

Opening Leads Against a Suit Contract

Good Leads (will usually develop tricks for your side):

1. Lead a suit that partner has bid.

If you have supported partner, make an attitude lead (low from something, high from nothing). If you have not supported partner, lead high from a doubleton, low otherwise.

2. Lead a trump when you think declarer will ruff losers.

(a) If responder shows preference to opener's second suit, lead a trump. Responder will be short in opener's first suit. You can expect dummy to be ruffing opener's first bid suit. (b) If the opponents bid 1H-4H or 1S-4S pre-emptive, you can expect them to have 10+ trump and shortness elsewhere. Each trump you lead may well eliminate one of declarer's tricks.

3. Lead the top of touching honors.

Lead the A from AK, the K from KQ, the Q from QJ, etc. This works to set up your next honor and tells partner that you have it.

4. Lead a singleton.

If partner wins the trick right away or gets in while you still have some trump left, partner can give you a ruff.

5. With 4 trump (or knowing that partner has 4 trump), lead your longest suit.

Declarer is likely to be short where you are long. If you can force declarer to ruff, your side may end up with more trump than the declaring side ... a bad situation for them.

Neutral Leads:

6. Lead top of a doubleton.

Similar to leading a singleton, but not as good.

7. Lead top of nothing.

This is a neutral lead, neither good nor bad.

8. Lead a low card from an unsupported Q or J.

These can be hit and miss. They can turn out to be a good lead if partner happens to have a touching honor. If you lead low from the Queen and partner has the King or Jack, this suddenly becomes a decent lead. But you have to guess where partner might have an honor. This is more likely to happen in an unbid suit.

Bad Leads (will usually cost you tricks):

9. Lead a low card from an unsupported K.

The Queen will be in dummy or in declarer's hand the majority of the time. This gives the Queen a free pass.

10. Lead an unsupported honor (such as leading K when you don't have the Q).

Leading an unsupported King or Queen is sending him or her to the slaughter house. You should not lead an honor unless you have the next lower one. This can be an acceptable lead if you have 2 cards in a suit that partner has bid, an honor card and a low one.

11. Lead a low card from a tenace (such as low from KJ73).

A tenace is a sequence of cards with one missing in the middle, such as AQ, AQJ and KJ. If you lead low from KJ, this is like leading away from the King and leading away from the Jack, two bad leads at the same time.

12. Lead the Ace when you don't have the King.

The job of the Ace is to capture the King, or failing that some other significant honor card. If you lead the Ace, it will capture only air, only low cards like the 2 and 3.

- **Exception 1:** It is OK to lead the Ace followed by a small card when you have only 2 cards in the suit. Partner might get the lead and give you a ruff. Partner will know you have only 2 cards in the suit if you start the hand like this.
- **Exception 2:** If they are in slam, you should lead your Ace(s).

13. Lead a low card when you have the Ace.

The job of the Ace is to capture the King. If you lead away from the Ace, you give the King a free pass.

When to Make an Attacking Lead, When to Make a Neutral Lead:

1. If you think declarer will ruff losers in dummy:

Lead a trump to reduce the number of dummy's ruffs.

2. If you think declarer will discard losers on dummy's known long suit:

Lead your strongest of the other suits, not trump, not dummy's suit. Try to get your winners in the other suits before they can be discarded on dummy's long suit.

3. If you think neither 1 nor 2 above will happen, make a neutral lead.

Let declarer break the side suits. Don't help declarer by breaking suits for him/her.

4. If the bidding indicates they are weak in one suit, lead that suit.