

Lead Summary

Before deciding which card to lead against a contract you must first decide which suit to lead. This may require you to consider:

- The bidding (or lack of it). The bidding will also help you to decide whether to make an:
 - attacking 'leading from honours' or
 - passive lead

Main principles

- Listen to the bidding and interpret it from your hand
- Decide whether to make an attacking or passive lead?
- Decide which suit to lead (trumps or a side suit)?

Leading trumps may stop declarer getting ruffs in the short trump hand but may give declarer the tempo he requires. David Bird's latest book on 'leads against suit contracts' shows that leading trumps is usually the worst lead possible.

Considerations

- Are there any clues in the bidding:
 - Has partner bid - what suits has he inferred (from a take-out double)?
 - What suits have the opposition bid?
 - What suits have the opposition bid or not bid?
 - What shape have the opposition shown?
 - Can you place certain of the honour cards?
- Lead through strength and up to weakness

Leading against no-trump contracts

- Lead partner's suit
- Lead partner's inferred suit from a weak hand where you don't have an entry for your promoted suit
- Lead the unbid suit
- Lead an unbid major
- Lead 4th suit forcing suit if no other evidence
- Make an attacking lead if there are chances of setting up a long suit

If the opposition have contracted no-trumps and have not tried to locate a major fit, then lead a major. Partner may have some useful honour cards there

- Lead the enemy's suit only if you have a solid holding (eg QJ1065)
- If you have no other clues lead your longest suit (4th highest)

1. ESTABLISH LONG SUITS BEFORE DECLARER MAKES HIS TRICKS

2. BE WILLING TO GIVE UP A TRICK(S) IN ORDER TO SET UP LONG SUITS (CONVERSE OF SUIT CONTRACTS)

Typically, playing teams and holding this East hand:

♠ J1084
♥ KJ75
♦ 73
♣ AJ4

After this bidding:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	2♥*
P	2NT	P	3NT

What do you lead?

Hearts is obvious if you listen to the bidding.

Leading against suit contracts

- Take your tricks quickly - you will not have time to set up your long suits
- Lead trumps
 - Don't lead singleton or doubleton

It may expose partner's trump honour which declarer may not otherwise be able to play for without your help.

- Lead trumps when the defence have lots of high cards (declarer has the trumps solid)
- Lead trumps when declarer will need to set up a long side suit by ruffing
- Lead trumps when you have declarer's first suit and dummy has given preference:

Now you are West

♠ 532
♥ KJ93
♦ 732
♣ AK4

and hear:

West	North	East	South
			1♥
	1NT		2♦
	P		

You have a good ♥ holding and sitting behind declarer; you don't want declarer to use dummy's trumps to ruff ♥s, so lead trumps.

- Make a passive lead against a tight contract, when you know that the suits are breaking badly for declarer

- DON'TS

- Never lead away from a top tenace (KJx or AQx)

♠ A43
♥ KJ7
♦ 10652
♣ Q98

- Never lead away from an ace
- Never lead a singleton or doubleton trump (unless J10 or QJ)

- Good leads

- Top of touching honours

QJ10x or AKJx

- Singleton - if you have good ruffing potential
- 4th highest from non-touching honours in an unbid suit (Q1086)

- Doubleton of partner's suit
- Top of nothing (or 2nd highest) from four small (8642 or 8642)

Attacking or Passive leads

- Make attacking leads against freely bid contracts. For example:

1NT-3NT or

1♥ -2♣

2NT-3NT

- Make passive leads against tight contracts (opponents have no spare values). For example:

1NT-2NT

PASS or

1NT-2NT

3NT

Subsequent leads

- Knock out entries in dummy before a long suit is established

Rule of 11

From disjointed suits with honours lead 4th highest, Partner will now be able to work out how many cards higher than your lead, declarer possesses.

Compare K10753 and KQJ93

Suggested leads

<i>Good</i>	<i>OK</i>	<i>Bad</i>
<u>K</u> QJx	Q108 <u>6</u>	K8x (against suits)
<u>K</u> Q10x	Q108 <u>6</u> 4	
<u>Q</u> J10x	<u>J</u> 109x	
<u>Q</u> J9x	1087 <u>6</u>	
<u>A</u> K53	9753	
<u>A</u> K9753		
<u>K</u> Q74		
<u>Q</u> J74		

Safe and Risky leads

<i>Safe</i>	<i>Risky</i>
<u>K</u> QJx	K2
<u>K</u> Q10x	KQxx
<u>1</u> 098x <u>J</u> 109x	A10xx (see Active or Passive)
<u>Q</u> J10x	
<u>8</u> 642	

WINNING LEADS HELP TO WIN AT BRIDGE, SO DON'T LEAD THE CARD NEAREST TO YOUR THUMB!