



Will's Workshops

Improve Your Defence Better Leads, Signals And Counting in Defence

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Opening Leads

Choosing an Opening Lead involves two choices.

Deciding **which suit** to lead, and also deciding **which card** to lead within that suit.

Which Suit To Lead?

These are roughly in order of priority:

Lead your partner's suit.

Lead a suit headed by a three-card sequence (Even if it has been bid by the opponents).

Lead a Singleton against a Suit Contract (Even if it has been bid by the opponents).

Otherwise, tend to avoid suits bid by the opponents.

Lead your longest suit against No-Trumps.

If it is headed by a sequence or near-sequence, then lead **top**, otherwise lead **fourth-highest**.

Lead a 'decent' suit.

This lead can be risky, as you might give away a trick.

If it is headed by a sequence or near-sequence, then lead **top**, otherwise lead **fourth-highest**.

It is fine to lead a suit with no honours.

This lead is very safe and doesn't give away anything.

Usually lead the **second-highest** card to let partner know it is a weak suit lead.

Perhaps lead a Doubleton against a Suit contract. Only if you want to trump. If you are going to lead a Doubleton, then lead the top card.

You can replay the hands from today's Workshop



www.willjenneroshea.com/wp/leads-signals-counting/

Which Card To Lead?

If you have Three Touching Cards headed by a 10 or higher
Lead the top card. Partner will work out you have the card below, and not the card above.

If you have Two Touching Cards headed by a 10 or higher
Lead the top card. Leading from only two touching honours is not as good as having three, but usually ok.

Leading from an AK or a KQ combination is good against a suit contract, since the suit only goes around once or twice before someone is trumping.

If you have a suit like **KQ432 against No-Trumps**, you should consider **leading a low card**. To establish this you need some help. Lead a low one. Partner will try to win, and also try to return the lead later. If you lead the King then Queen, you will be left with the 432 which won't be useful later.

If you have **KQ432 against a Suit Contract**, lead the King. Try to win the first or second round of the suit before you get trumped.

One or more Honours, Not Touching

Lead a small card (best is fourth-highest if you have five or more).

Any Doubleton (Honours, Touching, Anything)

Lead the Top, and then then lower.

Leading a Suit with No Honours

You should not lead a low card, since partner will think you have an honour. Best is to lead a high card. If you lead the top card, partner will perhaps mistake your lead for a doubleton.

Best is to lead the second highest.

If you have a suit like this, play the highest one next.

Partner *might* be able to work out that you don't have an honour (else you would have led a lower card) and that you don't have a doubleton (else you would have played top, then lower).

Bad Opening Leads

The following types of opening leads are usually quite poor and should not be used. They might give away a cheap trick.

A suit with the Ace, but no King

If you lead the Ace, then you are doing a favour to whoever has the King. It is much more likely to be the opponents than your partner. If you lead a low one (worse) then you might never get your Ace later. It might get trumped later on.

A Doubleton including an honour

Leading from a suit such as ♣K6 or ♦Q8 is not very good. If you don't lead the suit, then there is a high chance that you will win a trick with your honour card. If you lead it, then you will never win it.

A 'tenace' suit

Suits like ♣AQJT or ♦KJT7 have the potential to win a lot of tricks if you can catch the missing honour card (♣K or ♦Q). Don't lead these suits. Wait for them to come to you.

Exception: If **your partner** has bid that suit, then it is a great lead! Partner will usually have the missing honours to make the lead safe and profitable.

Attitude Signals – Low Like, High Hate

The most common signalling method is **Low to Encourage**.

Signalling on partner's lead:

Your first priority when partner leads a card is to try to win the trick, but if partner has played a winner, or dummy has played a winner then you should give an *attitude signal* (**Low Like, or High Hate**).

Signalling on the first discard:

You can use your first discard to show which suit you like.

Either discard a low card in the suit you like (**Low to Encourage**)

Or you could discard a high card in one of the suits that you don't like (**High to Discourage**), and hope that partner can work out which suit you do like.

When to Encourage, When to Discourage.

You should encourage if you have an **adjacent honour** to the card that partner has led or shown.

Eg. If partner leads the Ace, which usually shows the King, you should encourage if you have the Queen, but not the Jack.

Eg. If partner leads the Queen, which usually shows the Jack, you should encourage if you have the Ten or the King.

If the opponents are in a suit contract, then you can also encourage when you have a doubleton, and you **want to trump in**.

You should also encourage partner, when you really don't like anything. Partner will continue playing this suit, and might get confused, but it will make Declarer work on the other three suits herself.

Interpreting Leads And Signals

Which Card Is High (Or Low)?

There is no rule about which card is considered high, or low.

When partner plays a signal, you need to look at all of the cards that you can see to work out whether the suit is high or low.

Here is an example:

You lead the ♥A against 4♠.

Partner plays the ♥5 and Declarer plays the ♥9. What does partner's card mean?

(Dummy)

♠ AK8

♥ J73

♦ AJ92

♣ J84

(You)

♠ 42

♥ AK86

♦ QT4

♣ T732

(Partner)

♥ 5

♥ 9

(Declarer)

In this example it looks like partner's ♥5 is an **attempt at a high card**. Of the low Hearts, you haven't seen the ♥2 or the ♥4.

Defensive Tip: You should assume that Declarer plays her lowest card. Any lower missing cards should be assumed to be held by your partner.

Declarer Play Tip: Don't automatically play your lowest card. If you hold the ♥942 and you can't possibly win a trick, then consider dropping the ♥4 or ♥9 on the first round of the suit.

Defence – Thinking

Here are some questions that the Defenders need to ask themselves.

What has partner led, and why?

What did partner signal on your lead?

What did partner show from her bidding?

How many points does the Declarer have?

How many points does your partner have?

How many tricks does it look like Declarer can win?

What has partner led, and why?

When your partner makes a lead, you should try to work out what it means.

Leading an Honour: Suggests a sequence. If partner leads the ♦K it shows the touching card below (♦Q), but not the touching card above (♦A).

Leading a Low Card: Suggests that partner has an honour in the suit, but not touching honours. Partner usually won't have the Ace though, since it is not a good idea to lead from a suit with the Ace but no King.

Leading a Medium or High Number Card: Usually means that the suit is not a good suit, no sequence, and no honours.

Perhaps partner has led a singleton or doubleton if we are defending a trump suit contract.

Maybe partner doesn't like this suit, and wants you to lead back a different suit.

What did partner signal on your lead?

If you lead a card, especially at trick one, partner should send a signal.

If partner encourages, then she usually has an adjacent honour card.

If partner discourages, then she usually doesn't have an adjacent honour, *which means that Declarer probably has the missing card(s).*

What did partner show from her bidding?

If partner bid, work out roughly how many points she has shown, and how many cards she has shown in each suit.

How many points does the Declarer have?

Estimate from the bidding how many points Declarer has. If they bid game, assume 25+. If they invite to game, it must be close to 25. If they bid No-Trumps, it is usually quite descriptive.

How many points does your partner have?

If you have an idea how many points Declarer has, then you can count roughly how many points your partner has.

Here is a quick tip for counting how strong your partner is, especially if Declarer has shown a narrow point range.

If Declarer has opened 1NT (15-17) assume that they have the middle number of points, ie 16.

Count Dummy's points. Eg, Dummy has 10 points.

They have about $16 + 10$ points = 26.

Deduct that from 40, so our team has 14 points.

If you have 9 points, that leaves partner with $14 - 9 = 5$ points.

Now, Declarer could actually have 15 or 17 (not 16), which means that your partner could actually have one more or less (4-6).

If your partner has played an Ace already, then she can't have much left over (at most 2 points – no more Aces or Kings)!

How many tricks does it look like Declarer can win?

If you can see Dummy, you can often estimate how many tricks Declarer is likely to win.

If the Dummy has a long running suit, and it looks like Declarer has a lot of tricks, then the Defenders need to take their tricks quickly.

If Dummy doesn't look like it has a lot of tricks, then there is no rush to take your tricks, and you have time to develop more tricks.

Defence – Quizzes

Question 1: Your Opponents bid to 4♠, after they open the bidding 1♣. Your team never bid anything. Your lead?

(You)

♠ 753

♥ AJ92

♦ 8632

♣ Q7

You should not usually lead a trump.

You don't want to lead a Club, which is an honour doubleton, and the suit that they opened.

Leading a Heart from a suit with an Ace but no King is not great.

The only suit left is a Diamond. So that partner doesn't get excited by the Diamonds, you shouldn't lead the ♦2 (she will think you are leading fourth-highest from an honour).

Best is to lead the ♦6 and play the ♦8 next. Leading the ♦8 is also fine, except that partner might think you have a doubleton if you play the ♦8 now and the ♦2 next.

Question 2: Your partner leads the ♣3 against 4♥. Which cards do you think partner has, and which cards do you think Declarer has? Dummy plays the ♣4. Which card should you play at trick one?

(Dummy)

♣ Q84

(Partner)

♣ 3

(You)

♣ KT72

♣ ??

(Declarer)

*Partner has led a low card, so she usually has an honour, but not the Ace (not a good lead). Partner has the Jack. **You should play the ♣T on the first trick.** Declarer will win the Ace, but you will get your King next time.*

Defence – Quizzes Continued

Question 3: You lead the ♦A against 4♥, partner plays the ♦5. Do you think the Signal is Low Like, or High Hate? Who do you think has the ♦Q?

(Dummy)

♦ 752

(You)

♦ AKJT

(Partner)

♦ 6

♦ 8

(Declarer)

The ♦6 is ambiguous, but a good hint is to look at Declarer's card, and assume that it is their lowest card if they are not trying to win. You haven't seen the ♦4 or the ♦3 or the ♦9. If partner has either the ♦3 or the ♦4, then the ♦6 is not her lowest card.

I think partner is trying her best to play High Hate.

I think that partner has ♦643 and was a bit stuck.

I think Declarer has the ♦Q.

Best defence is to switch suits and wait for the Diamonds to be played again, and to catch the Queen.

Question 4: You bid Hearts but the opposition bid to 4♠. Partner leads a Heart and you easily win the first two tricks, everyone following suit twice. You can count on 12 Hearts. Who has the 13th Heart?

(Dummy)

♥ 765

(Partner)

♥ # #

(You)

♥ AKQJT

♥ # #

(Declarer)

*All the Hearts played were very low, **but I hope you watched them!***

*If partner had a doubleton, she would have played **High-Low**.*

*With 3 Hearts (no honour), she would have played **Middle-Up-Down**.*

Defence – More Quizzes

Question 5: Your partner bids Spades and then leads the ♣Q against a 4♥ contract.

Which card do you play on the first trick?

What do you lead back to partner?

(Dummy)

♣ 862

(Partner)

♣ Q

(You)

♣ AT5

♣ ??

(Declarer)

You should play the ♣A on top of partner's Queen. You know that partner doesn't have the ♣K, so Declarer must have that card.

Partner might have a singleton Club, but that would leave Declarer with a six-card Club suit, which is unlikely.

You should lead partner back a Spade, the suit that she bid.

Question 6: Your partner leads the ♥A.

Which card do you play at trick one if you are defending 3NT?

Which card do you play at trick one if you are defending 4♠?

(Dummy)

♥ 863

(Partner)

♥ A

(You)

♥ 92

♥ ??

(Declarer)

Against 3NT, you can't help, and you need to tell partner that. Play the ♥9 – high-hate. Let partner decide what to do next, but tell her you can't help.

Against 4♠, you would like her to keep playing this suit because you can trump. You should play the ♥2 – low-like. Hopefully she plays the ♥K next and then another so you can trump.

Note that High-Low for a doubleton is only for LEADS, not SIGNALS.

Board: 1

♠ KQJT95

♥ K97

♦ 52

♣ QJ

♠ 42

♥ JT2

♦ QJT

♣ AT974

♠ 863

♥ AQ86

♦ 863

♣ 863

♠ A7

♥ 543

♦ AK974

♣ K52

W	N	E	S
--	1♠	P	2♦
P	2♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

The Lead:

East should not lead a Heart, which would give a trick to North's King.

Don't lead from a suit headed by the Ace, without the King.

Since East doesn't want to lead a trump, or a Diamond (South bid Diamonds) then the only choice is to lead a Club.

The best Club to lead from three, no honour, is the ♣6, Middle, intending to play highest next (Up – Down).

West can't be sure what the lead is from, but looking at so many Clubs, she should take her Ace on the first trick. Often it is right to wait to catch Dummy's honour, but not looking at so many Clubs. West should be able to work out the East has led a Club from a poor suit, since Declarer plays the ♣J on the first trick.

Since the lead doesn't look like a singleton (why would North have dropped the ♣J if she had four Clubs?) West should switch, and the best lead is a Heart.

Even mid game, usually switch to the normal lead, so West plays the ♥J.

The defence can take the first four tricks: ♣A and then three Hearts.

If North is allowed to get the lead she can draw trumps, and then win a Club or two and the ♦AK.

There are 10 tricks there unless the Defence have already taken four!

Board: 2

♠ 8

♥ T7432

♦ KQJ9

♣ QT4

♠ K942

♥ 985

♦ AT7

♣ 872

♠ AJ765

♥ AQJ

♦ 32

♣ AK3

♠ QT3

♥ K6

♦ 8654

♣ J965

W	N	E	S
--	--	1♠	P
2♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

West might bid 3♣: Bergen Raise, showing 4 Spades and 7-9 points.

The Lead:

Many players would attempt to lead the ♥K here, hoping to void themselves and then perhaps score a Ruff.

An Honour-Doubleton is rarely a good lead, since the Honour might have won a trick anyway!

The best lead here is either the ♦6 (second highest from a suit with no honours). Or perhaps the ♣5 (low from an honour).

If South is patient, she can win the ♥K eventually. She will always score one Spade trick. With such balanced hands, Declarer will lose a Diamond and a Club and go down by one.

One small piece of technique, if East leads a Spade towards Dummy is for South to play her ♠T, forcing out the Ace and guaranteeing that the ♠Q will win. It would be an impressive play for East to lead a Spade to the ♠9 in Dummy, not that normal way to play the Spade suit.

Board: 3

♠ K2
 ♥ KQT
 ♦ J763
 ♣ 8542

♠ 974
 ♥ 8543
 ♦ K9
 ♣ AQJT

♠ T3
 ♥ AJ97
 ♦ 8542
 ♣ 763

♠ AQJ865
 ♥ 62
 ♦ AQT
 ♣ K9

W	N	E	S
--	--	--	1♠
P	1NT	P	3♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			

The Lead:

West has two poor suits to lead from, the Clubs (a suit headed by an Ace but no King) or the Diamonds, and honour doubleton. In general, don't lead a trump, so that only leaves a Heart, and when leading from a poor suit, the best lead is the second highest (♥5) although the highest will also work here (♥8).

East should win the Heart lead, and it doesn't look like the lead was a singleton (South would have five Hearts, unlikely).

East should switch, and there is very little to go on, but Dummy has weaker Clubs than Diamonds. If East plays a Club, she should play the ♣6 (Middle-Up-Down) and play the ♣7 next. West should win the first Club, and can't easily tell how the Clubs are distributed, but playing the ♣A must be ok. If East had the doubleton Club, she could trump the third round. As it is, South is out of Clubs.

West must not play a Diamond at any stage of the hand, and if she waits long enough, the ♦K will score a trick.

West can tell from the bidding that her partner has approximately 5 HCP, so after East wins the ♥A, she can't have very many more points, definitely not the ♦A.

Board: 4

	♠ T5	
	♥ A765	
	♦ AJ92	
	♣ 765	
♠ AQJ93	♠ K86	
♥ K93	♥ Q84	
♦ K63	♦ Q84	
♣ 84	♣ Q932	
	♠ 742	
	♥ JT2	
	♦ T75	
	♣ AKJT	

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	2♠	P
P	P		

The Lead:

North only has bad suits to lead from, and should not lead a red suit, where she has Aces. North should lead the ♣6.

South wins the first two tricks with the ♣T and the ♣A.

If South notices that North plays the ♣6 then ♣7, then North must have one more Club.

The best switch for South is actually to a trump, which doesn't give Declarer any assistance.

The defence is not over, North still has some work to do! North should wait patiently with the red suits, planning to catch an honour with her Aces.

If North catches the red Kings, then Declarer will lose another trick in each suit.

If North had played her Aces, then Declarer would make both the King and Queen in each suit.

Board: 5

♠ KQ85

♥ T

♦ A75

♣ K8743

♠ A64

♥ 9762

♦ Q843

♣ T2

♠ 73

♥ J843

♦ JT96

♣ AQ5

♠ JT92

♥ AKQ5

♦ K2

♣ J96

W	N	E	S
--	1♣	P	1♥
P	1♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

The Lead:

East should lead the ♦J, top of a three-card sequence, especially since that is the unbid suit.

From the lead, West knows that East has the ♦JT9, but none of the higher honours, so there is no future in the Diamonds.

Declarer should try to draw trumps. Note that playing out the winning Hearts doesn't achieve anything, since you can't discard enough Clubs to make a difference, and there is no reason to discard the Diamonds.

When Declarer draws trumps, West should take her Ace on the first round. Once on lead, West needs to switch away from Diamonds, and instead play a Club (the ♣T, top of a doubleton). East should win the Club with the ♣Q, and there are clues that West has led a doubleton (or singleton). North has bid Clubs, showing at least three or more Clubs. Also the lead of the ♣T can't be from a sequence, since the ♣9 is in Dummy.

East should win the ♣Q, then play the ♣A and then another Club for West to trump.

Very impressive defence if they manage to work it out!

Board: 6

♠ A52
 ♥ AK63
 ♦ 862
 ♣ T62

♠ QJ9
 ♥ QJT7
 ♦ 9743
 ♣ K3

♠ KT876
 ♥ 84
 ♦ KJ5
 ♣ AQ7

♠ 43
 ♥ 952
 ♦ AQT
 ♣ J9854

W	N	E	S
--	--	1♠	P
2♠	P	P	P

The Lead:

There are two reasonable leads for South, but neither is very good.

South might lead a low Club (♣5, fourth-highest).

Of perhaps the ♥5 (Middle-Up-Down), *play the ♥9 next.*

South should not lead a Diamond, which would give away a cheap trick

If South leads the ♥5 and then plays the ♥9 on the second round, then North can work out that East is out of Hearts, and must switch.

If North gets on lead and leads the ♥A, then South must play the ♥9 to discourage.

If South leads a Club, even a low Club, North can tell that there is no future in Clubs.

When North is on lead, she must play Diamonds. South can catch any of East's cards, and will perhaps win up to 3 Diamond tricks.

Defeating this contract would be a great defensive effort!

The defence have to be near perfect!

Some East-West's will make 8 or even 9 tricks here.

Board: 7

♠ T965

♥ KJ74

♦ 654

♣ AK

♠ 843

♥ T9

♦ AKT7

♣ J982

♠ A

♥ 86532

♦ J92

♣ Q543

♠ KQJ72

♥ AQ

♦ Q83

♣ T76

W	N	E	S
--	--	--	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

North might bid 3♦: Bergen, 10-12 with four Spades.

The Lead:

West should lead the ♦A from the touching ♦AK.

Two touching honours is enough, especially AK, against a suit contract.

West wins trick one with her ♦A, but must pay careful attention to the cards played.

East must send a signal, and the ♦J looks useful, but can't actually win a trick, so East must discourage the lead (♦9).

West must resist temptation, and not play the ♦K next, since she knows that South has the ♦Q.

Best is to switch, perhaps to the ♥T and wait.

When East wins a trick with her ♠A, she needs to return a Diamond (best is ♦J, top of the *remaining doubleton*).

West can score two more Diamond tricks if she plays the ♦A and then waits.

If West leads the ♦A then the ♦K, South will score the ♦Q and make her game.

Although leading the ♦A from AK is great, don't always play the King next. Look at Dummy, and the signal!

Board: 8

♠ T9

♥ J972

♦ 853

♣ AKT7

♠ AQJ74

♥ K64

♦ Q

♣ Q652

♠ K532

♥ A3

♦ KT64

♣ J84

♠ 86

♥ QT85

♦ AJ972

♣ 93

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	3♠	P
4♠	P	P	P

East might use a 3♦ Bergen Raise. 10-12 with 4 Spades.

The Lead:

North should lead the ♣A from the ♣AK.

Although South has no Club honours, she has a doubleton, and really wants partner to continue Clubs.

South should play the ♣3 (low like).

North should continue with the ♣K next (encouraging doesn't promise the Queen, it could be from shortage).

North should lead another Club which South can trump.

South is entitled to win her ♦A at some stage, and might just lead it. South can get her ♦A later, but must take it on the first round of Diamonds, since West has the singleton ♦Q.

If the defence have taken almost enough tricks to defeat the contract, consider taking the 'setting' trick.

Board: 9

♠ QT
 ♥ AQ9
 ♦ A54
 ♣ KT864

♠ 642
 ♥ 642
 ♦ 962
 ♣ A532

♠ A985
 ♥ T85
 ♦ KQJT7
 ♣ 9

♠ KJ73
 ♥ KJ73
 ♦ 83
 ♣ QJ7

W	N	E	S
--	1NT	P	2♣*
P	2♦*	P	3NT
P	P	P	

2♣: Stayman

2♦: No 4 card Major

The Lead:

East has an easy ♦K lead (top of the sequence).

East should lead the ♦K and North should hold up her ♦A until the third round to make the defence hard.

West should discourage the opening lead (♦9), however, East doesn't need any help, so should continue playing Diamonds.

Once North gets the ♦A, she needs to play the Clubs immediately.

West can win the Ace of Clubs at anytime, but good technique is to hold it back at least once.

East only has one Club, so discards something on the second round. East should either discard the ♠5 (low like Spades) or the ♥T (high hate Hearts).

When West wins her trick, she needs to play a Spade back to allow East to play more Diamonds.

Note: West is looking at identical cards in both the Majors in her hand, and also in Dummy!

You can use signals on your first discard.

Board: 10

♠ A53			
♥ 7642			
♦ T92			
♣ T92			
♠ QJ92	♠ KT8764		
♥ KQ8	♥ A		
♦ 765	♦ AKJ		
♣ 765	♣ K84		
	♠ -		
	♥ JT953		
	♦ Q843		
	♣ AQJ3		

W	N	E	S
--	--	1♠	X
2♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

West might bid 3♣: Bergen Raise, 4 Spades, 7-9 points

The Lead:

South should lead the ♥J, top of the sequence. Note that leading any other suit here will cost a trick.

South's Heart lead doesn't seem to have helped much, but it didn't give Declarer anything *that wasn't already hers*.

Declarer should try to draw trumps, and try to get to Dummy. Note that if Declarer can win a trick in Dummy, then she can use the ♥KQ to discard losing Clubs or Diamonds from her hand.

North must win the first Spade immediately, and needs to switch suits (not Hearts, not Spades).

North has no real clues which suit to switch to, but South can help by discarding a signal on the first round of trumps.

South could discard the ♣3 (low like Clubs), or the ♦8 (high hate Diamonds). Best is to discard the Diamond here – discouraging.

North should switch to the ♣T, top of touching, despite not being very high, and East is in trouble. Either she covers with the King, and quickly loses three Clubs, or she doesn't and North can play more Clubs.

Best defence will win three Club tricks and the ♠A before East-West have a chance to do anything.

Note that if South had discarded the ♣3, she might get stuck on lead with the ♣J!

Board: 11

♠ QJT96	♠ 832
♥ 743	♥ AKJ92
♦ 743	♦ T962
♣ A4	♣ 2

♠ AK4
♥ T6
♦ AKJ
♣ T9863

W	N	E	S
--	--	--	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

The Lead:

West should lead the ♠Q, top of the sequence.

On the first trick, East should discourage the Spade lead, since she can't help out.

Declarer can win the lead immediately, and needs to play Clubs straight away.

Best defence is for West to duck one round, which makes no difference to the Clubs, but it allows East to discard and show which suit she likes.

East needs to either discard the ♥2 (low like Hearts) or the ♦T (high hate Diamonds).

It isn't usually best to discard cards from your long powerful suit in No-Trumps, so the ♦T is a better choice.

If West has been watching very carefully, she knows that East doesn't like Diamonds, so South still has a stopper there.

East doesn't like Diamonds, so West needs to try leading a Heart (best is the ♥7 to not look like low from an honour, but it doesn't matter to East).

East can now win four or five tricks, depending if she discarded a Heart as her signal.

North-South had 9 tricks available to them, but not if the defence took five or six tricks first.

Board: 12

♠ AT3	♠ Q86
♥ A6	♥ 53
♦ T9654	♦ KQJ87
♣ AKJ	♣ Q86

♠ 754	♠ KJ92
♥ QJT98	♥ K742
♦ A2	♦ 3
♣ 754	♣ T932

W	N	E	S
1NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

The Lead:

North should lead the ♥Q, top of the sequence.

On the opening lead, South should encourage by playing the ♥2 (low like).

West might hold up the ♥A once, but has to win it the second time. West must play Diamonds immediately.

North can hold up her ♦A once, but once she wins it she must continue playing Hearts, since South encouraged.

On South's first discard, she might throw the ♣T (high hate Clubs) or perhaps the ♠2 (low like Spades).

There is one small twist to the defence, which is that South must use her ♥K on the third round of Hearts so that she can lead a small one back.

If South wins the fourth round of Hearts, and can't play back to North, then Declarer will only lose 3 Hearts and the ♦A and make her game.

North has lead from her longest suit presumably, which must be 4 cards (doesn't matter who wins the fourth Heart) or 5 cards (South must get out of North's way!).

Board: 13

♠ KJ

♥ AQ42

♦ A94

♣ AK75

♠ T953

♥ T98

♦ 652

♣ 843

♠ AQ62

♥ KJ6

♦ QJ87

♣ T6

♠ 874

♥ 753

♦ KT3

♣ QJ92

W**N****E****S**

--

2NT

P

3NT

P

P

P

On a Club lead, Declarer only has 7 easy tricks, and must work on the Majors to try to find an 8th and 9th trick.

If East wins the lead, and never breaks open a new suit, then eventually she will probably win a Diamond or two, and a Heart or two, and at least two Spades.

North should play out all of the Clubs and Diamonds and then lose a trick, and hope that the defence have to play something back to North which will help her. If East recognises the situation, then she can win a more tricks than she would have otherwise.

The Lead:

East should think about the auction, and with a very strong hand on her right, and her partner with very few HCP (if any!) she should make a passive lead of the ♣T.

Even the ♦Q risks giving away a potential trick.

Since leading the ♦Q promises the Jack, Declarer can win the lead with the Ace, and subsequently lead a Diamond to the ♦T.

Board: 14

♠ AK65	
♥ T43	
♦ T83	
♣ QT5	
♠ Q942	♠ 83
♥ 975	♥ AQJ6
♦ AJ92	♦ KQ65
♣ 76	♣ A82
♠ JT7	
♥ K82	
♦ 74	
♣ KJ943	

W	N	E	S
--	--	1NT	P
P	P		

The Lead:

South should lead a low club (the ♣4, fourth-highest) since it seems reasonable to hope that partner has some help in Clubs.

South's low Club lead appears to be from an honour or two, but no sequence. North should play the ♣Q on the first trick and return Clubs whenever she can. East might hold the ♣A back once or twice.

East has 6 sure tricks, but needs to make at least one extra trick from Hearts to make her game.

Once the ♣A has been knocked out, South can win up to four Club tricks.

As South runs the Clubs, North should send a signal, and the best signal is the ♥T (high hate Hearts).

If South leads a Heart, East-West will make 7 or more tricks.

If South leads the ♠J once the Clubs are finished, the defence can score at least 7 tricks, enough to defeat 1NT.

Board: 15

♠ AK64

♥ J762

♦ AKQ

♣ Q6

♠ JT2

♥ K84

♦ 86

♣ KJ873

♠ 5

♥ T953

♦ T9532

♣ 952

♠ Q9873

♥ AQ

♦ J74

♣ AT4

W	N	E	S
--	--	--	1♠
P	4NT*	P	5♥*
P	6♠	P	P
P			

*5♥: 2 Aces

The Lead:

Against a slam, West knows that her partner has no points, so shouldn't lead a Club or a Heart. That only leaves a Diamond!

W	N	E	S
--	--	--	1♠
P	2NT*	P	3NT*
P	4NT*	P	5♠*
P	6♠	//	

*2NT: Jacoby Raise

*3NT: 14-15 points, no shortage

*5♠: 2 Keycards, & ♠ Queen.

West knows that North-South have around 33 points to have bid a slam. West holds 8 HCP, which leaves East with nothing. Leading a Club or a Heart can't possibly gain tricks if partner has no help.

If West leads a Diamond, then North-South can win, and draw trumps.

They can try finessing the Hearts, but West can win and play back a Heart (or Diamond, or Spade, just not Club).

Whichever King West wins, she must never play the other suit.

If West waits patiently, and guards both her Kings until the end, she will probably win both of them, and defeat the slam.

Note that this hand is identical to the previous hand on opening lead (against 1NT).

If your partner has a reasonable expectation to have some points, then leading a Club or a Heart will likely establish you a trick or two. (against 1NT or 2♠, I would lead a low Club or Heart).

If your partner has no points, because the opposition have bid for a slam, then you must not lead a suit with honours, and instead wait!

Board: 16

♠ AK	♠ 853
♥ 874	♥ K3
♦ KQT5	♦ J974
♣ AT92	♣ KQJ4

♠ QJT74	♠ 962
♥ J96	♥ AQT52
♦ A82	♦ 63
♣ 86	♣ 753

W	N	E	S
1NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

The Lead:

North has an easy sequence lead of the ♠Q.

On the first trick, South should work out that North has the ♠QJT, but not the ♠A or ♠K. South should also discourage the opening lead, since she can't really help, and only has three Spades.

From the first trick, North can work out that Declarer has the ♠AK, and that establishing the Spades will be tricky.

West will need to play both the Diamonds, and Clubs, and at some stage lose the ♦A. When North gets her ♦A, she needs to switch to the Hearts.

If South has had a chance to signal a Heart with a discard, that will help, but North can work it out anyway.

There is one more element to the defence, which is that North must 'unblock' her ♥J to get out of South's way.

She could lead the ♥J on the first round, or she could throw it on the second, but she must avoid winning it on the third round.

Board: 17 ♠ AKJ93

♥ AKJ

♦ Q6

♣ 432

♠ T62

♥ 98432

♦ 9752

♣ 7

♠ 4

♥ Q75

♦ AKJT

♣ A9865

♠ Q875

♥ T6

♦ 843

♣ KQJT

W	N	E	S
--	1♠	X	2♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			

South might bid 3♣: Bergen Raise, 7-9 with 4 Spades

The Lead:

South leads the ♦A, top of touching honours.

This is a tricky hand to solve without thinking about how many points North must have to jump to game opposite such a weak raise from South.

North must have around 17 or 18 points. Dummy has 8 HCP, and East has 14 points. Which means that West must have at most 2 HCP!

After one or two rounds of Diamonds, East needs to switch, and the obvious choice is a Heart, hoping that partner has the ♥A or ♥K, but East can work out that is impossible!

When you know that your partner has no points, don't assume that they have an Ace!

The best defence when partner has so few points is for East to try leading a Club.

East has a lot of Clubs, so does Dummy, so the best defence is to try to give partner a ruff in Clubs. Note that if partner could ruff Diamonds, then she would have encouraged the opening lead.

If East plays a second Diamond winner, the ♦Q dropping from North is a giveaway that there are no more Diamonds.

Board: 18

	♠ AK7	
	♥ 832	
	♦ 9432	
	♣ 965	
♠ J82		♠ T54
♥ KJ7		♥ AQ96
♦ AQJ		♦ K85
♣ JT82		♣ AQ7
	♠ Q963	
	♥ T54	
	♦ T76	
	♣ K43	

W	N	E	S
--	--	1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

The Lead:

South will probably lead a low Spade against 3NT.

Especially since the opposition didn't use Stayman or Transfers to look for a fit.

South only has 5 HCP, so there is a reasonable expectation for North to have a few points.

North should win the opening lead (♠K) and then lead her other honour, and then another Spade. South can win the third Spade, and then play a fourth Spade immediately. It's a shame that South only started with a four-card suit, otherwise the defence would have defeated East-West already!

South has taken four tricks already, and only needs one more to defeat the contract.

The obvious thing to do next is to lead a Club, South's only other good suit, but she needs to count Declarer's points.

East has shown 15-17 HCP in the bidding, Dummy has 13.

East-West have 28-30 HCP, and therefore North-South have between 10-12 points. South has 5, which leaves North only 5-7 points. **North has already used up the ♠AK, so she can't have any more points, not even a Jack!**

South must not lead a Club, since partner can't have an honour in Clubs, and instead wait for Clubs to be played by Declarer.

Sadly for East-West, they only have 7 easy tricks in the red suits, and they must play Clubs eventually. Losing one more trick to South.

Board: 19

♠ KQJT9

♥ K6

♦ AKQ

♣ 763

♠ A85

♥ Q54

♦ 54

♣ QJT84

♠ 763

♥ AJT92

♦ J32

♣ 92

♠ 42

♥ 873

♦ T9876

♣ AK5

W	N	E	S
--	--	--	P
P	1♠	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

The Lead:

West has an easy lead of the ♣Q against 3NT (Top of the sequence).

On the opening lead, East can't help in Clubs, so signals ♣9 (high hate Clubs).

Both East and West can work out that South has the ♣AK.

South plays a Spade immediately, conceding the Ace, but establishing four winners in Spades.

West can see that Declarer has 4 Spade winners, plus 3 Diamonds, plus the ♣A and ♣K, which is 9 tricks. To defeat the contract, West must abandon Clubs, and try leading the only other suit, Hearts.

West can also work out that South has ♣AK, and with only 6-10 points, she can't have the ♥A as well (since that would be 11 points).

On a Heart switch, Declarer is in trouble.

East-West still have a small thing to untangle, which is that West must get her ♥Q out of the way of East, so that East can win lots of Heart tricks.

West could lead the ♥Q after winning the ♠A, or she could play it on the second round of Hearts, but she can't afford to win it on the third round, since she won't have any more Hearts to lead back.

Board: 20

♠ A54

♥ 94

♦ Q652

♣ AQ86

♠ KJ86

♥ QJ5

♦ KJT84

♣ J

♠ QT92

♥ KT76

♦ A7

♣ K54

♠ 73

♥ A832

♦ 93

♣ T9732

W	N	E	S
1♦	P	1♥	P
1♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

The Lead:

Despite being the unbid suit, North should not lead a Club, away from her Ace. The best lead here is the ♥9.

When leading a shortage, it doesn't matter if the opponents have bid the suit – in fact, it is even better! You might be trumping their nice suit!

South knows that a Heart lead is unusual, since East bid Hearts. If you see an unusual lead, you should assume that the lead is from a singleton or doubleton.

South might win the first lead and return a Heart for partner to trump. However, sadly, North didn't have a singleton, she had a doubleton.

South has a clue that North's lead wasn't a singleton, but a doubleton. East bid Hearts, and West didn't raise Hearts, so West doesn't have 4 Hearts, she has at most three.

North can't have a singleton then, and must have a doubleton.

The best defence here is for South to not take the Ace immediately, and encourage Hearts instead. When North wins her ♠A, she should lead another Heart, and South should win this time, and return a Heart for North to trump.

The defence can win three Aces, but their only other trick comes from North trumping a Heart!

If North-South defeat this hand, they are truly excellent Defenders!

Opening Leads Examples

The card underlined in Green is the Card you should lead.

*The card marked in Blue would be my lead **against No-Trumps** if there is a difference.*

Suit	Vs Suit Contacts	Vs No-Trumps
<u>A</u> KQ4	Great lead	Against No-Trumps, all of these are quite good, sequences, and long suits.
<u>Q</u> JT86	Good lead	
<u>J</u> T963	Alright, safe, unlikely to win	
<u>A</u> K53	Great (look for the signal)	Ok. Try to establish tricks
<u>K</u> Q8 <u>6</u> 3	Great (get a trick quickly)	Good. You need help
<u>Q</u> J984	Reasonable	Note there are only two touching, but the 9 is close.
<u>A</u> 75 <u>4</u> 2	Bad (gives away a trick)	Leading from a long suit with an honour is great against No-Trumps, you might establish tricks. You can lead away from an Ace in No-Trumps.
KT8 <u>4</u>	Fine, you might get the K	
Q96 <u>5</u> 32	Ok, a long shot	
<u>K</u> 3	Bad (Risks the King)	Don't lead short suits against No-Trumps, unless your partner has bid the suit.
<u>6</u> 5	Ok	
<u>Q</u>	Bad	
<u>8</u>	Great!	
8 <u>6</u> 4	Fine. Safe. These leads give nothing away. If might be a better choice than your other suits.	Prefer to lead your longest suits, but these are alright. You might establish something.
9 <u>7</u> 62		