

WINNING LEADS AGAINST NO TRUMP CONTRACTS

Sometimes you have an obvious lead, but often no lead stands out and you have between an active lead and a passive lead.

An active lead – to develop our side's long suit to try to defeat the contract

A passive lead - a safe lead that does not give a trick away immediately

These two objectives may conflict!

Review the bidding. What suits have the opponents bid on their way to the no-trump contract? What have they not bid? – in particular, if they could have used Stayman and haven't, what conclusions can you draw from that? If you have a weak hand, partner may have values but did he / she have the opportunity to open the bidding or overcall at the one or two level?

Strong honour sequences – three or more touching honours. Both constructive and safe.

If partner has opened the bidding or overcalled, and opponents buy the contract in no-trumps, lead his / her suit unless there is a good reason not to.

If the opponents reach 3NT and have not used Stayman, or if there has been a failed Stayman auction, there is a major suit bias. (Failed Stayman = responder bid 2♣ and opener replied 2♦ showing no four card major. In a failed Stayman auction the left hand opponent will have one or both majors but the opener will have at least seven and probably eight cards in the minors.)

There is only a slight major suit bias when 1NT is opened and passed out.

Look for alternatives to fourth highest if your suit is poor – only one honour or two honours that are not touching.

With a poor hand consider trying a short major (trying to find partner's suit) in preference to fourth highest of a long minor suit. Leads from a long minor are likely to find partner with a singleton or void.

Some situations when you might look for a passive lead - (1) if opponents have bid to 6NT without showing a long suit.

(2) if right hand opponent has shown a very strong hand in the bidding (opened 2♣ or 2NT)

(3) opponents have reached 3NT via a limit bid from the responder, such as 1NT-2NT-3NT.

(4) you are playing match pointed pairs rather than teams with IMP scoring (you might get a good result from a safe lead that doesn't give away an overtrick or two).

The higher the level of the contract, the more you should favour a passive lead. Active leads are more successful against 1NT contracts than higher level contracts (the points will be evenly divided).

Discuss with your partner if you are considering trying some short suit leads. They will not be successful if partner will always return the suit you first led! The other defender has to think about the hand, the bidding, what is in the dummy and what line of play declarer is adopting.

QUIZ ON OPENING LEADS

You are playing a teams event with IMP scoring, so your objective is to find the lead that is most likely to defeat the contract. The contract is 3NT, and your right hand opponent opened 1NT-and was raised to 3NT. The opponents are playing a weak no trump with Stayman and red suit transfers. What would you lead from the following:

Hand 1

♠J1075432 ♥73 ♦92 ♣105

Hand 2

♠QJ5 ♥853 ♦J9532 ♣94

Hand 3

♠1064 ♥7 ♦984 ♣Q98642

Hand 4

♠Q9 ♥J98763 ♦9852 ♣5

In the next four examples again it is teams with IMP scoring. The opponents are playing the same system as before. The contract is 3NT - right hand opponent opened 1NT, his partner bid 2♣ Stayman, the opener replied 2♦ showing no four card major, and the left hand opponent then bid 3NT. What would you lead from the following:

Hand 5

♠AJ962 ♥52 ♦1073 ♣KJ4

Hand 6

♠AQ ♥J106 ♦1072 ♣Q8742

Hand 7

♠765 ♥86 ♦AQ1073 ♣K53

Hand 8

♠- ♥J10543 ♦K98 ♣A10963