

Rule of 11

This rule applies to both declarer and his RH defender. It is used at Trick 1. But it only applies if the defenders are using *4th highest leads*.

The Rule of Eleven states that declarer subtracts the number of the *first card lead* from the number 11, and then the result is the number of cards *higher* contained in the hands of:

- **partner** of the leader and
- **declarer** and
- **dummy**.

This information is useful not only to the declarer, but also to the partner of the leader, who can apply the same mathematical calculation. This principle applies only to the opening lead, not to any other leads when leading to the second trick or any trick thereafter.

This information can be useful in deciding to play which card, either from the hand of the *partner* of the leader, or the hand of the *declarer* or from *dummy*. Let us have a look at a few hand examples.

Example 1:

Contract: 3 NT by South

Lead: 6 of Diamonds

Dummy	
♠ AK98	
♥ 987	
♦ QJ53	
♣ J4	
West	East
♠ J532	♠ 104
♥ K54	♥ J102
♦ K1076	♦ 82
♣ 107	♣ A96532
South	
♠ Q76	
♥ AQ63	
♦ A94	
♣ KQ8	

According to the Rule of Eleven, the *partner of the leader* subtracts 6 from 11 and the result is 5. So there are 5 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds in the hands of:

- dummy (north)
- declarer (south)
- partner of the leader (east)

Likewise, the declarer subtracts the number 6 from 11 and the result is 5 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds in the hands of the dummy, of the declarer, and of the partner of the leader.

The partner of the leader looks at dummy and his hand and counts 3 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds. The partner of the leader has 1 card **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds. The partner of the leader is in trouble.

Declarer looks at dummy and his hand and counts 4 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds. Therefore, RHO has only one card higher than the 6. Declarer is happy with this lead.

Example 2:

Contract: 3 NT

Lead: 7 of Spades

Dummy		
♠ K52		
♥ 987		
♦ KQJ53		
♣ J4		
West		East
♠ QJ87		♠ A1093
♥ K543		♥ J2
♦ 1076		♦ 42
♣ 107		♣ A9653
South		
♠ 64		
♥ AQ106		
♦ A98		
♣ KQ82		

Declarer sees the 7 of Spades, and assumes it is the fourth down from the longest and strongest suit. Declarer subtracts 7 from 11 and counts 4 **higher** cards than the 7 of Spades. Declarer counts only 1 card in dummy and none in his hand **higher** than the 7 of Spades. This spells trouble for the declarer.

The partner of the leader also assumes that the 7 of Spades is fourth down from the longest and strongest suit of his partner. East also arrives at 4 cards **higher** than the 7 of Spades. East can see all of these 4 cards: King of Spades in the dummy, Ace-10-9 in his own hand. If declarer calls for the King of Spades, East plays the Ace of Spades and returns a Spade. With this lead, East-West win 4 Spade tricks and the setting trick is the Ace of Clubs.

If declarer decides to play low on the first trick, East lets the 7 of Spades ride, because he knows that there is no **higher** Spade than the 7 of Spades in the hand of the declarer. West continues to play the queen of Spades, and declarer plays low, as does East. There is no way that declarer will take one Spade trick. East-West set the contract by applying the Rule of Eleven. You will see that without the knowledge of the Rule of 11, East may mistakenly rise with the ace if declarer plays low at trick 1.

The Rule of Eleven has a lot of merit and can be used effectively. Each partner must be attuned to recognize when it is appropriate to use it, or even to consider it. The Rule of Eleven has its most application against a No Trump contract since it is generally accepted practice that the leader plays the fourth card down from his longest and strongest suit. The Rule of Eleven can also be effectively employed against a suit contract.

Example 3: Combining the Rule of 11 with the Rule of 7

West plays in a contract of 3NT. North leads S6, South putting in the SQ.

Dummy	
♠	
♥	
♦	
♣	
West	East
♠ KJ9	♠ 842
♥ AK3	♥ J42
♦ J92	♦ AQ1053
♣ A753	♣ K8
South	
♠	
♥	
♦	
♣	

The *Rule of 11* shows that North has the A10. If you win with the king, North will have the A10 sitting over the J9. Now when you take the diamond finesse, and it loses, your J9 will be swallowed up by the A10. He will then cash any other outstanding spades. No, what if you refuse to accept the easy first trick (Rule of 7), it will be safe to take the diamond finesse later on. If South has 3 spades, then the suit will split 4-3 and you will only lose 3 spade tricks. If North has 5 spades then South only has two, and when he gains the lead with the diamond honour, he will not have any spades to play.

After ducking the spade, you can play the jack on the second round. It does not matter whether North wins this trick or not, you have a spade stop. If he wins he will not get back in until you have made your contract: (1 spade, 2 hearts, 4/5 diamonds and 2 clubs). If he ducks and you take a losing diamond finesse, the opposition will not be able to stop you making your contract. If South has a spade left to return, he has 3

spades and so North only has 4 spades. Therefore, the defence can take 3 spades and 1 diamond, and you have 9 tricks. If spades break 5-2 then South will not have a spade to return, hence you will also make your contract.

(See Rule of 7)