

Leads

The task of the defence is very different to that of declarer. The defence is trying to set up their long suits by driving out declarer's stoppers, just as declarer is trying to do the same to the defence. It is a race that is won by the first side to win their quota of tricks. The difference between declarer and defender is that the defenders cannot see each other's cards while declarer can see those in dummy. This makes defence more difficult than playing the hand. On the other hand, the defence makes the opening lead and this should give them an advantage in the race to establish tricks

Leads against a suit contract

Leading against a suit contract is a different strategy to leading against no trump contracts. Against suit contracts you get your defensive tricks from high cards, not from setting up long suits (which may be trumped by declarer in a suit contract)

- If partner has bid **always** lead the highest card you have in partner's suit
- Lead a singleton (looking for a ruff)
- Lead top of an honour sequence **AK2, KQ76, QJ85**
- Lead a high card to show no interest in a suit **973, 8642**
- Lead the Ace (if you have AK) in order to look at Dummy and to decide what to lead next
- Do NOT lead a suit that Declarer has bid unless it is trumps and both opponents have bid the suit
- A good lead is Dummy's suit if you have only three cards and no honours in the suit
- Try to avoid leading a suit containing the KJ or AQ
- If Dummy has a suit headed by the AQ or KJ and you don't have an honour in the suit and Declarer hasn't started playing that suit then *perhaps* partner has the missing honours and you should be leading that suit
- If partner leads a suit always return that suit when you are first on lead **unless** there are compelling reasons to play another suit (see point 4 above)
- AVOID leading small from a suit headed by the Ace, You may lose to a singleton King

Leads against No Trumps

The strategy when leading against no trumps is to endeavour to set up your side's longest and strongest suit.

- If partner has bid **always** lead the highest card you have in partner's suit
- Lead top of a sequence **KQJ7, QJ104, J1095**
- Lead fourth best promising an honour in the suit **A10852, Q976, K984**. The only exception would be if Declarer had bid the suit, then you would wait for Declarer to play the suit
- Leading a high card thereby denoting no interest in the suit **975, 8742, 107643**
- Lead an unbid major in preference to an unbid minor, opponents will usually bid a major if they have one

Lesson 10a

Rule of Eleven When the lead is clearly fourth highest, subtract the value of the card from 11. The result tells you the number of cards higher than the card led in Dummy, in the next hand, and in the Declarer's hand.

Example Defence

6 lead Dummy Q 8 2 You A 10 7 $11 - 6 = 5$

therefore declarer doesn't have a card higher than the 7 so cover any card played in Dummy and you should win the trick

Example Declarer

6 lead Dummy Q 8 2 You A 10 7 $11 - 6 = 5$

therefore if you play the 2 from Dummy your 7 should win

Leads – Declarer

Beware the singleton lead. A person who bids a suit and then leads some other suit is usually leading a singleton

Leading towards honours when an honour is missing

- If you hold all honours except the ace, the best lead is towards the double honour
♠ K854 opposite ♠ QJ63 – best lead is 4♠
- When you are missing the ace and another honour card it is best to lead towards the honour cards you want to win:
♥ 8643 opposite ♥ KQ97 - lead 3♥ and if LHO plays small your king should win. Return to dummy and lead 4♥ towards the queen. If LHO again plays low your queen wins, and you will take 3 tricks in the suit
- The principle of leading towards an honour also applies when you are missing the king
♦ QJ43 opposite ♦ A976 If you lead the queen trying to finesse the LHO for the king, you will probably lose two tricks. Instead you should play the ace first and then lead towards the queen-jack and you should end up with three tricks
- Similarly: ♣ QJ3 opposite ♣ A976 Don't cash the ace first but lead towards the queen-jack and you should end up with three tricks in the suit
- Similarly: ♠ KJ6 opposite ♠ Q984 Lead low towards the king-jack
- Similarly ♥ QJ10985 opposite ♥ A9 Cash the ace first then lead towards the queen-jack-ten. Playing the queen first for a finesse is unlikely to work if LHO holds off and you will squander an entry getting back to dummy. You probably have to lose a trick to the king so play ace and a small card to the queen
- Desperation play:
♦ 76 opposite ♦ K4 play 7♦ to the K♦ and hope the A♦ lies favourably