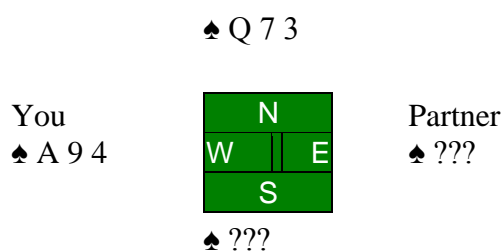


Second Hand Low

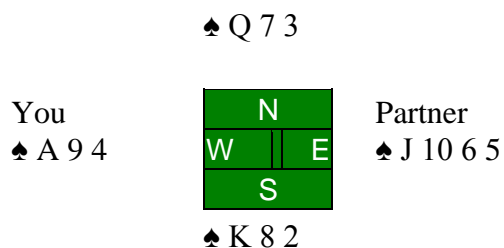
Second Hand Low is a bridge maxim that is used only by the defenders. This rule can be used by the defenders in any position: before or after dummy; before or after declarer. If you have honors or high cards in the suit led do not assume that declarer can see your cards - in most cases play low. Remember your partner is the last to play and can still possibly win the trick.

- When you play low in these situations the declarer will often need to guess correctly to get the play right. When you play high in the second hand there is no guess and no chance for additional tricks on defense.

Consider this situation where declarer leads a low card towards dummy:

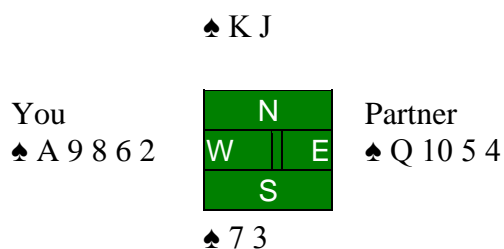


Should you play your ace? Often it's best to follow the guideline and play second hand low, contributing the four to the trick. First, let's suppose declarer has the king and the whole layout is something like this:

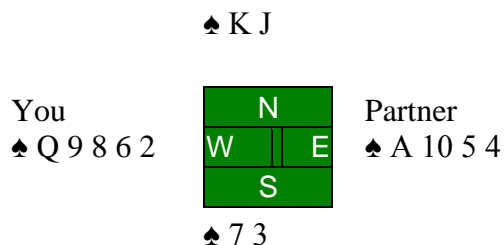


If you rise with your ace, declarer will end up with two tricks, one with the queen and one with the king. If you are patient and play second hand low, declarer can win the first trick with dummy's queen but now the king remains trapped by your ace and partner's jack and ten. Declarer will be held to one trick in the suit. Your ace is meant to take declarer's king, not the two. Don't play your ace "on air."

Playing low can be even more important when declarer has a complete guess to make. Consider this layout:



When declarer leads a low card toward dummy, you may think it doesn't matter whether or not you play your ace since declarer is always entitled to a trick in the suit with dummy's king. Declarer, however, can't see your cards. If you play second hand low, declarer may think the actual layout is something like this:



In this layout he should play dummy's jack, taking a finesse against your queen. Since declarer doesn't know which is the actual layout, play second hand low and let declarer do the guesswork.

Exceptions to Second Hand Low

As true with almost every bridge maxim or adage there are exceptions. Here are some exceptions to consider:

- **Splitting honors in order to create a winner in partner's hand**
- **Take the lead so you can return partner's suit**
- **Force declarer to win the trick prematurely**
- **Cover an Honor with an Honor**