

Third Hand High

In general, when partner leads a low card and dummy holds only low cards, you should play your highest card in an attempt to win the trick. Consider the following situation where partner leads a low card and dummy plays a low card:

♠ 7 6 3

Partner
♠

N	
W	E
S	

♠ ???

You
♠ K 4 2

Should you play your king? Yes, for a couple of reasons. You would like to win the trick for your side. If partner happens to have led away from the ace (tsk!), then your king will win the trick. But even if declarer wins your king with the ace, all is not lost. By playing your king and driving out the ace, you are promoting partner's queen or jack to eventual winners.

How about this situation, where you hold two honors:

♠ 7 6 3

Partner
♠

N	
W	E
S	

♠ ???

You
♠ K 10 5

By all means, play the king. You can't lose and you will gain a trick if declarer holds something like Q 8 4 or even A J 4. If declarer started with A Q 4, your king is always subject to being finessed and no harm done.

You want to play third hand high, but only as high as necessary. If you have touching honors, play the lowest one in the sequence. This will give valuable information to partner. For example,

♠ 7 6 3

Partner
♠

N	
W	E
S	

♠ ???

You
♠ Q J 10 4

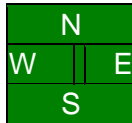
You should play the ten, the lowest card in your sequence. When partner sees declarer win this trick with the ace, he will be able to place the queen and jack in your hand.

Principle: Lead to a trick from the top of a sequence, but follow from the bottom of a sequence.

Another situation in which you want to play only as high as necessary is one like this:

♠ Q 5

Partner
♠ 9 7 6 3 2



You
♠ K J 8 4

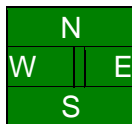
♠ A 10

If declarer plays a low from dummy, you will play your jack rather than your king since you have the queen surrounded. Remember to look at the dummy before deciding on your play.

Third hand high? How high should we play in this example?

♠ Q 7 2

Partner
♠



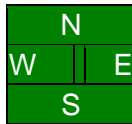
You
♠ K 10 4

♠ ???

It depends who holds the jack and who holds the ace. If partner holds them both, then playing the ten will be good enough and it will keep dummy's queen trapped by your king. If partner holds the jack and declarer has the ace, then playing the ten works better than playing the king. If the layout is like this:

♠ Q 7 2

Partner
♠ J 9 6 3



You
♠ K 10 4

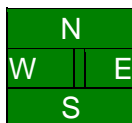
♠ A 8 5

Playing the ten forces declarer's ace and they only get one trick in the suit. If you play the king, they'll get two tricks. **Principle:** If partner leads a low card and dummy has an honor and it is not played, if you have a higher honor and your second best card is the nine or higher, play your second best card.

What if partner leads a jack or a ten or a nine? Should you play third hand high? It depends. If dummy has only small cards, it's right to play third hand high. Consider this situation where partner leads the jack:

♠ 7 6 3

Partner
♠ A J 10 9



You
♠ K 8 2

♠ Q 5 4

You should play your king, then return the eight. You will trap declarer's queen.