

## ACTIVE or PASSIVE DEFENSE?

Active vs. passive defense starts with the opening lead. Should you make an aggressive lead or a safe passive lead? Often the bidding is the clue.

Then comes the play of the deal. Active means attacking (breaking) new suits. The defenders are trying to take their tricks as quickly as possible, even if it means taking risks, such as leading from a king, breaking a new suit, or leading a trump.

Passive defense is trying to avoid giving anything away, letting declarer lose his tricks on his own, not breaking new suits, patiently waiting to take your winners.

Going active when you should have gone passive and vice versa is probably the most common defensive errors players make.

When the opponents bidding indicates that they have balanced hands, it's often best to defend passively. Make safe leads and don't break new suits.

On the other hand, it generally pays to be aggressive if the bidding indicates the opponents have long suits that will produce a lot of tricks.

In suit contracts, consider leading a trump when the auction suggests that the opponents have cross-ruffing possibilities. Avoid leading a singleton trump and don't lead a trump just because you are afraid to lead something else.

Next page – Hand #1 is an example of an active defense.

Hand #2 is an example of a passive defense.

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Q107 Redouble (or 2NT)  
 KQJ10 2 Spades  
 QJ72 Pass  
 82

94	Double	83	Pass
A843	2 Clubs	9752	Pass
AK10	Pass	854	Pass
K1064		Q953	

AKJ652  
 6 DEALER – 1 Spade  
 963 Pass  
 AJ7 4 Spades

West leads the K of diamonds and counts his tricks: one heart, possible 2 diamonds and perhaps the K of clubs. West cashes the K of diamonds, the Ace of hearts and exited passively with a heart, waiting for declarer to take a losing club finesse. Declarer is not taking any club finesses. After 3 high cards are gone, declarer has more winners than he needs. To get a club trick, West needs to hope his partner has the club Q. A club switch while he still has the heart Ace is his only hope of scoring the club K. No danger of this play. Even if declarer had the AQ of clubs, West was never getting the club K.

J52 Pass  
 J108 Pass  
 1053  
 A863

A10976		Q84	2 Spades
3	DEALER – 1 Spade	962	Pass
KQ987	Pass	J64	
K5		QJ109	

K3  
 AKQ754 3 Hearts  
 A2  
 742

West leads the K of diamonds, declarer ducked. West continued with a diamond to the jack and declarer's Ace. South played 3 rounds of trump ending in dummy and led a low club. East won and shifted to the 4 of spades, West's "suit". South played low and West won the Ace. South made 3, losing 1 spade, 1 diamond, and 2 clubs. East broke the spade suit, because West had bit them. East should stay passive and return a diamond. Declarer has to tackle spades himself and loses 2 spade tricks. Whoever starts the spade suit loses 2 tricks.