



Card Reading

This presentation hopes to show that, having a good grasp of some fundamentals of card play can help you in reading the opponents' (and partner's) cards.



Knowing standard leads is essential for communication with partner, but also helps with card reading when you're Declarer.

♠ Q J 9 7 3

Against a suit contract, what is the standard lead with this suit?

Answer – The Queen

NORTH
♣ K 10 3

Opening
Lead

WEST
♣ Q

EAST
♣ 2

SOUTH
♣ A 8 6

N	E	S	W
-	-	1S	Pass
3S	All Pass		

We'll mainly be looking at scenarios in Defence,
but we'll start with a Declarer problem.

Which player is most likely to hold the ♣ J ?

How do you play the suit for
three tricks?

Answer : Win the Ace and finesse the 10.

Reason being : Standard lead from **Q J 9** (x) (x) against a suit contract is the Queen.

When might this not be the case?

N	E	S	W		N	E	S	W	
-	-	1S	Pass		-	-	1NT	Pass	
1NT	2C	2S		OR	2C*	Dbl	2S	Pass	* Stayman
All Pass					2NT	All Pass			

Suppose the Defender is leading a suit their partner overcalled (or doubled a conventional bid to show strength in the suit) – then the lead could (more likely) be from **♣ Q x**

But, obviously, in these instances you're unlikely to hold the Ace and King in the suit between Declarer and Dummy!

Keeping in mind the principle of leading the Queen from Q J x x.
For the next example we'll incorporate another fundamental of
card play : Defenders playing high with touching cards - playing
the lowest of touching cards. For instance

NORTH

♥ 6 2

WEST

♥ 4

East

♥ J 10 9 5

West is on lead and plays the ♥ 4 – Declarer plays low from Dummy.

Which card does East play? Answer : Play the 9 – Third hand play high but
the lower of touching cards – **VERY IMPORTANT**

NORTH

♥ 6 2

WEST

Opening Lead ♥ 4

EAST

♥ K

Declarer SOUTH

♥ A 8 7

South plays in 3 ♠

Who has the ♥ Q ? And how do you know?

Who has the ♥ J ? And how do you know?

NORTH

♥ 6 2

South plays in 3 ♠

WEST

Opening Lead ♥ 4

EAST

♥ K

Declarer SOUTH

♥ A 8 7

If East had ♥ K Q ? Then they would play the Queen – lowest of touching cards.

Therefore West must have the ♥ Q

If West had ♥ J as well as the Queen then they would probably lead the Queen from QJx(x)

NORTH

♥ 4

Declarer WEST

♥ 3

EAST

♥ 5 2

SOUTH

♥ Q 9 7

N	E	S	W
-	-	P	1NT
-	3NT	All Pass	

North leads the ♥ 4 (fourth highest) against 3NT by West

Small from dummy and South plays the Queen – “third hand play high”.

West follows with the ♥ 3 . How many Hearts does West have? Answer :

Because we see the 2 and 3 then partner will have four and four for West

NORTH

♥ 4

Declarer WEST

♥ 6

EAST

♥ 5 2

SOUTH

♥ Q 9 7

N	E	S	W
-	-	P	1NT
-	3NT	All Pass	

North leads the ♥ 4 (fourth highest) against 3NT.

Small from dummy and South plays the Queen – “third hand play high”.

West follows with the ♥ 6 . How many Hearts does West have? *Maybe*

Answer : Partner has 4 or 5 Hearts – if he plays the 3 on the next round that will mark him with five

NORTH

♥ 10

WEST

♥ 8 4 2

Declarer EAST

♥ J

SOUTH

♥ K 7 6 3

Lead ♥ 3

N	E	S	W
-	1NT	P	3NT
All Pass			

What does East hold in this suit?

NORTH

♥ 10 5

WEST

♥ 8 4 2

Declarer EAST

♥ A Q J 9

SOUTH

♥ K 7 6 3

N	E	S	W
-	1NT	P	3NT

All Pass

With no honours in dummy North will play high (third hand plays high). With touching cards North would play the lower of touching cards. i.e. with ♥10 9 North would play the 9.

Therefore you *know* that East has the 9 and A Q J

NORTH

♥ Q J 10 7 6

WEST

♥ 8 4 2

EAST

♥ A K 9

SOUTH

♥ 5 3

To emphasise the play when following suit and playing high – South leads the ♥ 5 and North plays ?

Don't confuse opening lead standards, where top of a sequence would be correct to playing high when defending – then it's the bottom of a sequence! Or lower of touching cards.

More difficult when Dummy
has an honour

NORTH

♥ 10

WEST

♥ Q 4 2

Declarer EAST

♥ J

SOUTH

♥ K 7 6 3

Opening Lead ♥ 3

N	E	S	W
-	1NT	P	3NT
All Pass			

Now you have less information to go on :

If North held ♥ A 10 8 then generally the 10 would be the correct card to play.

The message is: It's not always "Third hand play high" when there's an honour card in Dummy.

Look at this example from North's perspective

NORTH

♥ K 9 7

WEST

♥ Q 4 2

Declarer EAST

♥

SOUTH

Opening Lead ♥ 3

N	E	S	W
-	1D	P	3D

All Pass

South leads fourth highest ♥ 3 against a suit contract. When Declarer plays low from Dummy what card does North play?

Ans : South should not underlead an Ace against a suit contract. Therefore North should not play the King as it is futile! North should play the 9

A different way to read the cards.....

Opening lead **WEST**
♠ Q

NORTH
♠ A 5
♥ 5 4 2
♦ K Q J 5 4 2
♣ K Q

EAST
♠ 8 7 4 3
♥ Q J 6
♦ 10 7
♣ A 7 6 4

Declarer SOUTH

N	E	S	W
-	-	1NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

South wins the first trick in hand with the ♠ K and then plays a ♣
Do you duck? What are you thinking?!

Who has got the ♦ A ?

		NORTH														
		♠ A 5 ♥ 5 4 2 ♦ K Q J 5 4 2 ♣ K Q		EAST												
WEST																
♠ Q J 10 6 ♥ Q 10 8 7 ♦ 8 6 ♣ 9 5 3				♠ 8 7 4 3 ♥ A 9 6 3 ♦ 10 7 ♣ A 7 6												
Declarer SOUTH																
		♠ K 9 2 ♥ K J ♦ A 9 3 ♣ J 10 8 4 2														
			<table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">N</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">E</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">S</th> <th style="padding: 0 10px;">W</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">-</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1NT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3NT</td> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	N	E	S	W	-	-	1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass			
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The inference that South hasn't played Diamonds immediately strongly suggests they hold the Ace.
 i.e. natural play for South without the Diamond Ace would be to start on that suit.

NORTH

♥ 6

WEST

♥ 8 4 2

Declarer EAST

♥ K

SOUTH

♥ A 5 3

Early in the play of a NT contract
Declarer calls for a small ♥ from
Dummy.

Who has the ♥ Q ?

Ans : Most times I'd expect East to hold K Q (J) x – because playing small to the unsupported King early in the play would be an unusual way to play the hand.

Ayrshire Pairs Semi-final

Matchpoint scoring

NORTH

♠ J

WEST

♠ 5 4

♥ Q J 9

♦ A K J 9 7 4

♣ 7 2

EAST

♠ A

SOUTH

♠ Q 10 8 7 6

♥ A 7 5

♦ 8 6

♣ Q J 8

Lead ♠ 7

N	E	S	W
-	NT*	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

* 15-17

Declarer, East, wins the Spade lead with the Ace and plays a small Heart to the Queen. Then plays the ♥ J – South wins with the Ace. What do you know about East's hand? What are you going to do next?

		NORTH		
		♠ J 2 ♥ 10 8 6 ♦ 3 2 ♣ A 9 6 5 4 3		EAST
WEST				
♠ 5 4 ♥ Q J 9 ♦ A K J 9 7 4 ♣ 7 2				♠ A K 9 3 ♥ K 4 3 2 ♦ Q 10 5 ♣ K 10
		SOUTH		
		♠ Q 10 8 7 6 ♥ A 7 5 ♦ 8 6 ♣ Q J 8		
			N	E
			-	-
			3NT	1NT
			All Pass	
			Pass	

The main point of the hand is that East's failure to try and set up Diamonds first, marks her with the Diamond Queen – i.e. Hearts being played for overtricks.

Some Opening Lead Questions.....

♠ K 10 8 3

What do you lead from this suit against a No-Trump Contract?

What do you lead from this suit against a Suit Contract?

Ans : Both Suit and No-Trump 4th highest lead of the 3

♥ K 10 8 3 2

What do you lead from this suit against a No-Trump Contract?

What do you lead from this suit against a Suit Contract?

Ans : Both Suit and No-Trump 4th highest lead of the 3

♦ A K 7 6 3

What do you lead from this suit against a No-Trump Contract?

What do you lead from this suit against a Suit Contract?

Ans : Suit contract lead Ace (or King) and No-Trump lead 4th highest 6

♣ A 9 6 3

What do you lead from this suit against a No-Trump Contract?

What do you lead from this suit against a Suit Contract?

Ans : Against NO-Trump lead 4th highest 3. Against a suit contract avoid leading a suit headed by the unsupported Ace. If you do lead a Club here then lead the Ace
NOT 4th HIGHEST!

♠ J 10 9 3

What do you lead from this suit against a No-Trump Contract?

What do you lead from this suit against a Suit Contract?

Ans : Jack for both – top of a sequence.

♥ K J 10 8 3 2

What do you lead from this suit against a No-Trump Contract?

What do you lead from this suit against a Suit Contract?

Ans : Jack for both – top of an internal sequence. Against NT, 4th highest 8 would be fine as well.

♠ K Q 10 5 4

What do you lead from this suit against a No-Trump Contract?

What do you lead from this suit against a Suit Contract?

Ans : King for both – top of an internal sequence.

♠ K Q 7 5 4

What do you lead from this suit against a No-Trump Contract?

What do you lead from this suit against a Suit Contract?

Ans : King against a suit contract and 4th highest 5 against a No-Trump contract.

The End !