

Exceptions to Third Hand High and Second Hand Low
Based on *Eddie Kantar Teaches Modern Bridge Defense*
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REASONS NOT TO PLAY THIRD HAND HIGH

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

You have bid spades and partner leads the queen against a suit or notrump contract. Partner probably has a doubleton, leaving declarer with a likely K109x. You should play low. If you take the ace and return the suit, declarer can insert the ten and later lead low to the nine, limiting your side to one spade trick. But if you play low at trick one, you are sure to get two tricks.

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

Against a suit contract, partner leads a low spade, dummy plays low, and you have to assume that declarer has the ace (partner should not be underleading an ace on opening lead versus a suit contract). If so, it is better to stick in the nine, saving the queen over dummy's jack. If partner is leading from the ten (she did lead low, usually from an honor), the nine will drive out the ace.

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

Against a suit contract, partner leads the ♠2, dummy plays low, and there is no point in playing the jack. Declarer (almost certainly) has the ace and if you play the jack, declarer will win and later finesse the ten to get three spade tricks. A better play is the ♠8. If partner led from the Q9x(x), the eight forces the ace and declarer is held to two spade tricks.

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

Against a suit contract, partner leads a low spade, dummy plays low, and you (*East*) should play the eight. Why? Partner (almost certainly) does not have the ♠KQx(x), because the king would be the normal lead against a suit contract. Therefore, declarer has a spade honor. No matter which honor declarer has, it is better to play the eight, saving the jack over dummy's ten. If *East* plays the jack, declarer can get three spade tricks, but only two if the eight is played.

- **When declarer is known to have all the missing honors**

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

Exceptions to Third Hand High and Second Hand Low

Against a suit contract, partner leads the ♠7 and dummy plays the enticing jack. Don't go for it! Play low. Declarer (almost certainly) has the ace and it may be doubleton. Why give declarer four spade tricks when she is only entitled to two or three.

- **When partner leads from a known doubleton against a suit contract and you have the ace but no outside entry, signal encouragement — don't play the ace**

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

South opens the bidding with 1NT, *North* responds 2♣ Stayman, *South* bids 2♠, and *North* bids 4♠. Partner (*West*) leads the ♥9, which figures to be the top of a doubleton; it can't be a singleton because *South's* bid of 2♠ denies four hearts. You (*East*) should signal encouragement with the ♥7 (standard carding) and allow declarer to win the first trick. When partner gets in with the ♠K, she can return her remaining heart to your ace, and your heart return allows partner to ruff. The ♦A is the setting trick.

- **When you have to retain a high honor to prevent declarer getting to the dummy and running an established suit**

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

Against a 3NT contract, partner (*West*) leads the ♠3 and dummy plays the ♠J. You (*East*) should play low to keep declarer from getting to dummy to cash her established club suit.

REASONS TO PLAY SECOND HAND HIGH

Exceptions to Third Hand High and Second Hand Low

- **To kill a long suit in dummy**

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

Against a 3NT contract, you (*West*) lead the ♠K, partner playing low (standard carding) denying the jack or ace. Declarer also plays low. You continue spades, and declarer wins the third spade. When declarer now leads a low diamond, play the queen! If you play low, declarer sticks in the nine, partner wins the jack, and returns a heart. Declarer takes the ace, leads a second diamond, your queen falls, and declarer has ten tricks.

However, if you play the queen on the first diamond lead, dummy cannot duck lest you take the setting tricks in spades. If dummy wins and a heart finesse is taken, you win and cash your winning spades. Or, if dummy takes your ♦Q, crosses to a club, and takes a second diamond finesse, it's even worse. Partner wins and returns a heart or a club. Down two.

- **To preserve an entry to partner's hand**

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

Partner (*West*) opens a weak 2♠ bid (showing a 6-card suit), and *South* ends up in a 3NT contract. Declarer wins the ♠Q opening lead with the king, crosses to dummy with a heart, and shrewdly leads the ♣Q. You (*East*) should go up with the king! If declarer has the ♣A, you are doomed anyway, so you have to play partner for that card. And if partner has the ♣A, you have to be the one that wins the first club, so that you can continue a spade, establishing the suit for your partner. When partner gets in with the ♣A, her spades are ready to go. However, if you duck the first round of clubs and partner wins the first club and establishes spades, you won't have a spade to return when you get in with the ♣K.

Exceptions to Third Hand High and Second Hand Low

- **To get partner off an endplay**

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

Against a 4♠ contract, partner (*West*) leads the ♦Q, taken by the ace in dummy as you (*East*) signal with the ♦7 (standard carding) showing an equal honor. Declarer draws trump in two rounds, loses a heart to partner's ace, takes her diamond and heart winners, and enters dummy with a trump to lead a low club. Do you play second hand low? No! You need three club tricks to defeat the contract and partner must have the ♣AQ10. If so, you must play the ♣J to prevent declarer from ducking the trick into partner and endplaying her.

- **When larceny is on declarer's mind**

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

Against a 3NT contract, partner (*West*) leads her fourth-best ♠6, you (*East*) play the ten and declarer wins the king. Declarer crosses to dummy with a diamond, and leads the ♥J, faking a finesse. What should you do? You should rise with the ace and return the ♠J! The bidding (1NT - 2♣ - 3♦ - 3NT) tells you that partner has at least five spades and the Rule of Eleven tells you that declarer started with exactly one spade above the six, which must be the king. Declarer is trying to sneak a ninth trick past you!