



# 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  $\spadesuit 2$  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