

Bridge Chestnut 3 - "Always play second hand low"

This is a reasonable policy. The policy is based on the fact that partner still has a chance to play as 4th hand.

However, being alert, thinking and planning the play is more important.

- What is declarer up to?
- Was he unable to get off the table any other way?
- Could he not get out of his hand?
- Why is he not drawing trumps?
- Why didn't partner return my suit?
- Should I grab ace of trumps to give partner a ruff?

The policy can also apply for declarer.

	K43	
x		?
	J62	

Here, your LHO leads a small card against your No Trump contract. Just by playing Low from dummy, you are guaranteed a trick in the suit. RHO may win the Queen.

However, your Jack or King can push out the Ace leaving our remaining honour high.

If you rise with the King, you run the risk of making NO trick in the suit. RHO may win the Ace.

Then, LHO smothers your Jack with his Queen.

As a defender, here is a classic case where you need to play second hand low – and smoothly.

	KJT43	
A52		Q86
	97	

When you saw that long suit in dummy, you know that a low card would be fired at you at some time, didn't you?

If you play the 2 nice and smoothly, declarer has to guess whether to rise with the King or finesse you for the Queen.

Yes, he might guess right. However, if you rise with the ace or flinch, you remove his guess.

	KJT75	
A42		?
	6??	

Declarer leads the 6 at you and it looks pretty hopeless, doesn't it? Not necessarily.

It depends on dummy's other entries and how many tricks we need to set the contract.

If we need two, rising with the Ace gives us little hope. Playing low may turn up

	KJT75	
A42		Q83
	96	

If declarer tries to get off the table with the 5 of this suit, partner will be ready to play second hand high and grab his queen.

Good defenders do their thinking about whether to cover an honour before declarer leads that suit, that way they can play in tempo and not give away the location of a high card.