

BRIDGE TECHNIQUE SERIES

DECEPTIVE CARD PLAY



David Bird • Marc Smith

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Bridge Technique Series

Entry Management
Tricks with Trumps
Safety Plays
Eliminations and Throw-Ins
Deceptive Card Play
Planning in Suit Contracts
Planning the Play in Notrump
Defensive Signaling
Squeezes for Everyone
Planning in Defense
Reading the Cards
Tricks with Finesses

Choosing the Correct Honor Card

If the defenders knew which cards you held, they would defeat many more contracts than they do. Keeping the defenders in the dark, thereby making their life as difficult as possible, is an important part of the game. In particular, there is nearly always a right and a wrong card to play from honors of equal rank. That's the subject of this chapter.

Selecting from touching honors

When deciding which of touching honors to play, you should aim to create ambiguity in the mind of at least one defender. Suppose you are playing in a spade contract and this is one of the side suits:

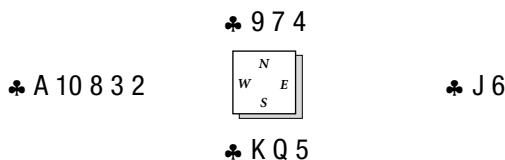
	♥ 7 6				
♥ J 9 8 4 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♥ Q 10 2
N					
W E					
S					
	♥ A K 5				

West leads the ♥4 and East plays the queen. Should you win with the king or the ace? Since they are equals, you might wonder how it could possibly matter. It does!

Winning with the ace leaves both defenders in doubt about the position of the king. If, instead, you win with the king, both defenders can

be certain that you also hold the ace. West will know because his partner failed to play the ace to the first trick. East will know because his partner would not have underled an ace against a suit contract. Conceding such gratuitous information at Trick 1 may enable a defender to place his partner with a key card in another suit, and therefore find the killing switch when he regains the lead.

Let's suppose now that you hold the king and queen instead.



West leads the ♣3 against your notrump contract, East playing the jack. If East is likely to gain the lead later, it may be right to allow the jack to win (breaking the link between the defenders). Assuming you are going to win the trick, though, should you do so with the king or the queen?

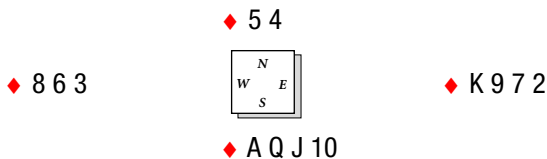
To work out the answer, put yourself in West's position. If the jack loses to the queen, what will he know about the position of the king? Right, he will know that you have it. If East held something like ♣KJ6, he would have played the king instead of the jack. By contrast, if you take the first trick with the king, the location of the queen remains a mystery. West may be tempted to continue the suit when he gains the lead.

The situation is similar when you hold the queen-jack:



West leads the ♠3. You play low from dummy and East follows with the ten. If you win with the jack, West will know that you also hold the queen. Unless he suspects that your remaining honor is bare, and can be pinned, he will not continue spades when he gets in. By capturing the ten with the queen instead, you leave West in the dark with regard to who holds the jack. He may elect to play his partner for this card, and hand you a third spade trick.

It is truly amazing how many declarers give away a strong holding in a suit by playing a lower honor card than they should. This is a typical situation:



East switches to the ♦2 and declarer thoughtlessly plays the ten, winning the trick. Now East knows there is no future in the suit. West has a pretty good idea, too! If declarer plays a more sensible queen, the defenders may persevere with the suit later. It's the same if declarer plays the suit himself, leading a low card from dummy. He should finesse the queen, not the jack or the ten.

The general rule has become clear, then:

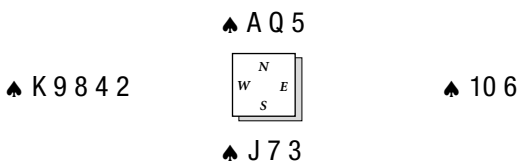
To disguise your holding, play the top of touching honors.

Sometimes two cards of equal value are on view, in the dummy:



West leads the four of spades. Playing either the ace or the queen leaves some doubt in East's mind about the location of the king. If instead you win the trick in hand with the king, the lie of the suit is exposed.

When you are weak in some other suit and fearful of a later switch in that direction, you may make the same play from this holding:



If you run the ♠4 to your jack you will score three spade tricks, it's true. You will also tell the defenders that there is little future for them in the suit, encouraging them to switch to your weak suit. Play dummy's queen instead and the defenders may not be willing to give up their chances in spades. If it is West who gains the lead first, he may even revive your third trick in the suit!

The same logic applies even when you may not win the trick with the card played:

INTERMEDIATE

The **Bridge Technique Series** is designed to take the reader through the most important aspects of card-play technique at bridge. Each book of the series focuses on a different topic, and wherever possible the tactics and strategy are considered from the point of view of both declarer and defenders.

DECEPTIVE CARD PLAY

During the play of the hand, declarer and defenders both have opportunities to use the cards they play to conceal their exact holdings from the opposition. It is possible to disrupt defenders' signaling, to mislead the opponents about strength or weakness in a suit, and even to persuade the defense to give you information.



DAVID BIRD has written more than forty previous books, including the well-known 'St Titus Abbey' series, and several co-authored with Terence Reese. He writes two newspaper columns in the UK, and his work appears regularly in numerous bridge magazines in the UK and the US.



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