The basic rules for playing touching honors at all times:

- \* On defense, play the card that clarifies your holding best for your partner
- \* When declaring, play the card that will give the defenders the most trouble or doubt about your hand
  - Most of the time, the highest card is best as declarer

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- \* Touching honors on defense when to play highest
  - On opening lead, play the highest of touching honors
  - In second chair splitting honors, play the highest
  - · When discarding, play the highest
- \* Touching honors on defense when to play lowest
  - When winning a trick, play the **lowest** of touching honors
  - When playing third to the trick, play the lowest

# **Opening Lead**

- In general, leading the top card with touching honors should be your first choice on opening lead if available
  - o Three in a row (AKQ, KQJ, QJT, JT9) especially attractive
- Holding a 3 card honor sequence, lead the bolded card against suits (AKQ, AKJ, KQJ, KQT, KJT, QJT, QJ9, JT9, KT9, QT9, T98)
- Holding AQJ, AJT or AT9, lead some other suit. Do not underlead aces against suit contracts!
- All of these honor leads can come from suits of any length
  - o KQJ, KQJ4, KQJ54, KQJ854, KQJ9854, etc.

## **Honor Card Leads against NT contracts**

- Holding a 3 card honor sequence, lead the bolded card against NT (AKQ, AKJ, KQJ, KQT, QJT, QJ9, KJT, JT9, AQJ, AJT, AT9, T98, KT9, QT9)
  - King from AK is standard against no-trump
- Underleading aces is OK against no-trump (and often attractive)
- The longer your suit is, the more attractive the honor suit lead is
  - KJT2, KJT43, KJT763, KJT8642, etc.

### Which honor to play from third hand on defense?

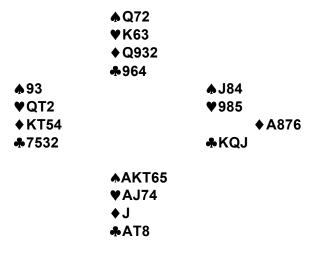
Play the lowest of equals; this gives the most information to partner

**♦**982 **♦**K753 **♦**QJT

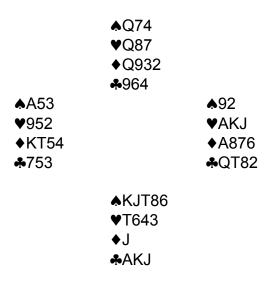
- Partner leads his fourth best spade. As third hand, you should play the **ten**. When declarer wins the ace, partner will know that you also have the jack and ten, because otherwise declarer wouldn't have wasted the ace!
- This rule applies both on opening lead and throughout the hand
- When winning a trick & fourth to play on defense, always win with the cheapest card available.

#### After winning a trick, which honor should a defender shift to?

Usually the highest one makes your holding most clear



Switch to the club king after a diamond lead against 4 spades. Partner will
continue clubs when in with a heart to beat the contract. If you play back a
diamond, declarer can toss a club loser and make the contract.



With East as dealer (no one vulnerable):

Partner leads a diamond (4, 2, A, J)

What card can you play at trick 2 that best signals partner to play a heart back when she gets in with the spade ace?

## What about when you are the declarer?

In general, play the highest of equals when declaring

A lot of times declarers will "get cute" and start a trump suit like this by playing the 8 of spades and then playing small from dummy. While it is amusing when the 8 holds the trick, it tells West that declarer has the king, queen, jack and ten when East can't win the trick. Start by playing the king of spades and keep the defenders a little more in the dark.

## **♠**K94

## ♠AQT653

- You are playing a spade contract and have won an outside trick in hand as South. What is the proper way to draw trumps?
- 1. Play the ace of spades
- 2. Play the queen of spades
- 3. Play a low spade to the king4. Something else