

## Opening Leads

Opening leads is one of the hardest parts of the game. You can't see dummy so you will often need to guess which suit is likely to be best in order to get you off to the best defense.

- Your opening lead is supposed to give your partner a good idea about what cards you hold in the suit you have led. Therefore, it is important to try and make consistent leads.
- Your lead could change depending on whether you are leading against a suit or against no-trumps.

### Top of a Sequence

KQJ85

AKQ64

JT974

QJT72

The best lead available! You won't be giving anything away and you will be setting up tricks regardless of what partner has in that suit. If you have a sequence of honours (A, K, Q, J, T) you should lead the highest. You can lead these suits even if your partner has bid another suit. Ideally your sequence will be three or more cards in a row. If you only have a two card sequence you should always lead the top against a suit contract but usually the fourth highest against NT. It depends on how good the rest of the suit is. Compare: QJ98 and QJ32.

Note that leading an honour card always denies the honour card above it, and always promises the card immediately below it (unless it is a shortage).

What if you have a sequence with a non-touching card above it?

You lead the **Top of an interior sequence.** KJT95  
QT98  
KT984

## Fourth highest from an honour

- If you only have one honour or non-touching honours in a suit, you should lead the fourth highest card in that suit. For this lead to be effective, you will normally need your partner to have some help in the high-card strength in this suit.

Q962

KT865

J96532

KJ65

- If you only have a three card suit, headed by an honour and you decide to lead this suit, you lead:

**Third highest from an honour, however it is best to avoid leading from a 3 card suit.**

K96

Q53

KT8

J74

KT5

## Exceptions for Fourth highest from an honour:

- Against No-trumps it is acceptable to lead fourth highest from an Ace, or top of an interior sequence away from an Ace

The reason is you will probably get another chance to win your Ace.

A865

A9643

AJ54

AJT95

AT984

- Against a suit contract, it is possible that dummy or declarer will have a singleton in that suit, and there are no guarantees that you will ever get a chance to win your Ace (they can trump your Ace). This leads to the guideline:

**“Don’t underlead an Ace against a suit contract.”**

If you really need to lead this suit then it is usually right to lead the Ace, but it is much better to lead a different suit.

## Top of a Doubleton

- If you are going to lead from a suit with two cards you would lead the highest one (regardless of their value)

K5    75  
AJ    Q4  
32    T8

- If you choose to lead a suit from 3 or more, and you only have small cards, then you would lead the second highest.
- It doesn't matter if your small cards form a sequence.

## Second highest from three (or more) small and MUD (Middle-Up-Down)

743    9643

8632    97642

87654    982

There is a very good saying that goes: **Blind leads are for deaf players.**

Soon you should be able to study the auction, and without looking at your hand you will know which suit to lead, or at least have a good idea.

Some auctions will scream for a trump lead, some auctions will suggest a passive lead, and some auctions will suggest an attacking lead.

### When to lead trumps

- **When they each bid one suit, and then agree on a third suit, especially in a part score - LEAD A TRUMP**

<b>You expect the short-trump hand hand (usually dummy) to be short in another suit.</b>	<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
	1♦	1♥
	1♠	1NT
	2♥	4♥    Pass

Opener's sequence here typically shows 3-card heart support. Since opener pulled partner out of 1NT, you should expect that they have an unbalanced pattern – almost certainly a 4-3-5-1 shape. The opponents are in a 5-3 fit or even a 4-3 fit with dummy having a shortage. Lead a trump!

Generally do not lead trumps against small slams. You usually need that tempo to set up a trick, so that you have something to cash when you get in. You should attack when on lead against small slams.

### **Trump leads:**

<b>1) Declarer has shown a two-suited hand.</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	
	1♦	1♥	
	2♣	2♦	Pass

Opening leads are a percentage business. While you cannot always get the lead right, some general principles will often point you in the right direction.

### **Passive Leads:**

- **When their auction suggests a close no-trump game - e.g. 1NT - 2NT - 3NT.**
- **When their finesses seem to be failing - they will often go down naturally if you give them nothing**
- **When you have length and good cards in their side suits**

### ***Active or attacking Leads:***

- when you have three small in their side suits and their finesses seem to be working - they will have discards, so get at your tricks fast

### ***LONG SUIT versus SHORT SUIT LEADS:***

- lead from length if you have four trumps. Almost **Never** lead a short suit when you have four trumps. Any four card trump holding means a forcing defence is usually suggested.
- lead from shortage only if your trump holding has no independent value. Holdings such as Ax or Axx, Kxx, xxx or xx of trumps make more sense for short suit leads. Not with KQ, QJx

***Generally more contracts are allowed to make through leading from shortage than are defeated as a result of the lead.***