



# The Opening Lead

The wrong lead can let through an unmakeable game; an inspired one can beat one that seems unbreakable. But there are no Rules for finding the winning lead every time: these are only rough guidelines.

## Choosing a Lead

*The first step is to decide which suit to lead.*

There may be **clues from the Bidding**:

If partner has bid a suit – lead it unless you have a very good alternative

If declarer or dummy has bid a suit the chances are that will be one of their Work Suits – lead something else

Try to picture the hidden hands based on the auction – maybe you can visualise giving partner a ruff

## Lead Strategy 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* opponents have bid it (or implied it by using Stayman)

*or* your hand is so weak that you will never get in to cash your length tricks.

With two suits of the same length prefer to lead a major when opponents have not looked for a major suit fit

lead the one with **lower cards** – aces and kings may provide entries to cash it.

## Lead Strategy against suit contracts

Try to establish and cash tricks in unbid suits, or suits your side has bid.

With a choice lead from a sequence of honours rather than from single honours

Do not lead unsupported aces; do not underlead an ace.

Sometimes go for ruffs by leading a singleton, or a suit you expect partner to be short in.

*Once you have chosen a suit the second step is to decide which card to lead*

Lead **top** of a sequence of honours

**higher** of touching honours (but against NT fourth highest from any suit with only two honours)

**low** from an honour or two non-touching honours

(The traditional lead is your fourth highest card. This allows partner to draw some conclusions

Eg if partner leads ♦2 and it is his fourth highest card he must have precisely four diamonds)

**high** from a suit with no honours

| Card Combination          | Lead against a suit contract   | Lead against no-trump          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| AKQ and others            | Ace                            | Ace                            |
| KQJ, KQ10 and others      | King                           | King                           |
| QJ10, QJ9 and others      | Queen                          | Queen                          |
| J109, J108 and others     | Jack                           | Jack                           |
| 1098, 1097 and others     | Ten                            | Ten                            |
| AK and others             | Ace                            | Fourth highest                 |
| KQ and others             | King                           | Fourth highest                 |
| QJ and others             | Queen                          | Fourth highest                 |
| AQJ and others            | Ace (prefer not to lead this)  | Queen                          |
| KJ10 and others           | Jack                           | Jack                           |
| K109, Q109 and others     | Ten                            | Ten                            |
| K or Q or J and others    | Low from three, fourth highest | Low from three, fourth highest |
| KJ or Q10 and others      | Low from three, fourth highest | Low from three, fourth highest |
| Three or more small cards | Second highest                 | Second highest                 |
| Doubleton                 | Higher card                    | Higher card                    |