

Developing a Plan on Defense

Opening Leads



Starting the Defense

When partner has not bid, you have a balanced hand and the opponents have had an unrevealing auction, such as 1NT - 3NT, determining the best opening lead is difficult.

It has been said that all opening leads are bad in this situation as you are giving declarer a free finesse by opening a new suit.

Sometimes, the opening leader will attempt to establish partner's long suit by leading their short suit, this can work, but try to avoid leading short suits against NT contracts. Unless the bidding tells you otherwise, it is normally harmful to the defense when you lead a short suit.

Think "4th best of your longest and strongest" against NT.

Rule of Eleven

When partner has made the opening lead of their 4th highest - subtract the card led from "11" and know the number of cards higher than the opening lead outside of your partner's hand.

Look at dummy, look at your hand and subtract the number of cards higher than the card led and know how many cards are higher than the led card in declarer's hand.

Half of the hands, your side is on defense. Half of all hands, your side wins the auction. When your side wins the auction, half of the time, your partner is the declarer and you are the "dummy" and not playing the cards.

In other words, you are playing the cards twice as often on defense as on offense.

Recommended Reading "Kantar on Defense" by Edwin Kantar and "Opening Leads" by Robert Ewen

Opening Lead against a Suit Contract

Top Priority - Lead partner's bid suit

Exception - you have a sequence of AKQx or KQJx

If partner has not bid....

Next Priority - Lead your singleton

As a general rule, if none of the above apply because partner has not bid....

- ✓ Lead the suit the opponents have not bid or a sequence QJT_x or JT9_x

Opening Lead against No Trump

Top Priority - Lead partner's bid suit

Exception - you have a strong sequence

If partner has not bid....

Next Priority

Lead 4th best of your longest and strongest (invite)

As a general rule, if none of the above apply because partner has not bid....

- ✓ Lead the suit the opponents have not bid or a sequence QJT_x or JT9_x
- ✓ xx - doubleton is a weak lead, unless partner bid the suit
- ✓ Jxxx is generally a poor lead
- ✓ Qxxx is generally a poor lead
- ✓ Do not lead away from an Ace and tend not to lead away from a King in a suit contract
- ✓ When in doubt - lead Trump - however a singleton trump is a poor lead as it often finesses partner

The lead of the Q guarantees the J, Qx or a singleton

If you are on lead and not sure which suit to proceed with

- Think -

When "Dummy" is on your right - lead the weakest suit in sight.



Bridge Defense Beginning Series #4

www.bridgewebs.com/borderlinebridge

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| #1 - Bridge Bidding Basics | #11 - Strips and Squeezes |
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Grafton Duplicate Bridge Club

Thursday Noon - Ameriprise Financial Bldg
Stratified Pairs - Bridge lessons at 11am
Director - Michael Leighton (701) 520-0753

Grand Forks Duplicate Bridge Club

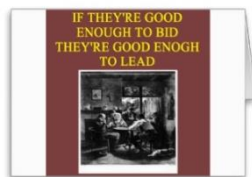
Monday 6:30pm - GF Senior Center
Stratified Pairs - Bridge lessons at 5:45pm
Friday 12:30pm - EGF Senior Center
Director - Tom Rand (701) 742-3676

Ambassador Bridge Club Winnipeg MB

Tuesday 12:15pm - MB Bridge Centre
Stratified Pairs
Wednesday 7pm - MB Bridge Centre
Invitational Pairs and Swiss Teams
Thursday 1pm - (0 - 200) Temple Shalom
Play and learn
Saturday 12:30pm - MB Bridge Centre
Swiss Teams
Director - Bill and Sue Treble (204) 669-1458

Carding on Defense

There is more than just following suit



Recommended Leads

AKx (if doubleton - KA)

KQJx KQTx

QJTx QJ9x

JT9x JT8x

Lead low from an Honor (A/K/Q) however, it is generally best not to lead away from an Ace or King in a suit contract on opening lead.

A **Low** lead says "Partner return my suit"

A **High** lead denies interest in having the suit returned; unless you play Journalistic leads and you have determined that partner has 2 cards higher than the lead of the "ten" or "nine".

Journalistic Leads

- ✓ Jack denies a higher honor
- ✓ Ten or 9 shows "0 or 2" higher

Special Situation (against NT)

When you lead an Ace against No Trump (as opposed to your 4th highest of your longest and strongest), you have the AKJTx or similar and are missing the Q or similar. If your partner has the Q, partner is requested to play the Q under your Ace (unblock) so that you can run the suit and hopefully take 5 tricks to defeat declarer in 3NT. Without the Q, partner should give count.

There is also a lot of discussion as to the best lead card with 3, 4 or 5 small spot cards. Some favor 4th best; Preferred is 2nd highest of 5 or 4 and top of nothing with 3.

It is often stated that...

"Defense is the hardest part of Bridge to learn".

Standard Carding

(When following suit to partner's lead)

Attitude - First

Count - Second

Suit Preference - Third

Attitude

Tell partner you like the suit led by following suit with a high spot card "7" (a come on) as opposed to a low card "2" or "3".

A great majority of the time, you will show attitude to your partner's opening lead.

Count

"Echo" or "Up the Line" to show count when attitude is obvious.

Suit Preference

A high card says "switch to the higher ranking suit that is not trump" and a low card says "switch to the lower ranking suit that is not trump".

Suit Preference only applies in obvious situations where continuing the current suit is hopeless because dummy is void or has KQxx after you have won the Ace and expect partner to ruff.

Small card play to partner's lead

"Echo" - High / Low carding shows an even number of cards in the suit led, generally a doubleton.

"Up the line" - Low / High carding shows an odd number of cards in the suit led, generally three.

Small card play to partner's lead with 3

small" MUD" There is a lot of discussion as to the best carding with 3 small spot cards against suit contracts. Some favor MUD - middle / up / down. Some favor low / up / up.

Discard of the Queen guarantees the Jack or a singleton Queen

Discarding

When you discard because you cannot follow suit and you do not desire or are unable to trump the trick, a high card says "I like the suit I discarded" and a low card says "I don't like the suit I discarded". As a rule, it is better to discard low cards in suits you do not like and for your partner to determine your desired suit by the process of elimination. A glance at dummy or recalling the bidding will generally make things clear.

However, when the situation is urgent; such as, you can see a long running suit in dummy in a suit contract and you need partner to switch immediately. Discard a high spot card in the suit you want led so that the defense can prevail.

Defensive Strategy

When you have determined that declarer has their contract made (you can see running tricks in dummy or the bidding has told you that declarer has a source of tricks), it is often correct to switch suits immediately and "gamble" to find tricks, with upper cut promotions, trumps or traps.

Uppercut - force declarer to play a high card or risk losing to a lower card played by partner after your lead, promoting partner's card to a winner.

Traps - are leading a sequence through an honor card when partner has a higher honor to capture the honor.

Barry Crane "God dealt you an Ace/King so you wouldn't have a lead problem"

Benito Garozzo "Always lead singletons against suit contracts"