

A photograph of a grand building with classical columns and a wide set of stone steps leading up to them. The text "Leading against suit contracts" is overlaid in white on the steps.

Leading against suit contracts

Tips - the opening lead against suit contracts

- The race is on! Can the defence take their tricks before the opponents make theirs?
- Trying to defeat a contract requires teamwork
- Use the opening lead to provide information to your partner
- Use the bidding and the information in your hand to decide:
 - The suit and
 - The card

♠ 8 7
♥ J 4 2
♦ A Q 4 3
♣ 10 8 4 2

Which suit to lead?

- Lead partner's suit unless there is something better
- Avoid leading suits that the opponents have shown length or strength
- With three small trumps, consider leading a singleton or doubleton – hoping to get a ruff
- Sequences are good leads – they tell partner about your holding
- Avoid leading a suit where you have:
 - An unsupported Ace (no king)
 - An unsupported King (no queen)
- As well as looking in our hand, we need to look at the bidding

♠ 8 7
 ♥ J 4 2
 ♦ A Q 4 3
 ♣ 10 8 4 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♦
Pass	2 ♠	All pass	1 ♠
2 ♠ by South			

Which suit to lead?

- You are West leading against 2♠. Which suit would you lead?
- What does the bidding tell us?
 - South has diamonds and has 12+ points
 - North has at least 4 hearts
 - South has 4 spades (and less than 4 hearts as they didn't support North's hearts)
 - North has 4 spades and less than 13 points as they didn't bid game
- They have shown length in hearts and spades. We would like partner to lead a diamond to our AQ
- Lead clubs – the unbid suit

♠ 8 7
 ♥ J 4 2
 ♦ A Q 4 3
 ♣ 10 8 4 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♦
Pass	2 ♠	All pass	1 ♠
2 ♠ by South			

Which card in the suit?

- Top of honours (A if AK, K if KQxxx) This tells partner that you hold the honour below. They know they can lead back to you
- Top of a sequence (J if J1098). This tells partner that you don't have the honour above and also describes the holding below (can be really important in no trumps)
- If you have a broken sequence eg KJ1098, lead the J
- Low if you have an honour. This tells partner that you would like the suit led back
- High if you don't have an honour. This tells partner you would prefer another suit led back
- Top of doubleton (playing the smaller one next time)
- Middle from 3 without an honour (playing the higher one next time)
- If you have to lead a suit with an unsupported Ace, lead the Ace
- Lead ♣10 (you would prefer partner to lead something else back)

♠ K 7 2
 ♥ 4
 ♦ K 9 7 6 5
 ♣ 9 8 7 5

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♦	1 ♠
2 ♥	2 ♠	3 ♥	All pass
3 ♥ by West			

What do you lead?

- You are North on lead against 3♥. What do you lead?
- What do we know from the bidding:
 - East has an opening hand and 4 diamonds
 - West has 5 hearts and 10+ points
 - East has at least 3 hearts and isn't sure if game is on (probably opened light)
- Partner has bid!
- Partner's overcall should show two honours.
- Lead spades
- Which spade?
- ♠2 to show you have an honour.
- The K♦ is unsupported. Leading a small diamond will give a trick away if either opponent has the queen
- If you want to lead clubs, lead 9. This shows don't want partner to lead this suit.

♠ J 10 9
 ♥ 9 8 3
 ♦ J 6 4
 ♣ A Q 8 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
3 ♥	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
4 ♥ by East		4 ♥	All pass

What do you lead?

- You are South on lead against 4♥. What do you lead?
- From the bidding we know
 - East has 12+ points and 5 hearts
 - West has 10-12 points and 3+ hearts
 - East has got at least 15+ total points as they bid game
- You would like partner to lead a club to you as you have AQ
- You have a sequence in spades
- Lead spades
- Which spade?
- ♠J

What do you lead?

♠ 6 4
♥ 2
♦ Q 8 7 6 4 3
♣ A J 4 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	All pass		
4 ♠ by West			

- You are North on lead against 4♠. What do you lead?
- From the bidding we know
 - West has 12+ points and 5 spades
 - East has 6 to 9 total points and 3+ spades
 - West has got at least 20+ total points as they bid game, knowing that East might only have 6
- You would like partner to lead a club to your AJ. The Ace is unsupported - not an attractive lead
- You have 6 diamonds, it looks like East is short somewhere as they jumped to 4♠. So it is unlikely that there are many diamond tricks for North-South
- You have two small trumps. They are only going to be useful if you can trump something.
- Lead the singleton ♥2 hoping partner has the Ace and will give you a ruff

Summary – leads against suit contracts

- Use the opening lead to help your partnership defeat the contract
- Check the bidding and your hand to decide on:
 - The suit to lead
 - The card to lead
- Top of a sequence leads are good as partner can tell you have the card below
- Leading a low card usually indicates that you have an honour, so you would like it if partner led this suit back
- Leading a middle sized card indicates that you would prefer partner not to lead this suit back. You are asking partner to try something else
- Only with 2 or 3 small trumps lead a doubleton or singleton
- Discuss your leads with partner
- You can only lead what you have in your hand. When it doesn't work – smile!