

A phrase that is often repeated and expresses a strongly held belief.

TEN POPULAR BRIDGE MANTRAS

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2. "Cover an Honour with an Honour"
3. "3rd Hand Plays High"
4. "Never Deny a Four Card Major"
5. "Always Lead the Top of Partner's Suit"
6. "Eight Ever - Nine Never"
7. "Never Underlead an Ace" - (against suit contracts).
8. "Lead 4th Highest of your Longest & Strongest"
9. "One, Two, That'll Do"
10. "Bid Weakly When Strong, Bid Strongly When Weak"
11. "Always Return Partner's suit."

THAT ARE NOT ALWAYS CORRECT

"COVER AN HONOUR WITH AN HONOUR"

♠ AQ943
 ♥ J9
 ♦ 2
 ♣ J10743
 ♠ 1065
 ♥ AQ62
 ♦ Q84
 ♣ AKQ
 ♠ K72
 ♥ 873
 ♦ 109753
 ♣ 95
 ♠ J8
 ♥ K1054
 ♦ AKJ6
 ♣ 862
3♠

Played at Brunton Bridge Club

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	2H*	X
2S	P	P	X
P	3D	3S	

♣9 LEAD

*East's X of a conventional bid (2♥) asks partner to lead this suit, but when east doubles a 2nd time, it shows a strong hand that wants to compete. West with only 3 pts. takes out the double to 3♦ but thankfully north bids on to an unmakeable contract.

OF COURSE YOU COVER!

Three clubs cashed and then the ace of hearts.

♥7 LEAD to the ♥A and three clubs cashed. Declarer wins the heart continuation with ♥K, and leads ♠J. IF west DOES NOT cover ♠J, declarer makes the contract.

WEST MUST COVER ♠J

♠ AQJ
 ♥ 6532
 ♦ QJ9
 ♣ K74
 ♠ 876
 ♥ K97
 ♦ K54
 ♣ Q1085
 ♠ 9532
 ♥ A1084
 ♦ 1086
 ♣ J9
 ♠ K104
 ♥ QJ
 ♦ A732
 ♣ A632
3NT

♥4 LEAD

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	3NT	

West makes a standard 4th highest lead of ♥4.

DO NOT COVER TOUCHING HONOURS

E/W take the 1st four heart tricks. West switches to ♣J won in dummy with ♣K.

Now ♦Q is played. East must NOT cover. If you do, west's ♦10 is trapped by north's ♦J9 and a finesse will bring in the contract. When north plays the ♦J, you DO cover with ♦K, setting up a winner for west.

♠ A8753
 ♥ AJ43
 ♦ Q5
 ♣ Q3
 ♠ K109
 ♥ 1086
 ♦ J94
 ♣ K742
 ♠ J64
 ♥ K52
 ♦ A10863
 ♣ 96
 ♠ Q2
 ♥ Q97
 ♦ K72
 ♣ AJ1085
3NT

♦6 LEAD

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	2H	P
2S	P	3H	P
3NT			

North transfers to show five spades, and then bids 3♥ to show a four card heart suit with enough points for game. With only two spades, south passes to play in 3NT

EAST MUSTN'T COVER ♣Q. WEST MUST COVER ♥Q

♦6 is led and Declarer plays ♦Q which wins.

♣Q is next. East must NOT cover. With four cards, declarer can never catch ♣K so duck ♣3 too.

Now declarer tries the ♥Q. IF west doesn't cover with ♥K, declarer makes all four hearts and the contract. On best defence, only 7 tricks are possible.

♠ A1083
 ♥ J3
 ♦ KJ105
 ♣ K65
 ♠ 64
 ♥ 1075
 ♦ 976
 ♣ AJ1072
 ♠ Q52
 ♥ AK864
 ♦ 82
 ♣ 843
 ♠ KJ97
 ♥ Q92
 ♦ AQ43
 ♣ Q9
4♠

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	2C	P
2S	P	3S	P
4S			

♥A LEAD

Stayman & then an invitational 3♠ is raised to 4♠ on south's 14 count.

NEVER COVER WITH TRUMP QUEEN

West cashes ♥A & ♥K. East plays ♥5 & ♥7 (showing three.) West switches to ♦8, won by south's ♦A.

Now ♠J is led. (Declarer is tempting you to reveal ♠Q) Playing the queen can never establish a winner for your side!

If you hold the queen of trumps, decide NEVER to reveal it and duck WITHOUT ANY HESITATION!!

"3rd HAND PLAYS HIGH"

When 3rd in hand, play **Highest When there is NOTHING to Guard in Dummy.*

	Dummy	
	♦ 872	
Lead		♦ <u>A</u> J5
♦ K10 <u>6</u> 4		
	♦ Q93	

With nothing to guard in dummy, East, 3rd in hand, should play ♦A and return ♦J. (hi-lo from two) On this layout, declarer cannot make any tricks.

	Dummy	
	♦ 72	
Lead		♦ <u>K</u> J5
♦ A10 <u>9</u> 64		
	♦ Q83	

With nothing to guard in dummy, east, 3rd in hand, should play ♦K. Important to return ♦J (hi-lo) from the two remaining diamonds.

	Dummy	
	♦ 732	
Lead		♦ <u>K</u> J5
♦ Q10 <u>9</u> 6		
	♦ A84	

With nothing to guard in dummy, east, 3rd in hand, should play ♦K. If declarer ducks, return ♦J (hi-lo) from the two remaining diamonds.

***When you are defending, ALWAYS try to win with the lower or lowest of touching cards. e.g. J1096**

	Dummy	
	♦ A32	
Lead		♦ <u>K</u> 95
♦ QJ <u>6</u> 4		
	♦ 1087	

Because east cannot beat the ♦A pretend it's not there and play ♦K This holds declarer to one trick.

	Dummy	
	♦ K32	
Lead		♦ Q105
♦ A9 <u>6</u> 4		
	♦ J87	

Because east cannot beat the ♦K pretend it's not there and play ♦Q This holds declarer to one trick.

	Dummy	
	♦ Q32	
Lead		♦ K64
♦ <u>J</u> 1095		
	♦ A87	

West leads Top of a Sequence. East only plays ♦K if ♦Q is played from dummy. ♦4 is the correct card. This is a count signal!

Keeping a Guard on Dummy's Honour Card

If your highest card can beat an honour in dummy, and your 2nd highest card is a 9 or higher, play it!

	Dummy	
	♦ Q32	
Lead		♦ A105
♦ J9 <u>6</u> 4		
	♦ K87	

East, 3rd in hand, should play ♦10, **keeping ♦A to guard ♦Q.** If east plays ♦A, declarer gets two tricks instead of one!

	Dummy	
	♦ Q32	
Lead		♦ A <u>J</u> 5
♦ K9 <u>6</u> 4		
	♦ 1087	

East, 3rd in hand, should play ♦J, **keeping ♦A to guard ♦Q.** When ♦J holds, east cashes ♦A and returns ♦5

	Dummy	
	♦ Q32	
Lead		♦ K <u>9</u> 5
♦ A10 <u>6</u> 4		
	♦ J87	

East, 3rd in hand, should play ♦9, **keeping ♦K to guard ♦Q.** ♦9 DOES NOT give a trick away. Declarer is entitled to 1 diamond trick.

What to Play on Partner's Top of Sequence Leads

	Dummy	
	♦ 73	
Lead		♦ <u>K</u> 82
♦ A <u>J</u> 1094	♦ Q65	

The one card that west DOESN'T have, is the ♦Q. East must therefore play ♦K and return ♦8

	Dummy	
	♦ A32	
Lead		♦ <u>K</u> 8
♦ Q <u>J</u> 1094	♦ 765	

With only two cards, east must unblock ♦K and return ♦8 This holds declarer to one trick.

	Dummy	
	♦ 1032	
Lead		♦ <u>A</u> 8
♦ <u>K</u> Q <u>J</u> 94	♦ 765	

With only two cards, east must overtake ♦K and return the ♦8.

“NEVER DENY A 4 CARD MAJOR”

Of course you would never make any of the following errors, would you? But they are all examples of mistakes I have seen people make before they try to excuse themselves with the Mantra “I couldn’t suppress a 4 card major!”

West opens 1♦

♠ K5
♥ KJ103
♦ K10842
♣ A7

East

♠ A103
♥ Q982
♦ QJ
♣ 10862

1NT “I had to show you my points partner!?”

W 1D
P E 1NT

Wrong

1♥ NO! - you had to show me your 4 card major!!!!

W 1D
3H E 1H
4H

Correct

West opens 1♦

♠ 75
♥ AQ103
♦ K10643
♣ A7

East

♠ 103
♥ KJ52
♦ AQ952
♣ 86

3♦ “I had to show you my support for diamonds?”

W 1D
P E 3D

Wrong

1♥ NO! - you had to show me your 4 card major!!!!

W 1D
2H E 1H
4H

Correct

West opens 1♣

♠ A5
♥ 103
♦ K1064
♣ A10743

East

♠ 1032
♥ QJ52
♦ AQ52
♣ 86

1♥ “I couldn’t suppress my 4 card major”

W 1C
2C E 1H
pass

Hmmm

1♦ 1♦ would NOT be suppressing your 4 card heart suit !!!

W 1C
2D E 1D
pass

Correct

West opens 1♦

♠ 75
♥ AK103
♦ K10964
♣ K7

East

♠ A3
♥ Q852
♦ A5
♣ A9652

1♥ “I couldn’t suppress my 4 card major”

W 1D
2H E 1H
4H

Wrong

2♣ YES YOU CAN - You are strong enough to bid again after opener’s rebid

W 1D
2D E 2C
2H
4NT etc 6H

Correct

West opens 1♥

♠ 75
♥ AQ103
♦ KQJ64
♣ AJ

Wrong opening

“I had to show you my 4 card major partner!?”

W 1H
2D East 2C
4H

♠ AJ10
♥ 852
♦ A5
♣ Q865

When you rebid 2♦, you are promising 5+ hearts!!!

NO - you had to show me your 5 card suit!

W 1D
2H East 2C
3NT

Now I can bid to the best contract of 3NT

West opens 1♦

♠ 75
♥ AQ103
♦ K10764
♣ A10

and rebids 2♥

Wrong rebid

“I had to show you my 4 card major partner!?”

W 1D
2H East 1S
3NT

♠ AJ103
♥ 987
♦ 985
♣ QJ86

When you rebid 2♥, you are promising 17+ pts.

NO - you cannot rebid higher than 2 of your opening suit unless you are very strong! (17 ish)

W 1D
2D East 1S
pass

Now I know that we haven’t the pts. for game

“Always Lead the Top of Partner’s Suit”

Although the Mantras included in this collection are correct most of the time, this one is generally WRONG and ONLY applies when you have TWO cards in your partner’s suit.

Cramlington Bridge Club

♠ 543	♠ A976	♠ K1082
♥ 10954	♥ K62	♥ QJ7
♦ J85	♦ Q7	♦ A10632
♣ Q43	♣ 9852	♣ 6

3NT by S

♠ QJ	♠ QJ
♥ A83	♥ A83
♦ K94	♦ K94
♣ AKJ107	♣ AKJ107

S	W	N	W
1C	P	1S	2D
2NT	P	3NT	

NOTE -

On ♦5 lead, declarer should play ♦Q at trick 1.

In the olden days - “ALWAYS LEAD TOP OF PARTNER’S SUIT” was a favourite mantra. This hand illustrates why you should not!

Wrong lead! ♦J - ♦Q - ♦A - ♦4.

East returns ♦2 - ♦9 - ♦8 - ♦7 Declarer makes ♦9 AND ♦A

Correct lead! ♦5 - ♦Q - ♦A - ♦4
♦2 - ♦9 - ♦J - ♦7

or ♦5 - ♦7 - ♦10 - ♦K
Then ♦A drops ♦Q etc.

Declarer can NEVER make this contract if west makes the correct lead of ♦5. (If dummy plays low, east should play ♦10).

The general principles for leading partner’s suit are -

- With three or four cards to an honour, lead the low card. e.g. J85 or J875
(There is however one exception. If you hold an ace of partner’s suit and you are defending a SUIT contract, lead the ace!)
- With three rags, make a MUD lead e.g. 985 or 764
- With only two cards, lead hi-lo. e.g. from J7 or 83

ONLY lead top of partner’s suit when it’s doubleton.

♠ J	♠ 109654	♠ 73
♥ K75	♥ 42	♥ AJ1096
♦ 10875	♦ K6	♦ AQJ3
♣ 106532	♣ AQJ7	♣ 84

4♠ by S

♠ AKQ82	♠ AKQ82
♥ Q83	♥ Q83
♦ 942	♦ 942
♣ K9	♣ K9

Another hand that shows why you do NOT lead the top of partner’s suit!

E	S	W	N
1H	1S	P	2H*
P	3C	P	4S

*2H = (Unassuming Cue Bid)

IF you lead ♥K and another, east will correctly think that you started with only two and after winning the ace, he will play a 3rd heart hoping that you can ruff higher than ♠10.

Instead south will win ♥Q and throw a losing diamond! **LEAD ♥5**

♠ K42	♠ 75	♠ AJ1086
♥ 10875	♥ KJ	♥ AQ93
♦ 10	♦ Q9654	♦ 73
♣ 106532	♣ AQJ7	♣ 84

3NT by S

♠ Q93	♠ Q93
♥ 642	♥ 642
♦ AKJ82	♦ AKJ82
♣ K9	♣ K9

E	S	W	N
1S	2D	P	2S*
P	2NT**	P	3NT

This hand illustrates why you should NOT lead the top of partner’s suit!

*2S = Have you a spade stop?

**2NT = Risky !?!?

Against NT contracts leading the top of partner’s suit is even more disastrous.

If west leads ♠K, can you see that you have ‘given’ declarer ♠Q as a trick?

“Eight Ever- Nine Never”

Almost every bridge player has heard the mantra “**Eight ever, nine never.**” It offers advice about when you should finesse **for a queen.**

The general rule, is that when you have EIGHT cards in a suit, missing the queen - FINESSE for the queen.

With NINE cards, simply play the ace and king off the top, hoping to drop the doubleton queen.

♦ A743

1

♦ KJ82

With EIGHT cards in the suit, play the ♦A and then lead ♦4 and finesse ♦J.

♦ A743

2

♦ KJ862

With NINE cards in the suit, play the ♦A and then lead ♦3 to ♦K.

♦ A862

3

♦ KJ109

So with 8 cards in this hand you **will** finesse for the ♦Q. BUT HOW?

Lead ♦J and **notice** how west plays. (*West may remember another Mantra, “Cover an honour with an honour” and play the ♦Q.*) If he plays low without much thought he probably hasn't got ♦Q, so cash ♦A, lead ♦2 and finesse ♦10.

BUT of course this is looking at only one suit.
In the play of a hand, you have other things to consider.

W	N	E	S
2S	3D	P	3NT

West leads ♠7, and you win with ♠J.

You have 1 spade, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds, 2 clubs.

You have 8 diamonds and 9 clubs.

If you think no further than the mantra, you would

Finesse in diamonds (*8 cards*) and

Play for the drop in clubs! (*9 cards*) BUT - -

try to visualise what will happen if east gets ‘on lead’.

BOTH of these plays would result in east winning and the

spade return would give west FIVE winning spade tricks!?!*!

SOLUTION To stop east getting on lead, lead to ♣A and finesse ♣J. Today this works, but even if it failed, west could not cash their top spades while you still held ♠K3!

You would still make your contract of 3NT

♠ 84 ♥ K ♦ AKJ1087 ♣ A753	3NT by S	♠ 105 ♥ J10872 ♦ Q53 ♣ Q92
♠ AQ9762 ♥ Q943 ♦ 64 ♣ 10		♠ KJ3 ♥ A65 ♦ 92 ♣ KJ864

The contract here is 4♠ and west leads ♥Q

You have a spade loser, and three potential club losers.

Assume initially a normal 3/2 trump break!

You need to draw trumps and with only eight of them, you may

decide that a finesse for the ♠Q as the best way of making all

your trumps. **BUT** have you recognised that IF east gets on

lead and leads a club, you will lose three club tricks?

Because you would be finessing into the danger hand (east), it would be far safer to play ace and king of trumps.

If the queen doesn't fall, play ♦A, ♦Q and another to ♦K.

A losing club can be thrown on ♦J.

IF east was able to ruff your 3rd diamond (before you have ditched a club loser). try to keep smiling!

♠ 107 ♥ QJ1052 ♦ 983 ♣ A95	4♠ by S	♠ Q94 ♥ 986 ♦ 752 ♣ QJ102
		♠ KJ53 ♥ K4 ♦ KJ104 ♣ 764
		♠ A862 ♥ A73 ♦ AQ6 ♣ K83

“Never Underlead an Ace” (against a suit contract)

Of all the mantras and one liners in the bridge language, this one is **correct** (*Most of the time!*)
But note that it refers to OPENING LEADS against SUIT CONTRACTS!

♣ 762
 ♣ A9543 by S ♣ QJ108
 ♣ K

This is the most obvious layout to illustrate the truth of the mantra. It requires no explanation

♣ 762
 ♣ A953 by S ♣ QJ108
 ♣ K4

Again it is easy to see that declarer would never make the ♣K. **Even LEADING an unsupported ace costs a trick!**

♣ 2
 ♣ A9543 by S ♣ Q76
 ♣ KJ108

As well as giving declarer a trick by the lead, east is obliged to play ♣Q. When this is captured by ♣K, declarer has a ruffing finesse available - so the ace will **never** win a trick

♣ 106
 ♣ AJ732 by S ♣ Q54
 ♣ K98

It is obviously a different story against NT contracts where you need to ESTABLISH long suits. **Underleading aces against NTs is fine.**

and it only gets worse!!

West leads ♣6 and declarer plays ♣2 from dummy.

East **KNOWS** that west would **NEVER** lead FROM an ace.

So playing the ♣K would be silly because south must have ♣A!

East also knows that he must keep the ♣K to guard dummy's ♣Q

So east tries to win with ♣10. This loses to ♣J.

Declarer now overtakes ♦K and throws both losing clubs on ♦Q & ♦J!

TWO defensive tricks have vanished and partnership harmony has disintegrated!

UPSETTING PARTNER

♦ AQJ85
 ♣ Q42

♦ 942 by S ♦ 10763
 ♣ A986 by S ♣ K105

♦ K
 ♣ J73

♠ J6543
 ♥ A1086
 ♦ AQ
 ♣ 72

♠ 2
 ♥ 52
 ♦ 109865
 ♣ A9654

4♠ by S

♠ A9
 ♥ KQ94
 ♦ J2
 ♣ QJ1083

♠ KQ1087
 ♥ J73
 ♦ K743
 ♣ K

E	S	W	N
1C	1S	2C	3C
4S			

Can you underlead an ace if your partner has bid the suit? NO!
 Opening 1♣ does NOT guarantee that you have the ace or the king of that suit.

If west, foolishly, leads a low club, it gives declarer the one IMPOSSIBLE trick that allows him to make the contract. Although it is normal to lead a low card to promise an honour in the suit, an ace is special.

You have also been advised that leading an unsupported ace is poor, but if you have decided to lead partner's suit, then your only choice - is the ACE!

♠ 10654
 ♥ AK104
 ♦ KJ5
 ♣ 97

♠ J832
 ♥ 75
 ♦ 962
 ♣ A1065

3NT by S

♠ A9
 ♥ J986
 ♦ A8
 ♣ J8432

♠ KQ7
 ♥ Q32
 ♦ Q10743
 ♣ KQ

Can you underlead an ace against NT contracts?
YES OF COURSE!

Against NTs you are trying to ESTABLISH your long suit (*which cannot be ruffed!*)

Even though your best suit is a minor - it IS the suit to lead. Leading from a poor 4 card suit is not usually a good idea.

MID GAME EXCEPTION

Dummy
 ♦ KJ4
 You
 ♦ A85 by S 4♠

Declarer in 4♠, has drawn trumps. You gain the lead. In dummy you can see ♦KJ4 and hold ♦A.

An average bridge player may simply cash ♦A.

A bold bridge player may **underlead her ace**.

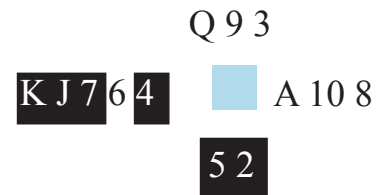
If declarer has ♦Q nothing is lost. If he hasn't, he has to guess whether to play ♦K or ♦J. Declarer may think that you wouldn't lead from ♦A, and play ♦J. Partner wins ♦Q. *There are always exceptions but normally*

DON'T LEAD AWAY FROM ACES IN SUIT CONTRACTS

"4th Highest of your Longest and Strongest"

This must be the most spoken mantra in the bridge world. It relates to, and is said to be, the standard lead against No Trump contracts. Responder will interpret the lead by using the rule of 11. Responder subtracts the number of the card led, from 11. This will tell responder how many higher cards of that suit, are in the remaining three hands.

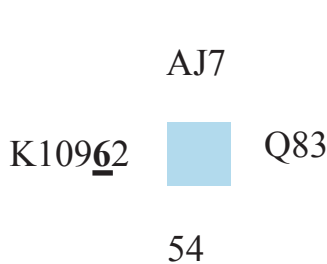
Suppose you hold ♠ K J 7 6 4. Your 4th highest card is the ♠6.
If you lead ♠6, your partner will subtract 6 from 11 and work out that there are FIVE cards higher than the six, in the other three hands.



East can see his hand and the dummy hand and can therefore work out that declarer has no card higher than the 6.

If declarer plays low from dummy, east can now safely play the 8.

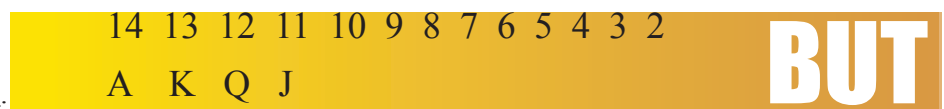
When this holds, east should now play the ace and then the 10. West will overtake - and run the suit!



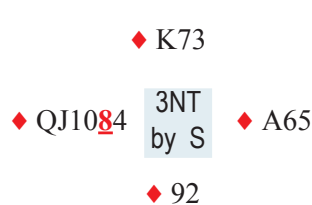
West leads the 6. Declarer plays 7
If you play the queen dummy will have a finesses position to make two tricks. Dummy's jack will become a 2nd trick for declarer.
That's bad news! Using the Rule of 11 guides you to the correct card!

If 6 is partner's 4th highest, $11 - 6 = 5$ (Five cards higher than the 6).
Dummy has three. You have two. So declarer has NO card higher than the 6.
Win the trick with the 8. Return the queen and if you get in again play the 3 to partner's king. The 10 and 9 will now be tricks for your side.

Many people cannot understand why it works. They forget that the 13 cards begin with the 2.

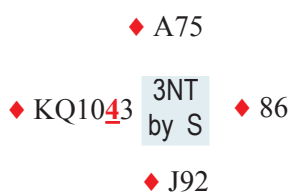


This lead is NOT the best lead against NTs. if you have a sequence of 3 cards headed by an honour!!

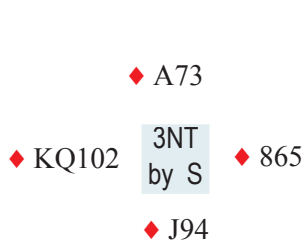


This is a perfect example of why the 4th highest lead is a disastrous choice.
West leads ♦8 and declarer plays low. East has no choice but to play ♦A!
This means that north's ♦K will win the next round of the suit.
If East plays ♦6, then declarer makes a trick with ♦9.

On the 'correct' ♦Q lead, declarer never makes a diamond trick!



Another example of the 'wrong' 4th highest lead.
Here declarer wins two tricks with the ♦J and ♦A
On the 'correct' lead of ♦K declarer can only make one diamond trick.
(If declarer ducks, east must give a count signal, and west must switch.)
(If declarer takes ♦A defenders must wait for east to get on lead - - when a lead through declarer's ♦J9 will lose to west's ♦Q104.



A final snag with the lead is that when the lowest card is led, declarer KNOWS that the lead was from just four cards. This can be very helpful to declarer!

Inga and I play 'Attitude Leads' which simply tell partner "The lower the card led, the more I want you to return the suit." No indication of length!
Whatever you play, you must be able to tell your opponents when they ask.
They ARE entitled to know your lead style!

"One, Two, That'll Do"

This very common saying relates to responder's support for opener - made at the 2 level. e.g.

W E
 1♠ 2♠ 2♠ shows a fit, and a pre-emptive raise with very few points. NO interest in game.

1♥ 1♠
 2♣ 2♥ Is similar, but in this sequence, east may not even have a fit. **It is a suit preference bid.**
 West has offered two suits, (5 hearts and 4 clubs and east prefers spades. 2♥ is a FULL STOP! A limit bid.
 Here are some examples after WEST opens 1♠

EAST
 ♠ J654 6 pts. Even though it is
 ♥ J108 a 10 loser, respond 2♠
 ♦ A952
 ♣ 74

EAST
 ♠ Q654 9 pts. Absolute maximum!
 ♥ K83 Only the 4-3-3-3 shape
 ♦ A92 stops a 3♠ response.
 ♣ 742

EAST
 ♠ Q6532 Having only 5 pts. should
 ♥ 108 not stop you responding
 ♦ K92 2♠ with such a good fit
 ♣ 742

EAST
 ♠ J65 7 pts. You could bid 1NT,
 ♥ 8 but 2♠ may be a better
 ♦ A9652 description of this weak
 ♣ Q743 hand. YES, only 3 spades

EAST
 ♠ J65 7 pts. No ruffing potential.
 ♥ 852 Respond 1NT to show 6-9
 ♦ A96
 ♣ Q743

EAST
 ♠ J652 8 pts. are not relevant.
 ♥ 8 You are an 8 loser,
 ♦ A9652 with a fit. Respond 3♠
 ♣ K743

The guideline we suggest, is that once you get close to 10 points look for some excuse to call it 10, and raise to 3. The excuse may be a doubleton or singleton that offers ruffs, or a 5th trump, or an 8 loser hand.

As far as opener is concerned we suggest that you treat 7 loser hands and 6 loser hands as normal opening bids and pass. Normally opener should only bid on with a 5 loser hand, or a hand with 17ish pts.

WEST	EAST
♠ AK1087	♠ 9652
♥ A10	♥ K93
♦ K8	♦ 10952
♣ K1092	♣ Q4
1♠	2♠
3♠	Pass

East may only have 3 spades but west with a 5 loser can bid 3♠. Inviting game!
 East, with minimum values (and 10 loser) should pass.

WEST	EAST
♠ AK108	♠ Q652
♥ A105	♥ J93
♦ K8	♦ Q1065
♣ K1092	♣ 84
1♠	2♠
2NT	3♠
Pass	

East may only have 3 spades. West has 17+ pts and with only four spades. He shows this by bidding 2NT. East with only 6 HCPs but four trumps, bids 3♠. West must pass!

WEST	EAST
♠ A1087	♠ Q652
♥ A105	♥ J93
♦ K8	♦ A1065
♣ KJ92	♣ 82
1♠	2♠
Pass	

East may only have 3 spades. West has only 15+ pts and should pass. Game cannot be made.

WEST	EAST
♠ AK1087	♠ Q65
♥ A10	♥ J93
♦ K8	♦ A10952
♣ KJ92	♣ 104
1♠	2♠
3♠	4♠

East may only have 3 spades but west, with a 5 loser, can bid 3♠. Invitational!
 East, with an outside ace, and Hxx in trumps, optimises and bids game.

WEST	EAST
♠ AK108	♠ Q65
♥ A105	♥ Q9
♦ K8	♦ A10652
♣ KJ92	♣ 1043
1♠	2♠
2NT	3NT

West has 17+ pts and with only four spades. He shows this by bidding 2NT. (In case east has only 3 spades.)
 East with 8 HCPs can bid 3NT. 25 pts. but no fit

WEST	EAST
♠ AK108	♠ Q652
♥ A105	♥ J93
♦ K8	♦ A1065
♣ KJ92	♣ 104
1♠	2♠
2NT	4S

West has 17+ pts and only four spades. He shows this by bidding 2NT
 East with FOUR spades and 8 pts. (incl doubleton), can bid game in 4♠

“Bid Strongly when Weak - and bid Weakly when Strong”

Not the commonest of bridge sayings and although it doesn't seem to make sense, you probably use this excellent principle already. e.g.

♠ AJ109543
♥ 86
♦ K8
♣ 72

With only 8 HCPs you would open this hand with a standard Pre-emptive bid of 3♠

Because 7 card suits do not occur very frequently, bridge players have applied the idea to SIX card suits by ‘inventing’ the ‘Weak Two’ opening bid.

♠ AJ10954
♥ 86
♦ K83
♣ 72

This weak hand with only 8 HCPs can be opened 2♠ by players using Benji or some other variation of ‘Weak 2s’

Follow the logic of this principle and you should realise that an opening bid of 4♠ is NOT a very strong hand! It is simply a pre-empt trying to keep the opponents out of the auction

♠ AKJ95432
♥
♦ J83
♣ 72

This weak hand with only 8 HCPs might be opened 4♠ or even overcalled 4♠ as a pre-emptive strike!

If partner has opened the bidding and you have a 4 card fit, You can use the LTC to find the level, without worrying too much about your shortage of HCPs.

♠ K9542
♥ 6
♦ AJ873
♣ 72

On this hand you might respond 4♠ with only 8 HCPs (but a 7 loser).

**BUT unless you have a system to separate weak and strong hands for these jumps, you will lose the ability to bid slams.*

With weak hands but long suits, you KNOW where you want to play and should bid aggressively to keep the opponents out of the auction and make it difficult for them to find their best contract.

♠ KJ954
♥ 6
♦ AJ873
♣ AQ

If you were to bid 4♠ with the above hand - you surely cannot make the same bid with this hand!!!

And of course it is the same principle that has led many bridge players to use WEAK jump overcalls.

After a 1♥ opening bid by west, many north's will overcall STOP 2♠ with a six card spade suit and 6-10 pts,

North

♠ AJ10954
♥ 86
♦ K83
♣ 72

Alternatively, if partner opens the bidding and you have an opening hand there is NO NEED to show your strength on the 1st round of the auction. (**Unless you have found a fit and know where the contract will be played*).

The jump shift of 2♠ is both silly (because it takes up bidding space when you don't know where the best spot will be) and wrong because it hasn't got a fairly solid 6 card suit.

Opener's REBID will tell you more about the shape and strength of his hand and ONLY NOW should you force opener to bid again. In the 2nd auction, the bid of 2♦ is a responder's reverse (*because the NEWLY BID DIAMOND SUIT, forces partner to bid her suit at the 3 level*).

1♣	2♠
3♣	3NT

The jump to 2♠ takes up your own bidding space and you miss the slam in diamonds.

♠ 5
♥ Q43
♦ AK82
♣ K9742

♠ QJ1072
♥ AK
♦ Q1097
♣ AQ

1♣	1♠
2♣	2♦
3♦	4NT etc.

The 1♠ response is 100% FORCING!! and allows you to find the 4/4 diamond fit.

*** IF you find a fit, the question remains as to how you force to game or investigate a slam.** An immediate raise to 4NT would obviously be ‘Blackwood’ but how do you proceed if the slam is only a possibility? Until you have a convention that separates weak ‘fast arrival’ bids from bids with strong hands, you will miss many slam opportunities. **Maybe you could try the ‘Jacoby 2NT’ convention.**

“Always Return your Partner’s Suit”

Defending is the hardest skill to master because you cannot see partner’s cards. Partner’s opening lead will give you some clues as to what s/he wants you to do.

Against a suit contract, the lead of a high card is likely to be HI-LO, from a doubleton or singleton when partner is hoping for a ruff. Assuming dummy plays low east would win ♠Q, cash ♠A and return a 3rd spade for west to ruff.

	♠ KJ4
♠ 83	4♥ by S ♠ AQ62
	♠ 10975

Against NTs, top of a sequence or 4th highest leads are usual. Assuming declarer plays low, win ♠Q and return ♠6 (highest from two remaining). *I have seen players who do not return the suit because the ace will win in dummy. By forcing out the ace, partner will be able to cash TWO more spade winners when E/W gain the lead!*

	♠ A4
♠ KJ83	3NT ♠ Q62
	♠ 10975

NORMALLY - unless you have an *obvious* switch, *return partner’s suit!*

Sometimes - in order to return partner’s suit, you have to overtake your partner’s winner. On this hand the lead promises KQ10 at worst. East should win ♠A and return ♠6.

	♠ 942
♠ KQ1053	3NT ♠ A6
	♠ J87

Sometimes - you have work to do BEFORE you return partners suit. On this hand east can SEE three tricks (two clubs and ♠A.) Like all good defenders east should try to visualise where a 4th trick might be made to set the contract. *Can you see it?* East knows that the lead of a king promises the queen!! East overtakes ♣K with ♣A. S/he then unblocks ♠A to create a void. ONLY NOW does east return partner’s suit to the ♣Q. After a moments thought west can *see* that the only reason for this play is to get a spade ruff. BINGO!

	♠ KJ1073	♠ A
	♥ KQ42	♥ 96
	♦ K3	♦ 108654
	♣ J7	♣ A10632
♠ 86542	4♥ by S	♠ A
♥ 103		♥ 96
♦ 972		♦ 108654
♣ KQ9		♣ A10632
	♠ Q9	
	♥ AJ875	
	♦ AQJ	
	♣ 854	

This time you must trust partner’s lead! ♠4 Promises an honour card!! and yet you can see ALL of the honours!?! Obviously the ♠4 must be a singleton! and partner can ruff when you return a spade. But which one?

You could give west a 2nd ruff if partner could get you back on lead with ♣A. You can tell him to return the *lower* ranked suit by returning ♠2 (*lowest* spade). and so the complexities of this amazing game get deeper and deeper

	♠ KQJ107	♠ A832
	♥ A652	♥ 94
	♦ J3	♦ 864
	♣ K6	♣ A842
♠ 4	4♥ by S	♠ A832
♥ 103		♥ 94
♦ 109752		♦ 864
♣ J10975		♣ A842
	♠ 965	
	♥ KQJ87	
	♦ AKQ	
	♣ Q3	

However, “ALWAYS” is too big a word in bridge and there are obvious occasions where returning partner’s suit is NOT very clever!

West has led 4th highest against 3NTs but when dummy is faced east can *see* that partner’s ♠K is trapped and there is no point in trying to establish spade winners.

	♠ AJ104
♠ K953	3NT ♠ Q62
	♠ 87

A similar situation where west has made an unfortunate opening lead. East should *see* that although partner can win ♠K, retuning the suit would establish three winners for declarer. - Not a good idea!!!

	♠ QJ1042
♠ K953	3NT ♠ A6
	♠ 87