



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(275) Leading a New Suit in the Middle of the Defense**

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Level: 1, 5

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#### **General**

Most partnerships have many agreements about the meaning of their opening leads, but when we lead a new suit in the middle of the hand (after trick 1), then we also need to have good agreements about the meaning of these cards, which are often different than our opening lead agreements. Here we look at these agreements in more detail.

#### **Attitude Shifts in Middle of the Defense**

*Level 1*

When we lead a new suit in the middle of the hand, we attempt to let partner know our attitude in this suit. We generally lead high from a holding without any honors and low to show a holding that contains an honor. This is true when leading through the dummy or through the declarer.

Here are common lead agreements in the middle of the hand, from a variety of different holdings:

- **98x**
- **732**
- **7632**
- **Q543**
- **K743**
- **A73** - From this holding we may lay down the Ace, getting an attitude signal from partner (to help us decide if we want to continue the suit) or we may underlead our Ace (hoping to put the declarer to a guess.)
- **Q7643** – Here we lead low to show an honor. We could lead our lowest or our 4<sup>th</sup> best, whatever will help partner. Some partnerships agree to play 4<sup>th</sup> best, attempting to combine some attitude and count information.
- **J743**
- **T632** – Here we do not want to waste the Ten, so we save it and lead our second highest.
- **QTx** – Here we may need to lead an honor to stay on lead (and lead through the King). In this case we may lead either the Queen or the Ten, hoping to keep partner from getting endplayed.



The goal when leading these suits is to help partner visualize where the missing honors are located. We lead an honor (similar to when we are on opening lead) when we have touching honors.

Leads from touching honors in the middle of the hand:

- KQxx
- AKxx
- QJxx
- JTxx
- T983

With this lead agreement, partner can have an idea of where some of the middle honors are located, in our hand or in declarer's.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Leads in the Middle of the Hand

### Level 5

Though these lead agreements can help partner work out what is going on, they still leave some complexity for partner. Some partnerships choose to use 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> best leads in the middle of the hand in an effort to help clarify some of these more complicated situations. These lead agreements are used to show both attitude and count. The idea is to lead 4<sup>th</sup> best from a 4+card suit that has a decent honor (Jack or higher). We also use the lead of 2<sup>nd</sup> best from a 3-card or longer suit without an honor.

*Note: We still lead top of a doubleton; some partnerships handle Hxx by leading low, while other partnerships choose to lead their middle card.*

Here are some leads we would make playing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in the middle of the hand:

- Q742 – Here the lead of the 2 tells us partner has a 4-card suit and an honor.
- Q7652 – The lead of the 5 tells us partner likely has an honor and either a 4-card or 5-card suit.
- T732 – The 7 is high enough for us to read that partner does not have an honor. We do not know if partner has a 3-card suit or a 4-card suit.
- T72 – The 7 is high enough for us to read that partner does not have an honor. We do not know if partner has a 3-card suit or a 4-card suit.
- 862 – The 6 is high enough for us to read that partner does not have an honor. We do not know if partner has a 3-card suit or a 4-card suit.
- JTxx – Most partnerships lead the Jack from touching honors, but some choose to lead 2<sup>nd</sup> best even from touching cards and thus would lead the Ten from this holding.



## Conclusion

Working together with partner to defend a hand is a challenge. We want to have agreements with partner that allow us to help clarify situations and make defending a hand easier. Having agreements about how we attack new suits is an excellent way to improve our communication with partner. Spend some time discussing these situations with your regular partners and see if having detailed agreements can make defending the hand easier for both of you!