



Defending

21 May 2019

“We had rubbish cards all evening and no chance of winning”

- ♠ On average, we spend twice as much time defending as playing
- ♠ Two heads should be better than one
 - ♥ ...but only if they are working together!
- ♠ Your goal is to win one more trick than the other defenders
- ♠ The other defenders will have to play with the same poor hand
- ♠ Defending, even with a poor hand, is a great opportunity

Information available before the first lead

- ♣ What you can deduce from the bidding
 - ♦ Was your Partner strong enough to open the bidding or compete?
 - ♦ If so, what is your Partner's longest strong suit?
 - ♦ How many combined points do your Opponents have if they have found their best contract?
 - ♦ Which Opponent is strong in which suit?
- ♠ If Declarer is to your right, all of the above can help you decide what to lead
- ♠ You may also wish to use your first lead to give your Partner information

Suit and card to lead against a Trump contract

Suit to lead (from non-trump suits)	Card to lead	Exceptions	Examples and Effectiveness	
Suit bid by partner	Top card if you have an honour (otherwise lowest)	You would need a very good reason not to (and partner might not play with you again)	Source: Andrew Robson	
Touching honour cards (include 10 as an honour)	Top card	Do not lead from suit with an "internal sequence" such as K, J, 10, 7	AK74	10
			KQJ6	9
			KQ76	8
			QJT4	8
			QJ52	7
Singleton card	No choice		3	9
Longest 3+ card suit with one or more Honours that are not in a sequence	Lowest card	Do not lead from under an Ace	Q952	4
		Avoid leading with 3 cards to the Queen	K752	2
		Avoid leading from suit with Ace and Queen	KJ53	2
		Risky to lead with 4 cards to King or to Jack	AT74	0
Longest suit without an Honour	Second highest card		852	4
Doubleton suit	Highest card		83	5
			J4	2
Do not lead an Ace (without having the King) except against a Slam contract				

NB – Chart included for completeness. Fuller notes on Trump leads on website

Opening leads against a No Trump contract

First exception to 4 th highest of your longest suit			
Same longest suit, but leading a card other than the 4 th highest in a suit			
Criteria		Examples of what to lead	
1	Top card from a sequence of 3 cards, headed by an honour (incl. 10)	K Q J 8 3	10 9 8 5 2
2	Top card from a broken sequence, headed by an honour	A K J 5 4	Q J 9 6 3
3	Top of an internal sequence, headed by an honour	A Q J 6 2	Q 10 9 7 3
4	The Ace from Ace, King followed by 2 or 3 more cards in suit	A K 5 4 3	A K 6 2
5	The second highest from a long suit with no honours (“high” for “hate”)	9 8 5 3 2	8 6 4 2
But			
Not the top card from two touching honours, other than for 4 above		K Q 5 3 2	J 10 8 5 3

NB – Chart included for completeness. Fuller notes on No Trump leads on website

Information available after the first lead

- ♠ You can now see what is in Dummy's hand
 - ♥ If Opponents are in a No Trump contract, did your Partner lead the 4th highest from longest suit?

Rule of 11

Common No Trump lead:	4th highest of your longest (and strongest) suit	
Why?	This helps your partner to work out your length and strength in the suit for which you believe you can make tricks	
How do you know if your Partner has led the 4 th highest of a suit?	"Rule of 11"	
	11 less the value of the led card = Number of higher cards in the hands of Dummy, you and Declarer	
	You can see the number of higher cards in that suit in Dummy and your Partner's hand	If this already exceeds the number above, the lead could not have been the 4 th highest.
		If, as is often the case, the lead is the 4 th highest, you can work out whether Declarer has one or more higher cards than you – which helps you to know what to play.

Information available after the first lead

- ♠ You can now see what is in Dummy's hand
 - ♥ If Opponents are in a No Trump contract, did your Partner lead the 4th highest from longest suit?
- ♠ You know the combined points of Declarer and your Partner
 - ♥ How do you think the points are split between the two?
- ♠ Looking at Dummy's hand, what are the suits to lead to and to avoid?

Example 1 of deducing what is held by Declarer and Partner

Your Partner

Lead 3 ♣

Declarer

W	North	E
e	12	a
s	South	s

Dummy

♠KJ72
♥943
♦K54
♣K64

Your hand

♠Q8643
♥765
♦AJ8
♣98

Bidding:

West	North	East	South
1 ♥	PASS	1 ♠	PASS
1 NT	PASS	3 NT	PASS
PASS	PASS		

What can we deduce about the other two hands?

	Combined	Declarer	Partner
Strength:	23 HCP	15 – 16 HCP	7 – 8 HCP
Content:		4 – 5 ♥ s	1+ honours in ♣ s
What else:		Declarer has three ♣ s higher than 3 ♣	3 ♣ was probably 4 th highest ♣ of 5

Example 1 of deducing what is held by Declarer and Partner

<p>♠A10 ♥KQ1082 ♦732 ♣AQ5</p>	<p>♠95 ♥AJ ♦Q1096 ♣J10732</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">North</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: green; color: white; text-align: center;">West</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: white; text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">12</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: green; color: white; text-align: center;">East</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">South</td></tr> </table>	North	West	12	East	South	<p>♠KJ72 ♥943 ♦K54 ♣K64</p>
North								
West								
12								
East								
South								
HCPs								
<table border="1" style="margin: auto; text-align: center;"> <tr><td style="border: none;">8</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: none;">15</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: none;">10</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: none;">7</td></tr> </table>	8	15	10	7	<p>♠Q8643 ♥765 ♦AJ8 ♣98</p>			
8								
15								
10								
7								

Bidding:			
West	North	East	South
1 ♥	PASS	1 ♠	PASS
1 NT	PASS	3 NT	PASS
PASS	PASS		

What can we deduce about the other two hands?			
	Combined	Declarer	Partner
Strength:	23 HCP	15 – 16 HCP	7 – 8 HCP
Content:		4 – 5 ♥ s	1+ honours in ♣ s
What else:		Declarer has three ♣ s higher than 3 ♣	3 ♣ was probably 4 th highest ♣ of 5

Example 2 of deducing what is held by Declarer and Partner

Dummy
 ♠853
 ♥K6
 ♦A52
 ♣AQ1094

Your Partner

Lead J♦

W e s t	North	E a s t
	3	
	South	

Declarer

Your hand
 ♠KQJ64
 ♥7543
 ♦943
 ♣5

Bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♠	PASS	2 ♣	PASS
2 ♦	PASS	4 ♠	PASS
PASS	PASS		

What can we deduce about the other two hands?

	Combined	Declarer	Partner
Strength:	21 HCP	11 – 15 HCP	6 – 10 HCP
Content:		5 ♠ s	Void in ♠ s
What else:		Not balanced	Not balanced Has 10 ♦

Example 2 of deducing what is held by Declarer and Partner

♠ 853
♥ K6
♦ A52
♣ AQ1094

♠ --
♥ AJ98
♦ J107
♣ J87632

♠ KQJ64
♥ 7543
♦ 943
♣ 5

♠ A10972
♥ Q102
♦ KQ86
♣ K

HCPs

13
7 6
14

West **North** **East**
3
South

Bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♠	PASS	2 ♣	PASS
2 ♦	PASS	4 ♠	PASS
PASS	PASS		

What can we deduce about the other two hands?

	Combined	Declarer	Partner
Strength:	21 HCP	11 – 15 HCP	6 – 10 HCP
Content:		5 ♠ s	Void in ♠ s
What else:		Not balanced	Not balanced Has 10 ♦

Example 3 of deducing what is held by Declarer and Partner

Your Partner

Lead A ♥

Declarer

W	North	E
e	12	a
s	South	t

Dummy

♠A764
♥84
♦J964
♣J103

Your hand

♠K5
♥J102
♦A105
♣K8742

Bidding:

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♦
3 ♦	3 ♥	4 ♦	PASS
PASS	4 ♥	PASS	PASS
5 ♦	5 ♥	PASS	PASS
6 ♦	PASS	PASS	PASS

What can we deduce about the other two hands?

	Combined	Declarer	Partner
Strength:	23 HCP	11 – 13 HCP	10 – 12 HCP
Content:		5 – 6 ♦ s 0 - 2 ♥ s	0 – 1 ♦ 6 – 8 ♥ s
What else:		Not balanced	Not balanced Has K ♥

Example 3 of deducing what is held by Declarer and Partner

♠QJ1082
♥AK97653
♦--
♣9

♠93
♥Q
♦KQ8732
♣AQ65

♠A764
♥84
♦J964
♣J103

West **12** **East**
South

HCPs

10
13 6
11

♠K5
♥J102
♦A105
♣K8742

Bidding:

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♦
3 ♦	3 ♥	4 ♦	PASS
PASS	4 ♥	PASS	PASS
5 ♦	5 ♥	PASS	PASS
6 ♦	PASS	PASS	PASS

What can we deduce about the other two hands?

	Combined	Declarer	Partner
Strength:	23 HCP	11 – 13 HCP	10 – 12 HCP
Content:		5 – 6 ♦ s 0 - 2 ♥ s	0 – 1 ♦ 6 – 8 ♥ s
What else:		Not balanced	Not balanced Has K ♥

Signalling to Partner

- ♣ Two main occasions when you can signal to your Partner
 1. When you are playing a card in the suit led
 2. When you are discarding, i.e. you do not have a card in the suit led
- ♣ In either case, you would not play a card that is a potential winner
- ♣ We will look at both the above types of signalling
- ♣ Some partners also signal a “Count” – not being covered today

Signalling to Partner with a card in the suit led

- ♠ This is often referred to by the term “Attitude”
- ♠ Used when responding to Partner’s lead
 - ♥ A high card is “encouraging” – Please lead a card in this suit to me
 - ♥ A low card is “discouraging” – I do not want you to lead this
- ♠ Robson: *“High for Aye, Low for No”*
- ♠ Do not use honour cards (potential winners) and treat high as >7 ; low as <7
- ♠ Some partnerships use “Reverse attitude” – Low encouraging; high discouraging

Signalling to Partner with a discard

- ♣ There are many variations, but I will mention three methods:
“Dodds”; “McKenney”; and “Attitude”
- ♣ I use McKenney with most partners and prefer it
 - ♦but it is a little complicated to use at first
- ♣ A fuller explanation of McKenney is on the website, but briefly:
 - ♦ You discard a high card in a suit if you would like a card led to you from the higher of the other two suits
 - ♦ You discard a low card in a suit if you would like a card led to you from the lower of the other two suits

Signalling to Partner with a discard (cont.)



With Dodds:

- ◆ You discard an even card in a suit if you would like a card led to you from that suit
- ◆ You discard an odd card in a suit if you would like a card led to you from the other suit of the same colour



With Attitude:

- ♣ You discard a high card in the suit you would like led to you
- ♣ You discard a low card in a suit you would not like to be led to you

Finally, some useful tips when discarding

Say you have to make discard(s). Here are some DOs and DONTs when deciding which suits to keep and which to release.

DON'T THROW when...

- It is equal length with dummy (or declarer).
- It is a four-card holding, unless you are sure declarer and dummy both have fewer cards.
- Partner is releasing the suit. He wants you to guard it.
- You are voiding yourself in a key suit. One round will see you show out, exposing partner's holding.

DO THROW when...

- Partner is guarding the suit.
- Your highest card is lower than dummy's lowest card.
- You are baring an honour in order to keep essential guards and/or winners elsewhere.
- It is dummy's short suit (in a trump contract), and declarer has spurned a chance to ruff losers (he cannot have any losers to ruff).

Source: - Andrew Robson' lesson on Signals and Discards

NB – Chart included for completeness – For those who wish to know more