

OPENING LEADS VS. SUIT CONTRACTS

Against notrump, we pretty much closed our eyes and led out best (unbid by the opponents) suit. Against suit contracts, our goal is different. We're not trying to set up a long suit. Our opponents have trumps to prevent us from taking lots of tricks in one suit. If we can set up maybe one or two tricks, we attempt this by leading top of touching honors such as A-K, K-Q, Q-J, or J-10.

What if we don't have any sequence (as is usually the case)? If partner bid a suit, we'd be happy to lead that. But, what if none of the above? No sequence and no help from partner?

We don't automatically lead our best suit. We don't lead away from (or lay down) an Ace against suit contracts (unless, of course, we have A-K).

What if we are on lead against 4 spades with something like:

Qxx Qxx Axx Kxxxx OR Qxx Jxx Axx KJxx

That's the way it usually is. No fun. Leading trumps is okay, but we don't want to lead from our trump Q 9 way to likely to cost a trick). We can rule out a diamond because we have the Ace. As to the other two suits, just hope you're a good guesser, leading from honors is dangerous and aggressive. Leading from a bunch of small cards not headed by an honor (even in trumps) is safer. Often the bidding gives us a clue as to which way to go. If the opponents have bid three suits, we'll usually lead the fourth one.

Sometimes the auction calls for an aggressive lead. If you think dummy might have a long running suit on which declarer could throw losers, you will tend to lead from an honor to try to set up tricks for the defense. For example, after 1 spade- 2 diamonds – 2 spades – 3 diamonds – 4 spades – Pass. You hold J87 K72 865 9632, lead an attacking 2 of hearts.

Suppose you decide to lead a heart against 4 spades from K7652, stick to leading 4th best. Unless your partner is very experienced and watches such things, it won't make any difference which small card you choose. But as you and your partner gain experience, you should lead the 5 of hearts, 4th best, from the holding above.

QUIZ: After 1 spade – Pass - 2 spades, all pass, what would you lead with:

1. J2 Q765 J876 J103
2. 876 A76 Q1087 Q32
3. 2 K1076 K932 K1076
4. Q65 A2 J876 7652

After 1 Heart – 2 clubs – 2 Hearts – 3 clubs – 4 Hearts, what would you lead with:

5. K432 865 J76 654

After 1 Heart – Pass – 2 Hearts – 2 Spades – 4 Hearts – All Pass, what would you lead with:

6. A32 QJ2 J1097 Q65

After 1 Spade Pass – 2NT (Jacoby) – Pass – 4 Spades – Pass 4NT – Pass – 5 Hearts Pass 6 Spades

What would you lead with:

7. 5 KQ762 A32 J872
8. J1073 3 1098 A7652

ANSWERS:

1. J of clubs, not completely safe, but better than anything else
 2. 8 of spades (or any spade), everything else is less appealing
 3. Should have balanced with a TO double, and avoided this opening lead
Decision, if you forgot to double, I hope you're a good guesser
 - 4 Club (any) Anything else is riskier, no need to take risks on this auction
 - 5 2 of spades, auction calls for aggression, best chance to establish/take some tricks
 - 6 J of diamonds, partner bid spades, but laying down the Ace is risky
 - 7 K of hearts, don't lay down the A of diamonds, you need 2 tricks, try for 1 in hearts
and one later in diamonds
 - 8 Ace of clubs, take that one and wait to set them with a trump trick
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