

Second Hand Play on Defense — Part 2
Based on *Eddie Kantar Teaches Modern Bridge Defense*
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ASSUMPTIONS

- standard leads, including fourth best leads against notrump and suit contracts
- attitude signals for suits initiated by partner (typically standard or upside down carding)
- count signals for suits initiated by declarer or dummy (typically standard or upside down)

WHEN DECLARER LEADS AN HONOR

- **If declarer leads the queen, you have the king, and dummy has the ace: in most cases, you should play low.**

Reason: Declarer probably has at least the QJx(x) or more likely the QJ9(x) or QJ10(x). If declarer has only QJx(x), she should lead low to the ace and then back towards the QJ.
 Caveat: Against inexperienced or sneaky declarers, you could lose to a pseudo (Chinese) finesse.

	♠ A 6 5		
(a) ♠ K 2		♠ ? ?	Tough. If declarer has the QJ98(x), you should duck hoping declarer continues with the jack. If declarer has the QJx(x), you should cover.
(b) ♠ K 3 2			Play low.
(c) ♠ K 10 2			Covering is optional with K10x(x), mandatory with K10 doubleton.
(d) ♠ K 4 3 2			Play low, and play low again if declarer continues with the jack. You will eventually win a trick with the king if you don't spend it.
	♠ leads Q		

- **If declarer leads the jack, you have the queen, and dummy has the ace — in most cases you should not cover — especially if declarer has known length.**

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

Declarer is testing you, and is probably not planning to finesse you for the queen. If you play low smoothly, chances are declarer will rise with the ace and lead low to the ten.

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

You lose a trick if you cover the jack. Dummy wins the ace and leads back towards the ten for a second trick. If you duck the jack and cover the ten, declarer takes but one trick.

- **Be wary of covering honor cards in the trump suit (or in any suit where declarer has known length) when there is one honor card in dummy. If there are two honor cards in dummy, cover if promotion is possible (when partner has length in the suit).**

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

South opens 1NT and ends up declaring a 4♥ contract. After three quick spade tricks, *West* exits with the ♦J. Declarer wins and immediately plays the ♥J. You should play low smoothly. Knowing you have long spades, declarer will probably play *East* for longer hearts, and will win the king in dummy and take the finesse back to her hand, losing to your queen.

DECLARER LEADS A LOW CARD

- **When dummy has a strong suit headed by the KQ or AQJ, second hand should give count. This will help partner decide when to take her trick if she has one — i.e. when declarer plays her last card in the suit.**

	♠ K Q J 10 6		Assuming standard carding, when <i>South</i> leads the ♠2, <i>West</i> should play the card underlined in bold from each holding to give count to her partner.
♠ <u>7</u> 4		♠ ???	
♠ 7 4 <u>3</u>			
♠ 8 <u>7</u> 4 3			
♠ 9 8 7 4 <u>3</u>			
	♠ leads 2		

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- **When dummy has you beat every which way, play low.**

	♠ A Q 10 8	
♠ K J 9 7 3		♠ ???
	♠ leads 2	

When declarer leads a low spade, play low. It can't do you any good to play a higher spade.

WHEN TO PLAY SECOND HAND LOW EVEN WHEN YOU CAN TAKE THE TRICK (assuming you are not ducking with the setting trick)

- **You have the ace and dummy has a KJ combination**

	♠ K J 9	
♠ A x x (x)		♠ ???
	♠ leads 2	

Duck smoothly, and in most cases win the second round of the suit. If dummy has the KJ9 and partner has taken the jack with the queen, duck the second round as well and hope declarer plays the 9 and partner the 10.

- **You have the ace and dummy has a KQx(x) combination**

	♠ K Q x (x)	
♠ A x x (x)		♠ ???
	♠ leads 2	

It is usually right to duck the first time and win the second. Even if declarer has a singleton, it usually saves a trick.

- **You have the ace and dummy has a KQ10 combination**

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

It is not only right to duck the first time, it is usually right to duck the second time as well.

- **You have a KQ combination and dummy has the AJ9(x)**

	♠ A J 9	
♠ K Q x (x)		♠ ???
	♠ leads 2	

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Play low. If declarer is missing the ten, the percentage play from dummy is the nine, which allows your partner to win the ten. However, if you need only one spade trick to set the contract, split your honors.

- **You have the king and dummy has the QJ10**

	♠ Q J 10 9	
♠ K x x (x)		♠ ???
	♠ leads 2	

Play low. You are pretty sure partner has the ace. If declarer has the ace, why isn't she going to dummy and taking a finesse?

- **You have the queen and dummy has the J10xx**

	♠ J 10 x x	
♠ Q x x (x)		♠ ???
	♠ leads 2	

Play low. You are pretty sure partner has the king or the ace, maybe both. If declarer has the ♠AKx(x), she would either be playing the ♠AK hoping the queen drops, or entering dummy to take a finesse.

- **You have the king and dummy has a Q10 combination**

	♠ Q 10 8 6	
♠ K 7 4 (x)		♠ ???
	♠ leads 2	

Say declarer leads a low spade, or plays the ace and a low spade. In the first case, partner may hold the jack. In the second case, partner almost certainly holds the jack — because if declarer has ♠AJx(x), she would probably cross to dummy to take a finesse. In either case, play low smoothly; allow partner to win her (hoped for) jack, and take the king later.

- **At notrump when you have the AKx(x) and dummy has the Q10x(x)**

	♠ Q 10 9 4	
♠ A K 7 3		♠ ???
	♠ leads 2	

When declarer leads low, it is usually right to play low, allowing declarer to make the percentage play of the ten which may lose to partner's jack.