



Basic Defensive Principles

Masterclass, July 2023

- Positional Principles
- Defending with Honours
- Thwarting Declarer

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Positional Principles

- What are they for?

- ▶ Using your position on each trick to make life as difficult for Declarer as possible
- ▶ With both defenders following these principles, you can trap Declarer's high cards!

Positional Principles

- What does 'position' mean here?

On each trick, you will be in one of 4 positions:

- ▶ First (Leading)
- ▶ Second
- ▶ Third
- ▶ Fourth

Each position comes with pros and cons.



Positional Principles

- Pro and con of being FIRST

► Pro:

You get to choose the suit!

► Con:

You are not certain to win the trick unless you are playing the highest outstanding card in the suit.

3
2 4
1

Positional Principles

- Pro and con of being SECOND

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► Pro:

If your partner has a high card in the suit, you can leave the final decision to him about what wins the trick.

► Con:

If your partner only has low cards in the suit, Declarer will normally be able to beat whatever you play.

Positional Principles

- Pro and con of being THIRD

2

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4

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► Pro:

You get an opportunity near the end of the trick to attempt to win it (and if it is Dummy to play after you, you can see how high you need to go!)

► Con:

If it is Declarer to play after you, you might have to guess how high you need to play.

Positional Principles

- Pro and con of being **FOURTH**



► Pro:

You know for sure whether the card you play will win the trick.

► Con:

It might be in a suit that you were not yet ready to play.

Positional Principles

- Second and third positions

▶ First (Leading)

▶ Second

▶ Third

▶ Fourth

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2 4
1

Second and third are awkward; let's discuss how to handle them.

Positional Principles - 1

- Second hand low

Second hand should generally play low 'in tempo'.

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1

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Why?:

- ▶ To avoid crashing honours together.

2

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Positional Principles - 1

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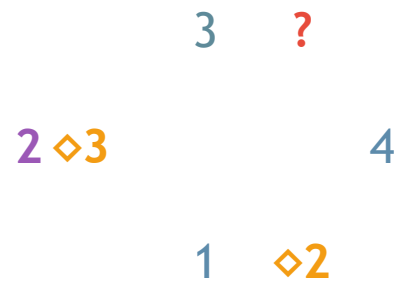
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Why?:

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- ▶ To avoid giving away to Declarer who holds which honour!

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Second hand should generally play low ‘in tempo’.

Why?:

- ▶ To avoid crashing honours together.
- ▶ To avoid giving away to Declarer who holds which honour!
- ▶ To give your partner the fourth-position advantage.

Positional Principles - 2

- Third hand high

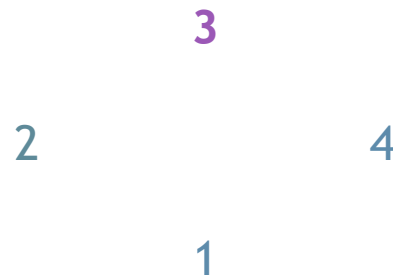
Third hand should generally play the highest card possible.



Positional Principles - 2

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Third hand should generally play the highest card possible.
BUT remember to check the dummy!



Positional Principles - 2

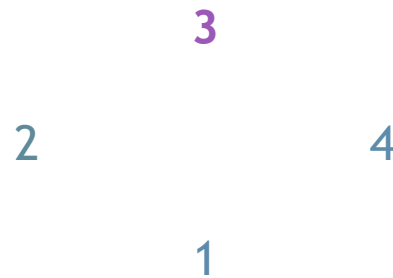
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3 ♠KJ9
2 ♠QT3
1 ♠2
4

Positional Principles - 2

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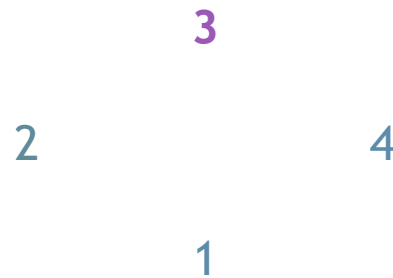
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Why?:

- ▶ To force Declarer to use up his high cards rather than winning cheaply.

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- ▶ To force Declarer to use up his high cards rather than winning cheaply.
- ▶ To promote a card in your Partner's hand.

Positional Principles - 2

- Third hand high

3 ♠KT6
2 ♠973 4 ♠AJ5
1 ♠Q842

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Positional Principles

- First position (Choosing a suit)

▶ First (Leading)

▶ Second

▶ Third

▶ Fourth

It can be tough to know which suit to play when it is your turn to lead.



Positional Principles - 3

- Play through strength/towards weakness¹

Choose a suit that puts potential/known strength in second position and potential/known weakness in fourth position.

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Why?:

- ▶ To minimise Declarer's fourth-position advantage.

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Positional Principles - 3

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Why?:

- ▶ To minimise Declarer's fourth-position advantage.
- ▶ To maximise Declarer's second-position disadvantage.

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Positional Principles - 3

- Play through strength/towards weakness

Choose a suit that puts potential/known strength in second position and potential/known weakness in fourth position.

Why?:

- ▶ To minimise Declarer's fourth-position advantage.
- ▶ To maximise Declarer's second-position disadvantage.
- ▶ To maximise Partner's potential to win the trick/promote a trick by playing "third hand high".

- Positional Principles
- Defending with Honours
- Thwarting Declarer

Defending with Honours - 1

- Cover an honour with an honour

When your RHO plays an honour (including the Ten) and you have a higher honour (not including the Ace), you should play your honour, rather than low, in second position.

4

3

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Defending with Honours - 1

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When your RHO plays an honour (including the Ten) and you have a higher honour (not including the Ace), you should play your honour, rather than low, in second position.

Why?:

- ▶ To promote one of your intermediate cards.

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Defending with Honours - 2

- Keep honours guarded when discarding

When you are choosing what to discard, think about how many small cards are needed to guard your honours from the outstanding higher honours; do not unguard your honours unless you have no other choice.

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K → 1 small card (Kx)

Q → 2 small cards (Qxx)

J → 3 small cards (Jxxx)

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Why?:

- ▶ You need small cards to play underneath those higher honours, retaining a trick in the suit.
- ▶ Even if your partner has a trick in the suit too, this can prevent him from coming under pressure with his discards.

- Positional Principles
- Defending with Honours
- Thwarting Declarer

Thwarting Declarer

- The most important principle

On every hand, a good defender will be considering the following questions:

- ▶ How is Declarer playing the hand?
- ▶ What is he trying to achieve?
- ▶ How can I best counteract that?

Thwarting Declarer

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Drawing trumps or trying to ruff things?

Freely using entries or trying desperately to reach the dummy?

Establishing a suit or trying to steal tricks here and there?

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Trying to ruff? Defenders should draw trumps!

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Trying to ruff? Defenders should draw trumps!

Trying to reach the dummy? Defenders should take out its entries!

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Trying to ruff? Defenders should draw trumps!

Trying to reach the dummy? Defenders should take out its entries!

Trying to sneak a trick? Defenders might have a strong suit to attack!



FUNBRIDGE

Now, head to the
Basic Defensive Principles tournament
and try the
practice hands!