

# Lesson Notes: Opening Lead Basics

## 1) THE MOST DESIRABLE LEADS ARE:

- Top of a 3+ card sequence (KQJ, QJ10, J109, 1098) [A or K from A-K] (A 2-card sequence is okay, but not perfect).
- Partner's suit (lead same card that you would in any other suit). We no longer lead high from K75 (for example).

## 2) SPOT-CARD LEADS

When leading a spot-card, lead 4th best against NT. Lead 2 from K762. Lead 5 from K7652. Against suits the most popular method is also 4th best). Lead high from doubletons. Leading from 3 small is a matter of personal preference.

## 3) LEADING FROM KINGS or ACES:

It is aggressive to lead from a king, but called for when the auction tells you that your side might need to take tricks quickly. Never lead (or underlead) an ace against a suit contract.

Against notrump, usually lead 4th from your longest and strongest (unless you have 4+ cards and a sequence to lead the top card from). So, against notrump, you often will lead from an ace or king.

4) WHEN LEADING AN UNBID SUIT: Prefer majors to minors. Listen to the opponents (did they use Stayman, do they have a long suit, etc.?)

## 5) SHORT-SUIT LEADS IN SUIT CONTRACTS:

- Doubletons are overrated leads, especially with one honor.
- Trump control is a big plus. The best holding is Axx.
- Avoid short suit leads when your trump holding doesn't need a ruff.
- Avoid short-suit leads with trump length (or sure trump tricks).

## 6) LEADING TRUMP

- Usually this is a passive lead (you don't want to blow a trick).
- In general, don't lead a singleton trump
- Called for when declarer is playing in his second suit.

### a) Top of a 3+ card sequence:

Diagram 1: Hand with spades K Q J 7 4 3 2 4 3 2. Contract: 3NT. Lead: King of spades.

Diagram 2: Hand with spades 7 6 3 Q J 10 2 7 6 4 10 7 5. Contract: 3♥. Lead: Queen of spades.

### b) Leading from two-card sequences:

Diagram 1: Hand with hearts J 9 6 5 K Q 2 J 5 3 J 6 5. Contract: 2♥. Lead: King of hearts.

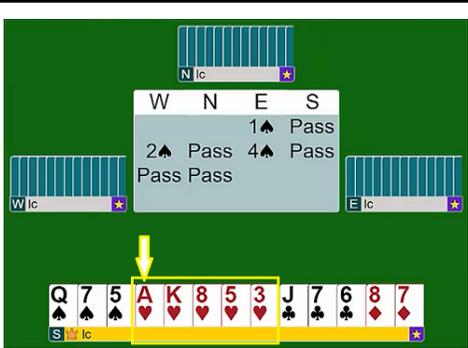
Diagram 2: Hand with hearts J 6 4 Q J 7 5 2 J 3 2 A 6. Contract: 2♠. Lead: Queen of hearts.

Diagram 3: Hand with hearts J 6 4 Q J 7 5 2 J 3 2 A 6. Contract: 3NT. Lead: Queen of hearts.

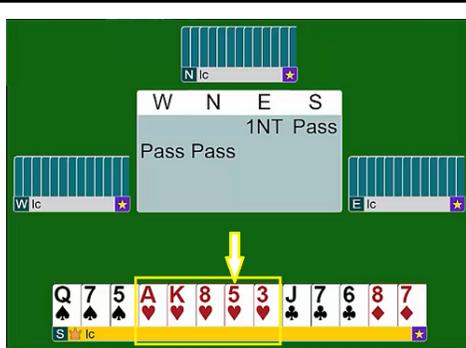
Against a suit contract, lead top of sequence. (On the example below, this would not be a good lead against NT)

Against suit contract:  
– Don't lead or underlead Aces.  
– Top of sequence

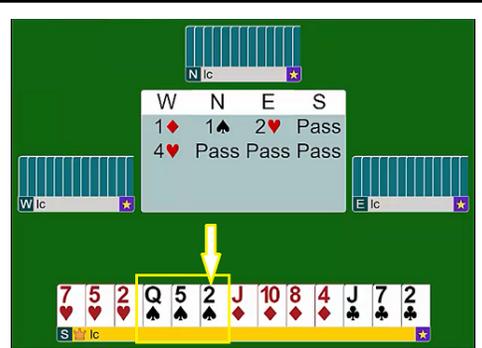
However, from same suit, if leading against no-trump, lead 4th best:



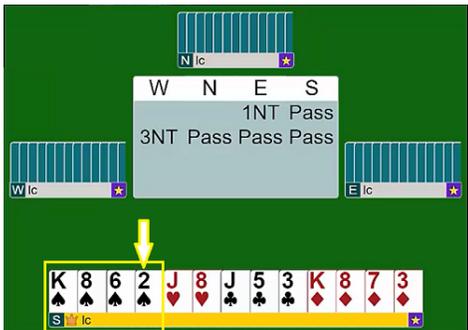
Lead Ace from Ace-King against a suit contract:



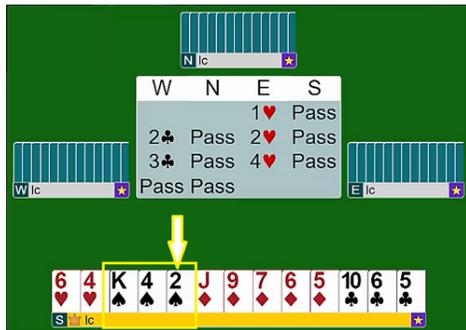
However, against no-trump lead 4th best:



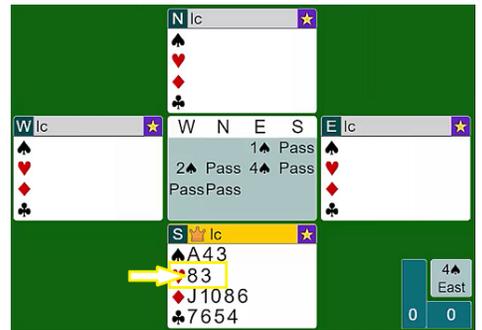
Lead partner's suit — but do not lead your highest unless you have a singleton or doubleton. Only 2 reasons not to lead your partner's suit: 1. you are void, or 2. you are dead.



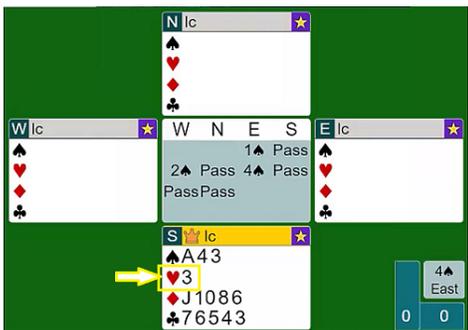
Against NT, if it's a close decision, it's preferable to choose the major.



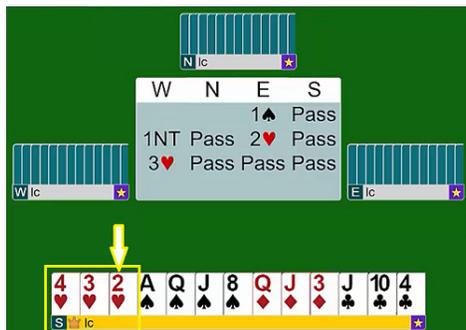
When to lead away from a King? It's an aggressive lead, but some auctions call for it eg opponents show a solid suit on which they can throw their losers



Sometimes several leads are possible & very close decisions. Above both top of sequence in diamonds & heart doubleton are good choices. Leading from small doubleton can work, but it is not recommended to lead from doubleton honors (Kx, Qx, etc.). Here slight preference towards leading the doubleton, as hold the trump Ace



However, on the hand below it is clear to lead the singleton, & not top of sequence from diamonds. Leading a diamond works against no-trump, but against suit, lead the singleton heart



About trump leads: There is an auction that "screams" for a trump lead. If your opponents have bid a suit, but end up playing in a different suit — you need to lead trumps.

## Q&A

Q1: Can you lead King from KQ10 against 3nt?

LC: If you have KQ10x or KQ10xx yes, definitely lead the King.

With KQ432, lead the 3. With KQ865, lead the 6. But with KQ1065, lead the K.

The general rule is to lead 4th best against no-trump, unless you have a suit headed by three cards in a row, or, like Marty Bergen used to say, by 2 and a half in a row: from QJ9x → lead the Queen; from J108x, lead the J. But with JT654, lead the 5.

If you have just KQ10, a 3-card suit, and you are defending 1NT – 3NT, you could maybe lead that but let's say we have:

♠KQ10 ♥J1087 ♦432 ♣432 → Here you lead ♥J

Or, if you have something like: ♠KQ10 ♥J54 ♦J432 ♣J32 then you could lead either ♦2, or ♠K.

Q3: When do we want to be passive on lead?

LC: Against part scores, when there is no reason to "attack".

Or if you have lots of things you don't want to lead away from. For example:

The bidding goes: 1♥ P 2♥ P 4♥ P P P

And you have: ♠Qxx ♥xxx ♦Jxxx ♣Axx → lead a trump.

So I am passive when I have nothing attractive to lead. Passive means safe.