

OPENING LEADS AND SIGNALS

Leading from a Sequence


A sequence consists of two or more cards in consecutive order of rank e.g. K Q J or Q J 10 9. A holding such as K Q 10 or Q J 9 is called a broken sequence.

Leading from the top of a sequence is usually the best opening lead that you can make, for two reasons

1. It is a safe lead i.e. it has a low risk of giving away a trick.
 2. It gives partner accurate information about your holding.
- Lead the A from a A K (You need to have a partnership agreement about this)
 - Lead the K from K Q J x or K Q 10 x
 - Lead the Q from Q J 10 x or Q J 9 x
 - Lead the J from J 10 9 x
 - Lead the J from A J 10 9 x (the top of an interior sequence against no-trump)
 - Do not lead the Q from Q J x x unless partner has bid the suit
 - You don't usually lead K from K Q x x but later in the play it may be desirable

The Attitude Signal


Sitting in third seat, you normally play a high card if you want the suit continued and a low card if you do not want the suit continued. What should "third hand" play in each of the following situations?

(a) Q 9 7
A  8 3

In a suit contract, play the 8. Partner will continue with K and you can ruff the third round.

(b) Q 9 7
A  8 3 2

Play the 2. You don't want partner to play the K. This would promote the Q and help the opponents.

(c) 10 9 7
A  Q 8 3

Play the 8. Partner will continue with K and you will play the Q on the third round of the suit.

(d) 8 6 3
Q  K 9 3

Play the 9. You want partner to continue the suit.

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Heeding Partner's Signal

(e)	♠ A K 8 7		West	North	East	South
	♥ 10 6			1♣		1♥
	♦ Q J 10 3		P	1♠	P	3♥
	♣ A 9 8		P	4♥	P	P
			P			
♠	Q 10 9 3					
♥	5 4					
♦	A K 8 4					
♣	J 4 3					
		5				
						9

West leads the A♦ against South's four-heart contract. East plays 9♦ and declarer plays 5♦. What should west do at trick 2?

(f)	♠ K 9 6 2		West	North	East	South
	♥ 6 2			1♣		1♠
	♦ A Q 5		P	2♠	P	4♠
	♣ K Q J 10		P	P	P	
♠	8 3					
♥	A K 5 4					
♦	J 10 8 2					
♣	7 5 3					
		3				
						7

West leads the A♥ against South's four-spade contract. East plays 7♥ and declarer plays 3♥. What should west do at trick 2?

The Bath Coup

The name "*Bath Coup*" comes from the game of Whist which was clearly very popular at the most fashionable of English spas in the 18th century. It is a cunning strategy by declarer to duck when his opponent leads the K of a suit in which he holds the A J. Declarer knows that the Q is behind the K. He now holds a "*tenace*", A J, over the Q so that the suit cannot be continued without giving him two tricks. It gives him the tempo to promote an honour in another suit while retaining a stopper in the original suit.


K		7 6 2
		A J 8


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Defence Against the Bath Coup

Defenders need to be aware of this strategy. If the person in third seat does not hold the ace or the jack, it is his responsibility to warn partner by playing a **low card**. When he eventually gains the lead, it is usually appropriate to revert to the partner's suit and lead through declarer's A J, thereby knocking out declarer's stopper.


But suppose that declarer is bluffing. Suppose that he has the A but not the J. Or suppose that he has the J but not the A. If third hand has either A or J, it is essential to signal by playing a **high card** to alert his partner to this deception and encourage partner to continue the suit.


(e) 8 6 5
 K  J 9 4
Play the 9, encouraging partner to continue the suit. Partner should under-lead the queen.

(f) 8 6 5
 K  9 4
Play the 4 to discourage. Do not play high-low just because you have a doubleton. This is an attitude signal, not a count signal. If partner has the K Q J, she will continue the suit anyway.

Unblocking

Sometimes you will have a high honour in the suit that partner has led. If you don't play it right away, it will win the next trick and block the suit. You need to overtake partner's lead and return the suit. This is called unblocking. You need to have faith that partner has at least a three-card sequence. Indeed, that is the message that your partner is conveying when he leads a king or a queen.

(g) 8 6 3
 K  A 7
Play the ace and return the seven.

(h) A 6 3
 Q  K 7
Play the king, whether or not the ace is played from dummy.