

Looking into Opponent's Hands Without Cheating

Last Revised May 19, 2016

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<http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaGeneral/Looking.pdf>

Keys to Looking into Opponent's Hands

- **DIDD**
 - Mike Lawrence talks about DIDD which is the delicate interpretation of delicate data.
 - Start Placing unseen honours
 - Defenders win tricks as cheaply as possible, Declarer does not. Adopt these practices.
 - If defending partner wins the trick with the King, he is denying the Queen and could still have the Ace.
 - Defender leads a high spot card when he does not want the suit returned and leads a small spot card when he wants the suit returned. Remember BOSTON- bottom of something and top of nothing.
 - Defenders will and should underlead an ace when dummy is in view and clues are available from the play.
- Bidding
 - What opponent bid or did not bid.
 - Player made or did not make a one-level overcall.
 - Please use any excuse you can to make a one-level overcall, but it must be a lead-directive suit if not a full opener such as KJxxx, AJxxx, KQ10xx, AKJxx, AKxxx, QJ10xxx (you still do not ask partner to lead the Ace in the suit just because you overcall), etc
 - Remember the bidding (especially later in the play)

Remember:

Lead and Discard top of a touching honour sequence, but follow suit or win as cheaply as possible.

- Opening Lead
 - Players tend to be more truthful on the opening lead than later in the auction.
 - One makes a natural lead (Ace from AK or three touching honours) if one has it and leads something else without a natural lead.
 - Is it fourth best?
 - Rule of 11
 - If partner leads the eight and you see 4 cards higher than the 8, the lead was not fourth best. It could be a singleton or top of nothing.
 - Could it be a singleton?
 - If you see one singleton there is a 68% chance there is another singleton somewhere.
 - Did someone pre-empt or is there abnormal distribution that you can see.
 - Is it top of nothing?
 - A player may refrain from leading his side's suit?
 - To lead a singleton
 - Because he has the ace in his suit
 - Aces are meant to capture something in RHO's hand. If you lead the Ace, you will capture small spot cards.
 - With Axx in your side's suit, lead something else and partner will lead the suit through declarer.
 - Natural lead (KQJx, AKxx, QJ10xx, etc)
 - The weaker hand is less likely to have a natural lead or any desire to lead from outside strength and will probably be leading a singleton or refraining from leading from the ace in his suit.
 - Rule of 11
 - Forcing Defense
 - <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDefense/ForcingDefense.pdf>
 - Trump Leads
 - <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDefense/LeadingTrump.pdf>
- Leads later in the auction
 - The suit first attacked by the defender not on opening lead especially if it is not the suit partner led. Is it shortness, from an honour, or top of nothing playing into dummy's dead suit?

- Did partner lead (an obvious singleton) into the strong suit on his right.
- Discards
 - Defender lets partner know what suit he can guard ASAP when declarer is running a long suit otherwise signals should suggest leads not pinpoint key honours.
 - Defenders discard a dead suit from the bottom to the top in order using standard signals. The entire dead suit is usually completely discarded.
 - Defenders discard a good suit from the highest spot card that they can afford to the lowest.
 - Honour discards (AKQJ and sometimes the Ten) deny any honour higher and show one or more touching honours below.

- How Declarer plays
 - I know what the opponents have by how they play.
 - After the hand, look at the opponent's hand and see if the way you would play the cards matched the way the opponent played the cards.
 - What did declarer do first?
 - Why did he not draw trump
 - Short hand ruffs
 - Protection against long hand being tapped in trump
 - Needs to hurry to set up a discard.
 - Number one reason defenders do not lead dummy's or declarer's side suits or cash a side-suit Ace.

- Declarer Techniques
 - Short Hand ruffs
 - <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDeclarerPlay/ShortHandRuffs.pdf>
 - Must know card combinations well
 - <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDeclarerPlay/CardCombinations.pdf>
 - <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDeclarerPlay/Finesse-SeeFinesse-TakeFinesse.pdf>
 - Law of Restricted Choice
 - <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDeclarerPlay/RestrictedChoice.pdf>
 - Card Placing by Assumption
 - <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDeclarerPlay/CardPlacingByAssumption.pdf>

- Discovery Plays
- <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDeclarerPlay/DiscoveryPlays.pdf>

- Procrastination
 - Delay problem suits as long as possible.
 - One may not have this luxury in the trump suit
 - <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDeclarerPlay/Procrastination.pdf>

- Watch spots and discards
 - Beware of falsecards. Often when one opponent falsecards, one can tell by the count of the hand in one's head and by the cards the partner played. One gives away the farm if they hesitate before falsecarding.

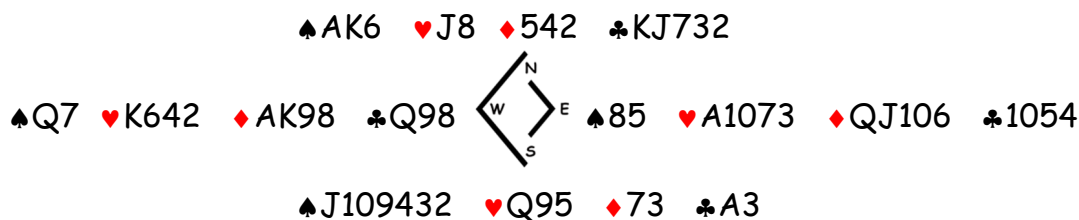
- Count everything
 - I count breaks. The suit broke 4-2.
 - When the first person shows out in a suit, I know the count of that suit in every hand.

- Plan Ahead
 - Declarer and defenders plan their play in every suit including the timing (order of play) when dummy first comes down.
 - Defenders must not break the tempo when playing in front of dummy. They should not act like a deer caught in the headlights.
 - Plan your play in every suit when dummy comes down.
 Dummy, your RHO, has ♠AQ5 and you have ♠K6432
 - You know right away, you will duck smoothly when declarer plays any ♠ from his hand because you can outlast the finesse and any significant cards partner has will likely fall.
 - Declarer must decide if the lead is favourable and what alternate contracts are likely by the field.
 - Think of exit cards.

Board 6 Matchpoints is Not real bridge

This occurred at the KJBC on April 18, 2016.

East Dealer East West Vulnerable



N	E	S	W
	P	2♠	Dbl
3♠	All Pass		

Opening Lead:		♦A	
Traveller	N-S	E-W	
3♠S=	140	(3x)	
2♥E+1		140	
3♠S+2	200		

Analysis:

Many authors maintain that matchpoints is not real bridge. At matchpoints, one will and should risk the contract for overtricks if the odds are reasonable 50% or better.

You are also allowed to use table presence. West doubled and East passed very easily. West led the Ace and King of Diamonds then played a small diamond. This denies both the Ace and King of Hearts.

I would finesse West for the queen of clubs. From trick three we know West does not have both the Ace and King of hearts. Therefore East has the diamond queen and Jack and either the king or ace of hearts. It is better than 50% that the club finesse will win.

Also when declarer plays spades, play the ♠Jack to the AK, let the opponent cover. Some players always cover. When you cash the AK of spades and see the spades are 2-2, take the club hook. I am not surprised the clubs are 3-3. Nobody had any distribution to make them come into the auction. People are not shy coming in when they have good distribution.

We play OGUST so your weak two is good. When in doubt, get into any auction you can.

You have too much defense for a weak three bid if you had seven Spades to the J109xxxx

One final note: When the opponents tell partner something (West's double) they are telling you too, so use the information.

- Cards Played
 - The cards led so far.
 - High card led tells partner not to return that suit and a low card led tells partner to return that suit.
 - The cards played when following to a trick.
 - Watch Spots!!
 - The cards discarded so far.
 - As soon as a closed hand **shows out of a suit**, get the count of the suit in the remaining hand and start to put all the clues together to see if you can get the count of another suit.
 - Spot cards (2 through the 9 and sometimes the Ten and Jack)
 - Attitude when partner first leads a suit
 - Count when declarer first leads the suit or you cannot beat dummy
 - Suit Preference when partner should not continue the suit or the card given to partner to ruff or the card that clears declarer's final stopper in the defender's suit at no trump.
- The art of table presence
 - interpretation of pauses and hesitations and speed of play by opponents
 - Declarer may use breaks in tempo to his advantage or lack of break in tempo to his advantage.

Tip: When you have a long suit, cash as many as you safely can to make the opponents guess what to discard and what to keep. Watch them squirm. If your long suit is trump, keep as many as necessary in case you still have to lose the lead. Never claim and say "I will give you a club." Cash all your winners to see if the last card they keep is a club!!

Opening Leads

"It is more important for the defenders to try to give each other information early in the play than to try to deceive the declarer" p2

No Trump Leads

When one leads one's own suit, not only does one usually pick a five card suit over a four-card suit, one will also have a side entry otherwise he may never get to a suit he sets up.

When a player has absolutely no entries even in his long suit itself, he will tend to make a short suit lead trying to hit partner's suit. Auctions that go 1NT 3NT call for a major suit lead.

Rule of 11

When one leads fourth best, subtract the pip from 11 and that is the number of cards higher than the card led in the remaining three hands. If you can see more than that number, then the lead was not fourth best and likely was top (or second top) of nothing or from shortness.

If one leads 4th best and it is the 2, then one is leading from a four-card suit and does not have a void, unless one has a five-card suit, one chose not to lead.

Furthermore, if one leads 4th best and the card is the 4 and you can see the 3 and the 2, then the suit is a four-card suit.

Example 1:

Dummy:	♦ AJ92	
♦ 5		RHO: ♦ ??
You:	♦ K63	

What do you play from dummy?

Example 2:

You have 986543 and lots of side entries against 3NT. What do you lead first then next and then once again?

Example 3:

Against 3NT, LHO leads ♠2 and dummy has ♠975 and you have ♠J10. You breathe a sigh of relief because the lead says the suit is four-four.

Example 4:

Against 3NT, LHO leads ♠2 and dummy has ♠975 and you have ♠AK. You need to set up ♦QJ1098. The opponents can only get two spades and you even have the option of end-playing them in their own suit.

Rule: Normally you need three stoppers or two stoppers and a first-round hold-up to set up a suit missing the Ace and King at 3NT.

Leads against a trump contract

- One does not underlead an Ace in a side suit unless one is making a low percentage try for a top board or dummy is marked with the King and partner could have the Queen and declarer could have the Jack.
- One will underlead an Ace of trump though.
- One will not lead a trump from Qxx and one will not lead a stiff trump.
- When one has four or longer trump, one does not lead trump and one does not usually try for a ruff. One tries to make declarer ruff in the long trump hand enough times to shorten his length to less than one's holding. This is called a **forcing defense**.
 - If you have 6532 of trump, dummy has three and declarer has five and ruffs twice in the long trump hand, the 6 will be a winner.

Leading The Partnership's bid suit

Opening leader may not lead his side's suit because he has:

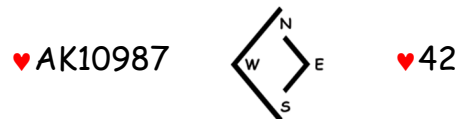
- a more constructive lead from:
KQJ, AK10, QJ109, J109x (rarely)
- singleton or rarely a doubleton
your side will have a lot of cards in the suit perhaps
- ace empty in his side's suit. With Axx in his suit, he will not lead it to capture an honour in declarer's hand. Just because partner bids the suit, he does not want you freeing an honour in declarer's hand.

Instead, he may make a neutral lead such as:

- trump
- nebulous holding in an unbid suit

The weaker hand will usually lead his side's suit (unless holding the Ace of their suit or a singleton) and the stronger hand will have alternatives.

Example 5 Law of Restricted Choice

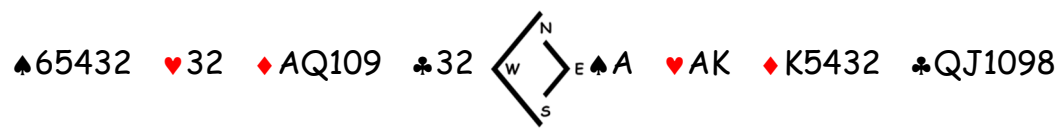


Cash the Ace and the Jack falls from North. What do you do next?

Habits

- Don't play too fast at trick one
- Analyze the opening lead
- Count your winners
- Count your losers
- Review the auction
- Adapt sophisticated thought processes.
 - East has the ♠King but did not lead it so he must not have both the Ace and King.
 - West opened 1♣ and East passed and then led the ♣Ace. East cannot have another Ace or any King or Queen.
 - Why didn't they bid ♠'s. They have 22 HCP's and 10 ♠'s. The points must be evenly divided and nobody has any distribution.

Example 6: From BridgeMaster2000-3B-27



S	W	N	E
1♣	P	1♠	2♦
P	3♦	P	4♦
P	5♦	All Pass	

AK♣ were led north playing the 7 then the 6 using Standard signals. What is happening? How do you make 5♦?

Counting

Count Count Count.

The more bridge skills that you have that become routine, the less you have to think about in the bidding and the play and the more you can keep track of.

Count High Card Points

Use the honours already played to place the unknown honours to match the bidding.

Count Distribution around the table

Example 7: Discovery Play

♠A7642 ♥KJ ♦Q964 ♣98  ♠93 ♥53 ♦AK10853 ♣KQ5

S	W	N	E
1♥	P	2♥	3♦
3♥	4♦	All Pass	

South leads the ♠King against 4♦. You draw trump and play ♣9 to the ♣King. South wins the ♣Ace and returns a low ♥. P 69.

What ♥ do you play from West?

Rule:

When you are faced with the guess, delay the guess, draw trump and scout around in the noncritical side suits.

Example 8: Count Distribution Before Guessing a Suit

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4♠ by West



N leads AK♥, S high-lows and N gives S a ruff.
Draw trump.

North has 5 ♥'s
South has 3 ♠'s

What do you do before guessing ♦'s?

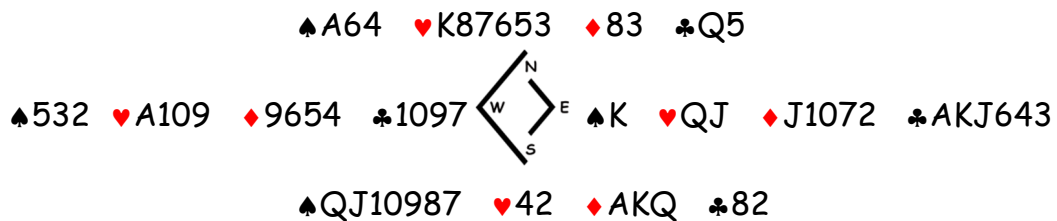
Card Placing by Assumption (ML p125)

Trick Knee, Wishful thinking, Occultism

When you cannot make a contract unless a certain card is in a certain place, then place it there and play accordingly.

Example 9:

p124:



N	E	S	W
	1♣	1♠	P
2♠	P	3♠	P
4♠	All Pass		

Declarer lost two clubs off the opening lead and won the ♦ switch. He played the ♠Queen to the Ace dropping the ♠King. He needed West to have the ♥Ace therefore he could not have the ♠King from the bidding.

Watch Discards

I ignore people's discard messages for the most part. I file the information away and see if it jives with my picture of the hand and with what the partner is discarding. They seem to be used to fool declarer. But I absolutely watch what was discarded to see what honours they are protecting.

If they discard the ♣9 and are using standard signals, does it mean they have the ♣Queen? Not necessarily. It means they have the ♣9 and might be protecting another suit.

If one has Qxx, one will discard in other suits. If one has Axxx, one will discard in this suit.



If North discards ♣'s, who will you finesse for the Queen?

If one has Qxxx, one will discard one card and hope partner will be marked for the Queen.

Pauses often tell one a squeeze will work.

When declarer is running a long suit, (using standard signals) discard a high card in a suit you can protect and then discard a low card in a suit you have nothing and then discard the entire (nothing) suit. Partner will do the same. Jxx can protect a suit if partner cannot protect a queen in the same suit.

False Cards

I always say that in order for someone to falsecard me, they first have to prove to me that they know how to "truecard." Learn as much as you can about the proper play of cards then falsecarding will be more effective.

Introduction in ML's book

Example 10: blotting the ten (smothering the ten)

	♠AJ2	
♠???4		♠???8
	♠Q9763	

The Jack wins the trick and you see the 4 and the 8. How do you play the hand?

Note:

I like to emphasize a personal method I use.

One of the best ways I use to determine a person's hand is by their actions. What would I do if I were holding their cards can be inverted to what cards would I hold to be doing what they are doing.

Additional Topics (see my Website)

- Card Combinations
- Squeeze play and rectifying the count
- Falsecards
- Pseudo squeeze

Reference:

Lawrence, Mike, *How to Read Opponents' Cards* 2nd edition. Louisville, Kentucky: Devyn Press, Inc, 1973, 1986.

Example 7: Discovery Play

♠A7642 ♥KJ ♦Q964 ♣98  E ♠93 ♥53 ♦AK10853 ♣KQ5

S	W	N	E
1♥	P	2♥	3♦
3♥	4♦	All Pass	


South leads the ♠King against 4♦. You draw trump and play ♣9 to the ♣King. South wins the ♣Ace and returns a low ♥. P 69.

What ♥ do you play from West?

Example 8: Count Distribution Before Guessing a Suit

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4♠ by West

♠AQ87 ♥Q94 ♦K109 ♣873  E ♠KJ94 ♥862 ♦AJ4 ♣AKQ

N leads AK♥, S high-lows and N gives S a ruff. Draw trump.

North has 5 ♥'s
South has 3 ♠'s

What do you do before guessing ♦'s?

Example 10: blotting the ten (smothering the ten)

♠AJ2
♠???4 ♠???8
♠Q9763

The Jack wins the trick and you see the 4 and the 8. How do you play the hand?

Answers

Example 1:

	Dummy:	♦ AJ92	
♦ 5			RHO: ♦ ??
	You:	♦ K63	

What do you play from dummy?

LHO led 4th best so there are 6 cards higher than the 5 in the remaining three hands. You can see five, so RHO has one. Play low (♦ 2) and you will set what that card is and finesse LHO for the rest.

Example 2:

You have 986543 and lots of side entries against 3NT. What do you lead first then next and then once again?

You lead the 5 then the 4 then the 3 and partner will know you have a six card suit. Sometimes that is useful information.

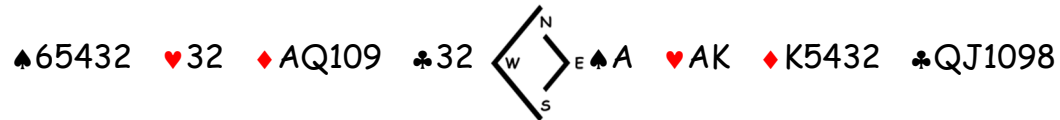
Example 5: Law of Restricted Choice

♥ AK10987		♥ 42
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Cash the Ace and the Jack falls from North. What do you do next?

Go back to the East and play to the 10.

Example 6: From BridgeMaster2000-3B-27



S	W	N	E
1♣	P	1♠	2♦
P	3♦	P	4♦
P	5♦	All Pass	

AK♣ were led north playing the 7 then the 6 using Standard signals. What is happening? How do you make 5♦?

You are missing nine ♥'s. South has at most four because he did not open 1♥. Therefore North must have skipped a five card ♥ suit to bid a five-card ♠ suit. Therefore, North is 5-5-1-2. You ask if North could be 6-5-0-2? Why is he not declaring if he is? Six-Five Come Alive!

Ruff the third ♣ with the ♦ Ace, cash the ♦ King and if the ♦ Jack does not fall then finesse South out of the ♦ Jack.

Example 7: Discovery Play



S	W	N	E
1♥	P	2♥	3♦
3♥	4♦	All Pass	

South leads the ♠ King against 4♦. You draw trump and play ♣9 to the ♣ King. South wins the ♣ Ace and returns a low ♥. P 69.

What ♥ do you play from West?

North needs the ♥Ace for his bid. If he has both ♥ honours, you are sunk. You need South to have one of them and if North has the ♥Queen, he cannot have a 2♥ response.

Example 8: Count Distribution Before Guessing a Suit

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4♠ by West



N leads AK♥, S high-lows and N gives S a ruff.
Draw trump.

North has 5 ♥'s
South has 3 ♠'s

What do you do before guessing ♦'s?

Cash Three ♣'s and discover that South has two ♣'s. Therefore North is 2-5-1-5 and has a singleton ♦. Cash ♦ Ace and run ♦ Jack through with certainty.

Example 10: blotting the ten (smothering the ten)



The Jack wins the trick and you see the 4 and the 8. How do you play the hand?

The proper way to play this is to come back to the South hand and play the Queen smothering the 10 because if it is not 108 doubleton and 8 singleton, you are losing the Queen anyways.

Mike Lawrence false-carded without pause for thought!!! and the actual hands were:

♠4	♠AJ2	♠K1085
	♠Q9763	