

# Basic Beginning Bridge

## Lesson 6 – Defense (Fighting Back!)

More information: <https://bridge.careytutor.com>

# Objective for Lesson 6

- Main objectives:
  - Learn how to take defensive measures
- Secondary objectives:
  - Defensive evaluation and planning
  - Opening leads and defensive plays
  - Overcalls
  - *Takeout Doubles*
  - *Preemptive bids*

# Defender Play – Evaluation and Planning

- Evaluate the opponents' bidding
  - Count your high card points and estimate the opponents' points based on bidding.
  - Estimate your partner's points.
- Determine the stronger defender's hand
  - Generally, you should try to set up tricks for the stronger hand.
- Determine whether to make an active lead vs. passive lead

# Opening Lead

- Lead partner's suit
- Lead the top of a sequence (e.g., K from KQJ)
- Lead a singleton against a suit contract
- Lead the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in a suit
  - **Rule of 11:** *subtract the value of the led card from 11; there are that number of cards higher than the led card outside the leader's hand*
- Lead a trump – if you believe opponents plan to ruff tricks
- Lead the top of nothing: highest card from a 3-card suit with no top cards

# Which Specific Card to Lead?

- Top honor from a sequence:
  - Ace from AKxx
  - King from KQxx
  - Queen from QJxx
- Top of an internal sequence:
  - Queen from AQJx
  - Jack from AJTx
- What not to do:
  - Do not underlead an Ace in a suit contract.
  - Try not to lead away from an honor (A, K, Q) – you may set up an extra trick for declarer.
    - Exception: when partner likes a suit, leading low from an honor may work.
    - Explore Bottom of Something, Top of Nothing (BosTon)

# Common Defensive Strategies

- Lead **through strength** and **toward weakness**
- General guideline: **cover an honor with an honor**
  - When covering the honor promotes one of your cards (or your partner's)
  - Cover any isolated honor: they hold Qx – play your King if they lead the Queen
  - Cover the last in a sequence: they have QJT – play your King on the 3<sup>rd</sup> round
- General guideline when 2<sup>nd</sup> to play on a trick: **second hand low**
  - Exception: when that gives up a trick you'll never recover
- General guideline when 3<sup>rd</sup> to play on a trick: **third hand high**
  - Exception: when a lower card will drive out an opponents' high card
  - Exception: when you need to wait and win the second trick in the suit to give partner a ruff

# Cover an Honor with Honor Example

**3NT contract - West**

♠T83 ♥KJ8 ♦KT98 ♣86



**West leads**

♦Q

**North  
plays ♦K**

**South**

**East**

♠ QJ2  
♥ A3  
♦ AJ543  
♣ K9

♠K654 ♥62 ♦62 ♣AT73

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Hand Low Example

**4S contract - West**

♠Q54 ♥Q752 ♦K86 ♣98



West,  
leads ♥T

North  
plays ♥2

East

♠ J632  
♥ K43  
♦ Q4  
♣ 6542

South

♠98 ♥J86 ♦JT532 ♣KQJ

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Hand High Example

**3NT contract - West**

♠A954 ♥52 ♦98 ♣Q9763



West  
wins ♣A

North  
leads ♣6

South  
plays ♣K

East

♠ Q63  
♥ K763  
♦ K52  
♣ 842

♠872 ♥T984 ♦A73 ♣KT5

# Overcalls

- An **overcall** is a bid by the opponents after an opening bid.
- Reasons to make an overcall:
  - To suggest an opening lead
  - To make the opener's bidding more difficult
  - To compete for a part score (or, more rarely, to proceed to game)
- Strength: 10 – 17 total points (evaluate as if opening)
- Length: 5-card or longer in the bid suit, generally with KJTxx or better
- Overcaller's partner responds naturally.
  - Be aware that overcaller may be weak and may pass any bid you make.

# Practice: Overcalls

- How many total points in defender's hand?
- Does defender have a 5+ strong suit?
- How might the bidding proceed?

# Summary

- Defensive evaluation and planning
- Opening leads and standard plays
- Overcalls
- *Takeout doubles*
- *Signals*
- *Preemptive bids*

# What Next?

- Topics I Wish I'd Covered (see handout)
- Ongoing practice sessions at the Olney library
- [Bridge.careytutor.com](http://Bridge.careytutor.com) for ongoing lessons and other news
- Olney Maryland Bridge Club – facebook page
- Tournament (duplicate) play