

LEADING TIPS

LEADS VS. DOUBLED CONTRACTS

	When partner doubles the final contract, partner either:
	(1) Thinks that the combined defensive strength between the two defensive hands is enough to defeat the contract.
	(2) Has a strong trump holding.
1	(3) Can tell from the bidding that it is a touch and go contract and that YOU have trump length. This double is an effort to give declarer a false impression of who has the missing trumps. These are called "offside" doubles and require a special relationship with partner when they don't work.
	(4) Is trying to direct your lead to a particular suit, a suit you might not otherwise have led. These 'lead directing doubles' particularly apply vs. slam contracts when partner has preempted or against notrump game or slam contracts that usually call for the lead of dummy's first bid suit.
2	When partner makes a penalty double against a trump contract, assume partner is short in your long suit. Penalty doubles work best when the doubling side is misfitted.

LEADS VS. DOUBLED SLAM CONTRACTS

	If partner has bid a suit and later doubles a VOLUNTARILY bid slam, do NOT lead partner's suit (the normal lead) and do NOT lead a trump. Partner's double shows either:
	(1) A void (the most common reason).
	(2) A desire for a lead in dummy's first bid suit.
3	(3) The AK of one of the declarer's bid suits.
	If partner has NOT bid and later doubles a VOLUNTARILY bid slam, do not lead the unbid suit, the normal lead, or a trump.
	Partner's double shows either:
	(1) A side suit void
	(2) A desire for the lead in dummy's first bid suit.

LEADING VS. A SLAM WHEN THERE IS NO DOUBLE TO HELP YOU OUT

	If dummy makes a wild leap to slam in partner's suit (no Blackwood), assume a void, strong trump, a powerful side suit, and perhaps a control in the shorter side suit. It is usually right to lead the shorter side suit if you can figure out which it is.
4	North East South West (you) 1H Pass 1S 2C 6S !! You hold S. A4 H. Q5 D. J64 C. AQJ952 Dummy figures to have a club void with a long hearts. Lead a diamond and hope to build up a trick in that suit before your SA is removed. If the CA would have cashed and you lose it, I don't know you.

LEADING PARTNER'S SUIT

5	With a terribly weak hand and having supported partner's suit with Qxx(x) or Kxx(x), lead the honor in case you need to switch to another suit. If you lead low, you may never get in again.
6	With the ace and any length, lead the ace unless you feel you must get partner in at once to: (1) give you a ruff; (2) the dummy has bid notrump and you think dummy has the king. Underleads of aces when they don't work out require a very special relationship with partner.
7	With 10xx, Jxx, or Qxx lead low. However if dummy has bid notrump, lead the high honor.
8	With three or four small, lead low if you have NOT supported; lead high if you have.
9	If you have led high from xxx, play your middle card next. If you have led high from xxxx, play your lowest card next. If you have led low from xxx, play your highest card next. If you have led low from xxxx, play your lowest remaining card next. In each case you are giving partner present count.
10	Leading a suit partner has overcalled is USUALLY safer than leading a suit partner has opened. However, if the bidding has indicated that partner has made a light third hand opening, tend to lead partner's suit. The main reason for opening light in third seat is to attract the lead.

THE OPENING LEAD VS. SUIT

11	The card you select as your opening lead is probably the most important card you are going to play during the entire defense. Therefore, you should give it a little thought. Your focus should be on the likely distribution around the table (easier when there is mucho bidding), declarer's likely strength and the degree of trump fit that the bidding seems to indicate.
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Of major concern is whether you should be making an aggressive or a passive opening lead. Again you must go back to the bidding to help you out.

Does the dummy figure to have a long side suit?

If there is a long side suit, how is it breaking? If it appears to be breaking evenly, make an attacking lead. If you have it well under control, a trump lead is usually best. Why? Because when dummy has a long suit it also has a short suit. Since the long suit cannot be established, declarer will try to use dummy's trumps for ruffing. Each trump you lead is one less loser that declarer can trump.

Should I be looking for a ruff? Lead a short suit, particularly with a trump holdings that look like Kxx, Ax (x), but not with QJx or J10xx where ruffing costs you a natural trump trick.

Should I be looking to give partner a ruff? This can work out well if you have a quick rump entry facing a partner who is marked with shortness in a side suit.

Should I be trying to shorten the declarer's trump holding? This is usually a good idea when holding four trumps. If declarer has five trumps, say, and you can make declarer twice, you will have more trumps than declarer. This is good news for you and bad news, very bad news, for declarer.

Should I just be sitting back and waiting for my tricks rather than attacking here, there, and everywhere? This is what you do against a balanced dummy where declarer cannot set up a long suit and will eventually lose any slow losers they have. Avoid breaking new suits unless it is safe to do so.

Should I be leading a trump to cut down on ruffs in the dummy? Declarer has bid two suits, winds up in the second suit, and you have length and strength in the first suit. This is a good time to lead a trump.

Has partner passed a low level takeout double? A trump lead is quasi- mandatory in this case. Partner must have a very strong trump holding to pass a low level takeout double. You should be looking to draw declarer's trumps so he can't make his little ones by ruffing.

TRUMP LEADS

12	Don't even think of leading a trump when the opponents are in the throes of a misfit.
13	Holding a balanced hand with broken strength in each suit, a trump lead from two or three small when dummy has given a single raise is usually best.
14	With a strong sequence in trump (KQJ, QJ109), a trump lead is usually best.
15	If partner is marked with a singleton trump, there is no point in leading a trump from Kxx because neither of you will be able to continue the suit. Try another lead and hope that partner will find the trump switch, if necessary.

PLAYING TIPS

1	<p>When a trump is led on the get go, assume the opening leader does NOT have the queen and play accordingly.</p> <p>North (dummy) S. K10</p> <p>West East S. 9763 S. Q</p> <p>South (you) S. AJ8542</p> <p>If a spade is led against your spade contract, play the king from dummy. East is marked with the queen and it may be singleton. If it is, you save a trick.</p>
2	When the opening leader makes a potentially ambiguous honor card lead such as the jack at notrump which could be top of a sequence or from the KJ10 or AJ10, and as declarer you have the AKQ, take the trick with the queen, the honor card third hand knows you hold regardless what the lead shows.
3	<p>Conceal your strength by playing the highest immaterial card you can when an opponent shows out.</p> <p>North (dummy) H. 754</p> <p>West East H. KJ93 H. -</p>

	<p>South (you) H. AQ10862 Hearts are trump and you lead a low heart from dummy, East showing out! As long as you don't intend to play the ace, play the queen, the highest immaterial card you can to conceal the position from East. If you play a lower card, East will have a better feel for West's strength in the suit. Also, do not ponder over your play which gives East gratuitous information.</p>
4	<p>Do not squander honor cards haphazardly. North (dummy) S. AJ2</p> <p>West East S. K9 S. 108763</p> <p>South (you) S. Q54 For three tricks lead low to the jack. If West has Kx, the ace will snatch the king and your queen is high. If you start with the queen, West covers and you only have two. In a similar vein: North (dummy) S. K1092 West East S. Q S. A876</p> <p>South (you) S. J543 For three tricks start with a low spade intending to insert the 10 if West plays low. Your play gains a trick when West has a singleton queen.</p>
5	<p>When you have a plethora of honors and spot cards, it still may be right to lead a spot card rather than an honor as an entry conserving play. North (dummy) D. AJ102 West East D. K876 D. 54 South (you) D. Q93 Say you need 4 diamond tricks and have no reentry to your hand. If you start with the queen and West plays low, you can only take three. After you repeat the finesse by leading low to the ten, you cannot get back to your hand to repeat the finesse. However, if you start with the 9 and West plays low, you can underplay with the deuce and then lead the queen. Now you have four tricks regardless. Similarly: North (dummy) D. K1092</p> <p>West East D. Q765 D. A4 South (you) D. J83 Say the lead is in your hand and you need three diamond tricks and have only one hand reentry. If you start with the jack and West plays low, East wins the ace and now you cannot pick up West's queen with only one hand reentry. However, if you start with the 8 and West plays low, you can underplay the deuce. Assuming East wins the ace (it doesn't matter), you can return to your hand and lead the jack losing but one trick in the suit.</p>
6	<p>Notrump; with a choice of two finesses and only stopper remaining in your weakest suit, ask yourself which finesse, if it loses, leaves you with the most REMAINING tricks. North (dummy) S. AQ943</p>

	<p>H. A96 D. A9 C. KJ5 South (you) S. J10 H. J843 D. K2 C. A10987 North East South West 1S Pass 1NT Pass 2NT Pass 3NT All Pass Opening lead: DQ Should you attack spades or clubs? If you attack clubs and the finesse loses, you remain with 8 tricks: 4 clubs, 2 diamonds 1 heart and 1 spade. If you attack spades and the finesse loses you remain with 9 tricks: 4 spades, two clubs, 2 diamonds and 1 heart. Attack spades.</p>
7	<p>When no line of play looks clear, consider "scrambling" (ruffing in the long hand) North (dummy) S. 108 H. Q3 D. AJ32 C. 98765 South (you) S. QJ532 H. AK76 D. 7 C. J32 South West North East 1S Pass 1NT Pass 2H Pass 2S All Pass Opening lead: DK Your best bet for 8 tricks is to embark on a mini-crossruff. Win the DA; ruff a diamond; cash the AQ of hearts ending in dummy and ruff another diamond; ruff a heart with the S8 and ruff your last diamond (if you can) reducing to the blank QJ of spades. You have scrambled for seven tricks and now all you need do is ruff the HK with the S10 to ensure an eighth.</p>
8	<p>When you have a CONCEALED running suit, try to steal your contract making trick early-before the opponents can count your tricks. North (dummy) S. A4 H. 854 D. J543 C. Q543 South (you) S. K2 H. J106 D. AKQ1076 C. KJ East South West North 3S 3NT All Pass Opening lead: S9 Win the SA and casually lead a low club to the king. Assuming West takes the trick, West is going to have to shift to a heart to defeat this contract. Not easy since West doesn't know about all of those diamond tricks you have lurking. However, if in a panic you run your diamonds first, it will be much easier for West to shift to a heart upon winning the CA.</p>
9	<p>When the dummy has more trump than you do (usually after a transfer sequence) treat your hand as the dummy and try to trump partner's losers in your hand, the shorter trump hand. Some players have to stand on their head to see this.</p>

	<p>North (dummy) S. KQ10654 H. 732 D. 2 C. K54</p> <p>South (you) S. AJ3 H. QJ D. A876 C. A863</p> <p>South West North East 1NT Pass 4H (1) Pass 4S All Pass (1) Transfer Opening lead: DQ</p> <p>You have six spade tricks, two clubs and one diamond for nine. The easiest road to 10 is to ruff a heart in your hand, the short trump hand. Win the DA and lead a heart. When you regain the lead, lead a second heart eventually trumping a heart in your hand for your 10th trick. If you draw trump first and trumps are 3-1, you will find up losing three hearts and a club.</p>
10	<p>When partner leads a suit at notrump and then discards several cards from that suit, he does not want that suit returned; look elsewhere.</p> <p>Dir: North Vul: Both</p> <p>North S. AK1032 H. A762 D. 3 C. J54</p> <p>West East S. Q76 S. J984 H. KJ93 H. 1084 D. 5 D. Q1087 C. A10762 C. 83</p> <p>South S. 5 H. Q5 D. AKJ9642 C. KQ9</p> <p>North East South West 1S Pass 2D Pass 2H Pass 3NT All Pass</p> <p>Opening lead: C 6</p> <p>Dummy wins with dummy's jack South takes a winning diamond finesse. When he cashes the AK of diamonds West discards clubs. When East wins the 4th diamond he should shift to a heart and not continue a club. Had West wanted a club continuation he would not have discarded clubs.</p>
11	<p>In this common position it is almost always right for East to duck the first round of the suit when declarer leads the queen and is known to have a doubleton from partner's count signal.</p> <p>North S. K10643</p> <p>West East (you) 982 AJ7</p> <p>South Q5</p>
12	<p>When discarding at notrump or even at a trump contract where getting a ruff is not an issue, avoid discarding from short suits, particularly short suits where you cannot see the queen in dummy. You may be exposing</p>

partner's queen to a finesse in a two way finesse position. It is usually right to discard from unimportant length.

DEFENSIVE TIPS

1	Don't lead a trump when the opponents are misfitted.
2	If partner is marked with a singleton trump, there is no point in leading a trump from Kxx because neither of you will be able to continue the suit. Try another lead and hope partner will find the trump switch, if necessary.
3	Deceptive leads in the trump suit include the 9 from 109x and the jack from QJ doubleton.
4	When dummy has shown a long side suit plus trump support, a trump lead is desirable if you have dummy's long suit bottled up; otherwise it is the worst lead in the world!
5	Do not lead a singleton vs. a voluntarily bid small slam if you have an ace. Partner can't have the ace and you will probably be helping declarer no end by placing the missing honors in partner's hand.
6	On the other hand, a singleton lead against a small slam when you don't have an ace has a much better chance of succeeding. With a little luck partner will have the ace of your singleton suit or the ace of trumps.
7	You do not lead the same against 3NT (or 4NT) as you do against 6NT. For example, say you have: S. K10764 H. Q84 D. Q76 C. 83 If the bidding goes 1NT- pass- 3NT (or 4NT) - all pass, you have an automatic spade lead. However if the bidding goes 1NT-pass-6NT- all pass, a spade lead is horrible. Why? The opponents presumably have about 33 HCP to contract for 6NT which means your partner is busted. There is no point in leading away from an honor. Lead a club and hope to make two tricks if declarer finesses into you.
8	When leading partner's suit against suit or notrump with three or four small, lead high if you have supported the suit, low if you haven't.
9	After leading high from three small in partner's supported suit, (862) play the middle one next. Lead the 8 and then the 6. If you have not supported, lead the 2. Leading high in an unsupported suit shows shortness.
10	After leading low from four small in partner's unsupported suit, (8632) play your lowest one next. Lead the 2 and then the 3. This assumes you have not supported the suit. If you have supported, lead the 8.
11	If you have led high from four small, play your lowest one next. With 8632, lead the 8 and then play the 2. In all of these cases, your second card is present count.
12	When partner doubles a slam contract after having bid a suit, do NOT lead partner's suit or a trump. . Partner usually has a void (or an outside AK), it's your job to figure out which and make the killing lead!
13	Be on the qui vive (alert) to double artificial bids (Stayman, Jacoby Transfers, cuebids and Blackwood responses) if you want the lead in that suit. These are all Lead Directing Doubles. Very important not to fall asleep at the switches if you can make a lead directing double.
14	To make a Lead Directing Double at a low level, particularly the two level, you need five or six cards in the suit headed by at least three honor cards. To double an artificial bid made at the four level or higher, all you need is strength in the suit, not length (KQx), even QJx if the bid to your right shows the ace.
15	When leading an unbid suit at notrump with four cards not headed by an honor, it is too misleading to lead low which shows strength, You are better placed to lead your highest or next highest card. If your highest card is an eight or lower, lead high. If your highest card is a nine or a ten, lead your second highest card. Lead the 8 from 8543, but lead the 6 from 9642. Lead the 7 from 10732 if you want another suit returned.
16	Make sure you discuss with your partner what you are going to lead from AKx(x) against a suit contract. Whichever you decide upon, lead the other from AK doubleton.
17	Be advised that if you lead the A from AKx(x) vs. a suit contract, that is a trick one convention only. During the rest of the hand, the king is led from the AKx(x). The reason being that after trick one a defender is likely to want to lead an ace without the king and does not want partner to think that he has the king. If you are on lead against a spade contract with S. xx H. xxx D. AKxx C. AKxx and declarer to lead the DA, if you next decide to lead a club, lead the king. If you lead the ace, you deny the king. (This is the second trick, remember).
18	If you and your partner have decided to lead ace from ace-king, be advised that the king is still led at trick one when: (1) The suit has been supported by EITHER player.

	<p>(2) Partner has bid the suit and you have not supported.</p> <p>(3) The contract is at the five level or higher.</p> <p>(4) You have AK doubleton.</p>
19	<p>You and partner might try leading the queen from the AKQ vs. a suit contract. Assuming partner can read the lead (almost always can), third hand gives count. There are two advantages to this lead:</p> <p>(1) The opening leader can tell how many tricks in the suit can be cashed.</p> <p>(2) If you lead ace from ace-king, partner knows you can't have the queen when you lead an ace.</p>
20	<p>Lead inferences</p> <p>If partner doesn't lead your suit, assume partner:</p> <p>(1) Is void</p> <p>(2) Is leading a singleton</p> <p>(3) Is leading top of a sequence</p> <p>(4) Has the ace and fears declarer has the king (particularly true if partner has supported the suit.)</p> <p>(5) Has forgotten the bidding</p>
21	<p>Before making your opening lead, add your HCP to declarer's estimated HCP. For example say you have 10 HCP and RHO opens 1NT (15-17) and winds up playing 3NT dummy also having 10 HCP. Take declarer's middle count, 16, and add that to dummy's 10 HCP telling you that the opponents are playing 3NT with 26 HCP give or take a point. That 26 added to your 10 HCP tells you that partner has 4 HCP. Say you lead a suit and partner plays the ace. Don't look around for any more high card points in partner's hand because if you do, you will be sorely disappointed. O.K partner may have a jack. Making a habit of doing this will turn you into a better defensive player, much better.</p>

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