



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(400) 3rd/5th Best Opening Leads – The Rule of 10/12

© AiB

Level: 9 of 10 (5 of 6)

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

Some partnerships choose to play 3rd or 5th best opening leads, instead of 4th best leads. This is most common against suit contracts. When they do this, they are focusing their opening leads more on count (# of cards in the suit) than on attitude (4th best leads are more attitude oriented). One way this is true is that players who play 3rd/5th best opening leads lead low from xxx (three small) in an unbid suit.

This means that leading a low card no longer promises an honor in the suit, but instead it shows that they do not have a doubleton. Just in case we decide to give these a try, or if we run into another pair that is playing them, we need to know how to interpret these opening leads. Let's see how we do so.

The Rule of 10/12

When we agree to play 3rd/5th best opening leads (3rd best from 3-card or 4-card suits, 5th best from 5+card suits) then 3rd hand needs a tool to help make use of this information. When we play 4th best opening leads, we have the Rule of 11 to help us. Playing 3rd/5th best opening leads we use the Rule of 10/12 instead of the Rule of 11. When partner is leading 3rd best, there is one additional outstanding card higher than the spot compared to 4th best leads, so we use the Rule of 12. We subtract the spot card led from 12 to know how many cards are in the other three hands higher than the spot – dummy, third hand, declarer. For example, if partner leads the 8 and it is 3rd best then $12-8=4$.

If the opening lead is 5th best, the opening leader has four cards higher than their led card. In this case, third hand uses the Rule of 10 to help them determine the layout of the suit around the table. One of the issues with 3rd/5th leads is that third hand player is not sure of the length of the lead – thus not sure whether to use the Rule of 10 or the Rule of 12. Fortunately, this ambiguity is a 2-card one, so we will be more easily able to work out what to do. Let's see how this works.

