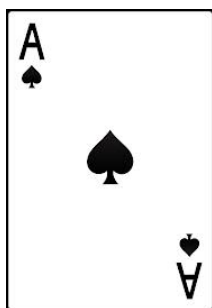


DEFENCE - DON'T WASTE THE ACE!



Our Ace is a very valuable card. We mainly want to use our Ace for beating Kings, Queens and other high cards.

We don't want to help declarer by letting him just play small cards when we play our Ace!

This handout is intended for complete beginners. First of all it is important to say that in bridge there are very few *absolute rules* about what to do in the play. The following are just guidelines and there will be exceptions, but just bear in mind that generally we are aiming to use our Ace to capture a high card.

1. WHEN WE ARE FIRST TO PLAY TO A TRICK

This includes the opening lead and also later when we lead any suit for the first time.

Guideline 1 - Don't lead the Ace unless you also hold the King

	North	
	♠ Q 8 3	
West		East
♠ A 9 6 5		♠ J 10 4
	South	
	♠ K 7 2	

We are West. The contract is 4♥. If we lead the Ace declarer will simply play a low card from dummy and then a low card from his hand. Yes we win a trick with the Ace but we haven't used it to capture a high card. Later declarer will win with both the king and the queen, making 2 spade tricks.

If we don't lead the ♠Ace we will later still hold the ♠Ace to capture South's King and declarer will only make 1 trick in spades.

Since the contract is 4♥, a suit contract, we must choose another suit to lead (see Guideline 2), but if the contract was No Trumps instead we can lead ♠5 (see Guideline 2).

An *honour* card is an Ace, King, Queen, Jack or Ten.

The lead of an honour card promises the card immediately below it, therefore a lead of the Ace promises the King. This is another reason for not leading the Ace without the King, we would be misleading partner about the location of the King.

Guideline 2

In a Suit contract, never lead a suit that contains the Ace without the King

This means don't lead a low card from a suit which contains the Ace. This guideline only applies when we are playing in a suit contract. If the contract is No Trump it is correct to lead our normal fourth highest even if the top card is the Ace.

2. WHEN WE ARE SECOND TO PLAY TO A TRICK

Second hand plays Low

We want to save our high card for capturing a high card.

When Declarer Leads From Hand

	North	
	K 6 3	
West		East
A 10 7 5		J 8 4
	South	
	Q 9 2	

We are West. Suppose that South (declarer) leads the 2. If we play the ace, dummy will play low. See how playing the ace is a mistake because it allows declarer to play low cards from both hands at the same trick. Later declarer will win with both the king and the queen.

If we instead plays low on South's lead of the 2, North's king will win this trick but later we will be able to beat South's Queen with our Ace. This time declarer makes only one trick in the suit instead of two.

In general, the purpose of 'Second Hand Low' is to save our high cards for a later trick in the suit, knowing that partner (the fourth to play) still has an opportunity to win the current trick.

When Declarer Leads From Dummy

Second hand low also applies after a lead from dummy. For example:

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

When the 2 is led from dummy, East should play low. South plays the queen and West wins with the king, after which East makes tricks with the ace and ten. Playing Second Hand Low therefore prevents declarer from winning a trick in the suit. If East had made the mistake of winning the first lead with the ace, declarer would be able to establish one trick from his remaining queen and jack.

WHEN TO PLAY SECOND HAND HIGH

Playing high to win the trick is normally correct if this would be the trick that beats the contract (e.g. the contract is 4♥ and the defence have already taken 3 tricks).

Playing high is also usually correct if the earlier play indicates that the defence will take enough later tricks to defeat the contract e.g. when we need to get the lead to switch to another suit in which we know partner has winners.