

## SECOND HAND LOW ... how to decide?

	Dummy	
	♠ K 7 3	
You		Partner
♠ A 10 4		♠ ??
	Declarer	
	♠ 2	

During this NT play, declarer leads the 2 ♠ toward the K♠. Declarer nailed you by finessing toward the K♠. What should you play? IMAGINE WHERE THE Q♠ is... then answer.

The whole deal shows that declarer owns both the K and the Q... and is always entitled to one of them. Let's give declarer ONLY one! If you duck the A♠, and declarer has to play the rest of the suit, they'll only make one ♠ trick. If you PLAY the A♠ in second seat, declarer will duck and enjoy two ♠ tricks. SECOND HAND LOW :)

	Dummy	
	♠ K 7 3	
You		Partner
♠ A 10 4		♠ J 8 6 5
	Declarer	
	♠ Q 9 2	

♦ ♣ ♥ ♠ **QUIZ:** ♦ ♣ ♥ ♠ Declarer leads the 2 ♥ toward Dummy. Assume there are no outside entries to the Dummy's hand. How many tricks can Declarer take if you play second hand high vs. low?

#1	Dummy	
	♥ Q 7 5	
You		Partner
♥ K 8 4		♥ A 10 9 3
	Declarer	
	♥ J 6 2	

- If second hand is high, 1 trick
- If second hand is low, 0 tricks

#2	Dummy	
	♥ A Q J	
You		Partner
♥ K 8 4		♥ 10 9 7 6 5 3
	Declarer	
	♥ 2	

- If second hand is high, 3 tricks
- If second hand is low, 2 tricks

By playing second hand low, you give your side the best chance to save your high cards, so that they not only take tricks but also capture the opponents' high cards at the same time.

**Board 3**

South Deals  
E-W Vul

	♠ 7 5					
	♥ A 8 6					
	♦ Q 10 9 8 7					
	♣ A 5 4					
♠ Q 10 8 6 3	<table border="1" style="background-color: #008000; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J 9 4	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ Q 9 2		♥ J 10 7 5				
♦ K 4 2		♦ J 5				
♣ 7 2		♣ Q J 10 9				
	♠ A K 2					
	♥ K 4 3					
	♦ A 6 3					
	♣ K 8 6 3					
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			
			1 NT			
Pass	3 NT	All pass				

**Auction Commentary:** South holds the max for a 1 NT balanced hand. North ignores the ♦ suit and bids 3 NT with that 10 count. (The ♦ s will be a nice source of tricks in NT.)

**Opening Lead:** 6 ♠ (This "4th from longest and strongest" shows the long suit, and gives us the opportunity to apply the Rule of 11. *See the Takeaways at the bottom of this sheet.*)

**Planning the Play:** Declarer counts winners in a NT contract: 2 ♠s, 2 ♥s, 1 sure ♦ winner, and 2 ♣ winners. That long ♦ suit should provide 2 more winners to make the contract. So declarer wins the A♠ on trick 1, plays the A♦, and then the 3 ♦ toward the ♦s in dummy.

**Defense:** West, don't be in a hurry to cash your K♦! You have 3 ♦s, so the King isn't going away, right? Think about this suit: if declarer held the J♦, wouldn't she have led with that instead of the 3♦? This means that partner has the J♦. "*Second Hand Low - give partner a chance!*" It's common to finesse to the 10♦ with this holding. So, West, you must smoothly duck this ♦ trick, giving declarer a chance to misguess the suit (and partner to win!).

**Takeaways:**

(1) When the dummy hits the table, West should examine it from the position of "what do I do if." With K♦-doubleton, when declarer played a small ♦ West should take the K♦ or risk losing it. Second Hand Low would not apply. But when you have 3 pieces to the King, you're always scoring that King, even ducking the first trick. SECOND HAND LOW gives partner a chance!

(2) **Rule of 11:** When the lead is exactly the 4th one down from the player's holding:

- Take 11 from the clouds, and hold it over the table.
- Subtract from 11 the "spot" of the card that was led -- (if it was the 6 ♠, subtract 6).
- The remainder, (in this case, 5), shows the number of cards HIGHER than the 6 ♠ in the OTHER 3 hands: (the dummy, and East, and declarer). 1 in dummy, 2 in East, so East knows declarer as exactly 2 ♠s higher than the 6. (*And declarer knows the very same about East!*)

**Board 4**

West Deals  
Both Vul

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



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass

**Auction Commentary:** Holding 22 HCP, West starts with an artificial 2 ♣ call, showing a very strong hand. It could be either a balanced 22+ HCP hand, or an unbalanced 8.5+ trick hand. East's artificial 2 ♦ tosses it back to partner, so West can now show which type of hand he has. The rebid of 2 NT is very specific! It describes the hand as exactly 22-24 HCP, balanced. With this information, even if West is at the "low" end with "only" 22 HCP, East's Ace will be enough to take the push to game.

**Opening Lead:** Q♦ (Against a NT contract, the lead of an honor is the top of a sequence of at least 3 touching honors - Q-J-T, and is a very safe lead. If this suit is led again, the AK♦ will have just promoted the third card in the series for the defense!)

**Planning the Play:** In NT, declarer counts winners and compares what he has to what he needs. Then the play develops with how to create the necessary extra tricks. Sure winners are 2 ♠s, 2 ♥s, and 2 ♦s. That's 6 tricks, and we'll promote at least one of those ♣ honors for trick #7. The longest suit and the only shot at extra tricks is the ♣ suit. West hopes that South holds the A♣, and will grab that trick, so that the rest of the ♣s will provide the needed extra tricks for the contract. Since West must play TOWARD the KQ♣ in order for all this to work, the plan is to duck the opening ♦ trick, and win the second one with the A♦ in dummy. Now declarer can play a small ♣ toward the KQ♣ and start the plan.

**Defense:** South needs to be awake! (Defenders make plans, too!) If South hops up with the A♣, the ♣s will now come home, as declarer now has the rest of the tricks he needs to make 3 NT.

South's A♣ trick isn't going anywhere. West described a balanced hand, so there are no long suits there to cash. There are no more entries to the dummy, so West will have to play "away from" the honors in his hand after this, and that's the defenders' paradise! If South is patient, then when declarer plays ♣s again, South will win both the A♣ and the J♣, and declarer will not be able to set up enough tricks. SECOND HAND LOW, SOUTH! Good job!

**Board 8**

West Deals  
None Vul

♠ 8 2			♠ A 9 7
♥ A 10 3 2			♥ K J 7 6
♦ K Q 10			♦ J 6 3
♣ 9 8 3 2			♣ A K 7
♠ K Q J 10 6 5 3	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">             N W     E S           </div>		
♥ 8 5			
♦ 8 4			
♣ 6 4			
♠ 4			
♥ Q 9 4			
♦ A 9 7 5 2			
♣ Q J 10 5			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

**Auction Commentary:** When partner preempts at the 3-level, it's not about POINTS in East's hand, it's about TRICKS. A disciplined preempt will have 2 of the top 3, or 3 of the top 5 honors in the suit. With East's A♠, he can sure count West for at least 6 tricks, and maybe 7. There are 3 sure tricks in A♠ and AK♣. Surely something will come of that ♥ suit. Besides, you have a combined 10 ♠s. The Law of Total Tricks says we should try for ten tricks. (And we need the contract to be in the preempted suit, because there is often no outside entry to the weak hand.)

**Opening Lead: K♦**

(The top of touching honors, and the top of a sequence of "almost 3" -- K, Q, "almost J!")

**Planning the Play:** Counting losers in a suit contract: 2 ♥s, 2 ♦s - 1 too many. Let's try to get something from the ♥ suit. Declarer ruffs the 3rd ♦ and draws trumps. Then the 5 ♥...

**Defense:** North, give partner a chance to contribute, and give declarer a chance to err! Taking the A♥ on this trick will give up the chance to defeat the contract. If declarer had the Q♥, she'd have led that instead of the 5♥. Partner has the Q♥, so, if declarer chooses to finesse to the J♥, you will win 2 ♥ tricks. Defenders can see that declarer will get 7 ♠ tricks, and 2 ♣ tricks. The 2 ♦ tricks you've just set up plus 2 ♥ tricks is the defensive plan. *"Second Hand Low - give partner a chance!"*

For sure, if North plays the A♥ on this trick, the contract will 100% succeed. But if North ducks the first ♥ trick, there is another possible outcome.

- If declarer plays to the K♥ the contract makes. But,
- if declarer plays to the J♥ the contract will fail.