

What is Your Agreement? A Bridge Tip

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A common bridge maxim is “third hand plays high”. Good advice in general, but there is exceptions.

Exception 1

Partner leads K/Q/J/10 and dummy plays you have the ace, play it.

Exception 2

If you have touching honors/cards, play 3rd hand "high," but with the cheapest in the sequence in your hand For example, partner leads the 2 and dummy has 7, 8, 9,

- A K 7 Win the king, not the ace
- K Q 10 Play the queen, not the king
- A Q Play the ace
- Q J 10 9 Play the nine, the cheapest in the sequence

Exception 3

If dummy one of the top three honors and you have a higher honor and dummy plays low withhold your honor and try to finesse with an intermediate card if you can.

For example:

- Partner leads the 3 and dummy has Q 9 7 and plays low. You should play the Jack holding K J 2 or A J 2.
- Partner leads the 3 and dummy has K 10 4. You should play the 8 from A J 8 3.

Exception 4

If you play 4th best leads against suit or NT contracts, you must use the rule of 11.

If you play 3/5 leads against suit contracts you must use the rule of 12/10, respectively.

No rule is needed if you play attitude leads (BOSTON) against NT contracts.

Another common bridge maxim when playing a bridge hand is the maxim “second hand low” Why?

Playing low when defending, allows partner to take the trick; however, it also applies in the play of the hand when the opponents lead and declarer is to play a card from dummy.

Are there exceptions? Yes!

Lets look at an example. The bidding goes:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♦	1♦
3♦	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Neither side is Vulnerable and west lead the 4♦ playing 3/5 leads or west lead the 2♦ playing 4th best leads. The deal follows.

		♠ Q73	
		♥ Q874	
		♦ A	
		♣ AKJ83	
♠	65	N W E S	♠ AK
♥	A10653		♥ K92
♦	Q842		♦ J9763
♣	74		♣ Q105
		♠ J109842	
		♥ J	
		♦ K105	
		♣ 962	

South plays his ace east plays his ♦6 (giving count – odd playing UDCA) and playing 4th best play the ♦3.

Declarer next leads a low heart from dummy. As east what do you now play?

If you play low west wins the trick with his ♥A. West switches to a club won by dummy’s ace, and declarer leads another heart. It does not matter whether now east plays his ♥K. Eventually the ♥K is ruffed and dummy’s ♥Q provides a discard for his losing club. The 4♠’s is made made, declarer losing two trumps and one heart.

If east does not play “second hand low” but wins his ♥K at trick two and cashes his two trump winners and exits with a heart, the contract must fall back on a club finesse and when it fails the contract is set on the “second hand high” card play.

Be ready to play second hand high when the opponents play low and you hold a higher touching honor over dummy’s honor card.

More Exceptions

Exception 1

With a short suit in Dummy Q4 and no intermediate cards in your hand A72 and west holds leads low. Play the Queen, if East had the King he would not play it on a low card from dummy.

Exception 2

Your hand is weak (953) and dummy has QJx and West leads low. Play the Q/J and hope West holds the A/K.

Exception 3

In a suit contract, if you have a singleton in your hand and dummy has the Ace, play the Ace.

Exception 4

You have AKx in dummy and Jxx in hand and west leads high. Win the trick with the A/K making it unsafe for East to return the suit.