

FALSE-CARDING

“**False-Carding**” in Bridge is the art of intentionally, deceptively playing of one’s cards in such a manner so as to deceive the Opponent(s), thereby maximizing the number of tricks secured during the play of the hand. It can be utilized by both the Declarer and the Defenders in order to fool the other. **An important rule:** When false-carding, don’t think too long. Be prepared, and play smoothly. Taking time to think may make the opposition suspicious.

A. False-Carding By the Defenders

Defenders have to be careful that they don’t deceive each other when honest strength or count signals are actually needed, and must guard against frequent, reckless false-carding to the extent that Partnership trust is lost. True, occasional false-carding by a Defender may also fool one’s Partner, but that is the price one pays for false-carding in defense.

Uses For False-Carding By Defenders

1) To give Declarer an alternative preference of how to play a suit, when not false-carding would leave no other choice but the one that would be successful for the Declarer.

a) In either a suit or in a No-Trump contract, Declarer plays the Ace and intends to finesse with the Jack next (the standard, best percentage play.)

KJ987 In order to deceive the Declarer, East should
Q43 105 play the **10** under the Ace. Declarer reasons
A62 that playing the **10** might very well be a forced card from a **Q10** holding (more likely than from a singleton **10**). So Declarer plays the **King** on the second round and loses an unnecessary trick, as the originally-intended finesse would have worked.

2) To confuse the Declarer as to the distribution of the suits and the placement of any outstanding high-cards held by the Defenders.

a) In either a No-Trump or suit contract, Declarer leads low to the Jack, intending, if it wins, to play the Ace next and pick up the entire suit, assuming that the King doubleton is on side.

AJ64 In an effort to deceive Declarer,
K5 1082 under the Jack, East plays the **10** (or **8**).
Q973 Seeing this, Declarer now has another option: go back to his/her hand and lead the Queen. This picks up the whole suit whenever East has the doubleton **108** and also protects against two losers if East has played a singleton. Even if Declarer knows East might be false-carding, he/she is likely to fall for this. **Note:** If East were to have played the **2** first, it leaves Declarer with no other choice but to succeed by playing the Ace from Dummy and a low card from his/her hand at trick #2.

b) **AK107** Declarer leads to the K. If both Defenders follow low,
J6 Q4 the Declarer has no other choice but to play the Ace next.
98532 If, however, West were to play the Jack at trick #1, Declarer may play West for the **QJ6** and go back to his/her hand for a finesse of the **10** which would then lose to East’s doubleton Queen. At least you have given Declarer a chance to go wrong.

3) To create a line of play that appears to be advantageous for the Declarer but, in reality, actually leads to trouble or the loss of an extra trick for the Declarer.

a) When playing in a No-Trump contract, Declarer plays the **Ace** and, if East follows with the **3**, Declarer has no other choice but to continue with **King** and then with the **Queen**, hoping to pick up the entire suit. **AKQ954** If, however, East were to, alternatively, follow **72** **J103** to the first trick with the **10** or **Jack**, **86** Declarer now has a chance to go wrong. He/she may think Restricted Choice applies and play East for a singleton and go to his/her hand in order to finesse the **9** in the Dummy.

b) Declarer, with a known 4-4 fit, lays down the **Ace**. If both Defenders follow low, Declarer will go to the **Queen**, guarding against **J963** in East (He/she cannot pick up the **J963** if it were in the West). It works and Declarer picks up the entire suit.

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5 **J963** But, what happens if East plays the **9** at trick #1?

AK107 Now, Declarer can pick up **J963** in West's hand and that looks like a likely holding after East first follows with the **9**. Declarer often will then lay down the **King** at trick #2 – setting up East's **Jack** for a trick. By first playing the **9**, East cannot lose, and often will gain.

B. False-Carding By the Declarer

Declarer holds an advantage over the Defenders when false-carding (making a “*deceptive play*”) since Declarer can elect to play his/her cards in any order he/she desires without fear of misleading Partner since the Dummy is not an active participant in the play of the hand. To be most effective, Declarer must find out about the Opponent's signaling methods, whether “*standard*” or “*upside-down*,” and plan his/her play accordingly, including cards to follow suit with or to win with, *before* playing to trick #1.

Uses For False-Carding By Declarer

1) To confuse the Defenders as to the distribution of the suits.

a) Declarer did not lead the **Queen** (as most Declarers would) hoping for **KX** on sides or a foolish cover from three or four to the **King**.

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K **86542** Instead Declarer made the deceptive lead of the **9**.

QJ1097 When the **King** was played by West, Declarer reasoned that no one would play the **King** over the **9** unless it was a singleton and was forced to do so. As a result, after winning the **Ace**, Declarer finessed the **7** on the way back, picking up the entire suit.

2) To confuse the Defenders as to high card placement and strength.

a) In a suit contract West leads the **2** of an un-bid suit. What card should Declarer play? **KQ843** Declarer knows that the lead is almost

2 **A765** certainly a singleton. He/she must do his/her

J109

best to make East think that the Declarer has the singleton, not West, and that the lead was from three cards to the **Jack**. After playing the **King** from the Dummy and, after the **Ace** is played by East, Declarer must follow with the **10**, *not* the **Jack** or the **9**. By doing this, Declarer is attempting to make it look as if West were leading from **J92**, a not unlikely possibility. West would have led the **Jack** from **J102** or the **Ten** from **1092**.

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.

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J72

On the lead of the **3**, 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 have been 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**.

c) When you, as Declarer, lead a suit from your hand, play your cards in such a way so as to obscure your true cards. Suppose your Trump holding is **KQJTX** opposite **XXX** in the Dummy and you wish to draw 2-rounds of Trump before relinquishing the lead.

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Play the **Queen**, not the **King**! If your left-hand Opponent holds the **KQJ103** 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.

3) To make it hard for the Defenders to read encouragement, discouragement, and/or length signals from each other, false-card with a high spot-card to encourage a continuation, otherwise play low, if you are hoping for a switch.

a) West leads the **Ace** of the suit shown, presumably from an **AK** combination.

964

AK75

J103

Q82

Declarer would like him/her to continue with the **King** so as to promote his/her **Queen**. Assuming that East plays the **3** so as to discourage a continuation of the suit (*standard signaling*), Declarer should conceal the **2** and play the **8**. As a result, West might think that East has **Q32** and is encouraging a continuation.

b) 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.

4) To steer the Defenders into the suit you want led.

a) If you, as Declarer, 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!