

Deceptive Plays and False-Carding in the Game of Bridge

False-carding and the use of plays which are deceptive are two methods which can be used by both Declarer and the Defense in order to fool the Opposition, thereby maximizing the number of tricks secured during the play of the hand in the game of Bridge.

A “*false-card*” is an intentional play of one’s cards in what might be regarded as an abnormal manner, the purpose of which is to deceive one’s Opponent(s) with respect to the cards one actually holds.

Declarer can elect to play his/her cards in any order he/she desires without fear of misleading Partner since Dummy is not an active participant in the play of the hand, but the Defenders must be careful when “*false-carding*” not to fool Partner, while attempting to deceive the Declarer.

Potential Benefits of False-Carding When Used by the Declarer

- a) Confuse the Defenders as to distribution of suits
- b) Confuse the Defenders as to high card placement and strength
- c) Make it hard for the Defenders to read encouragement, discouragement, and/or length signals from each other.

Find out about the Opponent’s signals and plan your play accordingly, including cards to follow suit with or win with, *before* playing to trick 1.

A. When your Opponent’s lead a suit and you do not intend to, or are unable to, win the trick, play in such a way that creates the most confusion for your Opponents with regard to their defensive signals. False-card with a high spot-card to encourage a continuation, otherwise play low, if you are hoping for a switch.

KJ842
3 A765
QT9

Declarer suspects that the lead of the **3** is almost certainly a singleton. He/she must do his/her best to make East think that it is the Declarer who has the singleton, and that the lead by West was from three to the **Queen**. Play the **King** from the Dummy and, after the **Ace** is played by East, follow with the 10 (**not** the **Q** or the **9**). You want it to look like West led from **Q93** – a not unlikely possibility. He/she wouldn’t have led the **3** from **T93**, which is why you play the **Ten**.

964
AK75 JT3
Q82

West leads the **Ace** of the suit shown above, assumedly from **AK**. Declarer would like West to continue with the **Ace**, thereby promoting Declarer’s **Queen**. East plays the **3** (standard signaling in an attempt to discourage West from a continuation of the suit) and Declarer should conceal the **2** by playing the **8**.

West might think East has **Q32** and is encouraging a continuation.

(If East/West were playing upside-down signals, East still has to play the **3** so as to encourage a continuation. Declarer should play the **2** to make it look like East wants a continuation.)

B. When your Opponent's lead a suit and you intend to win the trick, play in such a way that creates the most doubt about the honors you actually hold. When holding multiple cards in sequence, false-card by taking the trick with the highest card in sequence, not the lowest.

964
 AT53 J72
 KQ8

Holding the **KQx** in a suit led against a No-Trump contract, if your RHO plays the **Jack**, win the trick with the **King**, not the **Queen**. Playing the **King** hides the location of the **Queen**, which from the Leader's point of view, could be in his/her Partner's hand (with **QJx**, for example, Partner's correct play would be the **Jack**.) Also, if you play the **Queen**, you reveal the **King**, since the 3rd hand Opponent with the **KJ** would have played the **King**, not the **Jack**.

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C. Generally speaking, when you, as Declarer, take an early discard, it is customarily in a suit in which you have some losers. Such a discard will often encourage a switch to that suit as soon as the Opponents regain the lead. The deceptive play is, therefore, to sluff from the suit that you, As Declarer, actually desire the Opponents to lead.

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D. When you, as Declarer, are in a suit contract, you should play the cards in such a way that you hide your true purpose for playing that particular suit.

If you desire the Opponents to break the trump suit for you in order to remove the guess for a missing Queen of trump, for example, try to give the impression that you are attempting to ruff a loser. With **Ax** opposite **xx** in a side suit, and no way to escape the loser, cash the **Ace** and put your Opponent's on lead by playing the suit once again. If a Trump is returned by the Defenders in order to "**cut down the ruffing power**," you will have no further guess in the trump suit. If, alternatively, a trump is not returned, by the Defender who wins the trick, you, as Declarer, might infer that the Opponent on lead is trying to protect something of value in the Trump suit, such as the **Queen**. You win, or you win!

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E. When you lead a suit from the Dummy, play in such a way that makes your Opponents believe that you hold cards in your hand that are not actually there.

 Qxxx
 A Kx
 JTxxxx

Holding **Qxxx** in the Dummy, opposite **JTxxxx** in the Trump suit, lead the **Queen** to give the impression that you are about to finesse. If your right-hand Opponent (RHO) has the **Kx** and he/she does not stop to think things through, he/she may cover with the **King**, crashing his/her Partner's singleton **Ace** on the same trick.

AQTx Kxx
Jx

Playing in a trump contract, suppose you hold the **AQT**x in the Dummy opposite **J**x in a side suit and you are certain from the bidding that the **King** lies to your right, behind the **AQ**. Play the **Ace** and then a spot card towards the **Jack** in your hand. As 2nd hand, your RHO, the Player with the **King**, may duck the continuation for fear that you will ruff away his/her honor, thus establishing the **Queen** in Dummy. Instead, you win the **Jack**, and to add insult to injury, take a ruffing finesse with the remaining **QT**.

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F. When you, as Declarer, lead a suit from your hand, play your cards in such a way so as to obscure your true cards.

xxx
Axx xx
KQJTx

Suppose your Trump holding is **KQJ**Tx opposite **xxx** in Dummy and you wish to draw 2-rounds of Trump before relinquishing the lead. Play the **Queen**, not the **King**. If your left-hand Opponent holds the **Ace**, he/she might hold up one time fearing that playing it on the first round of Trump might find Partner with a singleton **King**. If you play the **King** first, the **Ace** will almost assuredly be played by one of the Opponents.

K9xx
AJTx

Holding **AJ**Tx opposite **K9**xx in Dummy, and having a two-way finesse, choose one way, for example, and lead the **Jack**. If your left-hand Opponent holds the **Queen**, he/she is inclined to cover it, hoping to set up Partner's presumed **Ten** ("*covering an honor with an honor*"). If your LHO follows low without hesitation he/she presumably does not hold the **Queen**. Rise with the **King** and finesse the **10** on the way back. You have given yourself two chances to capture the missing **Queen**.

AQx
KJxx

With **KJ**xx opposite **AQ**x in Dummy, finesse the **Queen** when you break the suit. You will not fool your left-hand Opponent (LHO), but your right-hand Opponent (RHO) may think his/her Partner has the **King**.

KTx
QJx

Suppose you are holding **QJ**x in your hand opposite **KT**x in Dummy and you are attempting to win one trick in that suit before giving up the lead. Start with the **Jack**, attempting to look like a Player who is about to finesse for the **Queen**. If your left-hand Opponent holds the **Ace**, he/she will probably duck the **Jack** to give his/her Partner the opportunity to win the **Queen**, and if your right-hand Opponent holds the **Ace**, he/she might also hold up, waiting to play it on Dummy's **King**.

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Potential Benefits of False-Carding When Used by the Defenders

- a) Give the Declarer a choice of how to play a suit when a non-false-card would leave no choice but the one that works for the Declarer
- b) Confuse the Declarer as to the distribution of suits and high-card placement
- c) Create the appearance of a line of play that will be advantageous for the Declarer that actually leads to trouble or the loss of an extra trick
- d) Steer the Defender's Partner into leading the suit you want led

The opportunity for the Defense to gain using false-carding is much greater than for Declarer. The only thing Defenders have to be careful about is that they don't deceive their Partner when honest strength or count signals are needed, and would otherwise have been beneficial.

 KJ965
 Q43 T2
 A87

Declarer plays the **Ace**, intending to next finesse with the **Jack** (the standard, best percentage play). However, East plays the **10** under the **Ace**. Declarer reasons that might very well be a forced card from a **QT** holding (more likely than a singleton **10**), so he/she plays to the **King** on the second round, thereby losing an unnecessary trick.

 AKQ953
 82 JT4
 76

Declarer plays the **Ace** and, if East follows with the **4**, has no choice but to continue with **King** and **Queen**. If, however, East were to follow to the first trick with the **Jack**, the Declarer would be given a chance to go wrong. He/she may think "**Restricted Choice**" applies and play East for a singleton. Declarer would then go back to his/her hand in order to finesse the **9** in Dummy, losing to the **Ten**.

 Q842
 3 J965
 AKT7

Declarer, with a known 4-4 fit, lays down the **Ace**. If both Defenders follow low, Declarer will go to the **Queen**, guarding against **Jxxx** in East (he cannot pick up **J9xx** in West). It works and Declarer picks up the entire suit. But, what happens if East plays the **9** at trick 1. Now, Declarer can pick up **Jxxx** in West's hand and that looks like a likely holding after East follows with the **9**. Declarer often will lay down the **King** at trick 2 – setting up East's **Jack** for a trick. The **9** cannot lose and often will gain.

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