

TEST YOUR
BRIDGE TECHNIQUE

DECEPTIVE PLAY

David Bird • Tim Bourke

♠ Q J 10 6 4
♥ A 6
♦ K 8 7
♣ J 5 4

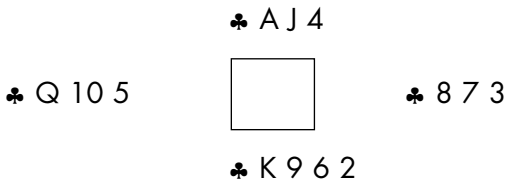
♦ Q led

♠ A K 8
♥ K Q
♦ A 9 4 3 2
♣ 7 6 3

HOW TO PLAY DECEPTIVELY

In this book we look at deceptive play from the perspective of both declarer and the defenders. Some players go through their entire bridge career without paying much attention to such plays. That's a pity. Give your opponents a chance to go wrong and they will often take it. Even if they don't, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you made life difficult for them (and perhaps tired them out a bit!).

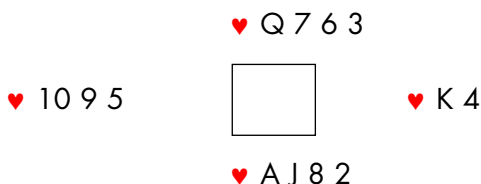
In this brief introductory section we will start by looking at some defensive plays known as 'obligatory falsecards'. What does that mean? It means that declarer will have a chance to go wrong if you play a falsecard but cannot possibly go wrong if you are lazy and simply push out your lowest card in the suit. Here is a well-known example:



You are sitting West and declarer leads the ♣2 to the ♣J, winning the trick. He continues with the ♣A. Suppose you follow somnolently with the ♣10. Declarer cannot go wrong! He knows that you hold the ♣Q because his earlier finesse of the ♣J succeeded. So, on the third round he will play a club to the king, dropping your queen. He will then score all four tricks from the suit.

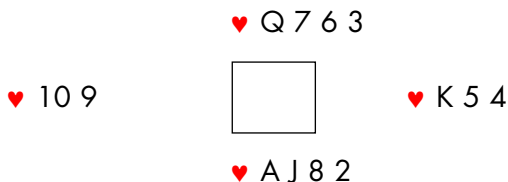
Now suppose that you drop the ♣Q under dummy's ace on the second round. Life is not so easy for declarer. If he thinks you started with ♣Q-5 and that East holds ♣10-8-7-3, he will finesse the ♣9 on the third round. You will then, in your usual cool manner, win with the ♣10. Dropping the ♣Q on the second round is an obligatory falsecard — a play that may gain and cannot lose.

Let's see another example of this style of play:



As before, you are sitting West. Declarer leads dummy's ♥3 to his ♥J, winning the trick. The room is hot and you are only half awake. You follow with the ♥5 and wait to see what happens next. It's not difficult to predict! Declarer will continue with the ♥A, dropping your partner's singleton ♥K, and pick up the suit without loss.

A better idea is to drop the ♥9 (or ♥10) on the first round. Declarer may now think that the suit lies like this:



If that were the case, he would do best to return to dummy and lead the ♥Q on the second round. The queen would be covered by the king and ace and your remaining card would be pinned. South's ♥8 would win the third round and declarer would score four tricks from the suit. If declarer thinks this is the position and leads the ♥Q on the second round when you actually hold ♥10-9-5, you will gain a trick from your deception.

If you follow with the low card, declarer has no guess to make and he is assured of success. If, however, you drop the ♥9 or ♥10 from ♥10-9-x, he will have to guess. What is declarer's correct play when the ♥9 or ♥10 falls on the first round? It makes not the slightest difference to you in the West seat! By offering him a choice of plays, you give him a chance to go wrong. (Declarer's correct play, in fact, depends on how strong he assesses the defender to be. If West is strong, he is more

likely to hold 10-9-x; if he is weak he is more likely to hold 10-9 doubleton.)

A hugely important deceptive technique in defense is the simple hold-up, aimed at persuading declarer that a card is well-placed for him when in fact it is badly placed. Deals such as the following are commonplace:

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

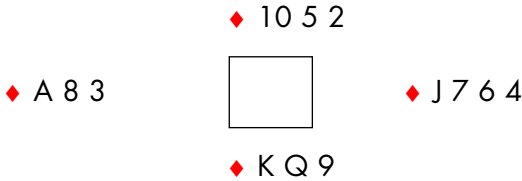
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	6NT	all pass	2NT

Sitting West, you lead the ♥10 against 6NT. Declarer wins in the dummy and immediately plays a diamond to the king. How will you defend?

Most of the world's defenders will win with the ♦A and play another heart. With eleven top tricks now, declarer will finesse the ♣J. You follow helplessly with a spot card and the slam is made.

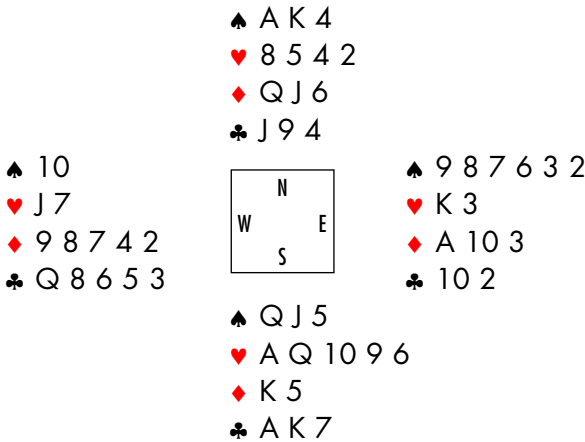
It is poor defense to take the ♦A on the first round. In fact, it will cost you just as much if you even think about taking the ♦A, thereby giving the diamond position away. When declarer leads towards a king, early in the play, you can be almost certain that he has the queen as well. Suppose you are a cool customer and follow with a smooth ♦3 over the ♦K. Life will not be so easy for declarer now. He will have a choice of plays. Should he finesse the ♣J or lead towards the ♦Q? Since his lead towards the ♦K proved successful, he will usually rely on the diamond suit — to his detriment.

Holding up the \heartsuit A may gain in a different way. Declarer's diamonds may be headed by the K-Q-9:



If you capture the \heartsuit K on the first round, you will force declarer to finesse the \heartsuit 9. Hold up smoothly and declarer will have a choice of plays on the second round of diamonds.

Sometimes you must use your imagination to visualize the effect that a falsecard may have on declarer. Would you have defeated this slam?



South reaches a dubious small slam in hearts and you lead the \spadesuit 10. Declarer wins with dummy's ace and plays a trump to the queen. What is your plan for the defense?

Suppose you follow with the \heartsuit 7, as most defenders would. With the king and the jack trumps still out, declarer will have no option but to lay down the ace next. His only remaining task will be to calculate the score for his successful slam.

Use your imagination — follow with the \heartsuit J on the first round of trumps. Placing your partner with \heartsuit K-7-3, declarer will now think he

has to cross to dummy for a second trump finesse. He leads a spade to the king and... not so fast! You step in with a spade ruff and the slam is defeated.

Let's look next at a basic deceptive move you can use as declarer. In notrump contracts, you may want to disguise either weakness or strength in the suit that the defenders have chosen to lead. On the following deal you are strong in the suit and wish to keep this information to yourself:

♠ 7 4					
♥ Q J					
♦ J 10 8 6 5 2					
♣ A Q 7					
♠ Q J 8 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; 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	♠ K 10 6 3
N					
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♥ 10 8 7 5 2		♥ 9 6 4			
♦ A K		♦ 7 3			
♣ 6 5		♣ 10 8 3 2			
	♠ A 9 2				
	♥ A K 3				
	♦ Q 9 4				
	♣ K J 9 4				

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♥5 against your contract of 3NT and you see that you have eight top tricks. To carry yourself past the finishing line you will need to establish the diamond suit. When the defenders take their first diamond winner, you will want them to continue hearts instead of switching to the thinly protected spade suit. Any ideas of how this can be done?

At Trick 1 you should overtake dummy's ♥J with the ♥K, giving the impression that you started with ♥A-K doubleton. When West wins the first round of diamonds, he may then be tempted to continue hearts in the hope that this will establish the suit for the defenders.

Suppose instead that you follow with the ♥3 at Trick 1. West will realize that there is little future in hearts. He may well find a deadly spade switch.

East can unmask this deception by giving a count signal. Here he would follow with the ♥4 — low from an odd number of cards. West would then know that East could not hold ♥9-6-4-3. From that holding he would have played a second-best ♥6. However, there are still defenders out there who would not give count in these situations.

Another frequently used deception is to win the first trick with a higher card than is necessary. Again the purpose is to disguise your strength in whichever suit the defenders have chosen to attack. Look at this typical deal:

♠ 8 5	♠ K J 7 3	♠ 10 9 6 2									
♥ A J 7 2	♥ 6 5	♥ K 10 9 8 4									
♦ Q 9 8 4 3	♦ A 5 2	♦ 10 6									
♣ A 6	♣ Q 10 5 2	♣ 7 3									
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
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W		E									
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	♠ A Q 4										
	♥ Q 3										
	♦ K J 7										
	♣ K J 9 8 4										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♦4 against 3NT and you win East’s ♦10 with your ♦K, an unnecessarily high card. If West falls for your deception, he may persevere with diamonds when he takes the ♣A. (He will play the ♦Q in case East has ♦J-10 doubleton.) If, however, you win the first trick with the ♦J, West is all too likely to switch to hearts, putting the contract down two.

There are many other deceptions available both to declarer and the defenders, and we will meet the most important of them in the pages that follow. When you attempt a problem, try not to say to yourself ‘The answer must be to drop the jack of spades,’ and then turn the page to see if you are right. The point of a bridge quiz book is not simply to see

how many correct answers you can find; you should also aim to improve your subsequent play at the table. To get a worthwhile return from a book like this, you must spend some time on each problem. Why might dropping the ♠J have a beneficial effect? Try to visualize what problems a particular falsecard may cause your opponents. Dropping falsecards randomly may work well on the deals in this book but at the table it is not generally a good idea. You have to know when and why to do it.

The runners are gathering at the starting-line and you are among them. Good luck with the problems and... you're off!

DECLARER PROBLEMS



Problem 1

[To Solution](#)

♠ Q J 10 6 4

♥ A 6

♦ K 8 7

♣ J 5 4

Lead: ♦ Q

♠ A K 8

♥ K Q

♦ A 9 4 3 2

♣ 7 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
pass	2♥*	pass	2♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

How will you play the spade game when West leads the ♦ Q?

Problem 2

[To Solution](#)

♠ 10 6

♥ J 8 6

♦ K Q 10 2

♣ K 10 7 4

Lead: ♠ 2

♠ A K 9

♥ A 5 2

♦ J 9 5 3

♣ Q J 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

How will you play 3NT when West leads the ♠ 2, East playing the ♠ J?

Problem 3

[To Solution](#)

♠ J 8 3
♥ 10 6
♦ A Q 10 8 6 2
♣ J 4

Lead: ♥5

♠ A Q 2
♥ Q 9 3 2
♦ K J 5
♣ A 9 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♦*	pass	3NT

all pass

West leads the ♥5 to East's ♥A and the ♥8 is returned. What is your plan to make 3NT?

Problem 4

[To Solution](#)

♠ K 6
♥ J 9
♦ Q 7 4
♣ K 10 9 7 6 4

Lead: ♦J

♠ A J 9 8 7 2
♥ K Q 2
♦ A
♣ A Q 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	3♣	pass	3♠
pass	6♠	all pass	

How will you play the spade slam when West leads the ♦J?

<p>♠ 9 2 ♥ J 7 4 2 ♦ Q J 10 ♣ K 10 9 2</p>	<p>♠ Q J 10 6 4 ♥ A 6 ♦ K 8 7 ♣ J 5 4</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 7 5 3 ♥ 10 9 8 5 3 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A Q 8</p>
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	<p>♠ A K 8 ♥ K Q ♦ A 9 4 3 2 ♣ 7 6 3</p>											

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
pass	2♥*	pass	2♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

In spite of the fact that the clubs are unprotected, 3NT is a better contract than 4♠. Nevertheless, you are playing in spades. How will you play when West leads the ♦Q?

To make the contract you will have to set up the diamond suit without allowing the defenders to score one diamond trick and three club tricks. That will be easy to achieve when the defenders' clubs are blocked, with one of them holding something like ♣A-Q or ♣K-Q. How can you give yourself a fair chance when the defenders' clubs are ready to run?

Suppose you win the first round of diamonds, draw trumps and concede a diamond. It will be obvious to the defenders that they need three club tricks to beat the contract. On deals where you need to concede a trick in order to set up a suit, you should arrange to do this when

the defenders can cause the least damage (or may not realize what damage they can do). Here your best chance is to duck the opening lead. When East plays a discouraging $\spadesuit 5$, if that is his method, drop the $\spadesuit 4$ from your hand. This may cause West to think that his partner is encouraging a diamond continuation, perhaps from $\spadesuit A-5-3-2$.

If West fails to find a club switch, which is hardly attractive on the evidence available to him, you will make the contract with an overtrick.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 2

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

Your partner attaches full weight to his three 10s and raises you to 3NT. How will you play the contract when West leads the ♠2, East playing the ♠J?

You will need to knock out both minor-suit aces. Since you have no wish for a heart switch when the first ace is dislodged, you should feign weakness in the spade suit. Suppose you play the ♠6 from dummy and win East's ♠J with the ♠K. When West takes his ♦A he will know from East's failure to play the ♠A or the ♠9 that you must hold both of these cards. With a spade continuation ruled out, there is every chance that West will switch to hearts. Down one!

You cannot disguise the fact that you hold the ace and king of spades. You can, however, keep West guessing about the ♠9. At Trick 1 you should play the ♠10 from dummy — exactly the play you would make if you had started with ♠A-K-4. East covers with the jack and

you win with the king. You play a diamond next, as before, but life is more difficult for West when he takes his diamond ace. If he decides that East holds the ♠9 he will revert to spades. Not only will you have time to knock out the club ace, you will also score three spade tricks and end with an overtrick. Although you have no idea where the missing aces lie, nor which defender will gain the lead first, you have nothing to lose by disguising your spade strength.

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TEST YOUR DECEPTIVE PLAY!

This book is designed to accompany *Deceptive Card Play*, Book 5 in the *Bridge Technique* series.

Why should you want to polish your technique in the area of deception? There are two very good reasons: first, give your opponents a chance to go wrong and they will often take it! The second reason is that the opportunities to use deception, either as declarer or defender, will arise on nearly every deal of every bridge session you play. So the rewards to be gained are considerable.

The basic principles of deceptive play are straightforward, but applying them is not always so easy. Rest assured that some serious challenges await you in these pages!



DAVID BIRD has written more than fifty previous books, including the award-winning *Bridge Technique* series (with Marc Smith). A regular contributor to many bridge magazines, he lives near Southampton, England.



TIM BOURKE is a world-renowned collector of interesting bridge hands, whose previous books include *Countdown to Winning Bridge* (with Marc Smith) and *Saints & Sinners* (with David Bird). He lives in Canberra, Australia.

