

POSITION AND PROMOTION

By Maritha Pottenger

Two of the most important concepts in bridge are **position** and **promotion**.

Position refers to the order of play. Each trick in a bridge hand (there are 13 tricks in one hand of bridge) has one card played by each of the four players. The person who won the previous trick leads to the next trick. Play proceeds clockwise around the table. When you know you are winning the trick, you do not care whether you are playing first, second, third, or fourth. When you are not sure whether you can win the trick, there is a huge advantage playing third or fourth (last).

Thus, **when you have a solid sequence of cards** (e.g., KQJ10 or 10987), **you do not care about position**. After you sacrifice your King to the Ace of that suit, your queen will take a trick the second time that suit is played. Your jack will take a trick the third time that suit is played. Your 10 will take a trick the fourth time that suit is played—unless there is a trump suit involved and someone trumps your good card.

With less than a solid sequence, you want to **arrange for the hand that has only one high card, or a broken sequence** (missing some cards in the middle) **to play third or fourth**. If you have K32 of hearts in your hand and 789 of hearts in dummy, you want to lead a heart FROM dummy. Your right-hand opponent will then have to play a card. If your right-hand opponent plays the Ace, you play low—and your King will take a trick the second time hearts are played. If your right-hand opponent plays low, you play your King. If right-hand opponent has the Ace, you get a trick with your King right away. If left-hand opponent plays the Ace, you don't get a trick (but you weren't getting one anyway). Half the time, the Ace will be on your left and half the time it will be on your right. Playing a low card TOWARD your honor(s) forces one opponent to commit BEFORE you have to play and is a big advantage for you.

Similarly, if you hold 532 of spades and dummy has AQJ, you lead a low spade (2 or 3 or 5) FROM your hand. If left-hand opponent plays low, you play Dummy's Jack. If the King is on your left, you will win that trick! (If the King is on your right, you'll lose the trick, but you were always slated to lose one trick in that case.) If the jack wins in dummy, you play a DIFFERENT suit that allows you to win the lead in your hand. Then, you play another spade FROM YOUR HAND. If left-hand opponent plays low, you play the queen. If left-hand ever plays the King, you take it with the Ace. Whenever opponent on your left has the King, you will get 3 tricks in the suit PROVIDED you lead FROM your hand TOWARD dummy's honors the first two times you play that suit.

Promotion refers to the idea of “**promoting**” **lower cards to trick-taking capacity**. The concept of “covering an honor with an honor” helps to quickly promote cards. Suppose you hold the solid sequence of J1098. From a sequence of two or three (or more) cards, the conventional lead is the top one. So, you lead the Jack. Declarer has Q53 in Dummy and partner has K62. If Declarer plays the Queen, partner “covers” the Queen with the King and Declarer wins the Ace. Your 10, 9, and 8 of that suit will now take three tricks (unless they are trumped). You will have the highest card for the next three rounds of that suit! Your partner's “covering an honor with an honor” quickly promoted your 10 (originally slated to win the 5th round of that suit) to winning rank on the second round that suit is played.

If Declarer does NOT play the Queen, your partner does NOT play the King. Declarer will be forced to take your Jack with the Ace. Next time you have the lead, you play your 10. If Declarer does NOT play the Queen, your partner does NOT play the King. You then lead the 9 which is covered by the Queen and King. When you get that lead again, your 8 is the highest card in the suit. With this layout, you will get 3 tricks in the suit (unless someone trumps)—the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th rounds of the suit all belong to your side (including your partner's King which could win one trick).