

Defending No Trump Contracts – Third Seat Surround Plays

Let's have a look at the best card to play after partner leads, dummy goes down and declarer calls for a card from dummy.

Third Hand Plays High

This is the default play; third hand plays the highest available card in the suit. There are many exceptions to this rule but we will start with situations where the rule applies.

Partner leads a small card and dummy has only small cards.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♠ 2	♠ 8 6 3	♠ K J 4

The lead of the two suggests a four card suit headed by an honour. The suit cannot be longer than four cards because partner has led fourth highest.

Play the king no matter what card is played from dummy.

Partner leads a small card. Dummy has an honour and small cards.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♠ 4	♠ K 6 2	♠ Q T 7 3

Again, partner probably has four spades. It can't be five because the two of spades is in dummy and the three is in your hand.

If a low card is played from dummy, play the queen. If the king is played from dummy, play a low card.

Play Low from Equals

Equals are adjacent cards like KQ or JT9. When third hand has to choose one of the equal cards, the choice should **always** be the lowest.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♠ 2	♠ 8 6 3	♠ Q J 4

Play the jack.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♠ 4	♠ 7 6 3	♠ T 9 8

Play the eight.


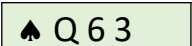
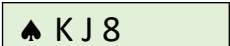
When Dummy's Honour is Surrounded

- If: (1) Dummy has an honour and
(2) Third hand has both a higher honour and a lower honour or a nine...

... dummy's honour is **surrounded**.


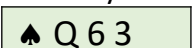
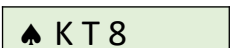
If a low card is played from dummy, third hand should play the lower honour (or nine).

Examples


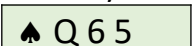
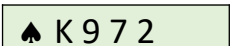
The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has	
			The queen is surrounded with no gaps.

The lead of a low card means partner has an honour. It may be the ten or the ace (or both). Partner is unlikely to lead from a four card suit headed by a ten, so will probably have the ace.


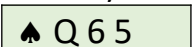
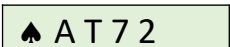
If dummy plays low, play the jack. If dummy plays the queen, play the king.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has	
			The queen is surrounded but there is a gap between the queen and the ten.


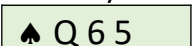
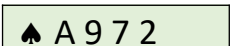
Again, the low lead signifies an honour. Partner has either the ace or the jack or possibly both. If dummy plays low, play the ten. If dummy plays the queen, play the king.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has	
			A big gap between the queen and nine. Two cards are missing – the ten and jack.

Partner has the ace or the jack or the ten or some combination of these. If dummy plays low, play the nine. If dummy plays the queen, play the king.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has	
			Gaps above and below the queen. Two cards are missing, king and jack.

Partner has the ace or the jack or the king or some combination of these. If dummy plays low, play the ten. If dummy plays the queen, play the ace.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has	
			There are gaps above and below the queen. Three cards are missing.

EXCEPTION: This is an exception to the general rule. The cards in third hand are ace and nine. Now, the gap is too big. Play the ace no matter what card is played from dummy.