

## DECLARER PLAY 10 - THE BASIS OF CARD PLAY

NEVER PLAY AN HONOUR OR HIGH CARD WHEN A LOW CARD WILL DO, AND LEAD TOWARDS HONOURS RATHER THAN PLACING THEM ON THE TABLE (“HONOUR PLONKING”) FOR HIGHER OPPOSITION HONOURS TO KILL THEM.

	Q32	
K987		A106
	J54	

When West leads the 7, if you play the Q, East will win with the A and return the 10. The J is scooped up under the K and you get no tricks.

When the 7 is led, you should simply play low from dummy. The J in hand is doing the all the work that the Q could do – there is no need to expose an honour. East is forced to rise with the A and the J later forces out the K and gives you one trick in the suit in the form of the carefully preserved Q.

Incidentally, even though you’re not a defender, playing low from dummy is a form of “second hand plays low” if you think about it.

	AQ432	
K5		1098
	J65	

Here, if you lead the J, the K covers and you get the AQ but have to concede the third round to the 10. The only chance to make all the tricks is to lead a low card from South and finesse the Q. Play the A and drop the K and now your J is good.

	KQJ2	
A3		10987
	654	

This is the classic situation. How many times have you seen players play the K to see it swallowed by the A? You do get QJ but have to concede the fourth round to the 10 and lose 2 tricks. You should lead a low card from South towards the KQJ2. If West flies with the A, you have KQJ. If West ducks, win the K and come back to South in a side suit and lead a low card again. West has to take their ace, but you have QJ for 3 tricks.

	AJ1032	
K		9874
	Q65	

Assuming you have entries back to the South hand in other side suits, the correct way to play this suit is to initially lead low towards the AJ10. The K drops and you get the whole suit. If instead, you incautiously lead the Q, you get AJ10 but have to concede the fourth round to the 9.

Bridge maxims are very helpful things but always remember they are a GUIDE and not a COMMANDMENT. Maxims always give way to the conditions at the table. Let's vary that last hand slightly:

	AJ1032	
K74		98
	Q65	

This time there are NO outside entries back to the South hand. If you play low from South and insert the J, you can't get back to hand to finesse again and must lose a trick to the K. Correct was to lead the Q.

But won't that lose in the earlier situation where the K was singleton? Yes, but the answer is to ask which holding in the West hand is more likely – the singleton king or Kxx? You probably realise instinctively that Kxx is the more probable holding (it's about 20% to about 2-3%).

	Q2	
A9875		J104
	K63	

You are in a NT contract on the lead of the 7. You should fly with the Q, hoping West has led from the A. Now you K is a stopper if you can prevent East getting on lead. If you duck the 7 in dummy, inevitably your K will be forced out and your bare Q on the table will be won by the A wherever it is and the suit will run for the opponents.

	AJ1098	
K76		32
	Q54	

Here, you have honours galore. It doesn't matter if the K covers an honour. Just lead the Q and repeat the finesse if the K doesn't cover. Leading a low card to the J and coming back to the South hand in another suit could take out an important entry or run the risk of a ruff in a suit contract.