

OPENING LEADS

The first consideration in opening leads is which suit to lead. After you decide which suit, then decide which card in the suit.

The first rule in deciding which suit is LISTEN TO THE BIDDING

The bidding will give you an idea of what the opponents have:

Do they have a long side suit that they can run?

Are they stretching for their contract or is it comfortable?

Do I need to be aggressive or passive?

Which suit to lead (vs. suit contract)

1. Partner's suit if he has bid
2. Your own suit especially if a sequence (KQJxx)
3. Top of a sequence in an unbid suit
4. With length in the trump suit lead from a long side suit not a short suit. You are hoping to shorten declarer's trumps and he might lose control
5. Lead the unbid suit especially if the opponents have stayed away from no trump
6. Make a passive lead if other leads could give away a trick and the bidding does not indicate that declarer has a long suit to run.
7. Also make a passive lead against a slam contract unless there are long suits to run
8. Lead a singleton especially if you may be able to get back in

When do you lead a trump

1. The bidding indicates that declarer wants to trump in dummy
2. Partner has passed your takeout double
3. You are strong in declarer's side suit
4. Your side has most of the high cards and the opponents are sacrificing

Leads to avoid vs. suit contracts

1. A doubleton unless it is partner's suit
2. Suits with unsupported aces (or with broken sequences such as AQxx)
3. A singleton trump
4. A trump lead that might cost a trick
5. Suits the opponents have bid especially declarer's side suit (unless you have a sequence)
6. Suits with broken sequences (KJxx) unless bid by partner

Which suit to lead (vs. no trump).

In no trump you are generally trying to set up your longest suit before declarer can set up his. However, if the bidding indicates that there are no long suits to be run, it might be better to make a passive (safe) lead and let declarer set up his own tricks

1. Partner's suit if he has bid
2. Your own suit especially if a sequence (KQJxx)
3. Top of a sequence in an unbid suit
4. 4th from longest and strongest suit
5. A safe lead if it appears the suits are evenly balanced
6. A suit that declarer could be short in. (For example if he responded 2D to Stayman, he doesn't have a 4 card major and could be short)

Leads to avoid (vs. no trump)

1. A suit that declarer has bid
2. A suit that dummy has bid
3. Leading a short suit unless partner bid it

What card to lead in a suit

Many of the standard leads are shown in bold on the convention card. Some general rules:

1. Lead top of a sequence (KQJx, QJ10, J109, KQ)
2. Lead top of a broken sequence (QJ9x, J108x)
3. Lead top of an interior sequence (10 from Q109x)
4. Lead low from 3 or 4 to an honor (Qxx, Kxxx)
5. Lead top of a doubleton (97, Q4)
6. From AKx(xx) lead A or K based on partnership agreement
7. From 3 small lead top against NT small against a suit

Opening Lead Quiz. In each hand what is your opening lead?

The opponents bid 1S, 3S, 4S

1. S 632 H 942 D KQJ7 C A43
2. S Q6 H Q92 D K104 C J6543

Quiz Continued

LHO opens 1C, partner overcalls 1S, RHO bids 2H, LHO bids 4H

4. S 1072 H 642 D 9843 C KQ8
5. S K4 H 943 D AJ8 C 87532
6. S 5432 H A74 D 4 C 108543

The opponents bid 1NT, 3NT. What is your opening lead?

7. S QJ1082 H K43 D A5 C 10543
8. S AK8 H 854 D 75 C KJ542
9. S 95 H 43 D K10976 C AQ102

Partner opens 1C, RHO bids 1H, you bid 1S, LHO bids 2H and all pass. What is your opening lead?

10. S KJ43 H 843 D AJ2 C 854
11. S AK743 H 86 D J532 C 105

Suggested answers to quiz

1. King of Diamonds
2. 4 of Clubs
3. Your guess is as good as mine
4. 2 of Spades
5. King of Spades
6. 4 of Diamonds
7. Queen of Spades
8. 4 of Clubs
9. 10 of Diamonds
10. 3 of Hearts
11. Ace (or King) of Spades