

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.

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

Answer – The Queen



Opening Lead WEST EAST

Q
2

SOUTH

A A 8 6

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

How do you play the suit for three tricks?

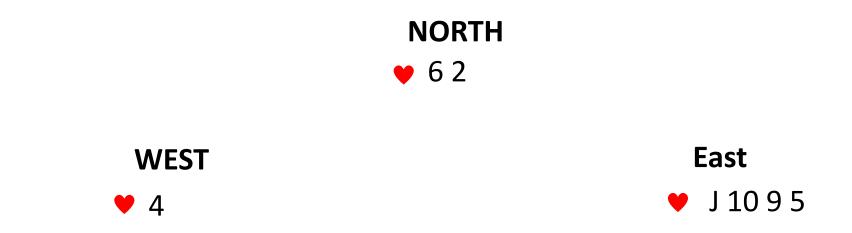
Answer: Win the Ace and finesse the 10.

Reason being: Standard lead from $\mathbf{Q} J 9 (x) (x)$ against a suit contract is the Queen.

When might this not be the case?

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 \clubsuit 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



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

9 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?

9 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 \(\nsigma\) Q

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



Y 4

Declarer WEST

EAST

9 3

♥ 5 2

SOUTH

Q97

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

EAST

9 6

9 5 2

SOUTH

♥Q97

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



• 10

WEST

9 8 4 2

Declarer EAST

y 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

9 8 4 2

Declarer EAST

AQJ9

SOUTH

♥ K763

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



♥ QJ1076

WEST

9 8 4 2

EAST

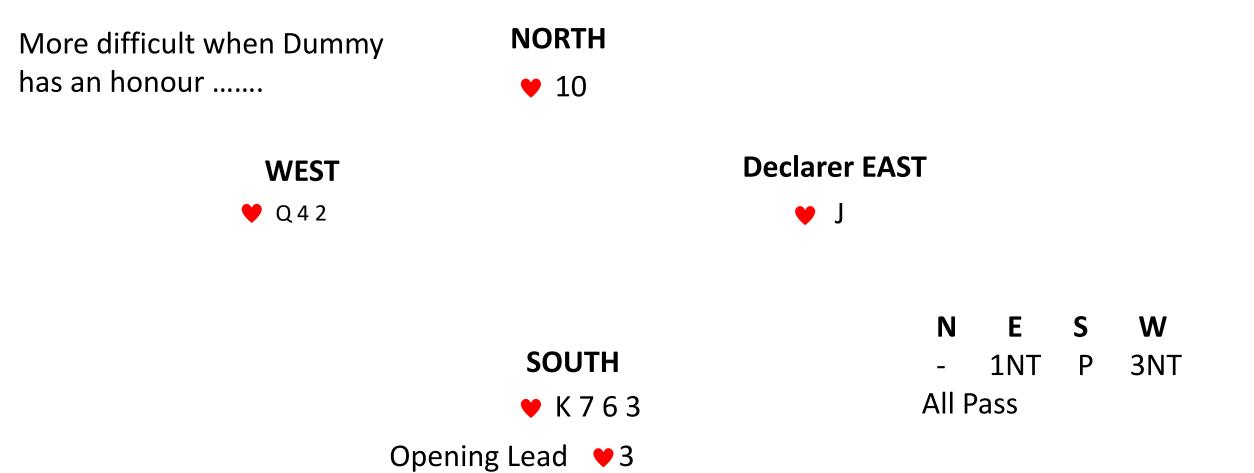
A K 9

SOUTH

9 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.



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

♥ K97

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

NORTH A different way to read the cards..... **♠** A 5 **♥** 542 ◆ KQJ542 **WEST EAST** ♣ K Q **♦** 8743 Opening lead • Q **♥** QJ6 **107 A** A 7 6 4 W 1NT Pass

Declarer SOUTH

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

3NT All Pass

Who has got the igoplus A?

NORTH

- **♠** A 5
- **♥** 542
- ♦ KQJ542
- ♣ KQ

- **EAST**
- 8743
- A 9 6 3
- **10** 7
- ♣ A 7 6

WEST

- ♠ QJ106
- Q 1087
- **♦** 86
- **\$** 953

Declarer SOUTH

- ♠ K92
- K J
- **♦** A93
- **4** J 10 8 4 2

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

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.



9 6

WEST

9 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 KQ(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 NORTH Matchpoint scoring EAST WEST ♦ 54 Α **♥** QJ9 AKJ974 **7** 7 2 Ν W NT* Pass 3NT SOUTH All Pass • Q10876 A 7 5

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?

86

Q J 8

Lead ♠ 7

* 15-17

NORTH

- ♠ J 2
- **•** 10 8 6
- **3** 2
- **A** 496543

- **EAST**
- ♠ AK93
- K432
- **Q** 10 5
- ♣ K 10

WEST

- **♦** 54
- **♥** QJ9
- ♦ AKJ974
- **7** 7 2

SOUTH

- Q10876
- A 7 5
- **♦** 86
- ♣ QJ8

N E S W
- 1NT Pass

3NT All 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.....

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



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

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



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



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

Ans: Against N0-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!**



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

Ans: Jack for both – top of a sequence.



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.

• KQ1054

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.

• KQ754

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 !