

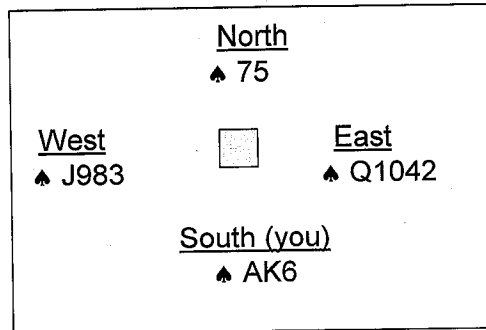
# DECEPTION IN DECLARER PLAY

with  
Betty Starzec

Here are my top five tips which will help you play a hand more deceptively. If you follow these tips, your declarer play should improve and you have the potential to become a feared opponent!

## 1. PLAY THE CARDS YOU ARE KNOWN TO HOLD.

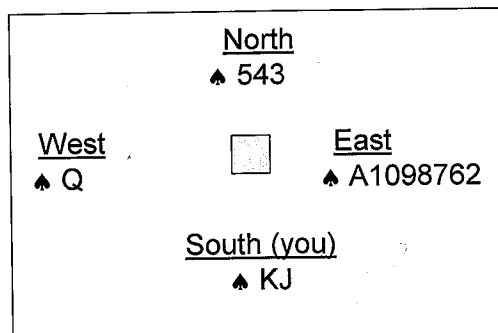
A.



Vs. a suit contract, assume West leads ♠3 and East plays the ♠Q, win the trick with the ACE. West may think East has the King and East might think West has the King. If you win the trick with the King, both opponents will know you have the Ace!

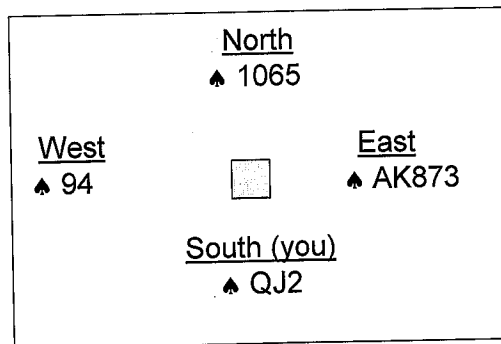
Strangely enough, vs. notrump you should win the first trick with the King. At notrump, winning the first trick with the Ace is usually a giveaway that you have at least one more stopper. After all, if your only stopper was the Ace, why didn't you hold up? (Please don't call me if someone plays the Ace and doesn't have another stopper – that was probably a desperation play trying to fool you into thinking they have another stopper!)

B.



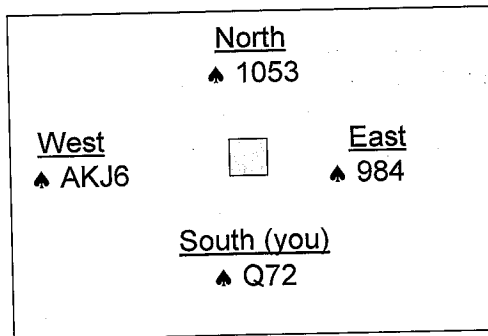
East has preempted in spades and West leads the ♠Q against your heart contract. When you see the lead of the Queen, you **know** that East knows you have the King. However, East does not know you have the Jack. Therefore, when East wins the ♠A, play the KING – the card you are known to hold.

C.



East has bid spades and West leads ♠9. This time you are known to hold the Jack and the Queen. When East plays the King and the Ace, you must throw the Jack and Queen. East may now have a problem deciding who has the deuce. There's a saying in bridge - it's all in the small - good players watch the small cards just as carefully as the big ones!

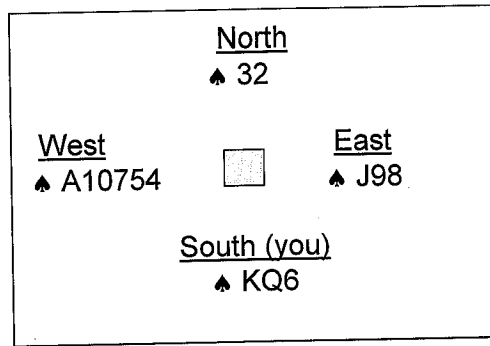
2. WITHHOLD THE LOW SPOT CARDS TO BOTH CONFUSE THE COUNT AND MAKE IT APPEAR THAT THE OPPONENTS ARE SIGNALLING ONE ANOTHER ENCOURAGEMENT, WHEN, IN FACT, THEY ARE NOT.



West leads the ♠A vs. a suit contract. East discourages with the ♠4. (Opponents are playing standard signals.) Sitting South, you KNOW that East is making a discouraging signal since you can see both the deuce and the trey. However, West cannot see the deuce if you don't play it! Play the ♠7 to conceal the deuce! For all West knows, East may be starting a high-low with either the ♠4-♠2 doubleton or ♠Q42.

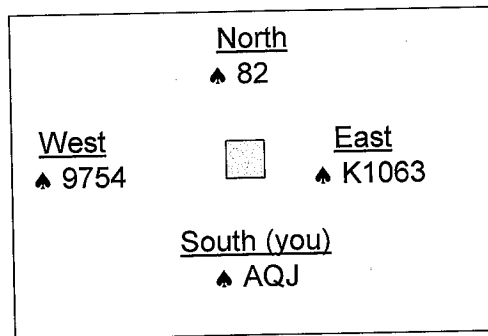
3. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, PLAY THE HIGHER OR HIGHEST OF EQUAL CARDS WHEN EITHER TAKING A TRICK, BEING LED THROUGH BY YOUR RIGHT HAND OPPONENT, OR LEADING THE SUIT FROM THE DUMMY TOWARD YOUR HAND.

A.



Vs. notrump, West leads ♠5 and East plays ♠J. Assuming you plan to take the trick, take it with the King. Why? Because when West sees East play the Jack, he knows you have the King, but he doesn't know who has the Queen (East would play the Jack holding both the Queen and the Jack). (This is also an example of play the card you are known to hold.)

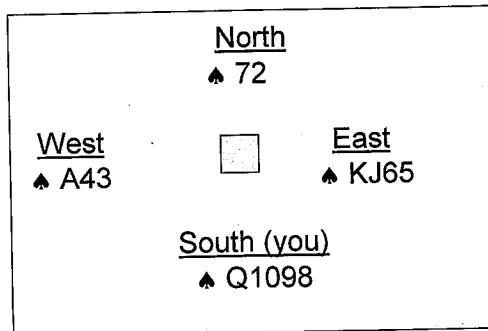
B.



If EAST leads a spade, play the Queen. If you play the Jack and it holds, East will know that you remain with the Ace and the Queen. If you play the Queen, East will not know who has the Jack.

If YOU lead a spade from DUMMY, insert the Queen from your hand, not the Jack, for the same reason.

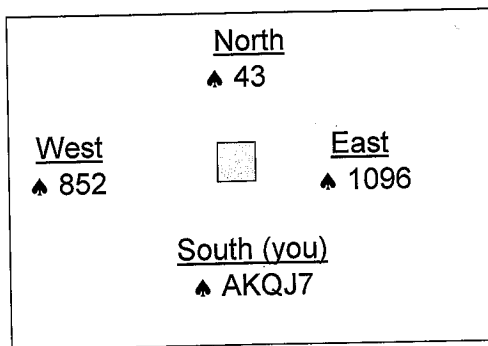
C.



This principle extends to lower cards as well. If either you lead the suit from dummy or East leads low, insert the 10 not the 9 or 8. Either of those cards gives away too much information to your opponents. Don't be so kind!

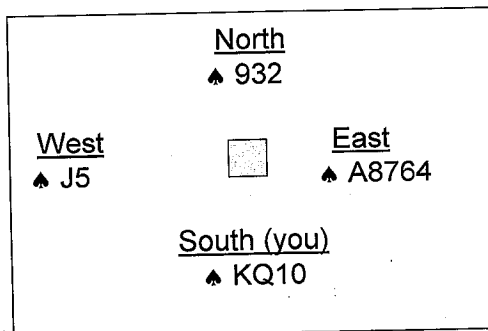
4. MAKE YOUR PLAYS BELIEVABLE.

A.



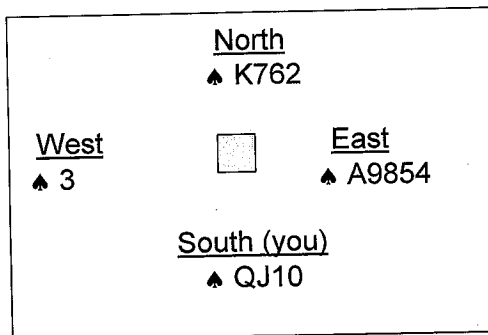
West leads a low spade against your spade or notrump contract, East playing ♠9. If you win the ♠9 with the Ace, everyone at the table will know you have a solid suit. How could the ♠9 force the Ace? Better to win the trick with the Queen. At least East will think that his partner has led from some honor.

B.



West leads the ♠J and East plays the ♠A and returns the suit. Your first play should be the Queen, a card you are known to hold; your second play should be the King. East may wonder who has the ♠10, a card West may still hold. If you show the ♠10, East will know that West started with a doubleton.

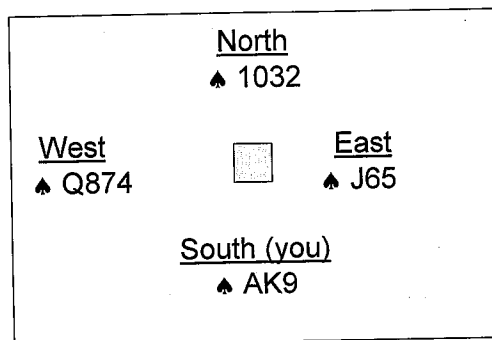
C.



Vs. a suit contract, West leads an obvious singleton after East has opened the bidding with 1♠. You play low from dummy and East plays the ♠A. Which spade should you play? You must project a spade holding in the West hand where the proper lead is the 3. You should play the Jack – East may be fooled because West would lead the 3 from the ♠Q103. In general, with three equal cards, it is almost always right to play the middle equal when the opponents take the trick.

5. WITH EQUAL SPOT CARDS IN BOTH YOUR HAND AND DUMMY AND EQUAL LENGTH IN BOTH HANDS, PLAY ONE OF THE EQUALS FROM DUMMY – BUT ONLY IF IT CANNOT COST A TRICK IF THE EQUAL IS COVERED.

A.



West leads a low spade vs. your notrump contract. You should play the ♠10 from the dummy. Vs. a suit contract when East plays the ♠J, you should win the ♠A. Vs. a notrump contract with East plays the ♠J, win the King.

The reason you play the ♠10 is to conceal the presence of the 9 in your hand. When West later gets the lead, he will not know who has the ♠9. If you play low from dummy, East will play the Jack, and West will know that you have ♠AK9 from East's failure to play the ♠9, a card he would surely play holding ♠J9 with the ♠10 in dummy.

## BONUS

### HONOR MANAGEMENT

When you have equal honors and want the opponents to cover, lead the **HIGHER** or the **HIGHEST** equal.

When you have equal honors and do **NOT** want the opponents to cover, lead a **LOWER** equal.

Material from this lesson should be credited in part to Eddie Kantar.