a falsecard of his own that makes it hard or impossible for the defense to try this ploy.

	9 5 <u>4</u>	
J 8 6 3	<div></div>	<u>A</u> K 7
	Q <u>10</u> 2	

If declarer can afford it, he can drop the ten spot. This will look to East as if South has Q10 doubleton and West J8632.

If this is the case, then East should not underlead his king. If declarer does drop the ten and if East does return a small card, then declarer can surely play low and not worry that the defense is executing a swindle.

Variations on this combination include:

	9 4 <u>2</u>	
5	<div></div>	<u>A</u>
	Q <u>10</u> 3	
	10 4 <u>2</u>	
5	<div></div>	<u>A</u>
	Q <u>9</u> 3	

In this next setting, you can't afford to play the ten, as that would lose a trick any time East had the jack:

	6 4 <u>2</u>	
5	<div></div>	<u>A</u>
	Q <u>10</u> 3	

FALSECARDS BY DECLARER TO FAKE WEAKNESS IN THE SUIT LED

You can try this one at either suit or notrump contracts.

	A 3
4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>
	KJ 7

By rising with the ace, you will appear to deny holding the KJ. Logically, if you had the KJx you would let the lead come around to your hand.

	♠ A 3	
	♥ Q J 8 2	
	♦ A 6 4	
	♣ K J 8 7	
♠ Q 8 7 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> W E </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">S</div> </div>	♠ 10 9 6 4
♥ K 4		♥ 6 5
♦ K J 7 3		♦ Q 9 8 5
♣ 9 6 3		♣ A 5 2
	♠ K J 5	
	♥ A 10 9 7 3	
	♦ 10 2	
	♣ Q 10 4	

Against 4♥, West led the ♠2. This free finesse does South no good. Rather than make the automatic play of bringing the lead to his hand, declarer went up with the ♠A and finessed in hearts.

Was West clearly wrong to continue spades? He did, and declarer had time to set up the clubs for a diamond discard.

TO DISRUPT THE DEFENDERS' SIGNALS

Without exception, the most potent falsecards in bridge occur at Trick 1 when declarer plays from his hand. Some of these falsecards were discussed earlier, i.e. winning with an unusual card so as to misrepresent your strength.

The most effective falsecards, however, are not the big, brazen ones. They are the subtle ones where you play a two instead of a four. Or a six instead of a three.

Take this situation from West's point of view:

	4 <u>3</u>	
Q J 9 7	<input type="text"/>	<u>5</u>
	<u>6</u>	

At notrump, you lead the queen and partner plays the five, declarer the six. Should you lead the suit again?

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

If this is the setup, you'd best switch.

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

But, if this is the actual layout, it is correct to continue.

What West should do is not clear. What is clear is that declarer has created an illusion that is going to mislead the defenders rather frequently. What's scary is that it was so easy to do. Declarer played a six instead of a two. Nothing fancy, nothing gaudy, but still effective.

Good defenders rely heavily on their communications and that usually means good signaling methods with their spot cards. As we've just seen, these signaling methods are not perfect.

The examples in this section are among the most important in the book. Their importance stems from many factors.

1. They work.
2. They are easy to execute.
3. They are common.
4. The things that make them work can be used in many other situations.

	8 6 <u>2</u>	
K	<input type="text"/>	<u>5</u>
	Q <u>7</u> 3	

This is the most common combination. The idea is that by playing the seven, you make it appear to West that his partner likes this suit.

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

This is the combination that actually exists. East is trying to discourage West.

	8 6 <u>2</u>	
A K J 4	<input type="text"/>	Q <u>5</u> 3
	10 9 <u>7</u>	

This is the combination declarer wants West to think exists.

	Q 9 <u>8</u>	
A K 10 7 2	<input type="text"/>	<u>5</u> 3
	J 6 4	

What should declarer play to keep the defenders from getting their third round to ruff?

If South plays the jack, West will note that both the three and the four are missing. If East has either one, the defense has a ruff coming. If East has neither, then the five will be a singleton (or J5 doubleton) and again, the defense will have a ruff coming. The jack is 100% the wrong play.

If South plays the six, West will again note the three and four are missing, and will sort it out as above. The six is a worse play than the jack. The jack, at least, has shock value against careless opponents.

This leaves the four, which is correct. West can work it out, but it is not as obvious. It's possible East has J65 and West will cater to this on occasion.

Conversely:

	Q 9 <u>8</u>	
A K J 7 2	<input type="text"/>	10 6 <u>4</u>
	5 3	

What should South play if he wants West to take his ace rather than to switch? South should play the five. West may conclude East has 43 and wants a ruff.

There is an interesting rule you can apply in these situations. When the defense starts with a high card that wins, declarer can influence the opening leader's second play by doing this:

- If declarer likes the lead, he should play a higher than necessary spot card. It may look to West as if his partner has the missing spot card and is encouraging.
- If declarer hates the lead, he should play his lowest spot card. West may be talked out of continuing if he can't read his partner's card.

(If the defenders play upside-down signals, the declarer must falsecard upside-down. High discourages; low encourages.)

Note that it is easier to get your opponents to continue a suit than it is to get them to stop.

Here are some more variations on the above combination:

	Q 9 <u>8</u>	
A K 10 7 2	<input type="text"/>	6 5 <u>4</u>
	<u>J</u> 3	

If South wants West to continue, he must drop the jack. This goes against the grain because the jack is the card that most players choose when they want West to *stop* leading the suit. Nonetheless, the jack is the proper card. West will note the three is missing and may continue, hoping to give East a ruff. Odd, isn't it, that declarers have been playing the wrong card for all these years?

	Q 9 <u>8</u>	
A K 10 7 2	<input type="text"/>	<u>4</u> 3
	J 6 5	

Here it doesn't matter. For declarer's play to make a difference, he has to have spot cards higher and lower than the one played by East. Then, according to which spot card declarer plays, he will have 'concealed' an important card.

In the above example, West will note that the three is missing. Whatever card South chooses, West will have the same amount of information to go on.

	Q 9 <u>8</u>	
A K 10 7 2	<input type="text"/>	<u>5</u> 4
	J 6 3	

This is a repetition of an earlier example. If South plays the three, West will note the four is missing. If South plays the six, West will note that the four and three are missing. In other words, South's choice of cards can influence the number of pertinent cards that West is missing. Again, note that South has a spot higher than East's card, plus a spot lower than East's card.

	Q 9 <u>7</u>	
A K J 10 6	<input type="text"/>	<u>8</u> 2
	5 4 3	

Doesn't matter. Whichever card South chooses, West will see there are three smaller cards missing. South can do nothing to confuse the defense.

	Q 7 <u>5</u>	
A K J 10 6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	<u>3</u>
	9 8 4 2	

If South wants West to switch, South must play the two. Any other card will conceal the two. West, noting the two is missing, may conclude his partner has it. West will cash the ace and the defense will get its ruff. Guaranteed.

If South plays the two, there is a fair chance West will switch.

	6 <u>3</u>	
Q J 10 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	9 <u>5</u>
	A K 8 <u>7</u> 2	

At notrump, South is hardly bothered by this lead. If South requires tricks in this suit, he should play the seven. West may continue, thinking East's five was encouraging. Note that in this diagram, you are not gaining a trick. You are gaining time.

	K 3	
J 10 8 7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	5
	A Q 9 6 4 2	

Conceivably, you might duck this trick. This is a possible layout:

Both vulnerable

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

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

With the ♦J lead, declarer can pretty well count on diamonds being 4-1. If declarer plays on diamonds, West will see declarer's diamond length and he will

have gotten some signals from East. It's unlikely declarer will be allowed to get his nine tricks in time.

A better strategy is for declarer to duck the diamond lead in both hands, i.e.:

	K <u>3</u>	
J 10 8 7	<div></div>	<u>5</u>
	A Q 9 <u>6</u> 4 2	

West is very likely to lead another diamond. Remember, even though he knows you have some high diamonds for your 2NT bid, he doesn't know you have six of them.

	K 7 <u>2</u>	
Q J 9 5	<div></div>	A 6 <u>4</u>
	10 <u>8</u> 3	

This may or may not work, but it's more likely to get West to lead this suit again than if South plays the three.

	A <u>K</u> 3	
10 8	<div></div>	9 7 5 <u>4</u>
	Q J <u>6</u> 2	

Even when you have complete control of a suit, you can raise doubt in a defender's mind. Could the suit not be, say:

	A K 3	
10 8	<div></div>	Q J 4 2
	9 7 6 5	

where East can afford no better than the four?

This kind of falsecard is almost endless.

	K <u>Q</u> 7	
8	<div></div>	<u>4</u>
	A <u>6</u> 2	

A little dust in their eyes.

	<u>K</u> J 6	
9	<input type="text"/>	<u>3</u>
	A Q <u>4</u> 2	

More dust.

	A <u>K</u>	
10	<input type="text"/>	<u>2</u>
	Q J 7	

Different and a little flagrant.

	A 7 <u>3</u>	
K	<input type="text"/>	<u>5</u>
	Q 8 <u>6</u> 4 2	

If West starts the king against a notrump contract, let him think he's on to a good thing.

So far, the falsecards in this section have been efforts to interfere with their attitude signals. You have tried to convince a defender that his partner likes the lead when actually, he doesn't. And vice versa. Another useful, but less frequent, falsecard by declarer is one that tries to disrupt the defenders' count signals.

Against a notrump contract, West leads the four.

	J 9 <u>2</u>	
K 8 6 4	<input type="text"/>	<u>A</u> 5
	Q 10 7 3	

Which card should declarer play?

If declarer plays the three, East will realize West has led from a four-card suit. He may judge to switch.

Obviously, the suit West led is not a threat to South. If South wishes the defense to continue it, he should play the seven. East will think, or hope, that West started with either Qxxxx or Kxxxx and is likely to return the five. This will do declarer's work and it may also gain declarer a tempo.

	J 9 <u>2</u>	
K 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	A 8 6 <u>5</u>
	Q 10 <u>7</u> 3	

East bids this suit and you end in 3NT. West leads the king. You rather like this start and you wish for them to continue the suit. Play the seven. This will make East's five look like it could be an encouraging signal. West is likely to continue the suit.

	J 9 2	
K 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	A 8 6 5
	Q 10 <u>7</u> 3	

Same layout. This time East-West did not bid. At some point in the play in 3NT, East switches to the five. South likes this and plays the seven to give West the impression that East has five cards, not four.

	7 4	
K Q 10 9	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	6 5
	A J 8 3 2	

South plays in 4♠ and West leads the ♥K. In a notrump contract it is routine to duck, hoping West will continue the suit. To encourage him to do so, South should play the eight, making it appear that East has the three or two, which would suggest that East is trying to give an encouraging signal.

Less known is that this play works nicely in a suit contract as well. Playing the eight will make it look even more likely that East has the ace.

CHAPTER 10 FALSECARDS IN AND AROUND THE TRUMP SUIT

Because of the special nature of trumps, there are some falsecards that are effective only when the trump suit is involved.

North-South vulnerable

♠ K Q 10 9
♥ J 3 2
♦ Q 9 8 7
♣ Q 9

♠ J 4
♥ K 8
♦ A K 5 4
♣ 8 6 4 3 2

♠ 8 7 6 3 2
♥ A 7
♦ J 3 2
♣ K 10 5

♠ A 5
♥ Q 10 9 6 5 4
♦ 10 6
♣ A J 7

Diagram illustrating a bridge hand layout. The table is divided into four quadrants by a central rectangle labeled N (North), S (South), E (East), and W (West). The hands are distributed as follows:

- North (N): ♠ J 4, ♥ K 8, ♦ A K 5 4, ♣ 8 6 4 3 2
- South (S): ♠ 8 7 6 3 2, ♥ A 7, ♦ J 3 2, ♣ K 10 5
- East (E): ♠ A 5, ♥ Q 10 9 6 5 4, ♦ 10 6, ♣ A J 7
- West (W): ♠ K Q 10 9, ♥ J 3 2, ♦ Q 9 8 7, ♣ Q 9

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

1. Forcing.

When West leads the ♠K, declarer is faced with five potential losers. These include one spade, two hearts and two clubs. The immediate concern is the trump suit.

An extremely old chestnut is for declarer to win the spade and to return the suit. If West can be conned into leading trumps, it will be much easier to hold the trump losers to one than if declarer has to play trumps himself. The reason this should not work is that nowadays, the art of signals has advanced enough that East can show West how many spades he has.

A much better falsecard by South is to duck the first spade entirely. West will know declarer has the ♠A, but he won't be at all sure of how many other spades he has. Perhaps West should not lead trumps anyway, but declarer's spade duck may make the trump switch attractive.

You are in your hand. How should you play this trump suit if you fear a ruff?

6

K Q J 10 9 8

For example, should you lead the eight or the nine?

Both vulnerable

♠ 6

♥ J 9 7

♦ 8 6 5 3

♣ K 10 6 3 2

♠ A 7 2

♥ A 8 6

♦ 9 7 4 2

♣ A Q 7

N

W

E

S

♠ K Q J 10 9 8

♥ Q 10 4

♦ A K Q J

♣ —

♠ 5 4 3

♥ K 5 3 2

♦ 10

♣ J 9 8 5 4

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

South’s 4♠ bid was a practical effort once West opened the bidding. West led the ♦2, won by South’s ace.

Recognizing the danger of a diamond ruff, declarer had to find a sequence of spade plays such that West would duck twice. South started by leading the queen, and when West ducked this, South continued with the nine. West did duck both of these, fearing the first time that East might have the stiff king and fearing the second time that East might have the doubleton jack. Not good defense, but certainly a possible defense.

Note that declarer must start with the queen. Any other card gives the show away.

CHAPTER 11 FALSECARDS BY DECLARER DURING THE MIDDLE OF THE HAND

CRASHING

8 6 4

 A K 7 5 3

How do you play this suit for four winners?

Basically, it appears that you require a 3-2 split, which will occur around 68% of the time. If this suit divides 4-1 or 5-0, then your expectation will be three or even two tricks.

An excellent rule for most bridge problems is to make allowances for misfortune. Sometimes you can make legitimate compensation for bad luck. Sometimes, even when there is no real way to negotiate certain dangers, it may be possible to enlist the opponents' help. A common technique is called 'crashing.' The idea is to persuade your opponents to play their high cards when they shouldn't, thus 'crashing' them.

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

In this setup, the suit does divide 4-1 so your theoretical maximum is three tricks. But, at no cost to South, he can start the suit by leading dummy's eight. If East ducks, the defense will get their two tricks, but if East covers, the defense will get only one trick.

This is known as something for nothing. It costs nothing to lead the eight. But it may gain. Would you cover if you were sitting East?

Both vulnerable

♠ 9 8 6 3 2
♥ 9 8 5
♦ 10 8 7 6
♣ Q

♠ K Q 5
♥ 7 6 4 2
♦ A 4 2
♣ J 6 3

N

W E

S

♠ A 10 4
♥ A Q
♦ Q 9 3
♣ A 8 7 5 2

♠ J 7
♥ K J 10 3
♦ K J 5
♣ K 10 9 4

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

When West leads a spade, declarer can see only eight tricks, assuming East has both red kings. Some club tricks are necessary. The best way to get them is to lead the jack. This gains technically if West has a stiff nine or stiff ten. And it gains if West has a stiff queen or a stiff king and East covers. The second possibility is what actually occurred.

The following crash is worth knowing.

East-West vulnerable

♠ A
♥ 9 6 4
♦ 7 6 4 3
♣ 9 7 6 5 2

♠ Q 7 6 5 2
♥ A K Q J 7
♦ —
♣ K Q J

N

W E

S

♠ 10 8 4 3
♥ 8 3
♦ Q 10 9 5 2
♣ 8 3

♠ K J 9
♥ 10 5 2
♦ A K J 8
♣ A 10 4

West	North	East	South
pass	2♣ ¹	1NT	pass
pass	4♠	pass	2♠
		all pass	

1. Both majors.

The defense started with two rounds of clubs. Knowing East had at least two spades, South tried the ♠Q from dummy.

East covered, and that was that.

In this case, the contract could have gone down. If West had held the stiff ♠J, the queen would also have been the winning play. In no case could the queen lose barring East having a stiff ace or king of trumps.

The crashing play most often found at the table is this next one. You are in 6♣ with this trump suit:

Q 7 6 4 2
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
J 10 9 5 3

How should you play the trumps? In this situation, you have two possible plays. One is to lead the queen and hope East covers with Ax or Kx. The second play is to lead toward the queen, hoping West will hop with Ax or Kx.

The best play depends on two separate factors.

1. If you can tell for sure who has the doubleton, then you have to play so as to give that hand the first play. If you know East has two, lead the queen. If you know West has two, lead toward the queen.
2. You often won't be able to tell who has the doubleton and in this case, you must fall back on scheme two. This requires that you estimate the respective strengths of your opponents. If one of them is known to be weaker than the other, then choose the play that makes the weaker player play first.

For whatever it's worth, if rules one and two don't give me a clue, I lead the queen. Note that everything said above also applies to trump suits like:

Q 6 3 2
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
J 10 9 5 4

You have less chance of a swindle, but it can't hurt to try. Whatever you do, don't start the trumps by leading low from the dummy. That gives the opponents no chance to goof.

If your honor cards are the same, but located differently, you may not have the same options.

8 7 4 2

Q J 10 9 6 3

No one is going to cover the eight if you lead it from dummy. It's not tempting enough. With this combination, you can do little more than lead the queen or jack.

It's true that West, with Kx, ought not to fall for it, but if he has Ax, he may think you are trying to sneak one round of trumps by him.

This is the kind of thing that might happen:

♠ A 5

♥ Q J 10

♦ Q 9 8 7 5

♣ Q 8 2

♠ 8 7 4 2

♥ A 3

♦ A 4 2

♣ K 10 9 3

N

E

W

S

♠ Q J 10 9 6 3

♥ K 8 2

♦ K 3

♣ A 4

♠ K

♥ 9 7 6 5 4

♦ J 10 6

♣ J 7 6 5

South is in 6♠ against the lead of the ♥Q.

If declarer ruffs a heart in dummy and then ruffs a diamond in his hand, he will have achieved a pseudo strip position. When South leads the ♠Q, West may grab it thinking declarer's hand is:

♠ K Q J 9 6 ♥ K 8 2 ♦ K 3 ♣ A 7 4

If this is declarer's hand, West must take the first spade and get out with a spade. If West ducks the spade, West will have to win the second spade and he will be endplayed.

Maybe West should not err in this position, but South gets credit for the play.

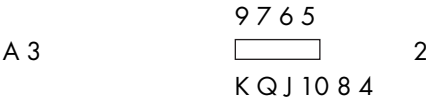
NOT REVEALING YOUR STRENGTH — I

Some of an expert's advantages have come from long hard days or years of experience. It's the best way to learn. Few things in this world are easy.

As with most things in life, there are some exceptions and in the world of bridge this is one of them. One of the qualities an expert has is that it is hard to read his hand when you are defending. There always seems to be some uncertainty about what's going on.

If you watch this expert you will note that he gives away very little information for free. This doesn't mean that he keeps a cool demeanor at all times. Hardly, although that would be worthwhile. What it means is that the expert chooses his cards in such a way that the defenders can't draw quick and easy inferences.

For instance:



If declarer leads the four to dummy's five, West will know 100% what the suit is and East will have a pretty good idea. If declarer instead leads the king to West's ace, West and East will both be unsure of the situation. Then when South leads the queen later, East will wonder if West has the jack.

The squandering of free information comes up over and over. Think back. Has there not been a recent hand where declarer has needlessly given you some helpful information?

♠ A

♥ K 2

♦ K J 7 6 3

♣ A 6 5 4 2

N
W E
S

♠ K 5 4 2

♥ 8 7 4 3

♦ A Q 5

♣ 9 3

West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	2♣	pass	3♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥Q. Declarer wins the king, plays to his ace, and ruffs a heart with the ace. Your partner has followed with the queen, nine and ten, which

means he has ♥QJ109 and declarer, ♥A65. Declarer comes to his hand with the ♣J and leads the ♠7, which you duck. Declarer continues with the ♠8 to your king. West has followed to both spades with the three and six.

What do you do now?

Declarer has six spades, three hearts, and at least three clubs. Therefore, only one diamond. You should cash the ace and take the trick you have coming before it goes away on dummy's clubs.

♠ 6 3

♥ Q J 10 9

♦ 9 8 4 2

♣ 10 8 7

♠ A

♥ K 2

♦ K J 7 6 3

♣ A 6 5 4 2

N

W

E

S

♠ K 5 4 2

♥ 8 7 4 3

♦ A Q 5

♣ 9 3

♠ Q J 10 9 8 7

♥ A 6 5

♦ 10

♣ K Q J

It wasn't hard to work this out.

What would have happened if declarer had been less free with information? What if he had come to his hand with the ♣K rather than the jack? East might suspect declarer had the ♣KQJ, but he couldn't be absolutely sure. Room for doubt. And therefore, room for error.

To a lesser extent, declarer gave away his spade holding too, but the bidding had already done that so the defense didn't get much new news there.

♠ —

♥ J 8 2

♦ A K Q J 2

♣ K 10 7 4 2

♠ Q J 10 9 8 7 6

♥ A

♦ 8 4 3

♣ Q 5

West	North	East	South
	1♦	4♥	4♠
all pass			

On this sequence, South's spades are a bit of a mystery. South was under serious pressure and might have been forced to bid on a much worse suit.

When declarer wins the heart lead, he should play the ♠Q rather than the six. The queen will leave both defenders wondering about your length in spades. If you lead the six, they will find out quickly how many you have and exactly what the high cards are.

RULE

Barring a clear reason to do otherwise, declarer should tend to play the highest of equal cards when he is playing from his hand.

There are dozens of examples that can show these wrong plays. Remember that you may have a valid reason for playing as described, but in general, you are giving away too much free information.

A 9 **2**

 K Q J 10 8

This will help East count both your high cards and your shape.

8 6 **2**

 A Q J 10

Whatever card West plays, East learns about your high cards.

4 3 **2**

 K Q J 7

Likewise.

K J 8 5

 Q 10 9 7 6 **2**

Awful!

K 4 **2**

 Q J 3

Why tell the opponents you have the queen? Lead to the queen. Now neither opponent learns what you have in the suit.

I see a lot of these combinations where declarer takes two tricks rather than one to give the show away.

K 4 3 2

 A Q J 10 5

The five to the king followed by the two to the ten gives the position away.

Q 5 2

 K J 10 9 3

The three to the queen followed by the two to the nine is another giveaway.

Many of these combinations can be played so as to mislead your opponents.

K 6 4 2

 A Q J 10 9

Play the ace and lead the jack to the king. Either opponent may think his partner has the queen.

5 4 Q 9 7 2 A

 K J 10 8 6 3

Lead the ten to the queen. If it loses to the ace, as it does here, lay down your king when you next play the suit. East may think West has the jack.

I have never seen anyone make the right play in the following layout:

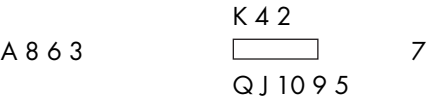
A J 9 3 K 4 2 7

 Q 10 8 6 5

When you lead the five to the king and return the four, East shows out, meaning

West has three winners. What I usually see is South playing the six while at the same time expressing disgust at his bad luck. This is bad technique and bad emoting. Save your sad comments until the hand is over.

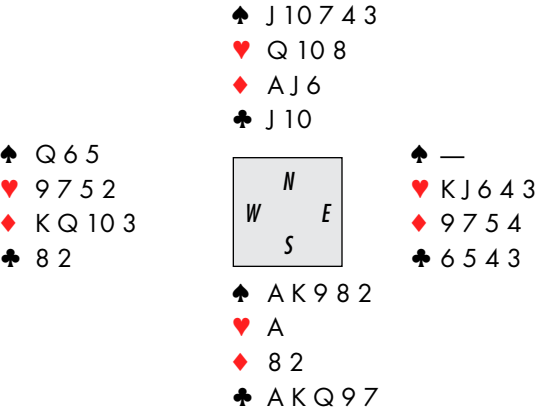
It doesn't matter which card you play. You have three losers. But you don't have to tell East. Play the queen and don't make a face when you do it. East may not realize West has the AJ93. From East's perspective, the suit might be like this:



Why give the show away?

These various plays won't make that much difference, but once you think of them, you will find them to be almost automatic. Your opponents, as a consequence, will have to work a bit harder and as a result they will make more mistakes than they do now.

This hand offers a web of deception.



West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	6♣
all pass			

South opened 1♠ and North made a limit raise. South cuebid, as did North. South might have considered looking for 7♠ but settled for 6♣.

West led the ♦K, taken by the ace. South noted that 7♠ might be cold, but when South played the ♠A and ♠K, he learned that West had a spade trick. Not

even 6♠ was cold now. South needs to get rid of dummy's diamonds on the club suit. How should South play from here? Be specific.

South should play the ♣A and ♣K. When he does this, West follows with the two and eight. South leads another club hoping that West can't ruff it, but his choice of clubs is important. If South noted West's eight, he will know that the seven is good. He should lead the seven. If West follows or if West has no more clubs but forgets to ruff, South will be able to get rid of dummy's diamonds.

When the hand was played, West erred and South was able to get rid of the diamonds in time. Do you see a way for West to know what he should have done?

If East signaled at Trick 1 with a high diamond, that play should show that he had two or four diamonds. In either case, South has at least two of them. West can ruff the ♣7 and cash a diamond.

Let's say that West does ruff. What should South play from dummy?

Believe it or not, declarer can make a falsecard from dummy! South discards a heart instead of a diamond. If West is not confident that his ♦Q will live, he may lead a heart. That won't work. South still has two good clubs to get rid of dummy's last two diamonds.

Swindles everywhere.

NOT REVEALING YOUR STRENGTH — II

A family of positions exists where you conceal your strength from the opponents in order to mislead them as to how many tricks you have.

	9 7 5 4 2	
Q J 3	<div></div>	10 6
	A K 8	

If you play the ace, king, and eight, the opponents will see you have 7 points and three diamonds and that you have four diamond tricks. If your entries permit, you might start diamonds by leading the eight or leading to the eight. The opponents may not judge you to have four running tricks and they may misjudge the urgency of the defense.

	♠ A 4 3	
	♥ J 5 4	
	♦ 9 7 5 4 2	
	♣ K 10	
♠ Q J 10 9 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ 8 6
♥ A Q 2		♥ K 10 9 7
♦ Q J 3		♦ 10 6
♣ 9 2		♣ 7 6 5 4 3
	♠ K 7 2	
	♥ 8 6 3	
	♦ A K 8	
	♣ A Q J 8	

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠Q, won by the ace. East plays the six and South the seven, trying to make the six look like a come-on. At Trick 2 declarer leads to his ♦8. Should West switch to hearts?

If declarer had played the ♦A, ♦K and ♦8, East would have discarded the ♣3. Certainly, comparing these two lines of play by declarer, West is more likely to switch to hearts when he see declarer's diamonds and his partner's ♣3.

Variations include these examples:

K 8 6 4 2

A 7 **3**

This is not spectacular but, as they say, it's free.

A 6 4 2

K 5 **3**

Why let them know you have the king?

J 9	K 6 3 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> Q 7 5 4	A 10 8
-----	--	--------

If you lead the four to the king and ace, later lead the five. No one will be sure where the queen is.

A Q 6 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> 5 4 <u>3</u>
--

In a slightly different vein, try leading the two toward the three. If nothing good happens, you will take the finesse. But if East started with Kx, Kxx, or even Kxxx, he may get nervous and take the king too soon.

Combinations like these can be a lot of fun.

J 9 <u>3</u>	K 7 4 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> Q <u>6</u>	A 10 8 <u>5</u>
--------------	--	-----------------

After winning the queen, go back to dummy and lead the four.

9 6 3	K 7 4 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> Q J	A 10 8 5
-------	--	----------

East will have to guess whether you have Q6 or QJ. If you did have the QJ, it would be good play to lead twice from dummy because East might duck twice, fearing you actually have Q6.

J 9 3	K 7 4 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> Q 6	A 10 8 5
-------	--	----------

Note that when you lead the two, you are already putting East under pressure. If he goes up with his ace, he gives you two tricks. And if he ducks, he runs the risk of letting you score a stiff queen.

9 6 3	Q 7 4 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> K J	A 10 8 5
-------	--	----------

When you exchange the king and queen, the situation is basically the same.

STEALING A TRICK WHEN TIME IS LOST

Bridge is comprised of many elements. One of them is time. If you bid 3NT and have eleven tricks, they will do you little good if you haven't time to get them. You'd be just as well off if you had only eight tricks.

♠ A 2
♥ K Q J 2
♦ Q 4
♣ K J 9 8 7

♠ K Q J 10 8 4
♥ 9 7 4
♦ J 8
♣ A 3

♠ 7 3
♥ A 10 3
♦ A K 3
♣ Q 10 6 5 2

♠ 9 6 5
♥ 8 6 5
♦ 10 9 7 6 5 2
♣ 4

W

N

E

S

These hands are typical. You can make 6♣ or 6NT without a spade lead. With a spade lead the bad diamond break holds you to 5♣. But you can't make 3NT. When time is against you, it may be fatal.

Sometimes, when you don't have time to make your contract legitimately you can steal a trick or two before the roof falls in.

North-South vulnerable

♠ A 10 7 5 3
♥ 8 4
♦ Q 9 3
♣ 9 6 5

♠ 9 6 2
♥ K Q J 7 2
♦ J 5 4
♣ 7 2

♠ K J
♥ 10 6 3
♦ A 8
♣ A K Q J 10 4

♠ Q 8 4
♥ A 9 5
♦ K 10 7 6 2
♣ 8 3

W

N

E

S

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

Against 3NT, West leads the ♠5 to the queen and king.

Cashing six clubs isn't a good idea since it would show East that he shouldn't hold up in hearts.

Better is for declarer to lead the ♥10. It's almost impossible for the defense to do the right thing. If West has the ♥A, he has to guess to take it and then to bang down the ♠A. And if East has it, he won't know for sure that the hand goes down if he wins it. East will almost always duck. If declarer is greedy, he might even try to steal a second heart trick. Nervy, but at matchpoints not too unreasonable.

Another common swindle looks something like this:

♠ K 5
♥ K J 2
♦ J 10 8 3
♣ K 10 9 2

N

W

E

S

♠ A J
♥ A Q 7
♦ K Q 7 2
♣ J 5 4 3

West	North	East	South
	pass	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠2 to the five, ten, and jack.

The obvious source of tricks is diamonds. Unfortunately, you won't have enough tricks from diamonds alone.

If you play on diamonds, the defense will win and return a spade, exposing your duplication. You won't have time to get a club trick. Your best play is to win the spade at Trick 1 and lead the ♣J. If West plays low, play dummy's king. If it wins, you're home. Note that if you let the ♣J run, it would not do you any good even if East won the ace. Not enough tricks.

Here are some combinations where you can try to steal a trick before going about your business:

K 4 2

9 7 3

Risky, but if you need an extra trick early, try to steal the king.

J 4 2

 A Q 10 **5**

If West is known to have the king, lead toward the jack.

4 2

 A Q J **10**

Maybe you can sneak the ten by West.

These plays don't rate to work all that often, but if you are desperate, these plays may be your best chance.

When you are weighing the chances of a swindle working, you have to consider how it's going to look to the defenders you're trying to steal from. Take the earlier example:

Q 10

 A **3**

I've always wanted to try this. Of course, if it doesn't work, there may be some explaining to do.

Leading the three toward the dummy looks perfectly absurd, but if you consider it from West's point of view, it looks quite normal, i.e. West will think the suit is something like this:

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

If West ducks smoothly (he hopes), declarer may finesse the ten. Defense isn't easy and even a good defender might misjudge.

Here is a hand where this ploy is your only chance:

Neither vulnerable

♠ K 7 6 2
♥ J 10 8 3
♦ 8 7
♣ A 7 6

♠ Q 10
♥ K Q
♦ K 9 5 3 2
♣ 9 8 3 2

♠ J 9 8 5 4
♥ 9 7 5 4 2
♦ 6 4
♣ K

♠ A 3
♥ A 6
♦ A Q J 10
♣ Q J 10 5 4

Diagram illustrating a bridge hand layout. The cards are distributed among four players (North, South, East, West) and a central dummy box. The dummy box contains the North-South hand. The cards are as follows:

- North (top): ♠ Q 10, ♥ K Q, ♦ K 9 5 3 2, ♣ 9 8 3 2
- South (bottom): ♠ A 3, ♥ A 6, ♦ A Q J 10, ♣ Q J 10 5 4
- West (left): ♠ K 7 6 2, ♥ J 10 8 3, ♦ 8 7, ♣ A 7 6
- East (right): ♠ J 9 8 5 4, ♥ 9 7 5 4 2, ♦ 6 4, ♣ K

West	North	East	South
			1 ♣
pass	1 ♦	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

South plays in 3NT with the ♥J lead. You have eight top tricks and three more are available in clubs. But the timing is against you. If you win the heart and lead clubs, East will win and likely will play a heart back. Your ace will show the opponents you started with two of them so they know they are in position to cash out for down one when you lead another club.

Better might be to win the heart in dummy and come to your hand with a diamond. Lead the ♠3 toward dummy. This is not such a strange play that a defender will sense something weird going on and he may well play low. A good defender will know that ducking with the king has to be done in tempo and he may play low automatically, something that is usually correct in this situation. He knows that if you had the AJx, you would lead the queen for a finesse. Leading toward the queen almost always shows that declarer has Axx or similar and is trying to set up a second trick in the suit.

If West plays low you must play the queen, and when it wins, you are home. Note that you do not lose anything on this particular hand by trying this swindle. If the opponents win the trick, you still have your eight tricks.

HIDING YOUR SHAPE

♠ J 2

♥ K Q J 10 8

♦ Q 8 6 3

♣ 5 4

♠ Q 8 6 5

♥ A 6 3

♦ K J 4

♣ 8 6 2

N

W E

S

West	North	East	South
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2NT ¹
pass	3♦ ²	pass	3♥
pass	4NT ³	all pass	

- 1. 22-23.
- 2. Transfer.
- 3. Quantitative raise.

Against 4NT, your partner, West, leads the ♠10, which looks encouraging. You cover dummy’s jack and declarer wins with the king. At Trick 2, he leads the ♥5. West plays the four and dummy the king. Do you win or duck?

It’s usually correct to duck and here there is no substantial clue to do otherwise. You play the three. The real problem comes at Trick 3 when dummy leads the ♥Q.

If you could tell how many hearts everyone had, you would be able to duck or grab appropriately. If you could just be sure. West, in these circumstances, should be trying to help you. His card will be a count card to tell you how many he has in the suit. If partner has two or four hearts, he will play a high one to show an even number. If he has three or five, he will play his smallest to show an odd number.

In the problem above, the hearts seen so far were these:

4

K Q J 10 8

5

A 6 3

Putting the above into practice, it becomes clear that on this particular hand, your defensive signals are inadequate. West’s four could be from 42, showing two, or from 974, showing three. There’s no way to tell for sure. You can guess that declarer would have bid 5♥ rather than pass 4NT if he had three hearts. But we all know that such inferences are nebulous at best.

Before looking at the complete hand, try defending this hand with a slightly different bit of information.

	K Q J 10 8	
<u>4</u>	<div></div>	A 6 <u>3</u>
	2	

In this setup, it's clear that West can't have a doubleton. The two and three confirm this. This means that West has three cards and, therefore, it is correct to take the second round.

This exact defense is required. Here's the complete hand:

	♠ J 2	
	♥ K Q J 10 8	
	♦ Q 8 6 3	
	♣ 5 4	
♠ 10 9 7 4		♠ Q 8 6 5
♥ 9 7 4		♥ A 6 3
♦ 10 7 2		♦ K J 4
♣ 10 7 3		♣ 8 6 2
	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W<div>E</div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ A K 3	
	♥ 5 2	
	♦ A 9 5	
	♣ A K Q J 9	

South upgraded his 21 points and got a smidgeon too high as a result. I guess this is called falsecarding during the bidding. North did a little overbidding too based on the solid heart suit. It all added up.

In the play, if East takes the first heart declarer will get twelve tricks and if East ducks the second heart, South will get his ten tricks.

Note what happened here. Declarer had the ♥52. It doesn't seem fair that his choice of plays should make such a big difference, yet it did. The reason declarer's play was effective was that he concealed a spot card that was crucial to the defense's signals. An ambiguity was created.

Remember a few pages ago when this suit was discussed:

	Q 8 <u>2</u>	
A K J 7 3	<div></div>	10 9 <u>5</u>
	<u>6</u> 4	

West couldn't tell where the four was. If West thought East had it, he would do one thing. If he thought declarer had it, West would do something else. Much

the same applies to defenders' count signals as applies to their attitude signals. They can be had! Not always, but more often than one might suspect.

One useful criterion here :

RULE

The smaller the card that you conceal, the more likely it is your falsecard will work.

J 7 <u>4</u>	<u>K</u> Q 10 8 6 [] 9 5	A 3 2
--------------	---------------------------------	-------

East can see all the small cards now so South's deception won't work. South made a nice try but the five was just not small enough to do useful camouflaging.

J 7 <u>6</u>	<u>K</u> Q 10 8 4 [] 9 5	A 3 2
--------------	---------------------------------	-------

This time, the missing five does create problems for East. West could have J765, J76, or 65.

A 8 6 4	K Q J 10 9 [] 7 5 2	3
---------	----------------------------	---

Lead the seven or the five, return to hand and lead the other high spot. West won't know if East started with one or two cards.

Some defenders get around this by signaling more enthusiastically when they have four cards, i.e., when holding four, they signal with their top or next to top card. For example, if a defender wished to give count, he would do so as in the examples below. Note the defenders' criteria for these signals.

RULE

Signal with the loudest or most emphatic card available.

<u>6</u> 2	Forced
7 <u>6</u> <u>2</u>	Also forced
<u>7</u> 6 4 2	Either the six or seven will be easier for partner to read than the four
J 10 <u>6</u> 2	If you can't afford a higher spot, do the best you can
J <u>8</u> 6 2	The eight, if affordable

I saw a declarer do this:

♠ K Q J 10 9 3
♥ 7 3
♦ 8 3
♣ J 9 4

♠ 8 6 5
♥ K 10 8 5 2
♦ A 5
♣ 10 8 3

W N E
S

♠ A 2
♥ J 9 4
♦ 9 6 4
♣ K Q 6 5 2

♠ 7 4
♥ A Q 6
♦ K Q J 10 7 2
♣ A 7

West	North	East	South
	2♠	pass	3NT
all pass			

West led the ♥5 to the jack and queen. Declarer saw that if he could steal a spade trick, he could concede a diamond for nine tricks. Declarer led a cunning ♠4 so that the defenders could be sure he had two spades. East observed he could shut out the spade suit by ducking and he did.

Declarer took no further spade tricks but the diamond suit afforded the rest. If South leads diamonds first, the defense will set up the hearts and South won't have time to get a spade trick.

Should East have worked it out?

10 4 2

A 9 7 3

5

East, at a middle stage of the hand, leads the five. What should declarer play?

Probably the seven. West will win the trick and whatever else he has to think about, he will think East has the three. This will lead to various misperceptions and ultimately, errors.

Similarly, these Trick 1 techniques will work later as well:

J 8		K
<div></div>		
Q 9 6 3 2		

At a notrump contract, East switches at some point to the king of this suit. Be sure you follow with the six.

	J 8		
7 4	<div></div>	A K 10 5	
	Q 9 <u>6</u> 3 2		

East might read the four as encouraging. West could have the Q42. You won't be hurting if East decides to continue this suit. You will gain a lot of time and perhaps a couple of tricks as well.

SUBTLE LEADS BY DECLARER: OVERCOMING BLOCKED SUITS

One of bridge's more aggravating moments comes when the tricks are there, except for some hidden glitch. A typical example is a suit which has a built-in blockage.

	A K J 6 2	
Q 8 7 3	<div></div>	5 4
	10 9	

This is such a suit. If you need five tricks, but have no entry to dummy, you have to take a first round finesse. Further, you can't succeed if West covers the card you lead.

Say you lead the ten and West plays the queen. You have the choice of playing the three top cards, which in this case will hold you to three tricks. Or you can duck the trick, thus ensuring four tricks against anything but a 5-1 or 6-0 division. If you need five tricks, though, you will require a small miracle. One way to improve your chances is to lead the nine rather than the ten. West should cover this, but many defenders have missed this play.

This theme, plus variations of it, appears frequently, but since quite a few tricks can result from success, it is important to know it. Here are some examples:

A K J 6 2
<div></div>
10 9

As per the above hand, you should try to sneak the nine through.

A K Q 3

 10 9

Again, try the nine. If you have an entry to dummy you can lead either card (intending to finesse), but if there is no entry you should lead the nine. The last thing you want is for West to cover.

K 9 5 4 2

 A J 10

If you lead the jack, West may rise to the occasion. Better to lead the ten. It's easy to say that West should cover the ten. At the table, it's not always so easy to tell.

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

♠ 7 5 2
 ♥ 10 6 2
 ♦ K 9 8 4 2
 ♣ K 5

N
E

W
S

♠ A K Q J
 ♥ A J 5 3
 ♦ A J 10
 ♣ J 2

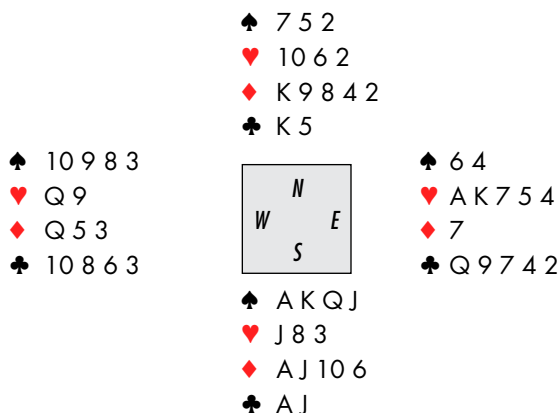
♠ 6 4
 ♥ K 8 7 4
 ♦ 7 6
 ♣ A Q 9 7 4

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	2NT

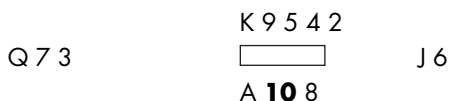
West leads the ♠10. Declarer wins and plays the ♦10.

If West ducks, declarer will get ten fast tricks. If West covers, declarer can either duck it or take it and hope that the ♣K is an entry. Both plays run risks.

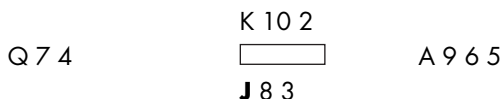
Conversely:



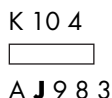
Covering the ♦10 would be a disaster.



This also would be a poor time to cover the ten.



This swindle works all too often, yet it's hard to judge defensively that West should cover.



One of the first cons you learned when you took up bridge was that you should start this suit by leading the jack. If West covers, fine. And if he doesn't, play the king and finesse East for the queen.

There was a time when this worked. After a while though, this play became so well known that everyone learned it and now no one covers the jack. Well, if no one is going to cover, it becomes reasonable to try the swindle mentioned above, i.e.:

K 10 2

J 8 3

or even:

K 10 2

J 8 6 5 3

If West misreads the situation, and many Wests will, then declarer will have stolen a trick. In practice it's extremely difficult to evaluate what declarer is doing and many fine defenders will fall for this one.

Incidentally, when you pull this off against a good defender, he will remember. Then in the future, when you have the real suit:

K 10 4

A J 9 8 7

your West defender may fall from grace and cover this jack, too.

It helps your credibility if you have bid the suit or if you make the play as quickly as possible before the defenders get a count on your hand.

Q 5 4

K 9 2

10 6 3

A J 8 7

Declarer can't get a trick out of this if the defenders do all the right things.

Because it's so difficult for the defense to always guess what to do, it's reasonable for declarer to start this suit by leading the ten.

A J 7 5

K Q 4 2

10 9 3

8 6

West usually ducks in this position and in this case, that's wrong. Declarer can let the nine ride and will end up with three tricks.

West has to cover the nine with the ace or jack to hold South to two tricks. It's a little strange for declarer to play the suit this way, but lack of entries could dictate it. Or knowledge that West has length could be the reason. In either case, the nine is the play most likely to sneak by the West defender.

OTHER SUBTLE LEADS

There are quite a few situations where declarer can trade on the defense's inability to tell what's going on.

♠	Q J 7 6
♥	J 2
♦	10 4 2
♣	K Q 5 3

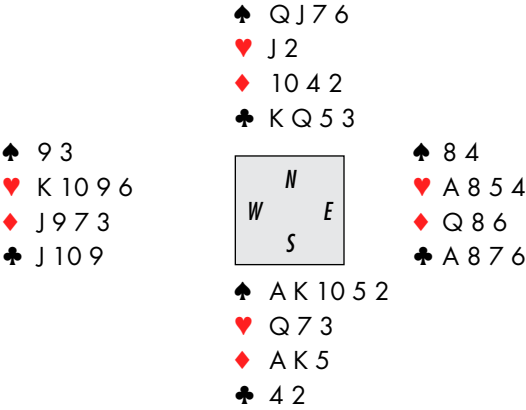
	N	
W		E
	S	

♠	A K 10 5 4
♥	K 10 5
♦	Q J 5
♣	A 4

Declarer in 4♠ has three top losers and must guess the heart suit correctly if possible. Declarer's most likely effort will be to draw trumps and fuss around with clubs and diamonds. Ultimately, declarer will lead the ♥J from dummy.

Clearly on this hand, the last thing East should do is cover. Whether East has the ace or the queen, he has to hold it back. If East has both honors, it doesn't matter what he does.

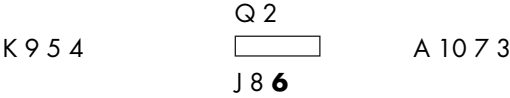
In the next diagram, South has a different problem. South plays in 4♠.



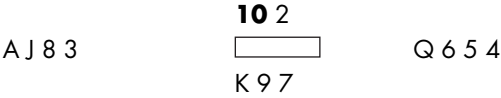
Here West led the ♣J to the queen and East's ace. Declarer won the club return with the king and drew trumps, ending in dummy. Now he led the ♥J and East found himself involved in a guessing game. Duck or not?

In this case, ducking is wrong. West will win the king, but declarer will later lead toward his queen, establishing a discard for dummy's losing diamond.

Similar guessing games can be created:



West has to guess if declarer has Jxx or Axx.



East has to guess if the actual situation exists and declarer is looking for just one trick, or if declarer has KJx and is hoping to avoid losing two tricks.

	♠ 8 6 5 2										
	♥ A Q										
	♦ Q 3										
	♣ K 10 8 6 5										
♠ Q J 9 4	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 7 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 8 6		♥ K 10 9 7 3 2									
♦ A 8 6 4 2		♦ K 9 5									
♣ 2		♣ 7									
	♠ A K										
	♥ 5 4										
	♦ J 10 7										
	♣ A Q J 9 4 3										

South plays in 5♣ with the ♠Q lead. Declarer wins, plays a trump to dummy, and leads the ♦Q.

East has to duck so West can win and return a heart. But this is a very difficult play to find.

Similarly:

	♠ 8 6 5 2										
	♥ A Q										
	♦ 8 3										
	♣ K 10 8 6 5										
♠ Q J 9 4	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 10 7 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 8 6 3		♥ K 10 9 7 2									
♦ A 7 6 4		♦ K 5									
♣ 2		♣ 7 3									
	♠ A										
	♥ 5 4										
	♦ Q J 10 9 2										
	♣ A Q J 9 4										

Again, South plays in 5♣ with the ♠Q lead. South's best play is to draw trumps and lead the ♦2 toward the eight. West will have to rise with the ace and shift immediately to a heart. Not an intuitive play.

8 3
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px;"></div>
K J 10 9 2

If this were the diamond suit in the previous hand, it would still be a good idea to lead the two toward the eight. Losing an extra diamond trick is of little consequence if the contract makes.

Other variations of this play include these:

A J 10 2
[]
K Q 3

If declarer needs to cash three rounds of this suit before East ruffs in, he can play the king, three to the ace and then the jack. East may think declarer is trying a ruffing finesse and neglect to ruff in.

A Q 9 6 2
[]
K 10 5

If declarer doesn't want East to ruff, he should 'finesse' the queen, cash the ace and lead the two. If East thinks South is going to ruff, he may not ruff in himself.

A K 10 8 6
[]
Q J 3

Again, if South doesn't want East to ruff in too soon, South should lead the jack to the ace. Then play the king and six.

You may observe that if West gives a count signal in these positions, East should not be confused. This is true, but you should try these deceptions anyway, for four reasons:

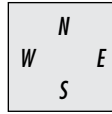
1. East may not be paying attention.
2. East-West may not give signals.
3. West may misjudge the situation and choose not to give count.
4. It can't hurt to try.

FAKING STRENGTH OR MISREPRESENTING YOUR HOLDING

Almost any time you can mislead your opponents, you will gain from their confusion.

The ways you can mislead and the reasons for doing so are myriad.

♠ A K Q J 5
 ♥ A J 3
 ♦ Q 4
 ♣ 10 9 7



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

West	North	East	South
	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♥4.

At this moment, you have eight tricks, regardless of your play at Trick 1. You need a diamond trick and you want to get it without the defense shifting to clubs. One possible smokescreen you can try is to play the ♥J at Trick 1. If East covers, you will win, but your exact holding won't be clear to the defenders. They may each hope their partner has your ten spot. Let's say East covers the jack and you win with the king. You lead the ♦10.

If West has the ace, he may not realize you have nine fast tricks and he may hold up. If so, you are home. If West doesn't play the ace, you will play dummy's queen. The reason you make this apparently wasteful play is that you don't want East to know you have solid diamonds. You want him to think West has the ♦J.

Let's say East wins the ♦A. If he believes either or both of your falsecards, i.e., the ♥J and the ♦10, then he may not find the killing club switch.

Now, let's assume the ♥J wins. Is it still correct to lead diamonds? Against thoughtless defenders, you may get away with setting up the diamond suit. But it shouldn't work. A better play would be for you to attack the club suit yourself. Lead the ♣10 at Trick 2. One of three things can happen:

1. The defense runs the clubs. This is not what you want and, in practice, it's unlikely to happen.
2. The defense will block the club suit and they will be unable to run it.
3. The defense may be able to run clubs but won't out of fear that you have the missing honors. Some of the time, the defenders will take the club and will attack diamonds. And some of the time, your ♣10 will win.

For example:

	♣ 10 9 7	
♣ A 5 4	<div></div>	♣ K Q 6 2
	♣ J 8 3	

I've see defenders do some strange things. If West thinks South has better clubs, he might let the ten win. If this does happen, I would probably not lead another club.

You can attack some pretty outrageous holdings. In the above hand, you attacked ♣1097 opposite ♣J83. When you judge that this tactic is proper, you can 'attack' just about any holding.

These combinations have all been attacked at one time or another:

8 2	7 5	K	6 2
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
J 6 3	Q 4	8 6 4	Q J

The last holding was once played at notrump for two tricks. Declarer led twice toward his hand and was allowed to win each time. He commented that it was a shame he didn't have the ten also, so that he might get another trick.

In 1960, a match between expert teams produced this hand:

	♠ A K Q J 7	
	♥ A K 6 4 2	
	♦ 3	
	♣ K J	
♠ 8		♠ 9 6 4 3 2
♥ Q J 10 9 7		♥ 8
♦ A J 8 2		♦ K 10 9 7 5 4
♣ A 10 2		♣ 8
	<div></div>	
	♠ 10 5	
	♥ 5 3	
	♦ Q 6	
	♣ Q 9 7 6 5 4 3	

South arrived in a doubtful 3NT against the lead of the ♥Q. The play went, believe it or not, ♥Q to the ace, ♦3 to the queen, which won (!), ♣6 to the king.

Declarer took his nine tricks.

Q 4

 8 **2**

 K J 7 6 5

 A 10 9 3

This is a side suit in a trump contract. You have guessed correctly to lead to the king.

If entries permit you to reenter dummy to lead the eight, East will almost always go up with the ace, which will crash West's queen. Here's a possible layout.

Both vulnerable

♠ 7 6

♥ Q 10 8 7 4

♦ J 7 4 3

♣ Q 4

♠ K 10 9 2

♥ 9 6 5

♦ A 8 6 2

♣ 8 2

N
W E
S

♠ A Q J 5 3

♥ A 2

♦ 9

♣ K J 7 6 5

♠ 8 4

♥ K J 3

♦ K Q 10 5

♣ A 10 9 3

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

West led the ♦3, won by the ace. Declarer guessed correctly in clubs by leading to his king.

If declarer continues clubs from his hand, he will eventually make an overtrick. If declarer instead goes to dummy with a trump and leads another club, East will probably win it, crashing West's queen. This gives declarer time to pitch dummy's hearts on the club suit, making six.

Suits like these can be played deceptively:

Q

 A J 6 4 2

In a trump contract, you might play this side suit by leading low to the queen. West might duck, especially if he wants East to get in.

This play could also be correct technically if you feel you haven't sufficient entries to ruff out the suit.

J 2
[]
A Q 6 **3**

If you feel the king is offside, you can lead to the jack, rather than take a losing finesse.

J
[]
A Q 7 6 **3**

Likewise.

J
[]
A K 10 5 **3**

If declarer knows West has length in this suit and that it will be difficult to ruff three times in dummy, he can try leading the three.

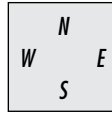
10 4
[]
A K Q **6**

If declarer needs four tricks from this suit, his best play is to lead the six toward the ten. West, with Jxx or Jxxx, may duck.

J 3
[]
A K **4**

As above, if declarer needs a trick, he could try leading the four.

♠ 4 2
 ♥ A J 8 6 2
 ♦ A 6 5 2
 ♣ K 2



♠ K 8
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ K Q 7 3
 ♣ A Q J 10 3

Declarer plays in 3NT with a small spade lead to East's queen. How should South proceed?

The correct play here is not difficult. In fact, it may not be worth mentioning. But it is worth trying. Run off your five clubs, pitching two diamonds and one spade. If a defender does have four diamonds, he may be induced to throw one.

This play is unspectacular, but is typical of the little things a good declarer does to mislead careless opponents.

East-West vulnerable

♠ J 4 2
 ♥ 3
 ♦ 8 6 2
 ♣ K 8 7 6 5 4

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



West	North	East	South
			1 ♣
dbl	4 ♣	pass	5 ♣
all pass			

You lead the ♥J, won by declarer's queen. Declarer pitches a spade on the ♥A and leads the ♣J to your ace.

Your play?

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

	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K Q 8										
	♥ A Q										
	♦ Q 10 5										
	♣ Q J 9 3										

If you don't cash your two diamond tricks, 5♣ will make. Were you taken in by declarer's spade discard?

If anyone wants to complain that their signaling methods would have avoided this, I won't quibble at all. It's quite possible that East may be able to suggest a diamond lead. But I doubt there will be many such defenders. I think the falsecard will lure far more defenders than not. Note that this falsecard is not without cost. If East-West take their three diamond tricks, declarer will be down one more than necessary.

How do you defend in the following setup?

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

	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										

North	South
	1♠
2♠	3♠
4♠	pass

Your partner leads the ♠3, won by dummy's queen. At Trick 2, dummy leads the ♥J. What is your play? Here are some possible layouts.

Chapter 11: Falsecards by Declarer During the Middle of the Hand [177]

♠ Q 10 8
♥ J 10 9
♦ A 6 2
♣ Q 10 7

[178] *Falsecards*

In this layout, the bidding is the same but East has the ♥K instead of the ace. Again, partner leads the ♠3 to dummy's queen, and the ♥J is led. Your play.

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

This layout is identical to the first of the above hands except that the defense's ♥A and ♥K are switched.

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

The winning defense is for East to go up with the ♥K and switch to diamonds. If East ducks, West will win, but this leaves South with a ruffing finesse in hearts. He will be able to set up two heart tricks and will make an overtrick.

What these hands teach is that in bridge, as in life, things are often either unclear, or not as they seem. In these examples was declarer playing deceptively, or was he making the technically correct play? The distinction is a delicate one.

CHAPTER 12

SOME AMAZING FALSECARDS

In this edition of the book, I have included many falsecards that were not in the original version. This final chapter has a few that I have noted over the years that deserve to be seen. They don't fit anywhere else so I put them here in their own little chapter.

From a game on a cruise ship:

North-South vulnerable

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

W	N	E
	S	

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

West	North	East	South
2♠	3♥	pass	3NT
all pass			

Sitting East, you are defending 3NT. West leads the ♠A, your strong lead asking you to play an honor if you have one and otherwise to give count. On this hand your play, whatever it is, will tell partner exactly what you have in spades. You choose the ♦3, discouraging. Your partner leads the ♦9. It looks like he is trying to kill dummy's entry. South is in dummy and at Trick 3 he leads the ♥Q. What do you do?

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

N

WE

S

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

From a practice match between two world-class teams:

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

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

[182] *Falsecards*

West led the ♠J, won by the ace. Declarer followed with the ♦K and ♦A, and a third diamond. West followed with the four, seven, and queen. This play established South's ♦J so the only remaining issue was getting trumps out. Declarer finessed the ♣J, and it won.

West's defense to this point was based on his knowledge of South's hand. West expected (hoped) that declarer would finesse clubs again, at which point West would give East a diamond ruff. Had this happened, it would have made for a great story.

When South continued with the ♣10 from dummy, East following, he decided not to play for an overtrick. Instead he took the ♣A. This dropped the king and declarer made an overtrick. Instead of West having a great story, South had one of his own.

In the postmortem that ensued during the comparison, it was pointed out that if East had held the ♣9, South could not have afforded to play the ♣A. That would have been disastrous if East had held four clubs to the K9.

From a pairs game at a National event. I will show you only the diamond suit. You can decide if East's play was a technically correct play or a falsecard.

South bid 1♦ and later declared in 3NT.

	♦ 6	
♦ Q J 10 5 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div>	♦ K 3
	♦ A 9 8 7 2	

When the ♦6 was led, East played the king. Perhaps he wanted to get in. Perhaps he was falsecarding. It was the correct play but I suspect it was not correct for the reasons East was thinking about.

Look at the spot cards in the diamond suit. If East plays low, so does South, West winning with the ten. South next leads the ♦A, dropping East's king, and follows with the nine. West wins with the jack and later South leads the eight, knocking out West's queen. That leaves South with the winning ♦7. Note that when East played the king, it had the effect of giving West four diamond stoppers, not three. One might think of the king play as covering an honor. A six is not usually thought of as being an honor card, but in this layout it was.

The next example comes from a BBO match. The opportunity to falsecard was noticed by the commentators but not by the players. It's easy to see why it was overlooked at the table. Instead of presenting this one as a problem, I will show you all four hands:

Neither vulnerable

♠ 5 3

♥ 9 7 6

♦ K J 10 6 5

♣ 10 9 8

N
E

W
S

♠ A 8 2

♥ A J 10 5

♦ A 4 2

♣ K 4 3

♠ K 6

♥ Q 3 2

♦ 9 8 3

♣ A Q J 6 2

♠ Q J 10 9 7 4

♥ K 8 4

♦ Q 7

♣ 7 5

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

West led the ♣10 and South ruffed the third round with the ♠9. South led the ♠Q and when West did not cover, he finessed, losing to East's king. East shifted to the ♦9. South played the queen and West played the king. South counted up the missing high card points and saw that East had to have the ♥Q for his bid. He won the ♦A and led the ♥J for a successful finesse. After drawing trumps, he ran the hearts and got rid of his diamond loser.

How does this defense strike you?

Here is where the commentators kicked in. One of them made the observation that if West lets the ♦Q win, South might credit East with the ♦K. If East has that card along with his ♠K and the ♣AQJ, then perhaps he would have opened 1NT if also holding the ♥Q. If South comes to that reasonable conclusion, East will win the setting trick when the heart finesse loses.

This hand comes with a serious problem. Not many defenders can work out not to play the ♦K in tempo. If you were able to think it through in about one second, you might get away with it. So this falsecard will probably not be seen soon at the table.

Both vulnerable

♠ Q 10 8 4
 ♥ K J 9 8
 ♦ A 9
 ♣ K 8 2

♠ A 7 5
 ♥ Q 7 6 5 3
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ 10 9 4

♠ 9 6 3
 ♥ 4
 ♦ 10 7 6 5 2
 ♣ J 7 6 5

♠ K J 2
 ♥ A 10 2
 ♦ K Q J 3
 ♣ A Q 3

N
 W E
 S

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

West leads the ♠4, won by South's jack. There are lots of tricks to be had here. If the hearts behave, you might take three spades, four hearts, two diamonds, and a club.

What do you do if West plays a low heart on the ace and a low heart when you lead to dummy? This depends on how serious you are about making your contract.

Can West do anything about this? Perhaps.

Chapter 12: Some Amazing Falsecards [185]

winners. West's ♥J is another falsecard that you probably haven't seen before, but should be aware of now.

Of course, if you are playing matchpoints, you may be inclined to play hearts to be 3-2, which is a typical greedy matchpoint play that wins some of the time and comes to grief the rest of the time. Your choice.

Just for fun, you might consider how to play the hand if West plays the ♥K on the ace.

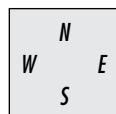
The last hand in the book was written up forty years ago. It was a nightmare hand for the defenders then but it makes for interesting reading now.

The players were all on the short list of who's-who in bridge. For once I will give you a name. South was Tim Seres, who was the best Australian player ever. He had a knack for doing just what you did not want him to do and this talent made him an extremely difficult opponent. I was lucky enough to play against him a couple of times. Not enough to get to know him as well as I would have liked, but well enough to know that he was an amazing player.

Here is the layout seen through his eyes:

Neither vulnerable

♠ 9 6 3
♥ Q 8 7 6 4 3
♦ 4
♣ J 6 5



♠ A Q 2
♥ 10 2
♦ Q 7
♣ A K Q 8 7 4

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	?

Tim, in fourth seat, did what many good players do. He opened 3NT. The idea is that he had tricks, he knew North was a passed hand so he wouldn't go overboard, and with all three players passing already, he expected North to have modest values. Tim counted on his bidding to create problems for the defense because they would not know what he had.

He was wrong about what he would find in dummy. Three points was way less than he expected. But the second part of his thinking, not giving the defenders useful information, was to play an amazing role.

West led the ♦A and South was now in danger of losing five or six diamonds and two or three hearts. On a bad day, the defenders might make 3NT before he took a trick.

East played the ten, an encouraging card, and West now went into the tank. It was clear that West was not sure what to make of East's ♦10. East's ten was enough of a muddle that West shifted to the ♠4. East played the ten.

How do you think that Tim came to nine tricks after this start? Here is the whole hand:

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

I will show you what happened.

Tim saw that if he won the ♠Q he would have eight tricks, but a ninth trick was not in view. Tim decided to try confusion instead of technique.

He won the ten with the ace, not the queen. This gave both of the defenders a false impression about the spade suit.

South then ran off his clubs. When he was done with them, East had three spades remaining, the ♥A, and the ♦K.

South led a heart toward dummy and West took it with the king. Or at least he tried to. East had the last word, winning the trick with the ace. He returned his ♠7 and South played low. He knew where the ♠K was.

West, however, did not know where the ♠Q was. West played his ♠K on East's seven and returned his ♠8 to East's queen. At least, that is what he thought he was doing. South turned up with the queen, which he took along with the rest of the heart suit. South not only made 3NT. He made an overtrick.

You are welcome to review the play. It is easy to say that the defenders should have done better but it is not clear how. If West had led his fourth-best diamond, the defense would have been easier.

Which brings up an interesting point that has nothing to do with falsecards. Here it is. Call it a bonus:

Many players today open 3NT to show a hand with a running minor. Some play that you don't need any other high cards besides AKQJ543 of your suit. Some play that you need something additional. When you are on lead against one of these 3NT bids, always ask what opener is expected to have. Much of the time it will be as I described here.

Leading an ace against these bids is a sane idea. You may be able to run this suit immediately or you may learn what you should shift to.

When someone opens 3NT in fourth seat, you may run into someone who is playing a 'random' 3NT opening bid.

They can have a solid minor.

They can have a balanced 22 count.

They can have any kind of hand that suits their fancy. One player I know did this with something like:

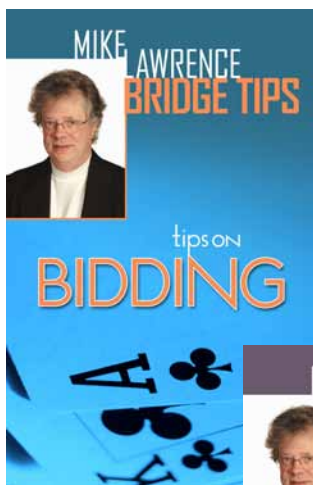
♠ K ♥ Q 9 ♦ A 8 4 3 ♣ A K Q 10 6 5

You are entitled to know what your opponents' agreements are.

If you learn that opener is likely to have a balanced hand, then leading fourth best is probably your best show. Be aware that you may not learn about declarer's hand until Trick 13.

If you agree that this is all true, you might choose to add the random fourth seat 3NT bid to your bidding methods.

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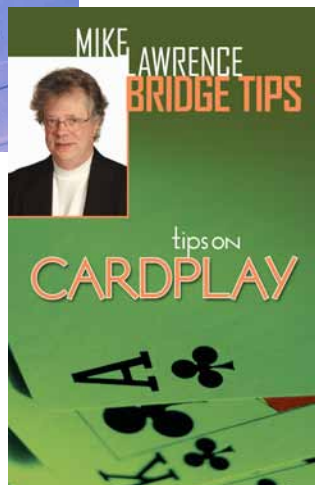
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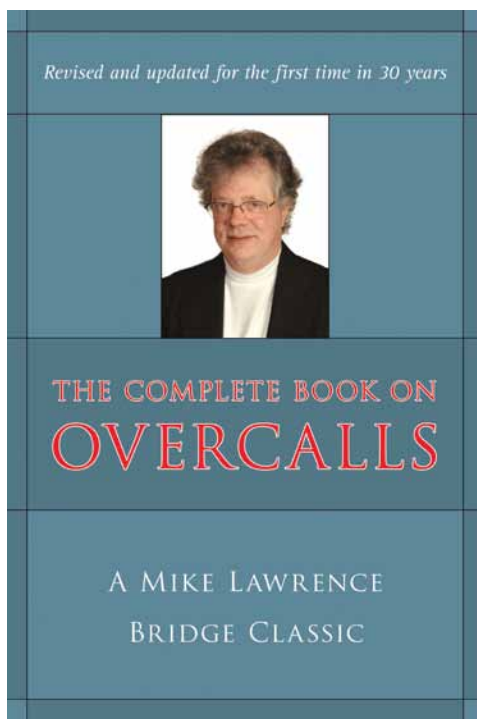
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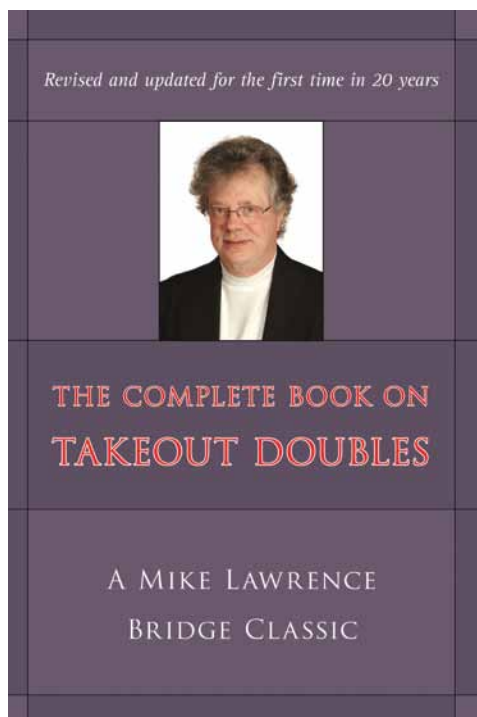
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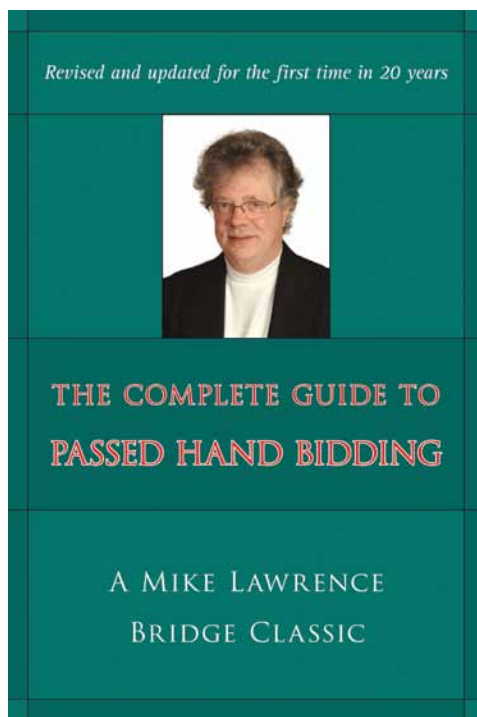
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