

Think and Play

Defence against NT



Opening Leads against NT Contracts:

Guidelines:

The aim of the defence against NT contracts is to set up tricks in their long suit before declarer sets up tricks in his.

This means that the defender making the opening lead will normally lead from his long suit *unless*

- ❖ his partner has overcalled a different suit
- ❖ the opposition have bid his suit
- ❖ he has a weak hand lacking entries.



Standard leads apply eg top of sequences, fourth highest from an honour, “top of nothing” or middle-up-down and high /low from doubleton.

Honour Sequence :

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
		1♣	2♦
Dble	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Dlr: East
 Vul: N/S

♠
♥
♦
♣

W	NORTH	E
E	18	S
S	SOUTH	T

♠
♥
♦
♣

♠	8 6 4
♥	9 2
♦	K Q 10 9 6 4
♣	Q 7

As South what do you lead?

Your partner probably has about the same number of HCPs as you but hasn't bid. Leading your own suit is the best of poor options because you have no clear outside entries and declarer clearly has a stopper. From KQJ or KQ10, you lead the K.

Honour Sequence :

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
		1♣	2♦
Dble	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Dir: East
 Vul: N/S

March 2, 2015

♠ QJ9
♥ A653
♦ J2
♣ 9854

♠ K732
♥ K74
♦ 73
♣ AJ102

West	North	East
	18	
	South	

♠ A105
♥ QJ108
♦ A85
♣ K63

	8	
11		14
	7	

♠ 864
♥ 92
♦ KQ10964
♣ Q7

	♠	♥	♦	♣	N
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	4	-	5	4	4
W	4	-	5	4	4

East as declarer can see up to 10 tricks if the club finesse through your hand works and North has the AH. She will never finesse into your hand because you are the dangerous opponent and she has only one diamond stopper. You have advertised a 6 card suit but declarer will probably duck twice just in case you only have five since she has no way of getting to 11 tricks before she loses 3.

Rule of Eleven Regarding Opening Leads

This applies only if you expect the lead is fourth highest eg against NT.

Consider the following hand:

Dummy
J63

Lead against 3NT : 7

You
K105

You subtract the lead from 11 and then subtract the number of cards above the lead in dummy and your hand to get to the numbers of cards above the lead in declarer's hand.

In this case, declarer has one card above the 7 in his hand. If a low card is played in dummy you should play the 10 (finesse against the dummy) because if declarer has either the Q or A he has one stop. If you play the K and he has the A you have allowed him to create two stops by taking your K with his A.

Rule of Eleven Regarding Opening Leads

This applies only if you expect the lead is fourth highest eg against NT.

Declarer as well as the defender whose partner has led can also use the Rule of 11 to advantage.

	<u>Dummy</u>
Lead against 3NT : 7	J63
	<u>Declarer</u>
	A4

By similar logic he can deduce RHO has two cards higher than the 7 . He can do 2 things:

- Duck, hoping that RHO will play the Q or K rather than his other higher card
- Play the J which is the only genuine defence against strong opponents, hoping the lead is from KQ.

Unblocking to facilitate communications:

March 3, 2015

Dir: South
Vul: None

	♠ J 5		
	♥ A J 8 7 4		
	♦ Q 9 5		
	♣ 5 4 2		

♠ 8 4 2		♠ Q 9 7 6 3	
♥ 10 6		♥ K 3 2	
♦ 10 8 4 2		♦ A 7	
♣ J 10 9 6		♣ K Q 7	

		NORTH		EAST	
WEST	27	SOUTH	EAST	WEST	NORTH

	♠ A K 10		
	♥ Q 9 5		
	♦ K J 6 3		
	♣ A 8 3		

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	1	3	4	2	3
S	1	3	4	1	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

8		14	
1	17		

Bidding			
W	N	E	S
	*		1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Notes: * = transfer bid
Perhaps South should bid 4H but it doesn't make unless you follow a very counterintuitive line.

West finds the JC lead and East feels better that he didn't bid 2S over the 2D. The J is an honour lead from J109 (xx) or from J108(xx). East has 14HCPs so can conclude that the JC is probably the only royal card West holds and that he has no entries. He should put the QC on the JC to unblock the suit. If declarer has Ax in clubs he can only hold up once. When East gets in, he can then play KC and his 7C to partner.

Unblocking to facilitate communications:

Dir: East
Vul: N/S

♠ Q J 9
♥ A 6 5 3
♦ J 2
♣ 9 8 5 4

♠ K 7 3 2
♥ K 7 4
♦ 7 3
♣ A J 10 2

W	NORTH	E
E	18	A
S	SOUTH	S

♠
♥
♦
♣

March 2, 2015.

East is in 3NT and your partner leads the KD. Declarer plays 3D. *What do you play?*



Unblocking to facilitate communications:

March 2, 2015.

East is in 3NT and your partner leads the KD. Declarer plays 3D. *What do you play?*



Dlr: East Vul: N/S	♠ QJ9 ♥ A653 ♦ J2 ♣ 9854	♠ A105 ♥ QJ108 ♦ A85 ♣ K63																																		
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W	4	-	5	4	4																															

The KD lead is from KQ10. Obviously it cannot be from AKJ or KQJ which would be other possibilities if you did not hold the JD.

You should play the JD on the KD to both unblock and to show your partner that declarer is not lying low if she holds AJx waiting for your partner to continue the suit so that she has two stoppers. (Bath Coup).

Hold Ups by the Defence against NT Contracts:

Most of us are familiar with the idea of holding up the A to prevent declarer setting up a long suit in dummy (and possibly also his hand if he is weak) where there are no outside entries to it.

Dummy

xx

xxx

KQJxxx

xx

Declarer leads towards the long suit in dummy in a NT contract and you hold Axx in front of dummy. You duck to ensure that declarer can never run all those diamonds. *But how many times?*

In these situations your partner should give you count to ensure that you don't duck more times than you need to and give declarer an extra trick she shouldn't deserve. Partner can play a **high/low** to show an even number and **low/higher** to show she holds an odd number. If you duck and partner plays a low card then she may have a singleton and you need to hold up twice. If she plays a high card then she (probably) has a doubleton. Getting count early is obviously easier if your partner plays before you.

Hold Ups by the Defence against NT Contracts:

Dummy(North)

xxx

xx

AQJ10x

xxx

Bidding:

S

2NT (strong)

N

3NT

You are sitting over dummy with Kx in diamonds and declarer finesses the JD, partner playing the 6D. *What do you play?*

Partner appears to have 4 x diamonds and declarer, 2 x diamonds. **Duck.**

Hold Ups by the Defence against NT Contracts:

Dummy(North)

Jxx

xxxx

KQ109

xx

You (East)

xxx

Jxx

AJxx

xxx

Bidding:

S

1C

3NT

N

1D

Partner leads 5S. Declarer wins with QS. She finesses the 9D, partner playing the 7D. *What do you play and then what do you lead?*

Partner appears to have Kxxxx in spades and a doubleton diamond. Declarer probably has a strong club suit, double stops in the majors and 3 x diamonds. Play the AD on the 9D to fool her into thinking she has now has 3 x diamond tricks assured, by repeating the diamond finesse, the JD being marked with your partner. Play another spade. If you play JD, and switch to a spade she will be forced to give up on diamonds and make the contract against the odds by playing her club suit from hand. She may hold AQ AK xxx AKJxxx and your partner the doubleton Qx in clubs.

Difficult Examples

(definitely not for the faint-hearted)

Opening Leads
against
NT Contracts

Opening Leads against NT Contracts- Clues from the Bidding:

Guideline:

Lead partner's suit if the opposition has called yours

<u>The bidding</u>			
W	N	E	S
			1C
---	1D	---	2H
---	3C	---	3D
---	3S	---	3NT
All Pass			
E-W vulnerable Dealer South			

West

S	K 9 6
H	Q 8 7 6 3
D	Q 6 4 3
C	3

Before deciding your lead as West consider:

What is declarer's point range? What is his shape?

How good is North's spade stop? Does he have a four card suit?

Does South have a full or partial spade stop?



Declarer has “jump shifted” indicating a strong hand (17 or more HCP) and forcing his partner to make a further bid.

Partner shows preference to clubs but **declarer makes a further attempt at game** (in diamonds) forcing another bid. Declarer should have at least 19 HCP to bid this way since his partner may only have 6 HCP.

Declarer is also showing 1-4-3-5 distribution i.e. a singleton spade, but probably an honour card to support his partner’s weak stopper; his partner’s spade bid shows a partial stop only. Otherwise he would have bid 2NT.

Your heart suit is too weak to be worth leading since declarer has bid it, but your partner must have at least 5 spades. The best defence is a spade lead and actually the KS to guard against declarer having the singleton QS.

Opening Leads against NT Contracts- Clues from the Bidding:

	S Jxxx	
	H Kx	
	D Kxxx	
S K9x	C 10 9x	S A 10 xxx
H Qxxxx		H 109
D Qxxx		D xx
C x	S Q	C J xxx
	H A J xx	
	D A J 10	
	C A K Q xx	



*Source: Improve your Opening Leads
– Kelsey & Matheson*

Pre-empts converted to NT Contracts:

Guidelines:

Good players convert their partner's pre-empt to a NT contract only if they have at least a partial fit, knowing that entries to the long suit will be limited. In this situation it is crucial for the defence to establish their suit rapidly.

The bidding

<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>
	3D	---	3NT

All pass

All vulnerable Dealer North

	S	A	J	8	3	
West	H	6	5			
	D	5	4			
	C	A	Q	7	5	3

West's strong holding in the black suits confirms that declarer hopes to cash most if not all of dummy's diamonds. *Is there any future in a heart lead? If a black suit lead, which card?*



Pre-empts converted to NT Contracts :

	S x	
	H K J 10	
	D K J 10 9 8 7 6	
S A J xx	C xx	S K 9 xxx
H xx		H 9 xxxx
D xx		D x
C A Q xxx	S Q 10 x	C xx
	H A Q x	
	D A Q x	
	C K J 10 9	

*Source: Improve your Opening Leads
– Kelsey & Matheson*

Hearts are unlikely to work for the defence unless partner is full of heart honours and then she is unlikely to have black suit honours or another entry. Declarer might make 7 diamonds, 1 x heart and 1 x spade. In situations like this the lead of an Ace in the black suits is almost mandatory to avoid giving away a cheap trick. The lead of the AC will not cost if partner has the KC whereas a lead of the AS will cost if partner has the KS without the QS. **After playing the AC, a discouraging signal from partner may persuade you to switch to a small spade.**

