

Expert defense involves collecting clues about the hand from the bidding and early play and putting all the information into place to solve the puzzle of how to defeat their contract

Take time before playing to trick one, because you have a lot of work to do!

a) Review the bidding, and note whether declarer has shown/denied 4+ cards in any suit(s). Make a mental picture of declarer's distribution.

b) Make an estimate from the bidding of approx. how many hcp the declarer has, Add your hcp to the hcp in the dummy and your estimate for declarer. This will tell you within a couple of points how many hcp your partner has, and help you to plan the defense.

c) Analyse the opening lead. If partner leads an honor card, you may be able to place the remaining honor cards in the suit.

If partner leads a spot card, is it a high spot from shortness or low from length? Ask yourself how many cards in the suit are left for declarer.

Vs suit contracts, when partner leads a spot card in an unbid suit, there is a strong inference that he doesn't have an honor sequence in another unbid suit. You can use that inference to start placing the high cards in declarer's hand.

d) know your trick target: how many tricks do you need to set the hand?

e) always count the declarer's tricks. This will tell you what you need in partner's hand to set the contract.

Trick one signal:

Primary signal is attitude (continue or switch) except give suit preference when no more tricks are cashing for our side. The most common situation for this is when dummy has shortness.

Example:

They reach 4S after 1N opening and texas. Partner leads the ace of hearts and dummy has AQxxxx, x, Qxx, Qxx

You hold: xx, 10xxx, AKJx, xxx

Play the heart ten, suit preference for the higher remaining suit

A diamond switch is necessary, because declarer's hand is KJx, QJx, xxx, AKJx

After trick one: spot card leads are attitude. A low card says you have an honor here and would like the suit returned. A high card says you want partner to shift to another suit

These deals are based on hands from "Kantar for the Defense, Volume 1" and "Kantar for the Defense, Volume 2" both by Edwin B. Kantar. I highly recommend this series of books forxxxxxx learning expert defense.

West	North	East	South	Board 1	North
	2H	2NT	P	None Vul	S J2
3NT	P	P	P		H QT8642
					D AK3
				West	C T4
				S A6	East
				H 97	S KQ83
				D QJT974	H AK53
				C AQ2	D 62
					South
					S T9754
					H J
					D 85
				3NT East	C 87653

South leads heart jack. North can see she has heart spots strong enough to overtake the jack with the queen and continue with the heart ten smashing dummy's nine. Key point: don't leave partner on lead to continue a suit when this is something you can do for yourself.

West	North	East	South	Board 2	North
		1D	1H	N-S Vul	S KQ2
2D	3C	P	3NT		H T
P	P	P			D 53
				West	C KJT9876
				S 953	East
				H A32	S JT76
				D JT98	H KJ94
				C 542	D AK42
					South
					C 3
					S A84
					H Q8765
					D Q76
				3NT South	C AQ

West leads the diamond jack. East wins the King and needs to figure out how to get 5 tricks before declarer gets 9. Declarer is marked with Qxx of diamonds, continuing the suit will only produce 3 tricks. If West's side card is spade ace, nothing can be done, but if west has either the heart ace or a club stopper plus the heart queen then switching to a heart will be productive. East plays the heart jack at trick 2 smothering the ten in dummy.

West	North	East	South	Board 3	North	
			1D	EW Vul	S 75	
1S	2C	P	2NT		H 86	
P	3NT	P	P		D Q75	
P				West	C AKQT62	East
				S QT832		S J94
				H AJ72		H KT53
				D A2		D T63
				C J7	South	C 843
					S AK6	
					H Q94	
					D KJ984	
				3NT South	C 95	

West leads his 4th best spade to partner's jack and declarer wins the trick. West estimates 12 hcp for declarer, so partner can have at most 1 king. West can see 8 fast tricks for declarer: 2 high spades and 6 clubs so west must win the first diamond and switch to the 2 of hearts hoping partner has the king. When East wins the heart 2, East will know to continue hearts based on the "attitude" of West's heart: a low heart by West means he wants a heart back, a high heart would ask for a spade back.

West	North	East	South	Board 4	North	
1NT	P	2C	X	Both Vul	S T965	
2H	P	4H	P		H 72	
P	P				D T9864	
				West	C T4	East
				S AJ2		S KQ84
				H A543		H QJT6
				D AK5		D Q7
				C 875	South	C J32
					S 73	
					H K98	
					D J32	
				4H West	C AKQ96	

North leads the club ten. South can see the club nine so knows this must either a singleton or a doubleton. South overtakes and cashes 3 clubs, North discarding the diamond 6. South can count 24 hcp between his hand and the dummy. Declarer has shown 15-17 so that means partner can own at most 1 hcp, the spade jack. The only chance for another trick is to lead a 4th round of clubs and hope North owns the precious heart 7. Ruffing with this card will uppercut dummy's trump holding and promote a trick for the K98.