

Defensive Techniques:

Using Clues from the Bidding, Rule of 11, Returning Partner's Suit, Maintaining Transportation, Leading Through Strength and Up to Weakness, Preventing Ruffs, Getting Ruffs, Getting Over-Ruffs, Uppercuts, Forcing Defense, Defending Against Small Cards

Using Clues from the Bidding. On many auctions, the bidding will provide defenders with information about declarer's hand and about partner's hand. The most common example is when declarer has opened 1NT. Once the dummy is tabled, each defender should know (within one point) how many high card points partner has. If the opponent's NT range is 15-17, assume that declarer has 16. That leaves 24 for everyone else. Add the points in dummy and your own hand and subtract from 24. That tells you what partner has +/-1 (since declarer could have one point more or less, so could partner). This information plus what you see in dummy may give you a clue about how to defend.

<p>♠A54 ♥86 ♦KJ87 ♣Q954</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">♠1063 ♥AQ5 ♦Q93 ♣A862</p>	<p>South opened 1N; North raised to 3. Partner led the ♥4. What do you know? You have 12 hcp and dummy has 10. That leaves 2 for partner (or more accurately, 1-3). It appears that partner has led fourth-best. Partner may have 5 or 6, since the 3 and 2 are unaccounted for. The normal play would be to win the Ace and return the Queen. However, if declarer has Kxx, he will "hold up" until the third round and hope that West does not hold the ♣A. Since you know that declarer may have the ♥K and that partner has no outside entries, you can "persuade" him to win his King immediately by playing the Queen initially. He can't afford to duck since it appears that West has the ♥A. Later, when you win the ♣A, you cash the ♥A and lead a low heart to partner. Of course, if partner has the ♥K, your Queen will win the first trick, and you can cash the Ace and lead low to partner.</p>
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Other examples of clues from the bidding:

- The opponents bid 1♣-1N-2N-P. The dummy comes down with 17 hcp. Declarer showed 6-10 for his first bid and a minimum (6-8) when he passed the invitation. Play him for 7, add this to your count and dummy's, subtract from 40, and you have partner's count, within 1.
- The opponents bid 1N-2♦(transfer to hearts)-2♥-2N-P. Dummy comes down with 5 hearts and 8 hcp. Declarer declined the invitation and chose NT over hearts. So play declarer for 15 hcp and 2 hearts.

Rule of 11. If Partner makes a fourth-best lead, the "Rule of 11" can be used to determine how many cards the declarer has higher than the card led. Subtract the value of the spot card led from 11. That is the number of cards higher than the spot card in the three remaining hands (dummy, you, and declarer). You can see dummy's cards and your cards and can determine what declarer has.

Returning Partner's Suit. Against a 3NT contract, partner leads ♥5 and the dummy has 2 small hearts. If you have

- A82 Win the Ace and return the 8 (when you have two left, lead the top card).
- A832 Win the Ace and return the 2 (when you have three left, lead low)
- AJ102 Win the Ace and return the Jack (when you have a sequence left, lead the top card).

Against NT contracts, return partner's lead unless you have a compelling reason to do otherwise.

<p>♠652 ♥97 ♦AJ97 ♣AJ85</p> <p>♠AQ943 ♠87 ♥864 ♥KQJ105 ♦1052 ♦643 ♣97 ♣K43</p> <p>♠KJ10 ♥A32 ♦KQ8 ♣Q1062</p>	<p>Against 3N, partner leads the ♠4. Declarer wins the 10 and leads the ♣10 to the 7, 5, and King. What do you lead? The Rule of 11 tells you that declarer has 3 spades higher than the 4. You also determine that partner has 4-6 hcp. So partner has two spade honors (but not the QJ9 because she would have led the Queen). So it's impossible for partner to hold the ♥A. So return partner's lead and hope she has the AQ of spades. That will set the contract. If you let yourself fall in love with your hearts and lead the ♥K, declarer will win 1 spade, 1 heart, 4 diamonds and 3 clubs to make 3N. Leading a heart has no future since you have no entries.</p>
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Maintaining Transportation.

<p>♠A842 ♥J10 ♦J107 ♣AQJ4</p> <p>♠J3 ♠Q10975 ♥A9642 ♥875 ♦842 ♦AK ♣965 ♣732</p> <p>♠K6 ♥KQ3 ♦Q9653 ♣K108</p>	<p>Against 3N, you lead the ♥4 (fourth best) to the 10, 5, and 3. When partner can't beat the dummy, she should give count, so the 5 shows an odd number (3). That means declarer started with KQ3. Declarer leads the ♦J from dummy. Partner wins the K and plays the ♥8. You must duck this. If you won it and returned a heart, your hearts would be good, but you would have no entry. If you duck, partner will regain the lead and lead her third heart to your Ace.</p>
<p>♠QJ10 ♥K32 ♦Q1075 ♣K94</p> <p>♠K8652 ♠A93 ♥1064 ♥985 ♦83 ♦A62 ♣J86 ♣10532</p> <p>♠74 ♥AQJ7 ♦KJ94 ♣AQ7</p>	<p>Against 3N, you lead the ♠5 (fourth best) to the 10, Ace, and 5. Partner returns the 9; declarer plays the 7. You should duck. It seems that partner has the 3. NS is entitled to 1 spade trick. Let them have it now, so that partner will be able to lead the third round to you when she gets in.</p>

Leading Through Strength and Up to Weakness.

<p> ♠K63 ♥AKJ5 ♦QJ74 ♣95 ♠1097 ♠AQJ8 ♥843 ♥97 ♦AK95 ♦1062 ♣K84 ♣10732 ♠542 ♥Q1062 ♦83 ♣AQJ6 </p>	<p>You lead the ♦A against a 2♥ contract. Partner discourages with the 2. There's no rush to cash the ♦K. That has the disadvantage of setting up the Queen and Jack in the dummy. Dummy has strength in spades and weakness in clubs. The maxim is to "lead through strength", so following the maxim, you should lead the ♠10 rather than a low club. This works very well. EW will win 3 spade tricks ending with East. East can now lead through declarer's presumed club strength and up to dummy's club weakness. The defense will win 3 spades, 1 club, and 2 diamonds.</p>
<p> ♠532 ♥K1073 ♦KQJ ♣AJ5 ♠AJ4 ♠Q1097 ♥9 ♥85 ♦109862 ♦A75 ♣10763 ♣Q942 ♠K86 ♥AQJ642 ♦43 ♣K8 </p>	<p>You lead the ♦10 (top of a sequence) against a 4♥ contract. Partner wins the A. Seeing the weakness of the spades in dummy, partner should lead "up to the spade weakness". Partner should lead the 10 (top of an interior sequence). The defense takes 1 diamond and 3 spades.</p>

Preventing Ruffs.

<p> ♠J5 ♥J9742 ♦J6 ♣QJ85 ♠642 ♠87 ♥Q85 ♥K63 ♦KQ105 ♦A742 ♣A102 ♣K743 ♠AKQ1093 ♥A10 ♦983 ♣96 </p>	<p>You lead the ♦K against a 2♠ contract. Partner encourages with the 7. Take a moment to look at the "big picture". The diamond shortness in dummy should be a "red flag". If declarer has more than 2 diamonds, he would like to ruff diamonds in dummy. You can prevent this by shifting to a trump. Declarer will win and lead a second diamond. Whoever wins this should lead a second trump. Now declarer will lose a third diamond trick.</p>
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<p>♠J73 ♥52 ♦K972 ♣K643</p> <p>♠K95 ♠64 ♥QJ108 ♥AK6 ♦Q86 ♦J1053 ♣J97 ♣A1082</p> <p>♠AQ1082 ♥9743 ♦A4 ♣Q5</p>	<p>You lead the ♥Q against a 2♠ contract. Both you and partner should recognize the likelihood that declarer will want to ruff hearts in dummy. Partner should also recognize that it is better for her to lead trumps in case you have a trump honor. Thus partner should overtake your Queen with the King and lead a trump. If declarer plays low, you should take the ♠K and lead a second spade. If declarer then leads a second heart, you should win and lead a third spade.</p> <p>If declarer plays the ♠A on the first trump lead and then leads a heart, you should win, cash the ♠K, and lead a third trump. The defense will win 1 spade, 4 hearts, and 1 club.</p>
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Getting Ruffs.

<p>♠KQ7 ♥AQ83 ♦QJ86 ♣96</p> <p>♠J92 ♠108653 ♥10 ♥962 ♦95432 ♦A ♣KQ103 ♣A852</p> <p>♠A4 ♥KJ754 ♦K107 ♣J74</p>	<p>Partner leads the ♣K against a 4♥ contract. You might think about discouraging the club lead, hoping partner will shift to a diamond, leading a club back and getting a diamond ruff. There's a much better plan. Overtake the ♣K with the Ace, cash the ♦A, and lead a low club to partner. Partner should get the message that you want a diamond ruff.</p>
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Getting Over-ruffs.

<p>♠10832 ♥976 ♦92 ♣AK63</p> <p>♠AKQJ5 ♠96 ♥42 ♥1083 ♦Q1073 ♦J65 ♣Q10 ♣98742</p> <p>♠74 ♥AKQJ5 ♦AK84 ♣J5</p>	<p>Partner leads the AKQ of spades against a 4♥ contract. What do you discard on the third spade? Some might choose a club because it has no defensive value. There's a better choice. With diamond shortness in the dummy, declarer may be planning to ruff diamond losers. If you discard a diamond on the ♠Q, you will be able to over-ruff the dummy (twice!). Declarer will lose 2 spades and 2 diamonds. If you don't discard the diamond, declarer will be able to ruff one diamond without an over-ruff.</p>
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Uppercuts.

<p>♠10864 ♥AK ♦J87 ♣AKQJ</p> <p>♠J5 ♠Q ♥10642 ♥J983 ♦AKQ5 ♦943 ♣942 ♣108753</p> <p>♠AK9732 ♥Q75 ♦1062 ♣6</p>	<p>South opened 2♠, and North raised to 4. You led the AKQ of diamonds. Declarer clearly has no losers in hearts or clubs. His opening bid showed a 6-card suit, so partner has only 1 spade. If it is the King or Queen, you can score an “uppercut”. Lead the last diamond so that partner can ruff. Declarer must over-ruff with the King, which promotes your Jack to a winner.</p>
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Forcing Defense (a.k.a. Tapping Declarer)

<p>♠874 ♥Q93 ♦K1092 ♣A65</p> <p>♠10532 ♠9 ♥A85 ♥10642 ♦4 ♦A863 ♣KQJ108 ♣9742</p> <p>♠AKQJ6 ♥KJ7 ♦QJ75 ♣3</p>	<p>Against a 4♠ contract, West has two good choices of leads: the singleton diamond or the King of clubs. With a diamond lead, the defense will win 3 tricks (♦A, diamond ruff, ♥A). With a club lead, it seems that the South hand has only 2 losers, but appearances are deceiving. South wins the club lead, pulls trumps, and knocks out the ♦A. East now “forces” or “taps” declarer by leading a club. When South ruffs, he now is out of trumps. South can cash 3 diamonds, but when he leads a heart to knock out the Ace, West will win the last 3 tricks with the ♥A and 2 good clubs for down one. The “lesson” on this hand is that a forcing defense is possible when one defender has length in the trump suit. If West had more hearts and fewer spades, then the singleton diamond lead would be better.</p>
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Defending Against Small Cards

<p>Dummy AKQ10</p> <p style="text-align: right;">You J432</p>	<p>Seeing the dummy’s holding, you recognize that you cannot afford to discard a card in this suit, since the AKQ would pull your Jack and make the 10 good.</p>
<p>Dummy AQ65</p> <p style="text-align: right;">You 7432</p>	<p>Now it may not be so obvious that you cannot afford to discard a card in this suit.</p>
<p>AQ65</p> <p>J108 7432</p> <p style="text-align: right;">K9</p>	<p>While declarer was cashing winners in other suits, East had to choose a discard. If East chose this suit, then declarer will subsequently get 4 winners in the suit. If East does not discard from this suit, the 7 will prevent declarer from winning the fourth trick.</p>

<p>Dummy</p> <p>♠A83</p> <p>♥Q73</p> <p>♦643</p> <p>♣AJ42</p> <p>You</p> <p>♠92</p> <p>♥AK4</p> <p>♦10752</p> <p>♣KQ103</p>	<p>South opens 1♠, North bids 2♣, South bids 2♦, North bids 3♠, South bids 4♠. West leads the ♥J, which wins the trick. West continues hearts, and you win the AK, everyone following suit. You now shift to the ♣K, won in dummy. Declarer now cashes 5 spade tricks, and you have to make 3 discards. You might be tempted to hold the ♣Q and therefore only 3 diamonds, but that would be a mistake. You have clues from the bidding and the play. South showed (at least) 5 spades and 4 diamonds in the bidding. In the play, South showed 3 hearts and 1 club. That's 13 cards. So you don't need to hold the ♣Q. Partner only has 2 diamonds, so you are the only one who can prevent declarer from winning 4 diamond tricks. Declarer held KQxxx/xxx/AKQx/x.</p>
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