

LESSON 3

Third-Hand Play



General Concepts

General Introduction

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GENERAL CONCEPTS

Defense

Third-hand play

- Third hand high
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- Third hand not so high
 - Playing the lower of touching cards
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 - When partner leads a high card
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- Promotion
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

There are too many exceptions to develop a set of specific rules for third-hand play. Instead, the students are introduced to the general guideline of *third hand high* and shown some of the circumstances where this is a good idea. Then they are introduced to some straightforward examples where third hand does not play its highest card, only as high as “necessary.” Rather than memorizing rules, the student should be encouraged to look at the card partner leads, look at the dummy and the cards in hand and try to visualize what the layout of the suit might be. With this picture in mind, the student can try to make the best play in third position.

Even if the student can visualize all four hands, the student has to know what to do. It is sometimes far from obvious even when you can actually see all of the cards in the suit. The exercises start off giving the students a chance to look at various suit layouts and to discuss how the defenders can take the maximum number of tricks in the suit.

“For the last two lessons, we have focused on opening leads. You were the first to play to the trick. This week, we’re going to move across to the other side of the table. Your partner leads, either as the opening leader or during the play, and you are now in the position referred to as *third hand*. You have an important role because your card is the last your side will play to the trick. Let’s see how you make your best choice.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: Third Hand High

Introduction

“One of the sayings handed down from the days of whist is *third hand high*. This implies that third hand should play as high a card to the trick as the player can afford. It helps to consider the circumstances in which this guideline is best applied. A typical situation is when partner leads a low card on opening lead and a low card is played from dummy. Let’s see why *third hand high* works so well. Take the spade suit and distribute it as follows:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 8 6 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ K J 7 5		♠ A 10 2
	DECLARER	
	♠ Q 9 3	

“You are East and your partner leads the ♠5 against a notrump contract. Declarer plays the ♠4 from dummy. If you play your lowest card, the ♠2, declarer wins the first trick with the ♠9. If you make a halfhearted attempt to win the trick and play the ♠10, declarer wins with the ♠Q. Instead, you must play the highest card you can afford, the ♠A. If you play the ♠A and lead back the ♠10, declarer’s ♠Q is trapped. If declarer covers your ♠10, partner’s ♠K takes the trick. If declarer doesn’t cover, your ♠10 wins and declarer loses the ♠Q on the next round. By playing third hand high, you prevent declarer from taking a single trick in the suit.

“Playing third hand high can be the best idea, even if you don’t win the trick. Let’s change the example slightly by exchanging your ♠A and ♠10 for declarer’s ♠Q and ♠9:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 8 6 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ K J 7 5		♠ Q 9 2
	DECLARER	
	♠ A 10 3	

“Again the lead is the ♠5 and a low card is played from dummy. It doesn’t hurt to play the highest card you have, the ♠Q. Declarer can take the ♠A, but you have promoted three winners for your side. If you played the ♠2, or even the ♠9, declarer would win the first trick with the ♠10 and still have the ♠A left.”

The focus of this lesson is on the first card played by the third hand. Nonetheless, it might help students see that in order to take all of the tricks they are entitled to in a suit, the defenders often must be careful. Have them exchange West's ♠J and South's ♠10 and discuss what would happen after declarer wins the first trick. The defenders would have to trap declarer's ♠J. This can be done only if East leads the suit rather than West.

This is likely to draw away from the focus on third hand high. Therefore, unless you feel your students are advanced enough to quickly understand the situation, this is probably not the best place to go into too much detail. If you think it is worthwhile, the discussion might go like this:

“In this layout, it is easy for the defenders to take their tricks once declarer's ♠A is driven out. Even after playing third hand high, however, the defenders must play carefully to get the tricks to which they are entitled. Let's exchange partner's ♠J and declarer's ♠10:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 8 6 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ K 10 7 5		♠ Q 9 2
	DECLARER	
	♠ A J 3	

“After partner leads the ♠5 and you play the ♠Q to drive out declarer's ♠A, let's look at the remaining cards:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 8 6	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ K 10 7		♠ 9 2
	DECLARER	
	♠ J 3	

“We'll be looking at how the defenders take their winners in more detail later in the series. It is worth noting at this point, however, that you, East, and not partner, West, has to lead the suit next, if the defenders are to take the three tricks to which they are entitled. Suppose partner gets the lead before you do. If partner leads a spade, either the ♠K or a low spade, declarer gets a trick with the ♠J. Instead, partner should lead another suit, trying to find an entry into your hand. There is no problem once you get the lead. When you lead a spade, the defenders take the next three tricks because declarer's ♠J is trapped.

“Let's practice playing third hand high.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise One, your partner leads the 5 and the 3 is played from dummy. Which card must you play as third hand to ensure that your side gets all of the tricks to which it is entitled?”

1)

	DUMMY	
	7 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
K J 6 5 2		A 8 4
	DECLARER	
	Q 10 9	

2)

	DUMMY	
	9 8 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
Q 10 6 5		K 7 2
	DECLARER	
	A J 4	

3)

	DUMMY	
	A 8 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
Q 9 7 5		K 10 6
	DECLARER	
	J 4 2	

1) Ace 2) King 3) King

Follow-up

Since this is the first exercise, have a student from each group give a report on how many tricks the group expected to take by playing third hand high. The explanation for each example can be quite simple. You might expect something like this:

“In the first example, you play third hand high, the ace, and win the trick. You can then lead the suit back and declarer’s queen is trapped. You end up with five tricks in the suit.

“In the second example, the king should be played to drive out declarer’s ace. As long as you lead the suit next, trapping declarer’s jack, the defense takes three tricks. If partner has to lead the suit next, declarer will take a second trick.

“In the final example, you should play the king, as high a card as you can afford. If you play the 10, declarer will win the trick with the jack and still have the ace left. When the king wins, you can lead the 10, top of your remaining doubleton, trapping declarer’s jack and setting up two more tricks for the defense.”

Conclusion

“In each example, the defenders were more effective when third hand contributed as high a card as could be afforded when trying to win the trick. A lower card would not have worked out as well.”

EXERCISE TWO: Only as High as Necessary

Introduction

“As with all guidelines, we have to be careful as to when we apply them. You don’t always play your highest card as third hand. The objective is to try to win the trick or to promote winners in partner’s hand, so you need to play a card only as high as necessary. To see this, lay out the following cards in the heart suit:

	DUMMY	
	♥ 8 5 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ K 10 6 4		♥ Q J 2
	DECLARER	
	♥ A 9 7	

“Suppose partner leads the ♥4 and a low card is played from dummy. You need to play third hand high. Your ♥Q and ♥J are *equals*, however. Since each one would be equally effective, it does not look as though it makes much difference which you choose. However, you must remember that you are playing with a partner. The card you choose may make some difference to partner who can’t see into your hand and has no way of knowing that you hold both the ♥Q and the ♥J.

“You have seen this sort of situation before, where you give partner information through the card you play. When making an opening lead, you always lead the top of a sequence to show that you have the next lower card but not the next higher card. It would be nice if we used the same rule in this situation, but the guideline here is to play only as high a card as necessary. That means you play the lower of your touching cards, the ♥J. It may seem irritating that you lead the top of touching high cards but play the lower of touching high cards in third hand, but let’s see why this works out best.

“When you play the ♥J, declarer has to play the ♥A to win the trick. This passes the information to partner that you must also have the ♥Q. Why? If declarer had both the ♥A and ♥Q, declarer would play the ♥Q on East’s ♥J, not the ♥A. Why does it make a difference whether you play the ♥Q or the ♥J? Suppose you played the ♥Q and declarer won with the ♥A. Partner would not know who had the ♥J. Partner would be entitled to think that declarer held that card. Let’s exchange your ♥J for declarer’s ♥9:

	DUMMY	
	♥ 8 5 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ K 10 6 4		♥ Q 9 2
	DECLARER	
	♥ A J 7	

“If this were the layout, you would have to play the ♥Q, third hand high. Now it would not be safe for partner to lead the suit again — declarer would take a trick with the ♥J. By always playing the lower of your touching cards when you have a choice, you are telling partner that you do not have the next lower card, although you may have the next higher card(s).”

“Here is another case where you need to play only as high a card as necessary to win the trick. Rearrange the heart suit as follows:

	DUMMY	
	♥ Q 5 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ 9 8 6 4 2		♥ A K J
	DECLARER	
	♥ 10 7	

“Suppose partner leads a low heart and declarer plays a low heart from the dummy. Which heart do you play? (The ♥J.) You need play only as high a card as necessary to win the trick. You do not want to waste your ♥A and ♥K. That would give declarer an undeserved trick with dummy’s ♥Q.”

Instructions

“In the layouts in Exercise Two, your partner leads the 5 and the 3 is played from dummy. Which card would you play? What do you expect to happen?”

1)

PARTNER	DUMMY	
5	A 9 3	YOU
	■	Q J 10

2)

PARTNER	DUMMY	
5	J 8 3	YOU
	■	K Q 10

3)

PARTNER	DUMMY	
5	A 6 3	YOU
	■	K J 10

1) 10 2) 10 3) King

Follow-up

Have the students give a brief explanation of which card they would play and why. The points covered should be something like this:

“In the first layout, third hand would play the 10, only as high as necessary. If declarer won the trick with the king, partner might suspect that you have the jack, and even the queen. Partner would know for sure that you do not have the 9. If the 10 wins the trick, partner will immediately know that you have the jack and the queen, since declarer could have won the trick if declarer held one of those cards.

“In the second layout, you would play the 10. Dummy’s jack is trapped and the 10 is as high a card as necessary. If partner has the ace, the 10 will win the trick. If declarer has the ace and wins the trick, your king and queen will have been promoted into winners.”

Some students may want to play the queen, the lower of their touching cards. Remind them that the focus is on playing only as high a card as necessary. They have to look at the cards in dummy before deciding how high a card is needed.

“In the last layout, you must be careful not to automatically play the lower of the touching cards, the 10. The priority is to play third hand high. You play the lower of touching cards only when you have a choice. Here, if you don’t play the king, declarer may win the trick with the queen.”

Conclusion

“Third hand should play only as high as necessary, playing the lower of touching cards when given a choice. Before deciding how high it is necessary to play, the defender has to look at partner’s card and those in the dummy.”

EXERCISE THREE: Trapping High Cards

Introduction

“When deciding how high a card you need to play as third hand, it often helps if you try to visualize the entire layout of the suit. You can't see partner's cards, other than the card led, and you can't see declarer's cards, but sometimes the bidding and the logic of the situation will help you out. Let's lay out some of the cards in the diamond suit as follows:

	DUMMY	
	♦ K 8	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♦ 4		♦ A Q 7 3

“Partner leads the ♦ 4 and declarer plays the ♦ 8. Which card do you play? (The ♦ Q.) This looks too easy. You can see that dummy's ♦ K is trapped and that your ♦ Q is as high a card as is necessary to win the trick. Now, let's make it a little more challenging and replace your ♦ Q with the ♦ J:

	DUMMY	
	♦ K 8	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♦ 4		♦ A J 7 3

“What do you do when partner leads the ♦ 4 and the ♦ 8 is played from dummy? How high a card is it necessary to play to win the trick? The ♦ A will win the trick for sure, but the ♦ J may win the trick if partner has the ♦ Q. This is where it helps to visualize the possible layout of the suit. First, let's give partner the ♦ Q:

	DUMMY		
	♦ K 8		
PARTNER	■	YOU	
♦ Q 10 6 4		♦ A J 7 3	
	DECLARER		
	♦ 9 5 2		

“Seeing all of the cards, it is easy to see that you can insert the ♦ J and win the trick, keeping your ♦ A to catch dummy's ♦ K. If you play the ♦ A rather than the ♦ J, you will give declarer an extra trick. But what if declarer holds the ♦ Q, rather than partner? Now it looks as though it would be a mistake to play the ♦ J, since declarer will be able to win the trick. Before deciding that it would cost a trick to play the ♦ J, however, let's see what the situation looks like when we exchange partner's ♦ Q for declarer's ♦ 5:

	DUMMY	
	♦ K 8	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♦ 10 6 5 4		♦ A J 7 3
	DECLARER	
	♦ Q 9 2	

“Look what happens when you put in the ♦J. Declarer can win the ♦Q, but now the remaining cards look like this:

	DUMMY	
	♦ K	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♦ 10 6 5		♦ A 7 3
	DECLARER	
	♦ 9 2	

“Dummy’s ♦K is not going to take a trick, since you still have the ♦A. When your side next gets the lead, you can take all of the remaining diamond tricks. Even if you are defending a suit contract, playing the ♦J does not cost anything. Declarer was always entitled to one trick in the suit.

“Now let’s go back a step and see what would happen if you played the ♦A, rather than the ♦J. The remaining cards would look like this:

	DUMMY	
	♦ K	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♦ 10 6 5		♦ J 7 3
	DECLARER	
	♦ Q 9	

“How many tricks does declarer get now? (Two.) So, playing the ♦A gives declarer an extra trick whether or not declarer has the ♦Q. Playing the ♦J does not cost a trick whether declarer or partner has the ♦Q. When a low card is played from dummy in the above situation and you play the ♦J, even though you do not know who has the ♦Q, you are said to be taking a finesse against dummy. Knowing when to take a finesse against dummy is not always easy. It helps if you can accurately visualize partner’s and declarer’s holdings in the suit. The general idea is to try to keep dummy’s high card trapped whenever possible, so that declarer does not get a trick to which declarer is not entitled. If you keep this in mind, it will help you decide how high you need to play as third hand when trying to take the most tricks for your side.

“Don’t finesse against dummy when there is nothing to finesse! If dummy has only low cards, there is no high card to trap. You should play third hand high with the highest card you can afford. To give you some practice at finessing against dummy, let’s try the following layouts.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise Three, your partner leads the 5 and the 3 is played from dummy. Which card must you play to enable your side to eventually take the maximum number of tricks in the suit?”

1)

	DUMMY	
	Q 7 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
K 9 6 5		A J 4
	DECLARER	
	10 8 2	

2)

	DUMMY	
	J 8 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
Q 7 6 5		K 10 2
	DECLARER	
	A 9 4	

3)

	DUMMY	
	K 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
J 9 7 5 4		A 10 6
	DECLARER	
	Q 8 2	

1) Jack 2) 10 3) 10

Follow-up

Give the students some time to look over the various layouts. The concept of finessing against dummy is not easy and you probably will have to help clarify the answers.

“The first layout is similar to the one we were looking at earlier. When you can see all of the cards, it is easy to play the jack on the first trick when a low card is played from dummy. You could still find this play without seeing all of the cards, if you keep in mind that you would like to keep dummy’s queen trapped. Even if declarer held the king, rather than partner, it is unlikely to cost a trick if you play the jack.

“On the next layout, you have to play the 10 in order to take three tricks in the suit. If you play the king, declarer will win the ace and later take a second trick with the jack. By playing the 10 on the first trick, you keep dummy’s jack trapped. At the table, you would have to try to visualize the layout. Playing the 10 will work best if declarer has the ace, but what if partner has the ace and declarer has the queen? In that case, declarer is still entitled to one trick in the suit. By playing the 10, you are merely giving up the trick sooner rather than later.

“In the last layout, you want to keep dummy’s king trapped, so you play the 10, rather than the ace, on the first trick. Declarer takes one trick with the queen, but your side takes the rest of the tricks when you regain the lead. If you play the ace, declarer takes two tricks, one with the king and one with the queen. What if declarer held the jack rather than the queen? Declarer would win the first trick, but would take one trick anyway if you play the ace right away.”

Conclusion

“If partner leads low and there is a high card in the dummy, try to visualize the complete layout of the suit. Whenever possible, you want to keep dummy’s high cards trapped.”

EXERCISE FOUR: When Partner Leads a High Card

Introduction

“So far, we have been looking at third-hand play when partner leads a low card. When partner leads a high card, you may not need to play third hand high, especially when there is an honor that can be trapped in the dummy. To illustrate this, let’s put out the following cards in the club suit:

	DUMMY	
	♣ K 8 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♣ Q J 10 9		♣ A 5 4 2
	DECLARER	
	♣ 7 6	

“When partner leads the ♣Q, top of a sequence, what do you play if declarer plays dummy’s ♣K? (Play the ♣A, to win the trick.) If, instead, declarer plays a low club from dummy, it would not be a good idea to play your ♣A, third hand high, since you can see that partner’s ♣Q is going to win the trick. You and partner have dummy’s ♣K trapped. You essentially play this suit the same way that declarer would if declarer held the same cards.”

At this point, don’t become involved with which club (other than the ace) that East would play. The students will come to defensive signals in a couple of lessons.

“Now let’s exchange partner’s ♣Q with declarer’s ♣7:

	DUMMY	
	♣ K 8 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♣ J 10 9 7		♣ A 5 4 2
	DECLARER	
	♣ Q 6	

“Partner would still lead the top of a sequence, the ♣J. What do you play this time when declarer plays a low club from dummy? Partner’s lead of the ♣J tells you that declarer has the ♣Q, since partner always leads the top of touching cards. It may look as though you want to be sure of winning the trick by playing third hand high, the ♣A. This situation, however, is similar to one we looked at earlier. If you play the ♣A, dummy’s ♣K will no longer be trapped. Declarer will take a trick with the ♣Q and a trick with the ♣K.

“If you don’t play the ♣A, declarer can win the trick with the ♣Q, but now dummy’s ♣K is trapped. After regaining the lead, partner can lead the ♣10 and you will get the rest of the tricks in the club suit no matter which card declarer plays from dummy.

“The situation is different if partner leads a high card and there is nothing in dummy to trap. Give partner your ♣A and exchange dummy’s ♣K with one of your low clubs:

	DUMMY	
	♣ 8 3 2	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♣ A J 10 9 7		♣ K 5 4
	DECLARER	
	♣ Q 6	

“Which card would partner lead against a notrump contract? (♣J, top of an interior sequence.) From partner’s lead of the ♣J, you again know that declarer has the ♣Q. But this time there is no high card in dummy to trap. What happens if you play a low card? (Declarer takes a trick with the ♣Q.) Even though it may seem expensive to play one of your high cards on top of partner’s high card, that is the only way that you can stop declarer from taking a trick with the ♣Q. This is another case of third hand high. Of course, partner may not be leading from an interior sequence. Let’s give declarer partner’s ♣A:

	DUMMY	
	♣ 8 3 2	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♣ J 10 9 7		♣ K 5 4
	DECLARER	
	♣ A Q 6	

“When you put the ♣K on partner’s ♣J, declarer can win the trick with the ♣A. But has your play of the ♣K cost your side a trick? (No.) Declarer is always entitled to two tricks in the suit, no matter what you do. Now, let’s put you to work deciding whether or not to play third hand high when partner leads a high card.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise Four, your partner leads the jack and the 4 is played from dummy. Which card must you play on the first trick? How should the defenders play the suit to get all of the tricks to which they are entitled?”

1)

	DUMMY	
	K 7 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
J 10 8 5		A Q 6
	DECLARER	
	9 3 2	

2)

	DUMMY	
	K 8 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
J 10 9 5		A 6 3
	DECLARER	
	Q 7 2	

3)

	DUMMY	
	7 5 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
K J 10 9		A 6 3
	DECLARER	
	Q 8 2	

1) 6 2) 6 3) Ace

Follow-up

Have a student report how the group decided the suit should be played and how many tricks the defenders can take. The focus is on which card third hand should play to the first trick. There is a good opportunity, however, to think about what would happen next in order for the defenders to take all of their tricks. The discussion might be something like this:

“In the first layout, play the 6 to let partner’s jack win the trick. Partner can lead the suit again and dummy’s king remains trapped. The defenders take all of the tricks in the suit.

“In the next layout, play one of your low cards. Even though you know declarer has the queen, you want to keep dummy’s king trapped. Partner will have to lead the suit again in order to trap dummy’s king.”

In both of these layouts, partner may need an entry in an outside suit to get a trick with the remaining low card. There is no need to dwell on this if the students do not bring the point up. The layouts all work the same way whether you are defending a notrump contract or a suit contract.

“In the last layout, you need to play the ace to prevent declarer from taking a trick with the queen. Then you must lead the suit back, trapping declarer’s queen, in order to take all of the tricks in the suit.”

Conclusion

“When partner leads a high card, you may be able to trap a high card in the dummy by playing a low card rather than third hand high. On the other hand, if there are only low cards in the dummy, you may have to overtake partner’s high card if there is an opportunity to trap a high card in declarer’s hand.”

EXERCISE FIVE: Unblocking

Introduction

“There are times when you have to play a high card from third hand even though it doesn’t seem necessary. Put out the following cards in the spade suit:

	DUMMY	
	♠ 9 4 2	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♠ K Q J 7 5		♠ A 3
	DECLARER	
	♠ 10 8 6	

“Before considering how the defenders should play this suit, let’s consider how declarer would play this suit. It is straightforward for declarer. To avoid stranding winners, declarer starts by playing the high card from the short side. After winning the first trick with the ace, declarer can lead the ♠3 to the rest of the winners. The defenders have a more difficult time. Partner can’t see your cards and starts off by leading the ♠K, top of a sequence. Since partner’s ♠K will win the trick, it does not look as though you need to play your ♠A. But look what happens if you don’t. Partner’s ♠K will win the trick. When partner leads the suit again, you can win the trick with the ♠A, but you have no low cards left to lead to partner’s winners. The suit is *blocked*.

“How can you avoid blocking the suit? (Overtake partner’s ♠K with the ♠A.) You want to start by playing the high card from the short side, in the same way that declarer does. By playing the ♠A on partner’s ♠K, you unblock the suit and take the first five tricks.

“An easy way to recognize this type of situation is to remind yourself that when partner is trying to take tricks in a long suit, you don’t want your last card in the suit to be a high card. You want to keep a low card so that you can give the lead to your partner.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise Five, your partner leads the indicated card and declarer plays dummy’s ace. Which card must you play to allow the defenders to take four tricks in the suit, if you have the only entry outside of this suit?”

1)

	DUMMY	
	A 9 2	
PARTNER	■	YOU
Q J 10 6 3		K 4
	DECLARER	
	8 7 5	

2)

	DUMMY	
	A 8 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
J 10 9 6 5		K Q 2
	DECLARER	
	7 4	

3)

	DUMMY	
	A 9 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
Q 10 7 5 2		K 3
	DECLARER	
	J 8 6	

1) King 2) King or Queen 3) King

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise with the class as a whole, covering the key points.

“When dummy plays the ace in the first layout, you want to play the king, so that you will have a low card as the last card left in your hand to lead to partner.

“In the next layout, if you play a low card on the first trick, the suit will be blocked. You will be able to take two tricks when you next gain the lead, but will have no low card left to lead to partner’s remaining winners. Instead, play the king or queen on the first trick, keeping a low card in your hand.

“The last layout may not seem as obvious — it looks as if playing the king under the ace will cost a trick. If you are the next defender to gain the lead, however, you will have a low card left to lead to partner, trapping declarer’s jack. If you play a low card on the first trick, your side could take only one trick in the suit unless partner has an entry in another suit.”

Conclusion

“To avoid stranding partner’s winners, sometimes you must play a high card, even though it is not needed to win the trick, in order to keep a low card to lead to partner.”

EXERCISE SIX: Putting It All Together**Introduction**

This exercise is a review of the points covered so far. It gives the students a chance to apply the guidelines for third-hand play looking only at the cards they would see at the table.

Instructions

“Your partner leads the indicated card in the layout in Exercise Six and the 3 is played from dummy. Which card do you play in each situation?”

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|--------|-----|----|--|-------|---|---------|---|-----|---|--|--------|
| <p>1) DUMMY
 10 8 3</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">PARTNER</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">■</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">YOU</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">K J 5</td> </tr> </table> | PARTNER | ■ | YOU | 4 | | K J 5 | <p>4) DUMMY
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 A 8 3</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">PARTNER</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">■</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">YOU</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Q J 2</td> </tr> </table> | PARTNER | ■ | YOU | 6 | | Q J 2 | <p>5) DUMMY
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 A Q 3</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">PARTNER</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">■</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">YOU</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">10</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">K J 4</td> </tr> </table> | PARTNER | ■ | YOU | 10 | | K J 4 | <p>6) DUMMY
 8 4 3</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">PARTNER</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">■</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">YOU</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Q</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">K 7</td> </tr> </table> | PARTNER | ■ | YOU | Q | | K 7 |
| PARTNER | ■ | YOU | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | | K J 4 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PARTNER | ■ | YOU | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Q | | K 7 | | | | | | | | | | | |

- 1) King
- 2) Jack
- 3) 4

- 4) 10
- 5) Jack
- 6) King

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise after the students have had a few minutes to try the layouts. If the students have followed everything so far, they should not have any trouble with the exercise. These are the points to be made:

“In the first layout, play third hand high. Make sure you play the highest card you can afford, the king, not the jack, when there are no high cards to trap in the dummy.

“In the second layout, you would play the jack. You want to play third hand high, but with a choice of cards, play the lower ranking — only as high a card as necessary.

“In the third layout, play the 4. Partner’s 10 is high enough to win the trick and partner can lead the suit again, trapping dummy’s queen.

“In the fourth layout, play the 10. It will either win the trick or force declarer to win with the ace, implying that you hold the missing cards.

“In the fifth layout, play the jack, keeping dummy’s king trapped. If partner has the queen, your jack will win the trick. If declarer has the queen, you don’t want to give up two tricks in the suit by playing your ace.

“In the last layout, unblock the suit by overtaking partner’s queen with the king. You want to be left with a low card in partner’s suit, not a high card.”

Conclusion

“Let’s see how we can put everything together. The general guideline is for third hand to play high. Before automatically contributing your highest card, however, take a look at the card partner led and the cards in the dummy. You want to play a card no higher than necessary. You want to try to trap any high cards in the dummy. You also need to be careful not to block the suit by being left with the highest card in the suit when partner is waiting to take the remaining winners.”

EXERCISE SEVEN: Review of Responses to 1NT Opening Bids

Introduction

“When partner opens the bidding 1NT, you have a clear picture of partner’s hand. Usually you can make the decisions about the level and strain of the contract right away. For example, with fewer than 8 points, you know the partnership belongs in a partgame contract. With 10 or more points, you know the partnership belongs in game.

“There are times, however, when you need more information. Since the partnership needs 25 combined points to be in a game contract, you may not be sure of the appropriate level when you have 8 or 9 points. In such a case, you will have to make an invitational bid, such as raising to 2NT to ask if opener has a minimum or a maximum hand. The partnership needs eight or more combined cards in a major suit in order to want to make that suit trump. You might need to find out how many cards opener has in a major suit. If you jump to three of a major, you show a five-card suit and ask opener to raise to game with three-card support or bid 3NT with only two cards in the suit. If you have a four-card major suit, you can use the Stayman convention, 2♣, to find out whether or not partner has a four-card major.

“You also can use Jacoby transfer bids which were taught in the *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century* course.

“In general, after an opening bid of 1NT, responder’s hand fits one of the following three categories, and partner bids accordingly.

- With 0 to 7 points, responder wants to play in a partscore, signing off in 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ with a five-card or longer suit, otherwise passing. If playing Jacoby transfers, a bid of 2♦ would ask partner to bid 2♥, and a bid of 2♥ would ask partner to bid 2♠.
- With 8 or 9 points, responder invites a game by bidding the Stayman convention, if interested in a major suit fit, or by bidding 2NT. Responder also can invite to game using Jacoby transfer bids.
- With 10 or more points, responder bids 4♥ or 4♠ with a six-card or longer suit, 3♥ or 3♠ with a five-card suit, 2♣ if interested in a four-card major suit or 3NT. Again, responder can use Jacoby transfer bids to show a game-going hand.

“The focus of this course is defense, so we are not going into the Jacoby transfer bid convention in detail at this time. To learn more or to refresh your memory, check out Chapter 9 in the *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century* text or the *Learn to Play Bridge 2* software.”

Instructions

“Partner opens 1NT. What do you respond with each hand in Exercise Seven? You should use both the Stayman and Jacoby transfers conventions, if applicable.”

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1) ♠ 10 8 6 5 4 2
♥ 9 3
♦ J 7 4
♣ 8 2 | 2) ♠ Q 3
♥ J 8 2
♦ 10 7 5
♣ 10 8 7 5 2 | 3) ♠ K 6
♥ K 7 3
♦ Q 10 9 6 5
♣ 9 7 5 |
| 1) <u>2♥ then pass</u>
partner's 2♠ rebid. | 2) <u>Pass</u> | 3) <u>2NT</u> |
| 4) ♠ K 10 8 6 2
♥ A 5
♦ J 9 4
♣ K 8 3 | 5) ♠ 8
♥ J 10 8 6 4 2
♦ A K 7
♣ 9 6 2 | 6) ♠ A 3
♥ 9 4
♦ J 8 2
♣ K Q J 7 4 2 |
| 4) <u>2♥ Partner</u>
bids 2♠, you rebid
3NT, partner decides
on the final contract. | 5) <u>2♦ Partner</u>
bids 2♥, you raise
to 4♥. | 6) <u>3NT</u> |
| 7) ♠ Q 10 8 3
♥ A 9 6 4
♦ A 8 3
♣ 7 4 | 8) ♠ Q 8
♥ A K 6 2
♦ 10 8 4 2
♣ 9 6 2 | 9) ♠ J 9 7 4
♥ Q 6 4 2
♦ 9 3
♣ 10 8 6 |
| 7) <u>2♣</u> | 8) <u>2♣</u> | 9) <u>Pass</u> |

Follow-up

Since this is a quick review, not the topic of the lesson, you could lead the students through the answers by making statements such as these:

“With only 1HCP on the first hand, you want the final contract to be a partscore. You know there are at least eight spades in the combined hands, because partner shows a balanced hand. What do you respond? (2♥, a transfer to 2♠.which you pass.)

“On the second hand, you want to play in a partscore. You can't bid 2♣, since that would be the Stayman convention. What do you do? (Pass.)

“With 8 HCP plus 1 length point on the next hand, you want to move toward game without actually bidding it. You aren't interested in a major suit, so what do you respond? (2NT.)

“There are 11 HCP on the next hand, enough for game. How can you make a forcing bid to find out if opener has at least three spades? (Bid 2♥, a transfer to 2♠, then rebid 3NT. Partner decides the final contract of 4♠ or 3NT.)

“You have 10 total points on the next hand, counting 2 points for your six-card suit, enough for game. Where do you want to play the contract? (4♥. To get there, start with a 2♦ transfer to 2♥, then rebid 4♥.)

“There are enough points for a game on the sixth hand. You may be tempted to bid game in clubs, but you'll need to take 11 tricks. What do you do? (Bid 3NT.)

“There are enough points for a game on the seventh hand. You want to play in 4♥ or 4♠ if you have an eight-card fit, otherwise 3NT. How can you find out if opener has a four-card major suit? (Bid 2♣.)

“On hand number eight, with 9 HCP and a four-card heart suit, you are uncertain about both the level and strain of the contract. How do you start getting the information you need? (Bid 2♣.) If partner bids hearts, you can raise. If partner bids 2♦ or 2♠, you can try 2NT to invite game.

“On the last hand, you are interested in a major suit but have only 3 points. Should you use the Stayman convention? (No.) What do you do? (Pass.)”

Conclusion

“When the opening bid is 1NT, responder has a clear picture of partner's strength and distribution and can often sign off in the appropriate contract immediately. Sometimes responder needs to make an invitational or forcing bid to get more information from opener.

“Opening 2NT and 3NT bids are also very descriptive. If partner opens 2NT, you respond in a fashion similar to responding to 1NT, keeping in mind that opener has 20–21 HCP. You can bid 3♣, Stayman, if you are interested in finding out if partner has a four-card major suit, and you can use Jacoby transfers, if interested. With no interest in the majors, you would pass only with fewer than 4 points. Otherwise, you would raise to 3NT (perhaps higher, if you are interested in a slam). Over 3NT, you do not have as much room. You would pass unless you are interested in slam or have a six-card major suit, and over 3NT, a bid of 4♣ would be Stayman.”

EXERCISE EIGHT: Developing Tricks in Notrump Contracts

Introduction

“When declarer goes through the PLAN and finds that there are not enough winners to make the contract, declarer *Analyzes the alternatives*. Declarer can get extra tricks from promotion, long suits or finesses. Let’s look at some layouts.”

Instructions

“What is the maximum number of tricks you can get from each of the suit combinations in Exercise Eight if the missing cards are favorably located? How would you plan to play the suit?”

DUMMY:	Q 7	A 7 5	7 6 3	Q 7 4 2	9 6 3
DECLARER:	J 10 9 2	K 8 4 3 2	A Q J	A 8 6 3	A Q 7 4 2

1) Two 2) Four 3) Three 4) Three 5) Four

Follow-up

Since this is mainly a review, it is probably best to go over the exercise with the group as a whole. You may want to lead the students quickly to each conclusion. You might say something like this:

“You are missing the ace and king in the first layout. How would you develop tricks? (Play the suit twice, driving out the ace and the king to promote two winners.) Which card do you play first? (The queen, high card from the short side.) How many tricks can you take in this suit? (Two.)

“In the second layout, you have eight cards in the suit. How many do the opponents have? (Five.) How are they likely to be divided? (3–2.) How many tricks will you end up with if you play the suit five times? (Four.)

“How many tricks can you get through promotion on the third layout? (Two, by driving out the king.) Is there any way to get three tricks? (Yes, by taking a repeated finesse against the opponent on your right.)

“How would you plan to take a trick with dummy’s queen on the fourth layout? (By leading toward it.) If the king is on your left, can you get more than two tricks in the suit? (Yes, if the suit is divided 3–2, you get an extra trick from length.)

“On the fifth layout, how do you get a trick from your queen? (By taking a finesse.) How do you get more tricks from the suit if the finesse is successful? (By giving up a trick to the opponents, hoping the suit is divided 3–2.)”

Conclusion

“When there aren’t enough tricks, declarer can make use of promotion, long suits and finesses to develop the extra tricks required.”

SAMPLE DEALS

EXERCISE NINE: Third Hand High

Introduction

You might want to discuss only the bidding and then have the students play the deal. You will be able to judge the needs of your class. If third hand doesn't play the ace on the first trick, declarer has only two diamonds and one club loser and can comfortably make the contract. The ace and jack combination may tempt students to "finesse" by playing the jack.

"Partner gets off to a good lead on the first pre-dealt deal, leading the unbid suit. Let's see if that is enough to defeat the contract."

Instructions

"Turn up the cards on the first pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player."

(E-Z Deal Cards #3, Deal 1)

Dealer: North	♠ A Q J 8 ♥ 5 3 ♦ Q 9 2 ♣ K Q 10 2				
♠ 5 4 3 ♥ 10 9 4 ♦ A J 5 ♣ 9 7 6 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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	♠ 9 6 ♥ J 7 6 2 ♦ K 10 6 3 ♣ A 8 3
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ K 10 7 2 ♥ A K Q 8 ♦ 8 7 4 ♣ J 5				

The Bidding

"What would North open the bidding? (1♣.) East and West pass through-out. With two four-card suits that can be bid at the one level, which does South bid? (1♥, responding four-card suits up the line.) Is there still room for North to bid a suit at the one level? (Yes.) What does North rebid? (1♠.) How many points does South have? (13 HCP plus 1 dummy point in support of partner's spades.) At what level does the partnership belong? (Game.) Is there a Golden Fit? (Yes, in spades.) What does South rebid? (4♠.) How does the auction proceed from there? (Pass, pass, pass.) Who is the declarer? (North.)"

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (East.) Which suit would be led? (Diamonds.) Why? (Unbid suit.) Which card would be led? (♦3, fourth best.) Which card would West play on the first trick? (♦A, third hand high.) What would West play next? (Return partner’s suit, leading the ♦J, top of the remaining doubleton.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer can afford three losers in 4♠. There are three diamond losers and one club loser, one too many. Declarer plans to discard one of the diamond losers on dummy’s extra heart winner, after drawing trumps. The ♣A can then be driven out.)”

Conclusion

“The guideline *third hand high* is useful on this deal, provided you (West) play as high a card as you can afford.”

EXERCISE TEN: Trapping High Cards

Introduction

“Here’s another deal where third hand has to decide how high a card to play when partner leads a suit. The play to the first trick can often make the difference between success or failure for the defense.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the second pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #3, Deal 2)

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

The Bidding

“What would East open the bidding? (1♣.) What would South do? (Overcall 1♠.) Can West bid a suit at the one level? (No.) What would West respond? (1NT.) North passes. With a minimum balanced hand, what does East rebid? (Pass.) How does the auction proceed from there? (Pass by South.) What is the contract? (1NT.) Who is the declarer? (West.)”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (North.) Which suit would be led? (Spades.) Why? (Partner’s suit.) Which card would be led? (♠6, top of a doubleton.) Which card will South play if a low card is played from dummy? (♠9, as high a card as necessary while still keeping dummy’s ♠K trapped.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer needs seven tricks. There are two sure tricks in diamonds and declarer will win the first spade trick. Four more tricks can be developed in clubs by driving out the ♣A. Declarer will need to keep the ♦A in dummy as an entry to the clubs in case the opponents hold up their ♣A.)”

Conclusion

“This time the defenders had to cooperate carefully to defeat the contract, keeping a high card trapped in the dummy.”

EXERCISE ELEVEN: Third Hand not so High

Introduction

“It isn’t just the high cards — aces and kings — that the defenders have to concentrate on. The way they use their lower cards can help bring about declarer’s defeat if they are used wisely.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the third pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #3, Deal 3)

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

The Bidding

“What is South’s opening bid? (1NT.) West passes. What is North’s response? (3NT.) How does the bidding proceed from there? (Pass, pass, pass.) What is the contract? (3NT.) Who is the declarer? (South.)”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (West.) What would the opening lead be? (♥3.) Why? (Fourth highest from the longest suit.) If a low card is played from dummy on the first trick, which card should East play? (♥10.) Why? (East wants to keep dummy’s ♥J trapped with the ♥K.)”

This contract will probably be quite difficult to defeat for most students. You will have to judge how many hints you want to give them before they play.

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer needs nine tricks and starts with one heart trick, four diamond tricks and three club tricks. The additional trick required can be developed in the spade suit through promotion by driving out the ♠A and the ♠K.)”

Conclusion

“In this deal, third hand had to keep dummy’s jack trapped by playing only as high a card as necessary to defeat the contract. The defender has to visualize the possible layout of the suit.”

EXERCISE TWELVE: Unblocking

Introduction

“It might seem like such a waste to put one of your high cards on your partner’s honor. In some hands, however, it is the only winning play.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the fourth pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #3, Deal 4)

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

The Bidding

“West and North pass. How does East describe this hand? (3NT.) South passes. What does West respond? (Pass.) How does the auction proceed from there? (North passes.) What is the contract? (3NT.) Who is the declarer? (East.)”

The Defense

“Which player makes the opening lead? (South.) What would the opening lead be? (♥K, top of a three-card sequence.) Which card must North contribute to the first trick? (♥A.) Why? (If North does not overtake with the ♥A, the heart suit will be blocked and the defenders will be unable to take all of their tricks in the suit unless South has an entry in another suit.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer needs nine tricks and has three spade winners, four diamond winners and three club winners — as soon as declarer gets in the lead.)”

Conclusion

“It may seem ironic, but on this deal, the only way the defenders could take all of their heart tricks was to play both the king and the ace on the same trick. If third hand didn’t get rid of the ace, the suit would have been blocked.”

