Defense

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Introduction

Bidding is a necessary element of the game and because we have to bid in order to get the whole thing started we are generally introduced to it first. And then since it's like learning a new language we get so engrossed in it that we lose sight of the forest. The forest is the game itself which has three parts: Bidding, Declarer play and Defense. If you haven't heard any of this before pay attention for there are really several points to be made. First, Once play has started Defense is half the game, meaning you will be on defense half the time. Since the Offense is control by just one player, an individual, on average will be on offense, only a quarter of the total time – half the offensive time. Second, on offense, the Declarer can see and manipulate both offensive hands – no communication necessary – no slip between cup and lip! Or at least there is no excuse if there is. On defense, there is no Dummy to be manipulated, both players must be fully engaged and communicating. Communication is likely the most important element of defense. More bad scores result from poor communication on defense than any other "mistake" one can make. And quite often it is on the first trick that it all begins to crumble. Once you start mastering the elements of defense you will find higher scores coming your way more consistency.

There is another point to be emphasized. When we pick up a hand we immediately "go on the offense". The focus is on how many HCP's we hold, do we have long suits we tend to look at our hands initially from the offensive point of view. It is understandable since that's where we started our learning of the game and, for many, where they get the most satisfaction. Bid and make game, make an over-trick, it's an easy way to define and recognize success. When we are dealt a mediocre hand one in which we immediately get overbid or never can bid, our focus can wander; to the last hand, the slam we made 6 boards back. Perhaps anywhere except on the pile of junk we are now holding. We can't participate in the bidding and will not be the hero declarer, or relaxing Dummy. We should not let such circumstances divert our attention from the hand. We need to pay attention because some information valuable to our defending the hand may be presented, in fact, is being offered right then and there. You might ask how can a simple bidding sequence such as P - 1N - P - 3NT - All pass, be full of information? For starters, we know the responder has 10+ HCP but didn't bid either Stayman or Transfer, i.e. he doesn't have a 4 or 5 card Major. Second, The Opener advertised a balanced hand an can therefore not have anymore than a single 5 card suit; and in modern bidding treatments if he does have a 5 card suit it's likely in a Minor suit, not a Major. So already, before you even look in detail at your hand you can visualized both of the opponent hands. And once the Dummy is exposed you can sharpen that big picture - if that is where you put your focus. Your hand, the Dummy and the bidding has even allowed you a glimpse into your Partner's hand. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. If you can actually see the Dummy that means the opening lead has been made – a decision has already been made by your partner or yourself. It is off said that many a good score starts with the first trick. And that is where we will start our exploration of Defense at the Bridge table: Opening leads and play by the Third hand (the partner of the Opening leader).

Thinking About Honors

Along the way we have all learned that the "picture cards" are called honors, the rest are "spot cards"; we may have also learned that the Ten "spot" *can* be considered an honor, sometimes even the 9. We give that exalted position to those five cards because Bridge is a trick taking game and the highest cards are the primary trick takers. You may have also heard the expression *Aces were make to kill Kings*, and will all know that Kings (like Henry the 8th) are Queen killers, etc. There are only 13 tricks available and in total 16 high honors, 20 total honors so winning 8, 9, or 10 tricks (trumping aside) should be a piece of cake. The T (and 9) are allowed into exalted status because we are so focused on using honors to kill other honors the higher spot cards get promoted. And so we come to

the 9 spot; while not an honor, we quickly find that we shouldn't ignore it; I sometimes think of it as a gate flag. As in declarer play, keeping track of the honors is then an important aspect of defensive play, and holding 3 or even 4 honors in a single hand puts us in an advantageous position. Why? Because we are able to sacrifice one in order to flush a higher one out of hiding; and avoiding the death blow an honor can inflict is often the key to making or defeating a contract. 'Finding' the Q, or 'finding' the J, two of the lower honors is often important. The (trick taking) power given Aces and Kings means they are more willingly exposed, but the lower honors are more elusive. Thus, some of the techniques used in developing a strong defense revolve around, are meant to show or hide the location of the honors before they are played. If you have a bunch (3 or 4) in sequence or not it is important to convey that message to your partner, first through bidding and then through manipulation during play-of-the-hand. This is the essence of why leading from a sequence of honors is the most effective lead that can be made, and why leading low to show that you hold an honor is also there too!

Many novitiate, sitting in 3^{rd} seat, hesitate in playing their Q after partner has led a low card in the suit. They think they have just lost a valuable honor. It makes them queasy to think they had to place her neck out there to knowingly be chopped off by the K or A. They don't yet understand that that particular A may be standing in the way of Partner's trick taking sequence consisting of KJT(4). A 3-for-1 trade.

Equal Honors Concept: This applies to attitude signals. We generally think of attitude signals as "*I like*" or "*I don't like*", it is, however, better to think in terms of "*I can help*" or "*I can't help*". Partner leads the ace, dummy has small cards in the suit, and you hold J732. Should you encourage with the seven? Or similarly, when partner leads the king and you hold T732? **No and no!** Only encourage when you hold honors that are equal to partner's honors, i.e. honors that complete a sequence with the honors that partner has promised. In the first hand partner's A has promised the king, so encourage when holding the queen. In the second case, partner has promised the queen so encourage with either the ace or jack. If you encourage with any old honor, partner may end up leading into a tenace or lose a trick by leading low, expecting to be able to put you on lead. There is nothing sophisticated about this and yet I think many discussions on defense don't make this point very clear when introducing attitude signals.

Attitude has priority over count on the opening lead but give count if all the missing honors pop up in dummy. For example, if partner leads the queen, and dummy has AKT2, give count.

Non-Perfect Sequences: There is some disagreement among experts on terminology. Some define a **Broken Sequence** as any 3 honors where there is only two touching, examples: AKJx, KQTx, AQJ(x)(x), KJT(x) and QT9(x) where some differentiate, calling the last 3 holdings where the highest honor is the non-touching element an **Interior Sequence**. Some recommend against using a non-perfect sequence lead against NoTrump contracts, insisting on 3 touching for an honors lead. The difference is related to timing. In a suit contract there may not be sufficient time for the lower 4th card, e.g. the x in a sequence KJT(x), to be developed into a trick. Regardless, the recommendation is to lead the higher of the touching honors, i.e. **A** from AKJ, **K** from KQT, and **J** from KJT.

The timing issue defines the difference in how we handle such sequences, and the primary defensive difference in the two contract types. In Suit contracts there generally isn't sufficient time for a sequence of three to be "set-up", and so we shorten an honor sequence to be 2 in length. Thus, in a suit contract, three is a sense of urgency to get the other two honors established in non-perfect sequences, whereas the urgency disappears in a No Trump contract.

<u>Parity</u>

Consider this case, you hold T743 in a suit and the Dummy has KQ9. You think my suit is useless against that Dummy, so you start discarding that suit. The 3 then the 4. Later Declarer shifts his focus

to that suit, leads small to the K, Partner wins the A, you playing the 7. You committed the sin of "losing parity". You can't always know when you have parity with the hidden Declarer's hand, but it's obvious in the Dummy. So long as your highest card in a suit is higher than the lowest card in an opponents corresponding suit you need to try, at all costs, to maintain parity, meaning keeping the suit lengths the same. In our example, throwing away that seemingly useless 4, while the KQ9 remained on the board, cost the defense a trick. Discarding the 3 doesn't effect parity, which means keeping the same length as the known (i.e. dummy's) length in a suit.

The TENACE

A tenace is a honors holding in which two honors are separated by at least 1 Card, example AQxxx, KJxx. It is rarely a good idea to lead a suit where you hold a Tenace. The Tenace is the the basis of the finesse, thus leading from a Tenace generally gives up a trick – the intervening card is a sure winner, and a competent Declarer will sniff out that holding. Let us consider an exception. You have concluded that this suit AQ973 is the proper suit to be led against a NoTrump Contract. If Declarer has the K and Partner the T or J to flush it out; if and when we gain the lead we own 4 tricks plus the one that gave us the lead; sufficient to set the contract. This makes it worth the risk of leading from such a holding. However, if the 5th card is missing, i.e. we have a 4-card suit then we can only count 4 total tricks. The advantage disappears.

Attacking v Passive Defense

More of an issue in Suit contracts is weather you should mount an Attacking or Passive defensive stance. An Passive defense is one in which you play a waiting game and is generally more appropriate when in a suit contract. In NoTrump the battle is quite often won or lost by the victorious side getting their suit established before the opponents; the division of the high cards provides the advantage – usually tilted toward the declarer. So the defense doesn't have the luxury of waiting for its tricks. It must immediately attack where it's strength lies. The battle in a suit contract can be more like guerrilla warfare; picking away at Declarer's strength (Trump) or letting the opponent open up second fronts, exposing his weakness to attack. This is why you can lead from an Ace in a Trump contract – it is always an invincible winner, but in a Suit contract a lowly 2 of Trump can topple the mighty Ace. So an Attacking defense means just that, you start out on the attack using your strength – leading protected K's and Q's. Passive means picking away at their strength by leading their suit, Trump, or their second suit rather than opening up a side suit or exposing your strength by leading your suit.

An attacking defense is one in which you are trying to establish your suit so as to get your tricks early. This type of defense is generally preferable when declarer has an obvious means of getting rid of losers, e.g. a long running suit. Otherwise a passive defense – waiting for your tricks to come to you naturally- is generally best.

Opening Leads

The card we choose for the opening lead can do two things, sometimes simultaneously. Since the defense is the opening leader it should be viewed as an opportunity. We want our lead to tell our Partner something about our holding and also to start the establishment of winners for the defense. The opening lead can be separated into two categories based on the type of contract but perhaps not a surprise, these categories little alter the choice. In either case the goal is to win tricks and tricks by and far are won much the same way in both NoTrump and Suit contracts. This is why we will look first at how the card is chosen and then differentiate. In both cases we first decide the suit we need to lead and then the particular card.

We first use information from the bidding and the shape of our hand to choose the suit. In this criteria it is almost always right to lead Partner's suit, this presumes Partner has bid; the exception,

when partner bids, being "a belief that your suit is a better source of tricks". You must however take into account that only one opponent can play after partner lays his card down, whereas both opposing hands have a shot at yours, that gives partner's suit an advantage. Of course, partner has to bid (or double) before you can have that information, so let's look at how we choose when Partner was silent. When Partner could have doubled a conventional bid – and didn't – says a lot; he doesn't favor that suit. For example, $P - 1N - P - 2 \Leftrightarrow$; $P - 2 \blacklozenge - P - 3N$. Had Partner had wanted a \bigstar lead he could have Doubled the artificial $2 \bigstar$ bid, he didn't so you might eliminate \bigstar 's as a choice. So even silence can suggest elimination of a choice. This leaves our hand to help, in conjunction of the knowledge that, in the example, neither opponent has a 5 card suit we should consider our own long suit, setting up a longsuit trick or a card that forces a trump from the offense. But what if we have one weak 5-card and a strong 4-card suit. It has to be right to lead from the stronger but shorter suit. I'm sure you have heard the expression 4th from the longest and strongest. That definitely applies if you have two equal length suits; in absence of such duality strength usually takes precedence.

Now let's consider 2 suits, almost equal in length and strength. When it's clear, as in our NoTrump example, that neither opponent has length in a Major it's is likely right to choose the Major. In the case with two equal length suits, one headed by an Ace, it's better to choose the one without the Ace even if it is decidedly weaker. Once the suit has been chosen we need to choose the card.

Picking the Card

Taking a hint from Declarer play we realize that a goal of any lead is, if not to win the trick, is to drive out the opponents top cards thereby establishing winners. This suggests that using the top card from a sequence is a most desirable opening lead. Such a lead serves to drive out the higher card without relinquishing your hold on that "upper ground". If the perfect sequence is good, a near perfect sequence should be nearly as good. Thus the K from a perfect sequence like KQJ, KQJ9 or Q from QJT8 or near perfect KQT, KQT5 and QJ9x can be considered first class lead choices. This vies with Partners suit for first choice. Note: the perfect sequence is a holding of 3- or 4-Cards topped by 3 cards in sequence. The near perfect sequence has 3 or 4 cards in the sequence with the flaw of a gap between #2 and #3. It should be obvious that the longer (4 vs 3 or more cards) suit is preferable for NoTrump contracts. Also note that the near-perfect sequence (between #2 and #3) differs from the interior sequence (between #1 and #2) by where the space occurs.

When your suit is not headed by such sequences a length lead is usually called for. This is the 'famous' 4^{th} card from the top. Obviously you must have a 4-Card suit for this to happen and it should be headed by an honor(s) (K, Q, J or T[yes, the T is an honor]). This is the first part of the 'BOSTON' leads – BOS=<u>B</u>ottom Of Something. What if, your chosen suit doesn't have an honor?

If the suit has 3 or 4 worthless cards, look for another suit, if there aren't any then lead the <u>**T**</u>op <u>**O**</u>f <u>**N**</u>othing. N.B. If the Top card is the 9, that 9 in a 4-card holding might be too valuable, especially in a NoTrump contracts and experts usually lead the 2^{nd} from the Top, preserving the 9. Some always lead the 2^{nd} highest.

And if that is not enough. If you were to lead the 4 from T874, many Partners would not be happy, they generally expect something better than a T when they see your 4; so you might consider leading the 8 from that sequence.

Suits (4-Card) headed by two adjacent Honors

Suits like AK987, AK76, KQ32, KQ642 create the first case where we have a difference between when there is a Trump suit and when there isn't.

• NoTrump: 2 adjacent cards are not considered a sequence thus we treat these as if there were only a single honor, i.e. we lead the 4th highest card in the holding.

• Suit Contracts: The potential for having one of the higher cards trumped before it can be "made good" suggests that in suit contracts we treat the 2-card honor sequence as we would the longer sequence. Lead the highest Touching Honor. It promises the lower honor.

Suits (3-Card) headed by two adjacent Honors

Here is where some experts differ. In NoTrump we suggest leading the Top Honor. The idea here is that you are short in the suit, therefore you are hoping to find Partner long in it and you are starting a un-blocking maneuver. Except for AKx, then lead A followed by ?. If nothing develops i.e. Partner doesn't give an encouraging signal, follow with K and then the x. If Partner encourages follow with the x, Partner knows you hold the K and you might capture the J.

Suits (3-Card) headed by one or two non-adjacent Honors

- For suits like Kxx, Qxx, Jxx (and in NoTrump Axx) we lead low (promising an honor).
- For suits like KJx, QJx, JTx (and in NoTrump AJx) we lead the J treating it like an interior sequence.
- For suits like ATx, KTx and QTx lead low (promising an honor the T is a long shot in a holding of 3).

Leading from Doubletons

Always lead the higher card – you are starting the hi-lo (echo) signal that shows an even count. We will get to the issue of showing count later and Yes, a doubleton is an even number of cards.

Partner Bids

- You didn't support (implying you had less than 4)
 - \rightarrow lead high from doubleton
 - \rightarrow lead highest if you don't have an honor.
 - \rightarrow lead lowest from 3 or more (you might not have been able to support) if you have an honor.
- You supported Partners suit
 - \rightarrow lead low from an honor
 - \rightarrow lead highest without honor

Coded 9 and T's – or J Denies.

Some experts recommend against this convention. But we recommend it because it makes reading Partners lead for all remaining potential holding much simpler. The simplicity and the amount of information it provides (to all at the table – including the opponents) is the reason for the aversion to it. If your head is spinning after what we have just covered, just wait. So without further adieu, coded 9 & T's:

- 1. the lead of a J denies holding any higher card, period,
- 2. The lead of a T promises either no or 2 higher honors
- 3. The lead of a 9 promises either no or 2 higher honors one of which is the T.

Thus if you held KQT9 you would lead the T, but if you held AT9x or QT9x you lead the 9 and with JT9x the lead is the J; and of course with QJ9x you would lead x.

Without Coded 9 and T's – or J Denies.

There are many combinations:

From a nice combination like AKT9(x) or AQT9(x) you'd lead the 9. You'd do this even if you use coded 9 & T's; it's a little lie but a good one.

OK to summarize:

- Lead Partner's suit generally lo with honor, hi without
- Lead of an honor promises the next lower honor and in NoTrump at least one additional honor (saying you hold 3 or more honors).
- BOS Lead of a low card promises at least one honor (may be the T!); and suggests you might welcome a return in that suit. If you want something else returned use TON.
- TON Lead of high card denies a higher card (and may be the start of a even count signal) the next bullet not withstanding.
- We recommend coded 9 & T's.
- Listen to the bidding develop clues from it; they're there:
 - Partner doesn't bid or double says something
 - Partner doesn't support your suit says something
 - If they don't end up in a Major suit contract likely no 8-card fit

Special Additions for Trump Contracts

Referring back to our discussion on Passive v Attacking defense. In a Suit contract you must decide which you are going to use. Keeping in mind there are two primary ways a Declarer has of getting rid of losers (declarfers losers are your focal point in attacking). Again using our understanding of good Declarer play to counter it we know that the goal of the Declarer is the elimination of losers – that's why they count their losers first – so they know what to eliminate. They can do it by (1) ruffing them in the short hand (usually the Dummy) and (2) throwing them off on established long suits in Dummy. If you suspect #1 then you want to remove Trump from the Dummy – A passive technique. If you suspect #2 then you are in a NoTrump like atmosphere and you want an attacking defense. In absence of #2 then you should prefer a passive defense but not necessarily by leading Trump. So let's start with

When to Lead Trump

- Declarer has bid two suits, the second presumably the weaker/shorter, and his partner shows preference for the second. Trump is Declarer's second suit lead it!
- Partner has passed your Takeout Double. His pass generally doesn't mean he's short or weak in Declarer's suit just the opposite. In essence he is saying "Help me rid them of their Trump"!

Just as important,

When Not to Lead Trump

- A misfit auction. Their main offensive weapon, Trump, is not going to be that formidable. Or so devastating you can't assail it.
- Dummy promises a strong long side suit as well as Trump support. Example, the bidding has gone: 1H P 2D P; 2N P 3H P; 4H Passout. The bidding suggests Responder (dummy) has a long/strong Diamond suit. Partner or you are likely short in Diamonds, you don't want to help declarer in drawing trump.

You or Partner hold 4 or More Trump

Recall our introductory remarks on Parity. When you hold 4 or more Trump you are on or near par with the Declarer. You might think this is the time to lead Trump. Just the opposite. They likely have the contract because they have more total honors (i.e. HCP), so you can't go toe-to-toe with them and expect to be successful. Lets look at the case where you hold 4. One offensive hand or the other likely has 5 or 6 cards, better still, maybe 4 each. In the case of 5 or 6, as soon as you can **force** the long hand

to use a Trump card once(5) or twice(6) you get to parity. The goal should be to force the Declarer to Trump so as to get to a 4-3 holding – parity. Then when the long hand Trumps one more time, the Declarer has lost control of the hand. Generally the hand with the longest Trump holding is in the catbird seat. Thus if you have a long strong suit to use as a force or have a short suit suspecting that partner holds length and strength in that suit it pays off to establish a **forcing defense**, i.e. force Declarer to Trump. This is another example of "when not to lead Trump".

Now consider this, you sit down at a new table and pick up this hand: $4Q83 \forall JT98 \notin KJ32 \notin 86$ before the bidding starts you decide that if you end up being the opening leader the \forall suit would be your first choice, a very nice 4-card sequence. The bidding now proceeds $1 \neq -P - 3 \neq -P$; $4 \neq -P - 4 \forall - 4 \notin$. The $3 \Leftrightarrow$ bid is obviously a limit raise, the \clubsuit and \forall bids, Controls. The Opening \bigstar bid was on your right so you are on lead. What card do you now choose?

If you said $\diamond 2$; you'd be absolutely correct. Why the shift from a strong lead of the top of a sequence to a low card headed by a Tenace, usually an undesirable lead? There are three very good reasons: (1) A \checkmark lead is going to run smack into LHO's advertised \checkmark stopper, (2) LHO skipped over \diamond 's indicating nothing there and (3) RHO's 4 \bigstar Control bid shows a strong hand with interest in Slam, but rather than continue in that direction after the 4 \checkmark bid he settled simply for game; He probably also lacked a Control in \diamond 's seem to be the Offense's weak point, why not attack it; you have the \diamond K who do you think has the \diamond A? The moral? Listen to and take clues from the bidding.

On the next hand you hold: $AQ83 \vee J983 \wedge AQ96 \wedge T2$ and the bidding starting on your right goes: $1 \neq -P - 3 \neq -P$; $3 \vee -P - 3 \neq -P$; $4 \Rightarrow -$ all Pass. The $3 \Rightarrow$ bid being a limit raise triggered Control bidding looking for an excuse to land in 3NT. What is your lead?

If you chose a small \blacklozenge again; you'd be absolutely correct. Both opponents failed to identify a stopper in \blacklozenge 's. Who do you think has the \blacklozenge K? If it's your RHO his bid would have been 3N rather than an inferior part score of 4. What does this say about "never lead from AQx", "never lead from a K"? The first is a good notion, the second an "old wives tale". Pay attention to the bidding, not slogans.

One last remark regarding leads is required. We mostly think the term "Opening lead" refers to the first lead of the hand -it's not! Any time a lead is made from a suit that has not yet been led, the "rules" that apply to "Opening" lead apply to subsequent first leads of a suit. Of course, there is much more information available and that additional information has to be included in the consideration of which card should be led.

Make passive leads against part-score contracts.

Signaling

Attitude is the most important signal to give and it is done when discarding and when partner or dummy is wining the trick, and in the later case you cannot beat the dummy's card. Remember the standard 'like' or 'I can help' signal is a high card; so a low card indicates the opposite. On discards a high card in an different suit indicates that is a suit you might be able to help in, i.e. you have another higher card in that other suit. If you win a trick and decided to shift suits you should use BOSTON (Bottom of Something – Top of Nothing) leads. By this time the Dummy has been exposed and there are other considerations. When ever you decide to change suits there are several things you should keep in mind. First, we want to avoid finessing our partner and also attempt to give our partner a trick. Both of these suggest the following mantra – *board to the right, lead to it's weakness; board to the left, lead to it's strength*. But these do not stand alone, we must remember what our partner and the bidding has told us. If partner has encouraged the lead of a particular suit we need to factor that in. If there is a long suit and an outside entry on the board we should endeavor to remove the entry is another consideration. We should avoid, at all costs, allowing a "ruff and sluff" - that is where counting and showing "count" becomes important. The standard Attitude signals, applicable only the first time the suit has been led by partner, are high \rightarrow encouraging, low \rightarrow discourage.

If we are unable to make an Attitude signal and when ever the offense opens a suit we should be making a count signal. Definitive "Count signals" takes 2 rounds of play of the suit, but the first card should be a good indicator; and what is being shown is an Odd or Even count. Odd being 1, 3, 5 or 7; even being 2, 4, 6 or 8. From this indication partner should, by looking at hand and dummy, determine the actual count. Having the Count on a suit helps in avoiding "ruff & sloughs".

Second-Hand Play

This important topic is generally not discussed enough. It contains some relatively simple rules that quite a few players are unaware of or have forgotten. The general rule for second hand play "The first time a suit is led, give your partner a chance to win the trick" otherwise known as "second-hand low" most everyone knows and adheres to. There are certain times, however, when you should violate that rule. These situations can be easily categorized, the first being 'you have a good strategic reason for doing so'. As an example, at the moment that you are faced with the choice of playing second-hand low or winning the trick you have sufficient sure tricks in your hand to set the contract and partner seems to have no clue as to what to return to set you up. Otherwise, how you play in the second seat depends primary on your honor holding.

In general we consider "honors" to be the 4 face-cards A,K, Q, J and also the T; Five honors in total, but for the case of second-hand play we will also include the 9.

You hold a single honor...

And there is a single honor of lower value visible in the Dummy. This is where the standard second hand low applies. Example: The 3 is led is from the dummy's J643 and you hold QT2. You should play the 2, there is a chance that declarer is holding AK9x and may attempt to finesse the 9 but (with 3 honors) that is unlikely. By playing low you have assured yourself 1 trick in that suit. Another example, this time the declarer leads low from hand. The dummy holds Q83 and you K95. You may be tempted to play the 9 - forcing the Q – but that is wrong! It is true that you effectively hold 2 honors (K and 9) but now is not the time to split your honors (that's for a little later), just remember "low on low" in second seat!

Honor led from Dummy

When an honor is led from the Dummy it is often correct to cover that honor, but it is also just as often wrong to do it. Knowing when to cover is a what makes you a better player. You might have heard the rules "cover an honor with an honor" and "cover the second honor" if the lead is from a two honor holding, We'll dissect those for a better understanding. There are two other rules that are dependent on how many honors you have that are higher than the honor that is led.

1. You have 2 honors higher than the honor led – play the higher of your two honors. Example: The lead is the J from the Dummy's JT65 and you hold AQ3. You should play your A. If declarer later plays the T you should cover with the Q. It may lose to the K, but if Partner originally held 3 to the 9, the 9 is now a winner. You have held declarer to one trick in the suit. You can check out this logic by laying a suit out as shown above and then divide the remaining 6 cards evenly between the other two hands. You will see that no matter how those 6 cards are divided, the explained strategy maximizes the tricks for the defense.

Another example. The lead is the T from dummy's T94 and you hold KJ7. The T and the 9 are equal honors so it matters little which is led, our rule says you should cover with the K. (Note: if partner has the A, he now knows that you have either the Q or the J.) If later the 9 is led you should cover with the J. If Partner indeed has the A, this approach will guarantee you 3 defensive tricks in the suit. One last example.

You hold QT3 and (sneakily) declarer leads the 8 from dummy's 982. Thinking of the 8 as an honor is quite a stretch, but here it is accompanied by the 9, so it is effectively equal to the 9 and you should cover with the Q (the higher honor). This isn't the best of defensive positions but no matter how the remainder of the cards are distributed playing the Q in this situation causes the declarer more problems than would playing the T. In both examples the Dummy showed 2 honors, the rule applies even if there had been only one.

NOTE: If the bidding indicates that Partner has a singleton or void in the suit (which is often the case when the suit is trump) then these rules do not apply. You should cover or split you honors in a way that benefits your own hand. Note that in all the last examples, we have split our honors so what we have learned is the proper way to split our honors when we have two.

2. You have only 1 honor higher than the honor led. Cover the honor if it is unsupported. This is where we find the rule about covering the last honor. If there are 2 honors in the dummy then you have supported honors and you should-not cover when the first honor is led. Once that honor is led, the other becomes unsupported and should be covered. Example: The T is led from dummy's T54 and you hold K82. You should play the K since the T is unnsupported. Again lay out the cards as above and distribute the other 7 cards (4-3) in various ways between the other hands and note the disaster that can occur if the K isn't played. Another example.

Dummy leads J from JT8 and you hold Q94. The J is supported by the T and so you should not cover, play the 4. Let's analyze this particular situation. The missing cards are the AK76532. If declarer holds anything other than AK7, your side has 2 tricks if you play low, if you don't play low you will only get 1 trick.

Dummy leads Q from QJ85 and you hold K73. The Q is supported by the J and so you should not cover, play the 3, low. Once again divide the remaining 6 cards between the other two hands and witness the different results when you play the K and when you play low.

Playing in Tempo – in any of these circumstances if you hesitate, even for the slightest moment you give your holding away. So before the card from the Dummy is played you should already know what you are going to play, so there is no hesitation. This means that while declarers are studying their options you should be looking at the dummy and your hand and deciding which card you will play when the offensive lead from the dummy is made.

So we have found the general formula for 2^{nd} hand play. (a) If you have 2 higher than the honor led play the your highest and (b) with 1 higher cover unsupported, duck supported honors. This we will see also applies if dealer is on lead,

Honor led by Declarer

When an honor is led from Declarer's hand, all the same principles apply. The only difference is that you don't know if the honor is supported. But the situations are symmetrical so let's look at same conditions.

. **1. You have 2 higher than the honor led.** The only difference here is that you don't necessarily need to play the highest. Play your highest unless your second highest will promote a sure trick for your highest. Example: Declarer leads the 9 toward the Dummy's AK82, you hold QJ73 you must play the J. In this particular situation you need to cover any card led by Declarer, because you have have the 4th trick in the suit, holding the 3 over the 2. It may get ruffed but that doesn't change the proper way to play it.

You hold KJ7 and dummy has AQ3. You know that you are Double finesse-able. If the declarer leads the T or the 9 you should play the K. It is the best way to conceal who holds the J; besides that, if you play the J and the Q wins the tricks the declarer is going to know you have the K. One more example.

You hold KJ7 and dummy has AT53. You know that you are Double finesse-able. If the declarer leads the 9 you should play the J. This forces the A (or wins the trick) and if the A is played you have promoted your K.

2. You have only 1 honor higher than the honor led. Cover if there is a card in the dummy that touches the card led. If there is no touching card in the dummy, don't cover. The logic behind this approach is that if there is no touching card visible, there is a high likelihood that there is a remaining honor in declarers hand. A couple examples. Dummy holds AJT4 and declarer leads the 9. You hold K52. The T is a touching honor(to the 9 that was led) you should therefore play the K. Once again you can see the effects of this strategy by laying out the cards as defined and then distribute the remaining 6 in the other 2 hands and look at the different results from playing low and playing the K.

Another example you hold either A73 or K73 and the dummy has Q974. The declarer leads the J. The Q is a touching honor, cover.

Finally, you hold Q82 and the dummy has K43 and declarer leads the J. There is no touching honor in the dummy - play low, don't cover.

COVER THE 2^{nd} time – This is equivalent to the notion that you cover the last honor led from dummy, and that is usually from a dummy that holds 2 honors. And if partner could win the first honor led she certainly shouldn't be able to win the 2^{nd} round.

SPLITTING HONORS

We have already encountered the term "splitting honors". The true notion of honor splitting is when you have a strong holding in a suit, i.e. you have 3 honors and a low card is led. The general rule is to split when at least two of your honors are touching. With the exceptions that we have already noted it is usually a mistake to split touching honors when there is only two. When holding three where two are touching it is right to split¹ and the card you play will be the same card you'd play if you were leading that suit, i.e. the top of the 2 or 3 touching honors. So Q from AQJ, K from KQT or Q from QJT.

¹ Note that the only 3 honor holding where there's no touching honors are AQT or AQ9 or KJ9