




Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ T98		
	♥ AKT		
	♦ T842		
	♣ 983		
West		East	
♠ A53		♠ KQJ4	
♥ J52		♥ Q843	
♦ AQ973		♦ J6	
♣ K4		♣ A76	
	South		
	♠ 762		
	♥ 976		
	♦ K5		
	♣ QJT52		

This series of six deals and its partner, also of six deals, are all about covering honours with honours.

There is an old adage at bridge that tells you to "cover an honour with an honour". Like all such maxims it contains a modicum of sense but should not be followed blindly as it sometimes does more harm than good.

It often makes sense when, by covering, you take two of the opponents' honours for one of your own and thereby promote a lower card in your own hand or your partner's.

Sometimes you know for certain you are promoting a card, sometimes you don't know but covering will be a no-cost play.

*The essence, though is **trick promotion**. If there is no prospect of promoting a trick in either your partner's hand or in your hand you should not be covering.*

So be warned. In many of these hands successful defence is found by covering an honour with an honour. But that is not always the case. Sometimes it is wrong to do so.

This hand is your first test. Do you cover an honour with an honour or not?

West	North	East	South
-	P	1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Lead: ♣ Q

Your right-hand opponent (East) reaches 3NT after a straightforward 1NT – 3NT sequence and you lead the obvious ♣Q from the top of your sequence.

Declarer chooses to win this in hand with the ♣A and plays the ♦J. This is the crucial point of the deal – and it happens at trick two. Do you play the ♦K on the ♦J? In other words, do you **cover an honour with an honour?**

The answer is **Yes**, you must cover. If you do play the ♦K you force the ♦A from dummy, taking out two of declarer's high cards for one of yours.

By covering an honour with an honour you will gain one trick if your partner started with ♦10 x x, or two tricks if partner has ♦10 8 x x.

As the cards lie, 3NT is unmakeable after your two-for-one defence. Declarer now tries the ♦Q from table and another Diamond hoping for a 3-3 break. (He would also succeed, you may note, if you started with ♦K 8 or ♦K 10).

However, no luck today, my friend. Partner wins his ♦8 and shoots down declarer's second Club stopper by returning your suit (it would be poor defence to cash the ♦10 prematurely, setting up dummy's ♦9).

Declarer is now wide open in Clubs and has to settle for one down. He cashes four Spade tricks and surrenders the rest. It is too dangerous for him to give up a Diamond trick in pursuit of setting up Dummy's fifth Diamond; you would have far too many tricks in defence.


Your play of covering the ♦J with the ♦K was key. If you were to play low then the ♦J would win and the ♦A would kill your unprotected King. True, your partner would win the fourth round of Diamonds with his ♦10 but declarer would have four Diamond tricks and his contract. In fact, he would make an overtrick.



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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ Q54	
	♥ JT9	
	♦ 542	
	♣ 9763	
West		East
♠ T2		♠ A87
♥ Q43		♥ K752
♦ AQ8		♦ KJT9
♣ AJT82		♣ Q5
	South	
	♠ KJ963	
	♥ A86	
	♦ 763	
	♣ K4	

This is your second test. Early in the game declarer leads an honour card. Do you cover it or don't you?

If so, *why*?

If not, *why not*?

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Lead: ♠ 6

You (South, as ever) are on lead after a simple 1NT – 3NT sequence. You lead the fourth highest of your longest suit, which happens to be the ♠6. Partner pleasingly produces the the ♠Q and returns a Spade when declarer ducks. You win with the ♠9 and continue a third round of Spades to knock out East's ♠A.

Now declarer plays the ♣Q and you have to decide whether to cover (or not) with the ♣K. Is there any layout of the cards where covering might achieve something for the defence? The only rationale for **covering an honour with an honour** is trick promotion. Might North have something worth promoting?

Yes indeed! If partner has a holding of precisely ♣9 × × ×. If North isn't so endowed then nothing is lost by covering – the ♣K would be a dead duck in any case.

So you duly cover the ♣Q with the ♣K (more in hope than expectation, it has to be said) and watch proceedings from there.

Next comes the ♣J 10 from dummy. On the ♣10 you see that East shows out, indicating that your partner's lowly ♣9 has duly been promoted to winning rank. You discard the ♥8, signalling that you would like partner to lead a Heart if and when he gets the chance. Declarer decides not to give North that chance – he glumly abandons Clubs, cashes his Diamonds and gets out for one off.


Covering the ♣Q with the ♣K is vital. If you don't do this declarer would be able to run five Club tricks before cashing four Diamonds, thereby making an overtrick.



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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ A	
	♥ JT965	
	♦ A542	
	♣ T32	
West		East
♠ J9863		♠ QT754
♥ K3		♥ AQ
♦ K6		♦ JT8
♣ AQ85		♣ J97
	South	
	♠ K2	
	♥ 8742	
	♦ Q973	
	♣ K64	

This deal has a variety of suit combinations and a wily declarer tries to put you on the spot on more than one occasion.

You need to be up for the challenge.

More accurately, you need to be up for the challenges.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	P
1♠	P	3♣	P
4♠	P	P	P

Lead: ♥ J

You are defending against an ambitious contract of 4♠ (maybe West should have Passed 3♠) and partner (North) leads the ♥J. Declarer contemplates the dummy for a few moments then takes the ♥Q and advances the ♠Q. Should you cover that?

Well, you *cover an honour with an honour* if (and only if) there is a prospect of promoting a trick somewhere. What Spades might be promoted in your partner's hand if you were to cover? Partner can only have one Spade and it's coming down on this trick so covering the ♠Q is *pointless*.

You can see what would happen if you were to cover. Perhaps you might picture the look of anguish on North's face as the ♠A and ♠K crash on the same trick? West is trying one of the oldest tricks in the book and you mustn't fall for it. You should play low (smoothly, by the way. Give nothing away).

North takes his ♠A and exits with a Heart. Dummy wins the ♥A and advances the ♦J. Should you cover that?

The answer is (again) no. There are *touching honours* in the dummy and the usual rule is not to cover touching honours. Does it matter? Well, it might. Here declarer has a guess – he has to decide whether to play you for the ♦Q (and run the ♦J) or the ♦A (in which case he should play the ♦K). If he gets this two-way chance wrong he will have four losers (two Diamonds and two Spades). Playing the ♦Q on the ♦J will only help West resolve this guess. Play low smoothly and make declarer suffer!

As it is, declarer guesses right and runs the ♦J to North's ♦A. 50% of the time, though, he will get such decisions wrong – and you can't ask for better than that. North exits with a Diamond so declarer takes his ♦K, crosses to the table with a trump and tests you out again by leading the ♣J.

So – for a third time – *do you cover an honour with an honour?*

This time the answer is Yes. With a capital Y. You must put the ♣K on the ♣J, hoping to

promote something in partner's hand. If declarer has all the Club honours (in this case the ♣A Q 10) then playing the ♣K (or not) makes no difference. But if partner were to hold the Ten then covering would be essential.

Here, North makes a trick with the ♣10 (eventually) if you cover the ♣J. If you **don't** cover, declarer runs the ♣J, plays a Club to the ♣Q and makes four easy Club tricks and the contract.



Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

West	North	East	South
3♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Lead: ♦ K

The auction is brief here. West opens with a pre-emptive 3♠ and his partner raises that to 4♠. North attacks by leading the ♦K from his sequence and West's first shot (having taken the ♦A) is to lead the ♠Q off the table.


Well, it's your play now as South. Should you cover? Remember, you should *cover an honour with an honour* if (and only if) there is a prospect of trick promotion. What Spades might be promoted in your partner's hand if you were to cover? West is marked with a seven-card suit after the pre-empt leaving North with a void. How can you promote a trick from a void?

West is trying it on, hoping you will give the game away with a revealing cover. From his position he can see eleven Spades and the odds say (just) that the suit ought to break 1-1. However, it costs declarer nothing at all to lead the ♠Q on the first round hoping that you will be tempted into doing something foolish.

When you play low on the ♠Q (without a flicker, please note!) West naturally assumes that the two missing Spades are breaking 1-1 and therefore plays the ♠A, hoping and expecting to drop the ♠K in the North hand. Not today, maestro!

Was that a look of respect in West's eye as he glanced at you? It should have been! Anyway, West crosses to the ♥A and tries the effect of the ♣4. With nothing to lose you grab the ♣A and fire back a Diamond, allowing North to take two tricks there.

One off.

	North	
	♠	
	♥ QT853	
	♦ KQJ	
	♣ 98653	
West		East
♠ AJT8652		♠ Q974
♥ K9		♥ A
♦ 842		♦ A753
♣ T		♣ KQJ4
	South	
	♠ K3	
	♥ J7642	
	♦ T96	
	♣ A72	

Sometimes you can get caught out early in the hand. How early?

Well, sometimes before you have had a chance to wipe the sleep out of your eyes.



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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 652	
	♥ QT9	
	♦ Q9852	
	♣ 64	
West		East
♠ T3		♠ A98
♥ A52		♥ K743
♦ KJ		♦ AT74
♣ AJ7532		♣ Q9
	South	
	♠ KQJ74	
	♥ J86	
	♦ 63	
	♣ KT8	

Is this the time to follow the adage, or to ignore it?

One choice leads to a successful defence, one choice leads to disaster.

No pressure, then (!)

West	North	East	South
-	P	1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Lead: ♠ K

You are on lead against a swiftly bid 3NT and choose the ♠K from your ♠K Q J sequence.

Declarer holds up for two rounds making it safe for him to lose the lead to your partner. As South you play a third round of Spades, forcing the ♠A. At trick four declarer plays the ♣Q and you have the now familiar decision. Should you cover with the ♠K or not?

If you play low declarer ducks in dummy, finesses the ♣J on the next round, cashes the ♣A on the third round and makes six Club tricks in total. What you have to see is that if you cover the ♣Q then you guarantee yourself a Club trick, regardless of your partner's holding in Clubs.

So the winning defence is to put the ♠K on the ♣Q. Declarer wins the ♣A over your ♠K and comes back to hand with the ♥K before playing the ♠9, which he intends to run to North. (Note that he doesn't mind losing the lead to your partner as that player holds no threat to the contract). However, holding the ♠10 8, you cover the ♠9 with the ♠10. Dummy takes the ♣J and your ♠8 is suddenly the biggest Club in town.

Declarer's last chance is that North holds the boss Club but another round of the suit is won by your ♠8 and you cash the ♠7 4 to defeat the contract.


Declarer was genuinely unlucky on this hand. If North had held any of the ♠K, ♠10 or ♠8 3NT would have romped home as declarer could always have kept you off lead. As the cards lie, however, you can always force an entry for yourself.



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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ QT4	
	♥ 854	
	♦ Q52	
	♣ T862	
West		East
♠ KJ5		♠ A63
♥ A62		♥ 97
♦ K74		♦ AT986
♣ Q943		♣ AJ7
	South	
	♠ 9872	
	♥ KQJT3	
	♦ J3	
	♣ K5	

Remember that the key element of covering is **trick promotion** for your side.

Does that apply here? Will covering be beneficial for your side?

Could it have a negative effect?

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Lead: ♥ K

You are on lead against 3NT after another brisk auction. You have an easy lead of the ♥K from your fine sequence. When declarer ducks you continue playing Hearts until the ♥A is forced from dummy on the third round.

Declarer comes back to hand with the ♠A and plays the ♦10. Do you cover with the ♦J? If you follow the "Always cover an honour-with-an-honour" rule with blind obedience you will put the ♦J on the ♦10 with potentially calamitous results.

Declarer may now "read" the Diamond suit. If you were to cover the ♦10 declarer might win with dummy's ♦K and finesse against partner's ♦Q on the way back. Declarer would thereby make his contract by taking five Diamonds, two Spades, the ♥A and the ♠A before you could get the lead back.

So, you need to play low to avoid setting up a possible finesse for declarer in Diamonds.

Declarer is only entitled to four Diamond tricks with that combination and that is all he can ever make unless you make a present of the deal by covering the ♦10 with the ♦J.

With correct defence, partner takes his ♦Q and puts declarer under pressure with a Club switch. Declarer might finesse that (if he does he is two down) but he decides to take the ♠A and rely on the Spade finesse. So he cashes out the Diamonds and plays a Spade. When you show out (having pitched all your Spades) declarer takes the ♠K and gives up.

One off.