

# BRIDGE TIPS BY ALEX & BARBARA

## Third Hand Play

**RULE: WHEN PARTNER LEADS A SMALL CARD & DUMMY COMES DOWN WITH SMALL CARDS, YOU (in third seat) MUST ALWAYS PLAY YOUR HIGHEST CARD. You are East on all these hands. West is leading.**

876 Dummy  
2 A43 You (East)

Whether you hold one of the Ace, the King, Queen or Jack in this seat, in this situation, you **MUST** play your highest card. NOTE: Dummy has small cards.

QJ82 partner 765 Dummy K43 You  
A109

Partner led the 2 ... note this is usually from a 4-card suit, so use this in your card-counting deductions!!

You play the K. Declarer plays the Ace to win the trick, but NOW partner's QJ are high for next time. (Partner would only have led the 2 from QJxx against a No Trump contract. Against a trump suit contract, if you have to lead this suit, you would lead the Q)

2 765 Dummy KJ3 You

Well, which card would you play? The King or the J? What was the RULE above? When partner leads a small card and dummy comes down with small cards, ALWAYS play your highest card! Play the King.

Otherwise, the whole suit may be placed as follows:

A1082 765 Dummy KJ3 You  
Q94

Had you played the J, declarer would have won with the Q and scored one trick in this suit. Okay, so you win the K...which card do you now lead back???

**RULE: WHEN RETURNING A SUIT (SUCH AS THE SUIT PARTNER HAS LED), WITH TWO CARDS REMAINING, ALWAYS LEAD BACK THE HIGHEST ONE. WITH THREE CARDS REMAINING, ALWAYS LEAD BACK THE ORIGINAL FOURTH BEST.**

***This is important so that partner can make deductions about how many cards remain in the suit in your hand and also, it serves to unblock the suit.***

**SO...What to do when dummy comes down with bigger cards??**

**2**

K93 Dummy

Q105 You

If a low card is played from the dummy, play the Q, in an attempt to TRY to win the trick.

Partner may have had (remember this is No Trumps)

A862

K93 Dummy

Q105 You

J74

Play the Q (if low card played from dummy) then lead back the 10. Declarer will always get ONE trick with the King, but not TWO tricks.

Note that if declarer plays the K from dummy, you would just play a low card, not the Queen!

**3**

952 Dummy

KQ4 You

**RULE: WHEN PARTNER LEADS A SMALL CARD & YOU IN THIRD SEAT HAVE TOUCHING HONOURS, YOU MUST PLAY YOUR LOWEST OF THE EQUAL HONOURS...This says to Partner, "I may have the ones above this."**

**NOTE THAT IF YOU PLAY YOUR HIGHEST HONOUR, IT STATES ADAMANTLY TO PARTNER THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE THE CARD BELOW IT.**

***This may seem petty but it is extremely important to the inferences that now follow when partner must decide whether to continue with the suit or not!***

K1064

853 Dummy

QJ2 You

A97

When you play the J, it says to partner, I may also have the Q.  
If you play the Q, it says you do NOT have the J.

Thus, if you had played the Q, partner would deduce the following lie of the cards:

853 Dummy

K1064

Q72 You

AJ9

NOW, partner knows that if she continues leading the suit later from her side that declarer will score two tricks in the suit.

**IMPORTANT:** Note that when declarer wins a trick, he / she is under no obligation to win the trick with any special card because her partner is merely the dummy. But as a defender, you have a partner who is carefully observing what you play & drawing important inferences from those cards. You are painting a picture of what you have in your hand.

**WATCH THE DUMMY!**

K4 Dummy

2

AQ53 You

If partner leads the 2 and the 4 is played from dummy, naturally it is good enough to play the Q to win the trick. If you play the A, declarer scores a trick with the King in dummy later. This is easy for you to see.

The next part gets tricky...you can learn it by rote...

**RULE: WHEN PARTNER LEADS A SMALL CARD AND DUMMY COMES DOWN WITH HIGH CARDS, IF YOU IN THIRD SEAT HAVE AN HONOUR HIGHER THAN ONE IN THE DUMMY, TRY NOT TO PLAY THAT HONOUR CARD IF A SMALL CARD IS PLAYED FROM DUMMY...INSTEAD, INSERT YOUR SECOND HIGHEST CARD, PROVIDED IT IS THE 9 OR BETTER.**

Q73 Dummy

J965

K104 You

Play the 10. If you play the K, here is the situation:

Q73 Dummy

J965

K104 You

A82

Declarer scores the Ace and the Q because you did not save your K to play when the Q was played.



## TAKING PREFERENCE

by Tony Jackson, a wonderful bridge teacher in California

One of my partners pointed out to me that a preference auction is not the same thing as suit agreement, and coincidentally I was reading about a preference auction in one of the Mike Lawrence "Insights in Bridge" books. I mentor and coach quite a bit, and I see confusion about this topic so I thought it would be a good tip.

What's a preference auction? Something like this:

1H - (P) - 1NT - (P)

2C - (P) - 2H

Responder is NOT saying they like hearts when they bid 2 hearts in this sequence. Responder is saying they have a preference for hearts (they prefer hearts to clubs) and they are not strong enough to continue the bidding further. Responder is most likely between 6 and 10 HCP and has exactly 2 hearts.

Here's the hand Mike Lawrence writes about:

S: QT762

H: AJ3

D: 32

C: J83

Your partner opens 1 heart. What do you bid?

Many people would choose 1 spade, but it's an inferior bid. 2 Hearts is much better. You might be thinking that perhaps you have a better spade fit than your heart fit, and while that's possible, there's a very good reason to bid 2 hearts. To understand why raising hearts is better, consider how the auction might continue if you bid 1 spade:

1H - (P) - 1S - (P)

1NT - (P) - 2H

If you respond 1 spade and your partner bids 1NT (or 2 of a minor) you will rebid 2 hearts. After all, you aren't strong enough to bid 3 hearts and you want to show your heart support. But there's now a problem: your partner thinks you are making a preference bid and does not think there is an 8-card fit.

If you are thinking "so what! Partner will be pleased to see an extra trump" then you are missing a very important point: Your partner's hand evaluation will vary based on whether or not she thinks you have a fit. If she thinks you have a 7-card fit, she won't be so eager to bid or invite game even with extras. So you can miss a game.

And what if you respond 1 spade and your partner rebids 2 hearts, showing a minimum opening hand with a 6 card suit? Are you going to raise to 3 hearts and make your partner think you are stronger than you are? Or are you going to pass?

None of the options are good. If you had originally responded 2 hearts, your partner would have known that you have 3 card support and 6-9 points. And isn't that exactly what you want to show? There's a very good maxim for this: **Support with Support**.

## YOU'RE LEADING ME ON by Marti Ronemus

A couple of deep philosophical questions have popped into my treasure inbox lately. Here's one from Patrick that brings up such an intriguing discussion.

**Marti, do you always lead 4th down from your longest and strongest suit against Notrump? Does it always make sense? Patrick**

Patrick, this question could easily fill my column for weeks. Let me try to keep it simple, even tho' it isn't. Let's look at an example that might help. The opponents have bid 1N - 3N and you're on lead.

S JT  
H 863  
D 652  
CJ7643

Pathetic or what! The knee-jerk, Granny-inspired lead would be the **C 4**, 4th down etc. **BUT!!** Let's put this in context.

First, a fundamental truth about NT. It's a race to see who is going to establish their suit(s) first. If you lead that **C 3** hoping Pard has enough winners that your little guys will finally take tricks... well, think about it. Do you have any re-entries to your hand? The only way back to your hand is on the wings of an angel. What is the real likelihood that will happen. I'm catching a whiff of Eau De Delusion here.

Let's think instead about our hands as a whole. Pard is rated to hold an opening hand, right? He's got at least 12 pts. Now, the opponents reached their contract without using Stayman or Transfers. That means they do NOT hold 8 cards in either major.

Let's visualize Pard's hand. He should have at least 4 Spades. And he most likely has more than one re-entry to his hand, unlike us.

On this hand, we would be smart to eschew the "obvious" choice, and instead lead the **Spade Jack**. Remember, a **Life Lesson**. In bridge, we are only looking at half our hand. The other half is across the table, in Pard's loving care. When we are broke, it makes sense to think about Pard's assets and how we can take advantage of them.

*Marti's Mutterings* is designed to celebrate the lighter side of bridge as well as improve play and defense. Each weekday, an exploration of the stranger side of bridge (and life) is accompanied by an interactive hand to build skills. Subscribers get addicted to the quirky view of life while painlessly becoming better players.

Try an entire month **FREE** at this link:

<https://bridgebee.memberful.com/checkout?plan=77574&coupon=FREE TRIAL>

## OVERCALLS by BARBARA SEAGRAM

1. Always include distribution but then downgrade your hand if partner bids a suit in which you are short. And upgrade when you have three card or better support for partner and when partner supports your suit.

2. One level overcalls: 1D by RHO (Right Hand Opponent) and you have:

S AKxxx

H xx

D xxx

C xxx

Overcall 1S. My rule is: Overcall a suit at the one-level with 8-17 points.

With only 8-12, have two of the top 3 honors or 3 of the top 5 honors. A suit you need partner to lead because likely you will not become declarer; a suit of which you are proud. With 13 + points, you may well become declarer so the quality of the suit does not matter as much.

With this hand, when RHO has opened 1C and you have:

S J7542

H 86

D AK6

C 765

Just pass because you are in that 8-12 range and ought to have a good quality suit to overcall.

With 18 or more, double first and then bid your suit.

3. Two level overcalls: (NOT jumps)

1S by RHO and you have

S xx

H KQJxx

D QJx

C xxx

Pass. Because you promise close to an opening bid or better for a two-level overcall, in the world of modern day bridge.

But with

S x

H KQJxx

D AKxx

C xxx

Overcall 2H after 1S by RHO.

Why do we overcall?

- a) To tell partner what to lead.
- b) To perhaps buy the contract. The opponents have opened, yes, but the hand may still belong to our side.
- c) To get in the way. To push the opponents around a bit and take them out of their comfort zone. We are taking the bidding space away from the opponents. When we do this, Sometimes they get to the wrong contract and either bid too little or too much.

1D by RHO and you have:

S AQJ832

H KQ

D 76

C Q84

Overcall 1S.

If you have the following hand and RHO has opened 1C, what will you bid?

S 65

H AKJ743

D AKQ

C 87

Bid DOUBLE first because if you overcall 1H, your hand is now limited to 8-17 points including distribution and on the hand above, you have 19 points.

One more: What will you bid if RHO opens 1C and you have this hand:

S AKJ10

H 65

D A875

C 762

You cannot double because you do not have support for Hearts and you do not have a five-card suit so overcalling is problematic. Just do it. Bid 1S. Sometimes it is okay to overcall a four-card suit if it looks like a five-card suit!!!

- a) Partner will now lead the suit.
- b) LHO will not be able to bid a suit at the one-level as you have crowded his bidding space.
- c) Partner may have a fit with you in Spades and you may buy a part-score contract.

With this hand, RHO has opened 1H and you have

S AK875

H 76

D Q65

C KJ7

Bid 1S. Do NOT bid Double to show partner that you have 13 or more points. If you Double and partner now responds 2C, now you are unable to bid 2S as Double followed by bidding a suit guarantees 18 or more points. Just bid 1S at your first opportunity and get it off your chest.



## ACE FROM ACE KING ON OPENING LEAD VS A TRUMP SUIT

by Andrew Robson

As the great Italian expert Benito Garozzo has said, "If you have an ace-king, you do not have a lead problem." And so say all of us.

The reason why ace from an ace-king combination is always your best opening lead versus a suit contract is that it keeps all your options open. You get a free look at dummy plus a chance to see your partner's card (he can signal whether or not he wants you to continue); and you still have the boss card in the suit.

The ace is a very helpful lead to partner, showing him the king (the convention being to lead top of an honour sequence). You would not normally lead an ace without the king (unless it was singleton, or partner's suit or a very high-level contract – say Five level).

Versus 1H - 4H, lead the underlined card from these three:

**Hand i)**

S A K 8 2  
H J 9 7  
D 7  
C J 10 9 6 4

**Hand ii)**

S 9 7 6 4 3  
H 6 2  
D K Q 10  
C A K 5

**Hand iii)**

S Q J 5  
H 8 4  
D A K 6  
C Q 9 7 5 4

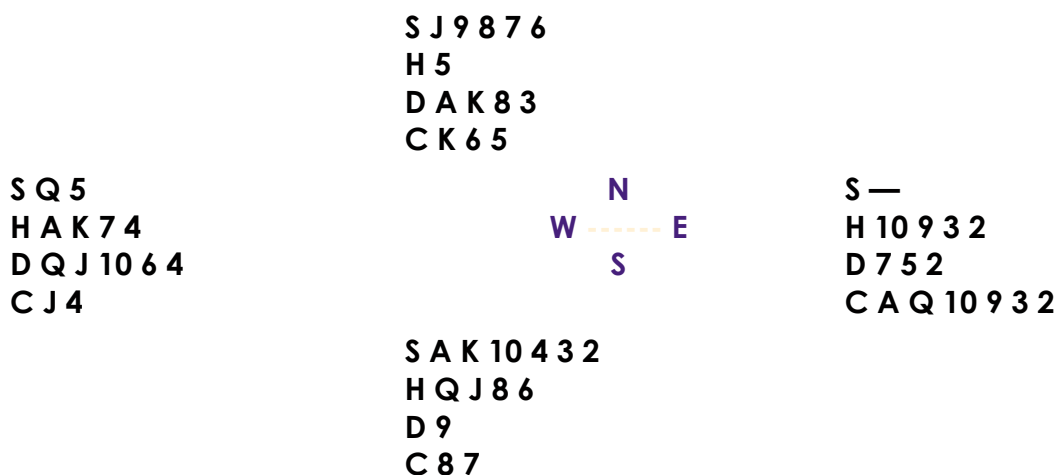
Note on the first that you prefer S A to the singleton D 7 – you can always switch to D 7 depending on what you see in dummy and the contents of trick one; leading S A keeps all your options open. Lead D 7, instead and declarer might win, draw your trumps, then run winners; you might never win your S AK.

On the second, you prefer C A from C A-K to D K from D K-Q. On the third, you prefer D A from D A-K to S Q from S Q-J: the higher the sequence the better.

Note that versus a notrump contract you would lead a different card each time. You would lead C J on the first, S 7 on the second and C 5 on the third.

South Deals

None Vul



**West North East South**

1 S\*  
2 D 4 S Pass Pass  
Pass

\*You won't see many better 10-point hands: lovely 6-4 shape with major-suit length and all honours in those long suits. (Ed. Note: Rule of 20)

4 S by South  
Lead: H A

West looked no further than H A lead vs our featured 4 S. A look at dummy told him not continue hearts nor to switch to diamonds. Instead, looking at the relatively weak clubs, West switched to C J (top of the doubleton). East beat C K with C A, cashed C Q and followed with C 10.

Whether declarer ruffed the third club with S A/S K (West would discard and score S Q later) or S 10 (his actual choice), West had to score S Q (here, overruffing S 10 with S Q). Down one. (Ed note: This is called trump promotion.)

\*\*Unusually, West would have to switch to C J from C **Jxx** – to retain the lead if dummy ducked.

## On the Crease by Marti Ronemus

We keep coming back to the subject of **hand evaluation**, don't we. Here's another inbox treat. We might be beating a dead horse here, but let's talk about it one more time.

**Good morning, Marti. I find myself hating picking up a 10-point hand. Minimum hands are evaluated 6-9/10, and intermediate hands at 10-12, but I feel like there's a lot more to it. I'm a fairly new player and keep getting in trouble over this. Can you help? Justin**

Hey Justin, cheer up. Help is at hand. And for Faithful Readers who are more experienced, a little tune-up on the basics will never hurt.

Ten point hands are on the crease, and I want to add some 9-pointers into the mix also. These hands are chameleons and can wiggle out in various directions, depending on their **TEXTURE**. What is texture? Here are examples. We're going to make decisions on what to do if Pard opens 1 Spade. Ready? By the way, we play Limit Raises, where a jump to 3S would promise 10-12 pts and **4 pieces of trump**.

- a) S J643 H QJ5 D QJ5 C QJ3
- b) S K943 H 85 D AQT9 C 98
- c) S J43 H KQ D Q842 C J875
- d) S KT97 H 5 D KJT97 C 986

**Hand a)** has 10 HCP and 4 pieces of trump, **BUT** it fails the "texture" test. It is flat, it "quacks" (honors are Queens and Jacks), and no Honorettes. To me, this downgrades to a 2S response.

**Hand b)** however is yummy. It only has 9 HCP, **BUT!!** Look at those Diamonds. There's an Ace and a King. Plus it's stuffed with Honorettes. I'm proud to bid 3S with this hand. GREAT texture.

**Hand c)** is also 9 HCP, **BUT!** The Heart KQ aren't "working" honors, no Honorettes, fairly flat distribution. What a difference "texture" makes. 2S bid on this one.

**Hand d)** is one we can argue about. I'm going to bid 3S with it, with confidence. Yeah, yeah, yeah, there are only 7 HCP, but as I've said before, "Bridge is a game of tricks, not points." I'm going to justify this outrageous bid by pointing out I can add 3 dummy points for the singleton Heart. Talk about texture! Look at those Honorettes! The great trump support! Lovely distribution! Compare it to hand #1... which would you rather have? Besides, we don't have to play this, right? No bid is too high if Pard has to play it.

*Ed. Note (Barbara) I LOVE the term "Honorettes"... 10's and 9's add so much to a hand. 2's and 3's: Not so much!*