



Defending No Trumps



Declarer should have more points than you, so your best chance of extra tricks is length – find a long suit and keep working it until you have the only cards left.

Opening lead – which suit? Bidding can sometimes give an indication of best lead.

- Best suit is one bid by your partner: high/low if doubleton; highest if 3+ to unblock short hand
- Top of a sequence of three ie. **KQJx**, **QJ10x**, **J109x**, **10987** and **AKQx**
- Honour sequence with the top 2 honours connected: **KQ104**, **QJ942**
- Internal sequence ie. **KJ109**, **Q10942**, **AQJ105**
- If hold **AK1032** lead A then **switch** hoping partner can lead suit through declarer
- If have choice between **♠KQ107** vs **♥A872** then **♠K** is a better lead than **♥2**
- 4th highest of your longest and strongest suit when no connected honour sequence. In addition to helping promote a long suit with strength, we are advising partner of our long suit and our fourth highest led signals partner to use the “Rule of 11” to calculate how many higher cards are held by the opponents. Here’s the formula: 11 – lead card value = remaining cards above the lead card spot value spread between remaining three hands.
- Avoid leading suits bid by opponents

During play return partner’s lead if you get the chance **and** if it is appropriate because there may be a better lead ie. **KQJx** in your hand or to dummy’s weakness. Example: if dummy holds **AQ10** in partner’s suit after partner then do not return partner’s suit, lead to dummy’s weakness or own sequence.

It is an unwritten rule that if dummy is to your left, you lead through dummy’s strength; if dummy is to your right, you lead to dummy’s weakness. Also, if dummy has a long suit, try to keep length with this suit rather than discarding the suit as declarer may need dummy’s suit length for extra tricks.

Although you and your partner are defending, you are both still communicating during play.

Signalling (attitude, low-like): If you have a choice of cards to play, a low card is encouraging, a high card discourages that suit.

Opportunities to signal are:

- Opening lead
- When declarer has played a card you cannot beat.
- When discarding for the first time. This will tell partner which suit you are keeping; it will also avoid you and partner keeping the same suit and declarer making tricks with low cards in other suits that you could be covering but have discarded.
- Watch for partner’s signals and respond to them when you get the chance.



Rule of 11



When partner leads fourth highest we can use the Rule of 11 to work out how many cards higher than the lead card are in declarer's hand.

The Rule of 11 is most commonly used: in a No Trump contract by 3rd player when partner has led 4th highest of their longest and strongest suit. It helps us to work out whether our side can play cheaply to win or promote a trick. It can also tell 3rd player if continuing the suit is hopeless and that a switch to another suit could be a better idea.

When we are third hand and the opening lead is the 4th highest of a long suit, we deduct the number of the card led from eleven. The result tells us how many cards higher than the one led are in the other three hands (i.e. in our hand, the dummy and declarer's hands). Once we see the dummy we can then work out how many of those higher cards are held by the declarer.

W	N	E	Partner (West) leads 7 and dummy plays 2. Subtract the card led 7 from 11 giving four. This tells us that there are four cards higher than the 7 in our hand, the dummy hand and declarer's hand. We can see four cards higher than 7 between our hand and dummy so we know declarer has no card higher than the seven.... we therefore play the three and partner wins with the seven. If the 9 was played from the dummy we would win the trick with the Jack.
7	K92	AJ3	

Here are all four hands: West - Q10874 North – K92 East – AJ3 South – 65

Why 11? The cards are numbered from 2 to 14, with the Ace being 14.

2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, J (11), Q (12), K (13), A (14)

If partner leads their 4th highest they have 3 higher cards than the card led thus $14 - 3 = 11$.

How do we know partner's lead is 4th highest?

We will need to judge whether partner's lead is likely to be 4th highest by looking at the card led and the other cards we can see.

Rule of 11 for Declarer

Declarer can also use the Rule of 11 in the same way to work out how many cards higher than the lead card are held by his right-hand opponent.

W	N	E	S	West leads the 5. Subtract 5 from 11 to give 6. Declarer has two higher cards, dummy has three, so East has just 1. Declarer plays low from dummy and sees East play the 9. After winning with the Ace South (declarer) deduces that West started with Q1065 or Q10653 and therefore (at some stage) takes the deep finesse of dummy's 8. This allows him to make 4 tricks in the suit.
Q10653	KJ82	9	A74	

Note: But declarer should beware if this is the unbid suit in the bidding, since West might then have led from Q65, in which case the deep finesse would cost a trick.