



Lesson 25 Teacher's Notes

Defence - The Opening Lead

Aims

- To refine the choice of opening lead

Content

- 1 The opening lead is very important. The 'wrong' one can let home an un-makeable contract: an inspired lead can beat an unbreakable one.
Sometimes the opening lead is obvious. If opponents are in 4♥ and you have ♦AKQ2 it is not too tough. But more often it feels like a blind guess!
- 2 **In choosing a lead** there are 2 questions to answer: **Which suit?** is more important than **Which card?**
Which suit? Unfortunately this is a very difficult question! There are no absolute rules.
Perhaps partner has bid a suit, and you will lead that.
Sometimes opponents have bid several suits, and you can lead **an unbid suit**.
Listening carefully to the bidding may help you to sniff out a good lead – draw inferences from what was NOT bid as well as what was. Try to picture opponents hands based on what you have heard.
Opponents' bidding will not always be the same as yours. You are allowed to ask questions about it.
When you are sure you understand what their bidding means, you can decide which suit to lead.
- 3 **Against no-trump contracts** try to lead *your side's* best suit.
If partner has bid a suit – lead that.
Otherwise lead your longest suit *unless* it has been bid by an opponent
OR your hand is so weak that you will not get in to cash your winners
In these cases try to find partner's longest suit. You may have to guess which short suit to lead. The tip is: choose one where you have an honour card, since that needs partner to have less in the suit.
Against suit contracts try to establish winners in side suits
Avoid leading suits that have been bid by an opponent - tend to lead an **unbid suit**
Lead from a sequence of honours, or a broken sequence
Do not lead an unsupported ace: do not underlead an ace (underleading aces against NT contracts is OK)
Sometimes you can make trump tricks by ruffing: lead a singleton or a suit where partner is short
- 4 **Which card?**
Once we have decided the suit to lead we follow the Rules we were taught earlier (see examples)
Against no-trump contracts we lead **top of a sequence** of **three** or more honours
higher of touching honours **in an interior sequence** with **three** or more cards
BUT fourth highest from a long suit with only **two** honours
Against suit contracts we lead the higher of touching honours
- 5 Revise the differences between the Opening Lead and Third Hand Play:
You **lead top** of a sequence of honours: **Third Hand plays lowest** from a sequence of honours
You **lead low** from a single honour **Third Hand plays high** – so it plays the honour
You **lead low** from two non-touching honours **Third Hand plays high**, the highest unless the two honours surround a card in dummy
- 6 **Leading Trump**
You have probably heard the old saying "when in doubt, lead trump".
A trump may look safe – but it is not. The first thing declarer does is draw trump – why help him?
A trump lead may give declarer time to develop his work suit and take discards before you can establish winners in the side suits. Our advice is "when in doubt, lead low from an honour(s) in an unbid suit".
(Occasionally a trump lead is called for– usually when opponents are playing in the third suit they have bid and you have a strong holding in declarer's first suit. Leading trump may stop ruffs in dummy.)