

Opening Leads No Trumps

Which Suit? We want to find the declaring partnership's weakest suit. This is going to be the Defending partnership's strongest.

When no suits bid in auction e.g. 1NT - Pass - 3NT - Pass

- Choose your longest & strongest suit.
- With 2 equally long suits, prefer a major to a minor.

When suits bid in an auction

- If Stayman used, prefer minor to major with 2 equal suits.
- If partner bid a suit or X'd conventional bid suit, lead it unless you have a very strong lead of your own.
- Avoid a suit where partner could've X'd conventional bid for lead but didn't unless it is your long strong suit.
- Avoid leading suits opponents have bid unless you are v. strong with a long sequence.

Active or Passive?

Vs. a confidently bid game auction. Attack with active lead.

Leading from the top of a sequence is an active lead, which tries to establish Defence suits and tricks early.

- Leading A from AKQx is both active and safe.
- Leading Q from AQJx is still active but risks giving declarer a trick with the K that he wouldn't make if the suit were led from any of the other three hands.

Taking a risk in what you hope is the Declarer's weak suit may be the only way to defeat a No Trump contract where Declarer appears to have HCPs to spare.

- A 3 card suit with 2 honours preferable to longer suit headed by a single low honour as chance of establishing weak long suit low.

Vs. an auction inching into game. Safe lead needed.

When the Declaring partnership has the minimum points for a no trump game contract it is important not to risk gifting Declarer a trick that allows him to make his contract.

- Either top of sequence [strong but safe active] or passive high for hate.
- Avoid 'low for like leads' here if possible.

Opponents have strong minor suit but preferred NT game to 11 trick minor suit game. Attack with an active lead [see above]. They hope to establish and run their minor suit quickly forcing you into discards. Take your tricks whilst you can.

Which Card?

- Top of **THREE** Touching Honours or more from a **4+ card** suit. **AKQx**, **KQJT**x
- Top of **2** Touching Honours with:-
 - i. a 1 card gap – a near sequence of 3 **AK*Jx**, **KQ*Tx**,
 - ii. a non-touching higher honour **A*QJx**, **K*JT**x, **A**JT**x
 - iii. a **3 card** suit & no suitable long suit to lead **KQx**
- Otherwise **Low** [for Like] from an honour in a suit with 3 or more cards. 4th card if your suit is long. **AT832**, **KQ73**, **K73**, **AQ103** **A low card promises an honour.**
- High [for Hate] from a suit with no honour. **9762**, **82**, **A high card denies an honour**

Rule of 11

When the fourth highest from the longest and strongest suit is led, subtraction of the value of the card played from eleven gives the number of higher cards in the remaining three hands.

The lead of a 2 in a No Trump contract usually indicates that the opening leader has only 4 cards in the suit.

- **Did the bidding suggest a 5:3 trump fit & do you have or will partner have 4 trumps?** Consider leading a long suit in hope of making the long hand ruff until he loses trump control.
- **Confident auction.** Active lead needed.
- **Inching into Game Contract auction.** **Passive lead to avoid giving away an extra trick needed.** Lead a trump unless a singleton or High for hate from a side suit not headed by an Honour.

Opening Leads Suit Contracts

Which Suit?

- **Did Partner bid a suit or make a lead directing double of a conventional bid?**
Lead it unless you have a good Option.
- **Did Partner have the chance to make a lead directing double & didn't?**
Avoid leading that suit unless it is your strong suit.
- **Do you have a strong opening lead option e.g. A from AK?**
Lead it.
- **Do you have a sidesuit singleton?** With an early trump entry, a singleton lead becomes strong even when it is in a suit bid by the declaring partnership.
Lead it unless a ruff will cost a natural trump trick.
- **Did the Auction hint at how Declarer will get rid of his losers?**
 - Ruffing in the short hand** – If you are strong in the opponents' second suit they won't have winners for discards and will need ruffs.
Lead a trump.
 - Establishing Dummy's suit for discards** – If you are weak in their second suit they will discard their losers on length winners.
Attack with an active lead to get your tricks early
 - They are short of points for their contract.** – They are relying on distribution and cross ruffing to make tricks.
Lead a trump even with a sidesuit AK. They will have shortages.
 - Dummy gave preference to Declarer's second suit** – He is short in the first suit and can soon ruff unless his trumps are taken out.
Lead a trump.
 - Partner passed your TOX.** – He has a long strong trump suit.
Lead a trump if you have any
- **Did the Opponents bid 3 suits then duck out of NTs?** They have a weak suit. Lead it.

Which Card?

AKx KQx QJT_x Top of Sequence of 2 or more Honours

x side-suit Singleton. If partner returns lead you can ruff.
[side-suit = a suit that is not trumps]

K73 Q973 Low [for Like] from an honour, KJ8742 Fourth highest card if your suit is long. A low card promises an honour
But

NEVER lead away from an unsupported ace. **A963**

9762, 82, High [for Hate] from a suit with no honour
A high card denies an honour

Lead Effectiveness Vs Suit Contracts

Lead

Score out of 10

| | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| AK83 | Ace from Ace/King. | 10 |
| 4 | Singleton [not a trump.] | 9 |
| KQJ6 | King from King/Queen/Jack. | 9 |
| KQ76 | King from King/Queen. | 8 |
| QJ104 | Queen from Queen/Jack/Ten | 8 |
| QJ52 | Queen from Queen/Jack/x | 7 |
| 83 | Top of an xx doubleton | 5 |

| | | |
|-------------|---------------------------|----------|
| 852 | High x from rubbish. | 4 |
| Q952 | Low from Queen /x/x/x | 4 |
| J4 | Honour top of a doubleton | 2 |
| K752 | Low from K/x/x/x | 2 |
| KJ53 | Low from King/Jack/x/x | 2 |
| AT74 | An unsupported Ace | 1 |
| AT74 | Low from an Ace | 0 |