



Lesson 20 – Student Notes

This is a lesson about Defending

You will be a defender on 50% of the hands you play so learn to love defending!

Defence begins with the bidding

Then comes the opening lead

1. Lead the top of touching honours

Against a suit contract this can be **TWO** touching honours

e.g. King from **K** Q 5 4 or Queen from **Q** J 5

Against a NT contract you need **THREE** touching honours

e.g. King from **K** Q J 7 6 or Queen from **Q** J T 6 5

or

In a broken sequence of three e.g. **K** Q _ T 6 5 or **Q** J _ 9 6 5

In a broken sequence the break is between the 2nd and 3rd card in the sequence

Note, that by leading an honour card you promise to....

- 1 hold the card immediately below the led card
- 2 and deny holding the card immediately above the led card.

With this honour card lead you express interest in the suit. You want your partner's cooperation – **partner return the suit.**

2. Lead Low for Like

Lead the 4th highest card of a suit in which you hold at least one honour

e.g. K J 8 **5** 3 or Q 9 7 **4**,

With this 'Low for Like' lead you express interest in the suit. You want your partner's cooperation – **partner return the suit.**

This is a poor lead against a suit contract because it will give declarer an extra trick unless your partner can contribute a high card.

Against a NT contract, this is a good lead if you have a long suit because you hope that giving declarer a trick will allow you to establish the suit.

3. High for Hate

Lead a high non honour card in a suit in which you have no interest.

With this '**High for Hate**' lead you tell partner that you have no interest in the suit. **You are not asking partner to return the suit.**

4. Side suit singleton against a suit contract.


Any lead against a suit contract could be a singleton. The hope is that partner will be able to win the trick and return the suit so you can gain a ruff!

Notice the difference

In the efficacy of different leads against a suit contract as opposed to against a NT contract.

In particular, note the '**Low for Like**' leads. Low from a long suit headed by at least one honour works reasonably well against NT but is poor against suit contracts.

Comparing leads against NT and suit contracts	
NT contracts	Suit contracts
<input type="checkbox"/> Top of a sequence of three honours in a long suit	<input type="checkbox"/> Top of a sequence of two honours in a any length suit
<input type="checkbox"/> Lead Low for Like	<input type="checkbox"/> Side suit singleton
<input type="checkbox"/> High for Hate	<input type="checkbox"/> High for Hate
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lead Low for Like



Choosing a lead

When deciding on an opening lead, of course you should be influenced by the bidding. If partner has made a bid you should definitely consider leading your

partner's suit.

Rule of 11 – If your partner leads a small card against either a suit or NT contract remember to use the **Rule of 11** to help you interpret the lead.

(If partner has led his 4th best from a long suit, take away the number of the spot card led from 11 to see how many cards above the led suit are in the other 3 hands. You can see dummy and your hand – the balance must be in declarer's hand – if partner led the 4th best! If you see more cards than the Rule of 11 gives – partner has NOT led his 4th best card!)

Attitude signalling

When your partner leads a new suit, either as the opening lead or later in the play, tell him whether you like the suit or not.

We are suggesting using a high non honour card, **'High for Hate'**, to say *"No partner I have nothing to contribute in this suit. Please switch"*

Playing a small card, **'Low for Like'**, to say *"Yes partner, I can be helpful if you continue playing the suit"*

This idea is called **Reverse Attitude**. We have chosen to teach this idea for two reasons: -

- 1 "Low for Like" and "High for Hate" are the same as for leading. It's easier to remember when your signal messages are both the same!
- 2 However, some people play the opposite - Attitude signals are the other way around 'High says Aye' and 'Low says No'. If you use this idea it might necessitate throwing a card which is higher than you can afford.
- 3 You must ask your opponents before you begin to play which method they use.

Examples of **reverse attitude** signalling

1) **Dummy**
 ♥ 8 5
♥ K is led you hold ♥ 7 3 2

Tell partner that you have nothing to offer in the suit by playing the ♥7 – ‘**High for Hate**’

2) **Dummy**
 ♥ 8 5
♥ K is led you hold ♥ A 9 5 3

Tell your partner that you like the suit. Play the ♥3 – ‘**Low for Like**’

3) **Dummy**
 ♥ 9 5
♥ A is led you hold ♥ 8 3
Against a suit contract

Tell your partner that you like the suit. Partner promises to have the ♥K. Play the ♥ 3 – ‘**Low for Like**’ If partner cashes ♥K and then plays a third heart you will be able to ruff!

4) Here Declarer, South, can set a trap and West needs to pay attention to his partner.

	Dummy	
	♥ 9 5 4	
♥ K is led		you hold ♥ 8 3. Play ♥ 8 – ‘High for Hate’ I can give you no help
	♥ A J 6	
	Declarer	

Declarer ducks the ♥K lead. If West continues with the ♥Q Declarer will win both ♥A and the ♥J!

There are Two types of Defence – Active and Passive

Active Defence

is needed when the defenders are in a hurry because a threat is obvious such as:

- 1 You can see that the Defenders’ might be able to put the contract down!
- 2 A long strong suit is visible in dummy on which Declarer will be able to discard losers
- 3 There is a threat of Declarer ruffing the Defenders’ high cards.
- 4 Defenders can count that Declarer has enough tricks for his contract if he can get on lead.

Let’s look at examples of each of these.

- 1 You can see that the Defenders' might be able to put the contract down!

South is playing in 3NT.

West's opening lead is the ♠2, 4th highest/best card from a suit headed by at least one honour. East wins with the ♠A, leads back the suit so the defence take the first 4 tricks. West is on lead. What should he do?

Cash the ♥A to defeat the contract!

	♠ 6 5 3
	♥ JT 9 3
	♦ A Q J 8
	♣ K 7
♠ K J 4 2	N
♥ A Q	W E
♦ T 9 6 5	
♣ J T 9	S

If you can see how to defeat the contract, be **ACTIVE**.

- 2 There is a long strong suit is visible in dummy on which Declarer will be able to discard losers

Active or Passive defence?

♠ 8 6 4
♥ K J
♦ 7 6 2
♣ A K Q J T

♠ A 7 2
♥ 7 6 5 4
♦ A 8 4
♣ 9 8 4

South is in 4♥ after a straight forward auction

♠ J (led)

N
W E
S

East wins the initial lead with the ♠A
Now what?

East, **observe dummy** - look at those winning **clubs**.
Clearly an **active defence** is called for 🧐

The threat is Dummy's long solid **club** suit on which Declarer can discard losers
The defence need to hurry to cash whatever winners they have
Lead ♦ A and watch for partner's attitude signal
If partner encourages, continue with **diamond** If he discourages revert to **spades**
partner might have led ♠ J from ♠ K J T (top of an interior sequence). South might hold the ♠Q in which case West (partner) can capture it.

3 Threat of ruffing the Defenders' high cards.

Hand 3

E/W vulnerable. Dealer South

♠ J 4
♥ K J 7
♦ 8 6 4 2
♣ K J 8 3

♠ A K Q
♥ 9 6 4
♦ Q 9
♣ A Q T 6 4

South	West	North	East
1♥	pass	2♥	3♣
4♥	all pass		

South plays in 4♥

♠ T 8 6 3 2
♥ -
♦ J T 7 5 3
♣ 9 7 3

N
W E
S

♠ 9 7 5
♥ A Q T 8 5 3 2
♦ A K
♣ 2

Opening lead from West
♣ 9 Partner's suit
East wins the first trick
Observe dummy – is there a threat?

Dummy has no long suit for Declarer to establish
Threat is possibility of a **spade** ruff in dummy (North)
Lead a trump to **cut down on ruffing** 🧐

East keep leading trumps at every opportunity
Declarer must now eventually lose a **spade**

4 Defenders can count that Declarer has enough tricks for his contract if he can get on lead. Sometimes a risky lead is needed.

Active or Passive defence?

♠ Q 4 2
♥ A Q 9 7
♦ 3 2
♣ 7 5 3 2

South is in 4♠ after a straight forward auction
West leads ♦Q

♦ Q (led)

N
W E
S

♠ 6 3
♥ 5 4 3 2
♦ A 9 7
♣ K J 9 4

East wins the initial lead with the ♦A
Now what?

East can see that **hearts** are working for Declarer.
Active defence is called for 🤖

Declarer must have ♦K (Note West's initial lead of the ♦Q)
East wins the 1st trick with ♦A
clubs are the defenders' only hope
Lead ♣4 'Low for Like'

Passive Defence is needed when defenders see no obvious threats. In this situation try not to give tricks away. Keep your leads safe. Be Patient.

Examples of situations when a defender's lead may give a trick away:

- 1 Leading from a suit with a single honour or broken honours
- 2 Giving Declarer a 'Ruff and Discard'
- 3 Playing a card from a 'Frozen Suit'

1 Leading from a suit with a single honour or broken honours

Dummy

♥ 7 5

East

♥ J 9 4 3

West

♥ K T 8 3 2

Declarer

♥ A Q 6

If West leads 4th highest card, ♥ 3, Declarer (South) will win a trick with the ♥ Q which is a trick he could not have won without defenders' help. In a NT contract defenders' gain because, in the end, a total of 3 hearts are established and available for the defence.

However, in a suit contract, this loss of a trick gains nothing because Dummy will be able to ruff the defenders' winners!

2 Avoid giving a Ruff and Discard

Ruff and Discard can occur if Declarer and Dummy are both void in an outside suit and there is at least one trump in both Declarer and Dummy's hands. Now, if this outside suit is led, then Declarer can discard a loser from one hand and ruff in the other. The defence have given away a trick!

3 Beware of Frozen Suits

This is a '**Frozen Suit**'. Whichever side first leads the suit will give away a trick provided the second player remembers '**Second Hand Play Low**' – Try it.

	Dummy	
	♥ Q 7 5	
West		East
♥ A T 2		♥ K 9 6 3
	♥ J 8 4	
	Declarer	

A Frozen suit is easy for Declarer to recognise because he can see both hands. For defenders it is not quite so easy. Basically, beware of leading a suit in which you have a **single, isolated, unsupported honour**.

When defending passively, don't be afraid of letting Declarer win a trick he will be winning anyway. If the Defence need 5 tricks to defeat the contract, it does not matter if they win the first 5 tricks or the last 5 tricks!

Why Defenders fail

- 1 Failing to play passively. The temptation is always to play aggressively!
- 2 Premature cashing of winning cards. Withholding winning cards requires judgement and that requires practice. Always be aware that it might not be correct to win a trick so always consider not cashing winners. The more you try, the better your judgement will get.
- 3 Giving Declarer information by hesitating before playing a card. If you have a key card in your hand and stop to think before your play to a trick, you tell Declarer that you have something to think about. Try to do your thinking before you are called on to make the play!