

Play the Honour From The Short Holding

One key to winning bridge is to bid and make game as often as possible. In considering that, it is clear that the auction is only half the story. As well as *bidding* the hand to the best game we can, it is also necessary to *play* the hand well.

Cardplay techniques are many and varied but one simple habit to develop that will improve your skills in this area immensely is to **play the honour from the short holding**. When does this apply? When we are cashing tricks (usually in our long suits, like drawing trumps for example) and where we have picture cards in both hands.

Consider the following four hands and consider the Diamond suit. The hand at the top of the diagram is dummy, your hand is the lower hand. The contract is listed underneath.

♠ AQJ2	♠ A2	♠ AKQ	♠ A54
♥ A62	♥ J863	♥ 53	♥ J73
♦ J42	♦ K2	♦ KQJT84	♦ J9
♣ 854	♣ A7	♣ 95	♣ AQJ85

♠ K6	♠ 98	♠ JT987	♠ 987
♥ 973	♥ KQT	♥ A982	♥ 42
♦ AKQ72	♦ AQJT943	♦ A	♦ A98742
♣ 932	♣ Q	♣ A73	♣ K2

Three Diamonds
(Heart Lead)

Three No Trumps
(Spade Lead)

Four Spades
(Heart Lead)

One No Trump
(Spade Lead)

Hand One (Three Diamonds on a spade lead):

It looks like we have two hearts and three clubs to lose, but once we have drawn trumps, we should be able to throw two losers away on the spades....*provided we play the King of spades on the first round of spades and not the Ace!* If we mistakenly play the Ace first, we will win the second round of spades in hand and be unable to reach dummy's established Queen and Jack.

Hand Two (Three No Trumps on a spade lead)

The opening lead has exposed the spade suit. If the defenders get in they will no doubt cash a lot of spade tricks. We don't need to panic though, we can cash our seven diamond tricks and two aces...*provided we play the King of Diamonds on the first round of diamonds and not the ace!* If we mistakenly begin with the Ace, we will be stuck in dummy on the second round – the defenders will then win a heart or a club and run all of their established spades.

Hand Three (Four Spades on a heart lead)

This hand looks pretty safe thanks to dummy's impressive diamond suit. However, there is a trap. Before drawing all of the trumps (ending in dummy) we need to cash the Ace of Diamonds first. We can then play trumps and after three rounds will be able to run our diamond suit, throwing away losers from our hand.

Hand Four (One No Trumps on a spade lead)

As usual, No Trumps is a race. The defenders are trying to garner their seven tricks to take us down before we can get ours. They are poised now to take a whole bunch of spade tricks and a whole bunch of heart tricks. Lucky for us, we have two Aces and Five Clubs....*provided we remember to play the King of Clubs on the first round of Clubs!* Otherwise, we will be forced to let them in before we can score up any more than two club tricks.