

Third hand play and signals

Partner leads an honour

If partner leads an honour he should have a sequence in that suit (unless he is leading from a doubleton in your suit). So a lead of a Q denies the King and promises the Jack. In No Trumps it would promise either the 9 or the 8 because you need a sequence of 3 in NT but only 2 in a suit contract.

Third hand therefor needs to tell partner if he likes the suit and to continue or he doesn't have anything in that suit and maybe opening leader should try another suit.

This is called attitude as you are giving your attitude to the lead it does NOT tell any thing about how many cards you have in that suit.

There are 2 ways to show attitude. It doesn't really matter which you choose so long as your partner does it too.

Some people play "*High Encourage*" meaning a high card is saying that you like the suit and to continue it please. Conversely a small card would say I have nothing in that suit please consider changing to a different suit.

Others play "*Low Encourage*" which is the other way round a small card says continue and a high card says switch.

I started playing low encourage and it is difficult to change so I will continue to describe using low encourage for these lessons. If you decide to do the opposite then whenever a small card is played in your mind pretend it is a big card.

For example:

Partner makes an opening lead of the A♠, and you have:

- a) Q85. Dummy has 3 cards and plays low. Partner has the K and you have the Q so it is possible that you might have the 1st 3 tricks if partner keeps playing the suit. Therefore encourage him with the 5 (playing low encourage or the 8 if you play high encourage)
- b) Say partner has opened the bidding with Spade (showing 5) but the opposition are playing in 4H. This time you have 85 and dummy still has 3. now you can work out that declarer has 3 also. Partner 5, Dummy 3, You 2 = 10, declarer 3. So you should be able to ruff the third round of S's. You want partner to continue the suit so encourage him with the 5
- c) You have the same Q85 but this time dummy has 4 spades what do you play this time. If you do your maths you can work out declarer has a singleton. You should tell partner to switch as you know the next lead will be trumped. Play the 8
- d) Same bidding, Dummy has 3 you have 2, (85). This time dummy has the K♦ and you have the AQ32 in Diamonds. You really want partner to switch to diamonds if he does and leads the J you may get 3 tricks. Even if he doesn't you will get 2 and then give the Spade back to

partners K and you put the contract down (2 Spades and 2 Diamonds) by two if partners then gives you the spade ruff.

Partner Leads a Small Card

When partner leads a small card it promises an honour usually a 4 card suit or longer but it may be 3 (never 2 or 1). So as third seat you are required to play your highest card so as to establish partners honour. If you have two or more equal cards then you play the lowest of the equals. The most common exception to this is when dummy comes up with an honour that you can beat but he doesn't play it. You may decide to keep your honour to take dummies.

For example:

Partner leads the 4♠ to 4 Hearts and you have;

- a) AJ53. Dummy has 2 small Play the A and return the 3 indicating that you started with 4 cards in that suit.
- b) A53. Dummy has 2 small Play the A and return the 5 indicating that you started with 3 cards in that suit.
- c) AJ53. Dummy has Q86. Play the J and return the 3 indicating that you started with 4 cards in that suit. Partner will take his k and lead back a small so you can take dummies Q with the A.
- d) QJ3. Dummy has 2 small. The Q and J are equal so play J. When declarer takes the A partner knows that you have the Q.
- e) QT9. Dummy has the J but it is not played. Play the 9 as QT9 are all equal because Declarer hasn't got the J. You can capture the J with your Q.