

An Honors eBook from Master Point Press

**David Bird**

**TWELVE  
IMPORTANT  
BRIDGE LESSONS**



**ON DEFENSE**

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## Lesson 1

# The Basics of Defense

*“I can see several new faces. Thanks for coming along! In this series of lessons we’ll be looking at defense. Can any of you say why defense is more difficult than playing the hand? Rebecca?”*

*“Is it because you can’t see partner’s hand?”*

*“Exactly. Declarer has a big advantage initially, but as the tricks go by, the defenders can build up a picture of all four hands. Today we will see some successful defenses, looking at the basic techniques involved.”*

*“Can you put up the first deal, Simon? Look at the West cards.”*

	♠ K J 8 4 3 2											
	♥ K 5											
	♦ Q 7 6 4											
	♣ Q											
♠ 10 6	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 5	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 9 6 4 2		♥ J 10 7 3										
♦ A K 8		♦ 9 3										
♣ A 10 8 2		♣ J 9 7 4 3										
	♠ A Q 7											
	♥ A Q 8											
	♦ J 10 5 2											
	♣ K 6 5											
<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>									
—	—	—	1NT									
pass	2♥	pass	2♠									
pass	4♠	all pass										

West has one of the best leads available against a suit contract, an ace-king combination. He leads the ♦A, and East will give an **attitude signal**. The classic way to do this is to play high if you would like the suit to be continued, low if you don’t. Here, East reads partner for the

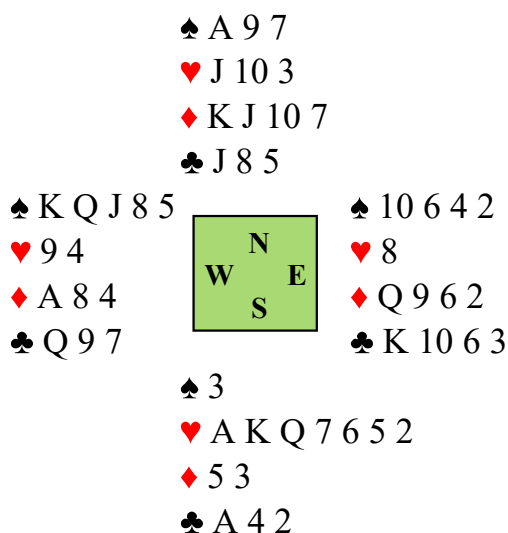
♦AK and would like a ruff. He plays the ♦9 and West duly continues the suit, playing the ♦K. What should West do next?

Many players would give the matter no further thought and lead the ♦8, which East does indeed ruff. Now, though, East must choose which suit to return. If he plays a club to West's ace, the game will be one down. If instead East guesses to return a heart, declarer will win, draw trumps and discard the ♣Q on his hearts. The game will be made.

West should have cashed the ♣A before delivering the diamond ruff. He knew which ace he held, his partner did not.

**POINT TO REMEMBER: Always bear in mind how you can make life easy for your partner. Once you foresee partner's potential problem, it is clear to cash the ♣A at trick three.**

Both defenders need to do well to defeat this contract:



West	North	East	South
–	–	–	1♥
1♠	1NT	2♠	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠K, won with dummy's ♠A. Declarer crosses to the ♥A and leads a low diamond. This is the first key moment for the defense. West should recall the general guideline, **play low in second seat**. Provided he does this smoothly, giving nothing away, declarer will

have to guess the diamond position. If he rises with dummy's  $\spadesuit K$ , he will have a tenth trick and make the contract.

Let's say that West was prepared for this moment and plays the  $\spadesuit 4$  at normal tempo. Declarer may then guess to play dummy's  $\spadesuit J$ . East wins with the queen, and the second key moment of the defense is reached. What should East do next?

Returning another spade would be hopeless. East knows from partner's  $1\spadesuit$  overcall that South has no spades left. After ruffing an unconsidered spade return, declarer would draw the last trump and lead another diamond, setting up discards for his club losers.

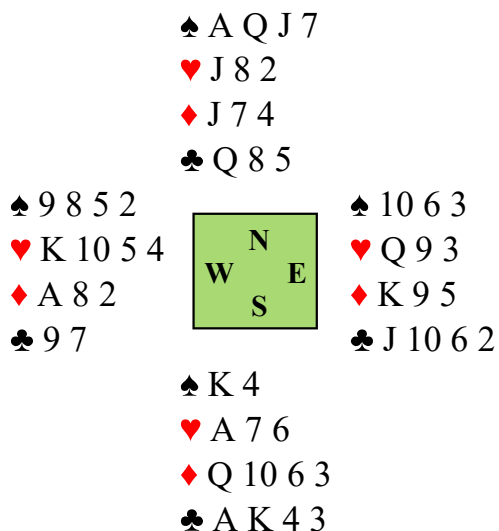
To beat the contract, the defenders will need two club tricks as well as two diamond tricks. East must therefore switch to the  $\clubsuit 3$ . West wins with the  $\clubsuit Q$  and returns the  $\clubsuit 9$ . Whether or not declarer plays the  $\clubsuit J$  from dummy, he will go down. West will rise with the ace on the second round of diamonds and the defense will make four tricks.

#### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

- (1) It is generally right to play low in the second seat. Rising with a high card may save declarer a guess. It may also give him an undeserved extra trick.**
- (2) Counting the defensive tricks may help you to decide whether you should continue the suit led or switch elsewhere.**

Another general guideline for defensive card play is: **play high in third seat**. However, defending accurately cannot be dictated solely by a set of so-called 'rules'. They are only guidelines. The more you play, the more you will recognize situations where it is necessary to play differently.

The next deal illustrates the most important situation where you should not follow the 'third-seat-high' rule.



West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♥4 and declarer plays the ♥2 from dummy. What card will you play from the East hand? If there was no heart honor in the dummy, you would follow the general rule of **third hand plays high**. Your high card might then either win the trick or at least force out a higher card from declarer, helping to set up winners in partner's hand.

Can you see why it would be a mistake to play the ♥Q? Declarer opened a 15-17 point 1NT and will surely win with the ♥A or ♥K. If you play the queen, he will make an extra heart trick with dummy's jack. You should therefore play the ♥9. You are hoping that partner holds the ♥10, but no damage will be done if declarer has ♥A106. In that case, he will make two heart tricks whatever you do.

As the cards lie, declarer holds up his ace and your ♥9 wins the trick. From two remaining cards, you **return the higher card**, the ♥Q. South holds up again and you play your last heart to his ace. With eight top tricks now visible, declarer will continue by playing four rounds of spades. What will you throw on the fourth round from ♦K95 ♣J1062? You must keep all your clubs in case declarer has ♣AKxx. Your two spot cards in diamonds are worthless, so discard one of them.

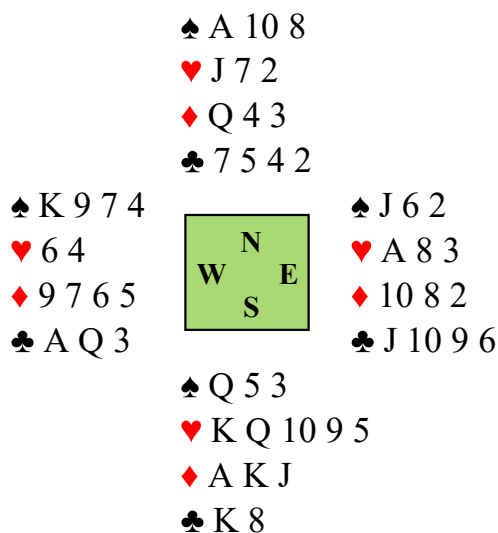
When declarer plays three rounds of clubs, hoping for a 3-3 break, he will be disappointed. Because you retained your guard in the suit, he will go one down.

**POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

(1) Do not play ‘third hand high’ when it will promote an honor in the dummy. Play your second highest card.

(2) Late in the play, think carefully which cards to keep. You must match your length to the suits you can see in the dummy or that you suspect declarer holds.

You have another decision to make with the East cards here:



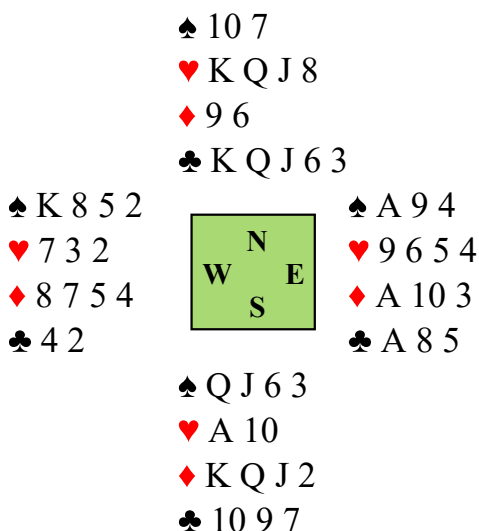
West	North	East	South
–	–	–	1♥
pass	2♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the ♠4 and declarer plays the ♠8 from dummy. How will you defend the contract?

Against a suit contract, West would not have led low from ♠KQ74. He would lead the king to make sure that his honors played a part in the first two rounds (the third round might be ruffed). So, you know that declarer has the ♠K or ♠Q. If he holds the ♠K, he will make three spade tricks after this lead, whatever you do. If instead he holds the ♠Q, committing your ♠J will give him an extra trick. He will win with the queen and subsequently finesse dummy’s ♠10. Play low, allowing dummy’s ♠8 to win, and declarer cannot make more than two spade tricks. He will go one down.

**POINT TO REMEMBER: ‘Third hand high’ applies when dummy has no honor. When dummy holds one or two honors, you must calculate your play more carefully. Here, playing the ♠J could never gain and would often cost a trick.**

Many, many East players would go wrong on the next deal. Are you one of them?



West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠2 and declarer plays the ♠7 from dummy. What is your defensive plan?

If the rule **third hand plays high** is deeply imbedded in your brain, you will be there with the ♠A, returning the ♠9 a second or two later. Yes, but you will not beat the contract. Declarer will lose only two spade tricks, to go with the defenders’ minor-suit aces. Aces are meant to capture honors, not mere spot cards such as the ♠7.

See what happens if East plays the ♠9 on the first trick, retaining the ♠A to deal with dummy’s ♠10. Declarer wins with the jack and plays on clubs, setting up four tricks there. On lead with the club ace, you play the ♠A (taking an honor this time, dummy’s ♠10). You continue



with the ♠4 and partner's ♠K8 score two further tricks in the suit. That's one down.

**POINT TO REMEMBER: When partner leads a suit where you hold an honor higher than the honor in dummy, consider playing a lower card.**

The right defense can often be found just by thinking clearly. East did exactly that when this deal arose:

	♠ K Q 10 9 3 2										
	♥ 3										
	♦ A 6 4										
	♣ K Q 10										
♠ 7	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 8 6 2		♥ A J 10 7 5 4									
♦ 9 7 3 2		♦ K Q J									
♣ 9 8 6 4 2		♣ 7 3									
	♠ A J 6 5										
	♥ K Q 9										
	♦ 10 8 5										
	♣ A J 5										
<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>								
–	–	–	1NT								
pass	2♥	dbld	2♠								
pass	4NT	pass	5♥								
pass	6♠	all pass									

Partner leads the ♥6 (second-best from spot cards) against the spade slam. What is your defensive plan?

You grit your teeth as you survey the dummy. It was natural to double the 2♥ transfer bid to show your good hearts, but the lead you needed to beat the slam was a diamond! What is your reaction? To win with the ♥A and switch to the ♦K?

East did better than that. First he counted HCPs (high-card points). Dummy had 14, East had 11, so declarer must hold the remaining 15 points. West must hold a complete yarborough.

Next, East counted declarer's tricks. He would have six spade tricks, at least three club tricks, and the  $\spadesuit A$ . That was ten tricks outside the heart suit. So, if East played the  $\heartsuit A$  at trick one, declarer was certain to make the slam. East therefore played the  $\heartsuit 10$  on the first trick.

Declarer won with the queen and could see only eleven tricks. He drew trumps, ruffed two hearts in dummy and cashed three club tricks. He then played ace and another diamond, hoping that East would win from an original doubleton and have to give a ruff-and-discard. Not today. East never made his  $\heartsuit A$ , but he did take two diamond tricks to beat the slam.

**POINT TO REMEMBER: Counting performs an important role in good defense. By counting declarer's tricks, East knew it was wrong to win with the  $\heartsuit A$ .**

*"You have a question, Helen?"*

*"Yes, on the bidding. Why was North's 4NT Blackwood and not a natural non-forcing slam try?"*

*"Very good question. If East had not doubled 2 $\heartsuit$ , 4NT would have been a natural quantitative slam try (the same as after Stayman). Here South's 2 $\spadesuit$  over the double guarantees at least three spades. A trump fit has been found, so 4NT is Blackwood. We will assume Roman Key-card Blackwood during this course."*

Let's take a look at the much-vaunted **Rule of Eleven**, most useful in notrump contracts. When a fourth-best card is led, subtract the value of that card from 11. The answer gives you the number of cards held by the other three hands.

West leads the  $\heartsuit 5$  in the single-suit position shown overleaf.

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

East subtracts 5 from 11. That's 6 cards above the ♥5 in the North, East and South hands. North can see two in the dummy and two in his own hand. So, that leaves two for declarer.

Let's see a full deal where the Rule of Eleven is put to good use. You should view the deal from the East chair:

	♠ K Q 6 5	
	♥ Q 9 5	
	♦ A Q 4	
	♣ 10 9 5	
♠ 10 7 3 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; text-align: center;">       N        W    E        S     </div>	♠ 9 4
♥ J 8 7 4		♥ K 10 6 3
♦ 9 7 5		♦ J 10 6 2
♣ A Q		♣ 6 4 3
	♠ A J 8	
	♥ A 2	
	♦ K 8 3	
	♣ K J 8 7 2	

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

Your partner leads the ♥4, and the ♥5 is played from dummy. How do you plan the defense?

The Rule of Eleven tells you that there are  $11 - 4 = 7$  cards higher than the ♥4 in the North, East and South hands. You can see six of them, so declarer will hold only one. He probably holds ♥A2 or ♥J2. If you waste your ♥10, dummy's ♥Q9 will become worth a trick. Instead, you should cover with the ♥6.

Declarer wins with the ace and crosses to a diamond to run the ♣10. West wins with the queen and returns the ♥7. That gives the defense three heart tricks to go with the ♣AQ. The game is one down.

**POINT TO REMEMBER: The Rule of Eleven helps you to read the lie of the suit that has been led.**

## Covering honors

You probably remember being taught in your youth to ‘cover an honor with an honor’. Sometimes, you do need to do this. Just as often, it will be wrong – you will give away the contract.

Let’s start by seeing an example of a cover working well:

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

Suppose you are West and declarer leads the ♦Q. If you fail to cover with the king, the queen will win the first round. Declarer will subsequently finesse the ♦J and make four diamond tricks.

There is nothing you can do if declarer hold ♦Q10x, so you must hope that your partner has the ♦10. Cover the queen with the king. Declarer wins with dummy’s ace, but your partner’s ♦10 is promoted and will win a trick.

**POINT TO REMEMBER: The purpose of covering an honor is to promote a trick for partner.**

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

When the ♦Q is led here, you cannot possibly promote a trick in partner’s hand; you can see the ♦J109 in the dummy. Play low and allow South’s ♦Q to win. Declarer can finesse the ♦J next, but he cannot repeat the finesse. He will make only three diamond tricks, instead of four if you cover.

**POINT TO REMEMBER: Do not cover if doing so cannot promote a trick.**

When declarer is missing the queen of a suit, he may try to trick you into covering:

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

When declarer leads the ♥J, do not even think of covering. Play low smoothly and declarer may well place the ♥Q with your partner. He will then overtake with dummy's ace and finesse the 10 to your queen.

This is another possible lie of the cards:

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

If you mistakenly cover the ♥J with the queen, declarer will win with dummy's ace and lead back towards his ♥10. He will score three tricks from the suit. Play low instead, and your side will make the king and the queen.

Swap the queen and king in the diagram, and the situation would of course be exactly the same. You must not cover the jack. Judging whether to cover can be no easy matter. A good general guideline is that **declarers usually want you to cover when they lead an honor**. When a jack is led from the closed hand, it will usually be accompanied by a touching honor, the queen or the 10.

This position is similar. The queen is led from the closed hand:

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

Declarer leads the ♣Q. If you mistakenly cover with the king, he will win with dummy's ace and finesse the ♣9 on the way back. He will make four club tricks.

The general rule **do not cover the first of touching honors** works well here. When the queen appears from declarer, you should assume it is backed by the jack. Do not cover and you will save your side a trick.

## The basics of defense – Recap questions

1. When a low card is led, why is it generally right to play low in second seat?
2. Why is it generally right to play high in the third seat?
3. Why is your play in third seat affected by the presence of an honor in the dummy?
4. Why is it generally wrong to cover the first of touching honors?
5. Suppose dummy holds A86 in a suit. What should you assume when declarer leads the queen or jack from the closed hand?

### Answers

1. Because you hope to capture a lower honor with your high honor. Also, by playing high you may assist declarer's play from the third hand.
2. To prevent declarer from winning cheaply in the fourth seat. You aim either to win the trick, or to force out a higher card from declarer, thereby promoting the defenders' cards in the suit.
3. Because you may need to retain your top card to beat dummy's honor later. It is often right to play your second-best card. For example with A104 over dummy's K86, you should play the 10.
4. It cannot gain to cover on the first round, rather than on the second round. Meanwhile it will often give a trick away.
5. Declarer will nearly always have another honor touching the led card. If you cover declarer's queen with the king. He may hold the QJ9 and be able to finesse the 9 on the second round. If you cover declarer's jack with the queen (or king), he may hold J10x(x) and be able to lead back towards the 10.

## Quiz Hands 1 & 2

1.

♠ Q 8 3  
♥ A 9  
♦ J 8 4  
♣ A J 10 5 3

♦7 led

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 6 4  
♥ K 10 8 7 3  
♦ A 10 3  
♣ K 6

West	North	East	South
–	–	–	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West, who would lead the second-best card when they held no honor, puts the ♦7 on the table. How do you read the opening lead? What is your plan for the defense? (*Answer on page 20*)

2.

♠ J 7  
♥ A 6  
♦ A Q  
♣ K Q J 10 8 6 3

♠3 led

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 9 5  
♥ J 10 8 3  
♦ J 9 7 3  
♣ A 4

West	North	East	South
–	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	3♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the ♠3 against 3NT and the ♠7 is played from the dummy. Which card will you play on the first trick? What is the reason for your choice? (*Answer on page 21*)

## Quiz Hands 3 & 4

3.

♠ 9 7 5  
♥ Q J 4  
♦ Q 7 6  
♣ J 7 3 2

♥ 7 led



♠ 4  
♥ K 10 9 5 2  
♦ 10 9 4 3  
♣ K 10 5

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	4♠	pass	6♠
all pass			

Partner leads the ♥7 and the ♥Q is played from dummy. What is your plan for the defense? *(Answer on page 22)*

4.

♠ 6 3  
♥ 9 6 5  
♦ A 10 8 6 4  
♣ K J 6

♠ 8 led



♠ K 10 9 7 4 2  
♥ Q 7 3  
♦ J 7  
♣ 9 3

West	North	East	South
—	—	2♠	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the ♠8 against 3NT. What is your plan for the defense? When declarer comes on lead, he will lead a diamond to the 10 and your jack. What will you return? *(Answer on page 23)*



## Answer to Quiz Hand 1

	♠ Q 8 3		
	♥ A 9		
	♦ J 8 4		
	♣ A J 10 5 3		
♠ 10 9 2	♠ 7 6 4		
♥ Q 5 4	♥ K 10 8 7 3		
♦ 9 7 5 2	♦ A 10 3		
♣ 8 7 2	♣ K 6		
	♠ A K J 5		
	♥ J 6 2		
	♦ K Q 6		
	♣ Q 9 4		



West	North	East	South
–	–	–	1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

You are sitting East, and partner leads the ♦7. How do you read this card?

It can be a fourth-best card only if West holds ♦KQ97(x). This is impossible, since it would leave only 13 points for South, who opened a 15-17 1NT. You can tell that the lead is ‘second-best from spot cards’. How will you then plan the defense?

It’s obviously not good enough to persevere with diamonds. Declarer will set up the clubs and make the contract easily. You should win with the ♦A and switch to hearts, hoping that your partner holds the ♥Q. Which card should you lead?

If you return the ♥7 and declarer plays low from his hand, West will have to put up the ♥Q. Declarer will win with dummy’s ace and have the ♥J as a second stopper. Instead, you must switch to the ♥10, killing dummy’s ♥9. West will not then have to play the queen, unless declarer commits his jack to the trick. You can clear the heart suit and cash the contract two down when you win with the ♣K. You will score four hearts, one diamond and one club.

## Answer to Quiz Hand 2

	♠ J 7	
	♥ A 6	
	♦ A Q	
	♣ K Q J 10 8 6 3	
♠ A 8 6 3 2	N W     E S	♠ Q 9 5
♥ Q 9 2		♥ J 10 8 3
♦ 8 6 5 2		♦ J 9 7 3
♣ 7		♣ A 4
	♠ K 10 4	
	♥ K 7 5 4	
	♦ K 10 4	
	♣ 9 5 2	

West	North	East	South
–	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	3♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

You are East and your partner leads a fourth-best ♠3. The ♠7 is played from dummy. What will you do on the first trick?

You must determine how the spade suit lies. You will need partner to hold the ♠2, and therefore five spades, to give the defense a chance. If South holds three spades to the ace, you will not beat the contract whatever you do. He will hold up the ♠A until the third round and clear the club suit. When you take the ♣A, you will have no spade to return.

You must therefore hope that South has ♠Kxx or ♠K10x. In the latter case, it will cost the contract to play the ♠Q on the first trick. Dummy's remaining ♠J opposite declarer's ♠10x would then give him a second spade trick.

All will be well if you keep your ♠Q to deal with dummy's ♠J and put in the ♠9. Declarer wins with the ♠10 and sets up the clubs. You can then return the ♠Q. Whether or not declarer covers with the king, the defenders will collect four spade tricks for one down.

Suppose instead that you held just ♠Q85 (swapping the ♠9 and ♠8). You would then need to play the ♠8 on the first trick.

## Answer to Quiz Hand 3

	♠ 9 7 5											
	♥ Q J 4											
	♦ Q 7 6											
	♣ J 7 3 2											
♠ J 8 6 ♥ 8 7 3 ♦ J 8 5 2 ♣ Q 9 4	<div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ 4 ♥ K 10 9 5 2 ♦ 10 9 4 3 ♣ K 10 5	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A K Q 10 3 2											
	♥ A 6											
	♦ A K											
	♣ A 8 6											
<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>									
—	—	—	2♣									
pass	2♦	pass	2♠									
pass	4♠	pass	6♠									
all pass												

You are East, and your partner leads the ♥7 against the spade slam. What is your reaction when the ♥Q is played from dummy?

It will be a big mistake to cover with the ♥K. This will leave the ♥J as an entry to the dummy. Declarer will win with the ♥A, draw trumps in three rounds, and cash the ♦AK. He will then use the ♥J to reach the otherwise stranded ♦Q for a club discard.

There is another situation where the cover could cost you. West would have made the same ♥7 lead (second-best from spot cards) if he held ♥8763 and declarer had a bare ♥A. If you cover, you might give declarer a second heart trick that could be reached with the ♦Q or possibly a trump.

The general guideline ‘do not cover the first of touching honors’ serves you well on this deal.

## Answer to Quiz Hand 4

	♠ 3										
	♥ 9 6 5										
	♦ A 10 8 6 4										
	♣ K J 6 2										
♠ 8 6 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 10 9 7 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K J 8 4		♥ Q 7 3									
♦ K Q 3		♦ J 7									
♣ 10 8 5		♣ 9 3									
	♠ A Q J										
	♥ A 10 2										
	♦ 9 5 2										
	♣ A Q 7 4										

West	North	East	South
–	–	2♠	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

You are East and partner leads the ♠6 against 3NT. This allows you to place declarer with the ♠AQJ. If you mistakenly play your king on the first trick, declarer will make three tricks from the suit and claim the contract immediately.

You should play a discouraging ♠2 at trick one, allowing declarer to win the trick. With only eight top tricks, he will have to develop the diamonds. He leads the ♦2 and West should play low, hoping that you hold the ♦J. Declarer puts in dummy's ♦8, and you do indeed win with the jack. What now?

You know that persisting with spades would be hopeless. A club switch cannot be right with such a strong holding in dummy. It is clear to switch to the ♥3. West wins with the ♥J and returns the ♥4 to your queen. Declarer holds up his ace, hoping to break the defenders' communications in the suit. He wins the third round of hearts and reverts to diamonds, winning West's queen with dummy's ace.

Hoping that the ♦K is not with the thirteenth heart, declarer plays a third round of diamonds. His luck is out. West scores the two red kings, putting 3NT one down.

## BRIDGE LESSONS FOR ASPIRING PLAYERS

The instructive material in this book is presented in a novel way, as if the author is delivering a series of bridge lessons to a small group of enthusiasts. Occasionally, members of the audience ask questions, or make comments.

Twelve important topics have been chosen, describing defensive techniques that you might apply several times during every session you play. Each lesson contains at least eight illustrative full deals, which are fully explained in David Bird's clear and lucid style. There is then a set of recap questions to test you on the chosen topic, along with the answers. Finally, there are four defense problems, which can be solved with the techniques just described.

Early lessons cover the basics of defense, signaling to partner, defensive communications, continue or switch, also a novel lesson on opening leads, based on results from computer analysis. You may be surprised how much there is to learn about these apparently straightforward elements of defense. Later, you can enjoy lessons on making declarer's life difficult, scoring ruffs and promotions, keeping the right cards, unblocking techniques, the forcing defense, breaking declarer's communications, and counting in defense. You can sharpen your defense by revisiting these lessons time and again.



**DAVID BIRD** (Southampton, UK) has written over 160 bridge books. He is well known for his clear explanations and economical writing style. The winner of a record 11 American Bridge Teacher's Association Book of the Year awards, he is entitled to be ranked among the very top bridge teachers via the written word. He and Thelma, married for 48 years, have a daughter, a son, and two grandchildren.