

Best eBridge Defensive Third-Hand High

This Guide shows how Defenders play when sitting in 3rd seat. The guidelines here conform to Audrey Grant (AG) and Best eBridge (BeB) systems. You may practice such play at BeB. Most examples in this Guide would be the same whether made from AG's *Defense* or BeB's principles. You may receive a 1-month free BeB membership by registering with this link: <https://bestebridge.com/?lps=70001234>.

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Third Hand High (3hh)

Theory of 3hh: You may Google "third hand high in bridge" to find many excellent links on the topic. One of these links that isn't the highest but seems very clear is by [Bridge Bears](#).

Signals: Part of Defense is the opening lead by LHO (left-hand opponent). Equally important to the defensive effort is the signal played on the opening lead by RHO (right-hand opponent). In most cases, when RHO can win the opening lead, then RHO should do so by playing 3rd-hand high (3hh). If RHO plays 3hh, they will play the lowest card from a sequence of their top cards (ie, play the underlined from QJ82). RHO can't signal and play 3hh. Instead, when playing 3hh, RHO waits until the 2nd round to show the count of their remaining cards. You may find BeB's count signals on some hands in this section and on all hands under the tabs Defense, Practice by Technique, Signals, Count Signals, Start Practice.

1st Lead by Left Hand Opponent (LHO)

- A. **4th Best:** LHO may lead their 4th best card from a long suit headed by an honor (AKQJ). RHO plays 3hh or, if Dummy plays high, shows count. See Hands 1, 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 20.
- B. **Rule of 11:** Whenever LHO leads the 4th best card from their longest suit, RHO can determine the number of outstanding cards higher than the lead by subtracting the lead from 11. Sometimes the result shows that Declarer has no higher card. In such a case, RHO plays only high enough to cover the card played by Dummy. See Hands 13, 15, 19, 21.
- C. **A:** LHO leads the Ace to promise the K. RHO either signals that they can take the next trick, or shows count. The signal for a ranking card is to play the top of a two-card honor sequence, such as hhxx. If Opener determines that the next lower card can win the 2nd round, then Opener will continue with a low card. See Hands 4, 5.
- D. **K:** LHO leads the K from a sequence, asking RHO to unblock. RHO either dumps their highest honor, or shows count. See Hands 9, 11, 12, 17.
- E. **Sequence:** LHO leads the top of touching honors from a solid, broken, or interior sequence. The solid sequence may be 3c in a notrump contract, or 2c in a suit contract. RHO will play 3hh or show count. With a doubleton, the signal might be ambiguous as RHO would play the same card whether playing 3hh or count. See Hands 2, 3, 8.

F. RHO's Suit: LHO will lead any suit that RHO bid. The lead should show count. If the lead is not an obvious or logical count signal, it may be a doubleton or singleton. See Hands 6, 11, 14.

BeB Hands (You are always RHO. Declarer is either W or E.)

- **Hand 1:** 3NT Contract. 1N-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best from hxx2. RHO holds a 3c hxx capable of winning the trick. RHO plays high.
- **Hand 2:** 3NT Contract. 1N-P-3N. LHO leads top of a 3c sequence. RHO plays top of a doubleton to signal count.
- **Hand 3:** 3NT Contract. 1N-P-3N. LHO leads top of a 3c sequence (perhaps hhhxx). RHO plays top of a doubleton to signal count.
- **Hand 4:** 4♣ Contract. 1♠-2♣-3♣-P-4♣. LHO leads an A, promising a K. RHO signals a doubleton. On the 3rd round, LHO uppercuts with a continuation. Dummy must trump high, which establishes RHO's highest trump, or trump low, which allows RHO to overruff.
- **Hand 5:** 4♣ Contract. 1♠-3♥-4♥-P-4♣. LHO leads an A, promising a K. RHO signals a doubleton. On the 3rd round, RHO ruffs. Then RHO plays passively by returning a trump.
- **Hand 6:** 5♠X Contract. 1♦-1♠-P-4♠-5♣-5♠-P-P-X. LHO leads a Hi-Lo doubleton from one of Partner's bid suits, showing count. RHO overtakes the lead and runs 3 rounds to set the 5♠X contract. RHO tries to win additional QT but here Declarer ruffs.
- **Hand 7:** 3NT Contract. 1N-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best from a suit with an honor. RHO holds h \bar{h} x, so plays 3hh but also plays bottom of sequence so that LHO can infer the location of the other honor.
- **Hand 8:** 3NT Contract. 1N-P-3N. LHO leads the Q from the top of a 3c sequence in a 5c suit. RHO signals a doubleton by playing Hi-Lo. RHO wins and returns the suit to LHO.
- **Hand 9:** 3NT Contract. 1♦-P-1♥-P-1N-P-3N. LHO leads a K, asking RHO to play an honor or show count. RHO signals count with top of doubleton, which happens to be Jx an honor.
- **Hand 10:** 3NT Contract. 2N-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best from a weak suit. RHO plays 3hh, but bottom of sequence. LHO continues to develop the weak suit whenever regaining the lead.
- **Hand 11:** 3NT Contract. 1♦-1♠-1N-P-3N. LHO leads RHO's suit. The lead of a K in partner's suit is likely a doubleton or singleton. LHO's count does not matter to RHO, as Declarer's bidding has already implied a tripleton Qxx stopper. RHO overtakes the lead and continues the suit to drive out Declarer's stopper.
- **Hand 12:** 4♣ Contract. 1♣-P-1♠-P-1N-P-4♣. LHO leads a K from a sequence. RHO overtakes with an Ax doubleton. However, rather than returning the lead immediately, RHO cashes their winners, then returns the lead.
- **Hand 13:** 3NT Contract. 1♠-P-1N-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best from a strong 4c suit. Using Rule of 11, RHO determines that Declarer has no stoppers. LHO ducks so that RHO wins and continues. When Dummy plays a stopper, RHO traps Dummy's stopper. RHO plays their QT and then returns the suit to LHO.
- **Hand 14:** 5♦ Contract. 1♠-2♦-P-2♠-3♠-4♦-4♠-5♦. LHO leads RHO's suit. The Ace is missing. RHO would not underlead an Ace, so Declarer has the Ace. RHO plays 3hh, but bottom of sequence. When LHO regains the lead, RHO signals with a high discard in

own suit to request an entry to the higher of the two remaining suits (ie, not ♦ trumps and not RHO's ♠). LHO leads ♥ up to RHO's tenace.

- **Hand 15:** 3NT Contract. 2N-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best. LHO should have an honor, with the QT the only ones not seen. Dummy has an honor tenace. The Rule of 11 shows Declarer with two cards, perhaps the Q or T. RHO must stand guard over Dummy's cards, so plays a high intermediate rather than the ranking card. RHO wins, and plays high from their remaining doubleton. RHO wins and plays their remaining singleton. LHO signals a strong positive attitude.
- **Hand 16:** 3NT Contract. 1♦-P-1♥-P-2♦-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best from an unbid suit. LHO has one entry, which is insufficient to develop the lead suit. LHO must let RHO win as much as possible. When Dummy leads low in LHO's entry suit, LHO ducks. In this case, RHO wins and returns LHO's suit. Declarer wins, but LHO's suit is now established. Eventually, LHO regains the lead with their entry and runs their established suit.
- **Hand 17:** 3NT Contract. 1♦-P-1♠-P-1N-P-3N. LHO leads K, which is top of interior sequence from an unbid suit. RHO has the gap card as a doubleton. RHO dumps the gap card. Declarer wins, but the suit is established. When LHO regains the lead, LHO runs the suit.
- **Hand 18:** 3NT Contract. 1N-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best from a suit headed by an honor. LHO has almost no points, so honor might be the J. RHO has an AQ tenace plus a side-suit entry. Dummy does not have the K. Best play is the Q smoothly, hoping Declarer will not holdup. Alan Truscott classifies RHO's complex play when holding a tenace and an entry as "[3rd hand second.](#)"
- **Hand 19:** 3♥ Contract. 1♦-P-1♥-1♠-2♥-2♠-P-P-3♥. LHO leads 4th best from their overcall suit. Dummy has 2 cards and ruffing power. Defense needs 5 tricks. RHO has entries only in the suit led. Rule of 11 shows that Declarer cannot win the lead. RHO wins as low as possible, alerting LHO that RHO has the higher honors. RHO then leads Dummy's weakest suit, hoping to trap Declarer's stoppers. LHO wins the side suit, returns the original suit, and RHO once again leads the side suit through Declarer's strength.
- **Hand 20:** 3NT Contract. 1♦-P-1♠-P-2N-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best. RHO has no strength and no entries. RHO shows count to help partner.
- **Hand 21:** 3NT Contract. 1N-P-3N. LHO leads 4th best from an honor. Rule of 11 shows that Declarer has one stopper, and Declarer wins Round 1 with their stopper. On the first chance, RHO unblocks (discards) in the lead suit. Eventually, LHO regains the lead and runs their long suit.