

# Opening Leads Against No Trump Contracts

## Getting Started



# Choosing the Suit to Lead

- In most cases, declarers will not have all the tricks they need to make their contract.
- Nor do defenders have all the tricks they need to defeat a contract.
- Both sides need to develop tricks to reach their respective goals.
- The defense has the advantage of making the opening lead, which gives them a head start.

# Aggressive vs. Passive Defense



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♠ A 8 6

♥ 7 5 4 3 2

♦ A 8 3

♣ 10 5

♠ Q J 10

♥ K J 8

♦ Q 10 6 5

♣ A K 3

♠ K 9 4 3 2

♥ 9 6

♦ 7 4

♣ Q J 7 6

♠ 7 5

♥ A Q 10

♦ K J 9 2

♣ 9 8 4 2

# When Choosing a Suit You Have Options

- Your partner's suit, if partner has bid a suit
- Your own suit
- An unbid suit

# Leading Partner's Suit

- If partner has bid or overcalled a suit, you should **lead that suit**, unless you have a really good reason not to do so.
  - You can establish the setting trick by leading your own suit.
  - You don't have any cards in partner's suit.

# Leading Partner's Suit

Hand 1

♠ Q 5

♥ 9 6 3

♦ K Q 7 6 4

♣ 9 8 2

# Leading Your Own Suit

- If you have no help from partner's bids, you must look to your own hand and the opponents' bids to help you decide on a lead.
- The basic guideline is to select your longest suit, if it is not one bid by the opponents.
- There is no guarantee that this will work out, but it is the suit that gives you the best potential.



# Leading Your Own Suit

Contract 3 nt

Hand 2

♠ 8 5

♥ A K 3

♦ Q 10 7 6 5 4

♣ 9 8

Hand 3

♠ K J 8 5 3




♥ 7 3

♦ J 8 6 5 2

♣ 8

# Leading an Unbid Suit

- When the opponents have bid more than one suit and then end up in no trump, it is probably not a good idea to lead one of the suits they have bid.

North	East	South	West
1 	pass	1 	pass
1 	pass	3nt	all pass

Hand 4

 Q 5

 K J 8 3

 Q 5 4

 J 10 7 4

Hand 5

 J 9 7 5

 Q 7 4 3

 Q 5

 10 9 5

Hand 6

 K Q J 10 3

 J 3

 10 7 2

 A 8 5

# Selecting the Card to Lead

- When you have determined what suit to lead, you must select a card.
- There are certain lead conventions that will help partner know what you have and, by inference, what the declarer has in the suit.
- The choice of card depends on whether you are leading partner's suit or your own.

# Choosing a Card: Partner's Suit

- Lead the top card from a doubleton.
  - A 3
  - Q 6
  - 6 2
- Lead the top card from a sequence of honors.
  - Q J 3
  - 10 9 5

# Choosing a Card: Partner's Suit

- From 3 or 4 cards without touching honors, lead low or 4<sup>th</sup> best.
  - K 8 3
  - Q 9 4 2
  - 8 6 4
- Many partnerships prefer to lead the top card from 3 small against no trump.
- You should talk with your partner.

North

1 

2 

East

1 

pass

South

1 

3nt

West

pass

all pass

Hand 7

 8 7 3

 J 3

 10 5 4

 K 9 8 6 4

Hand 8

 Q 10 8 4

 Q J 7

 9 2

 J 10 9 3

Hand 9

 J 7 3

 Q 8 3

 9 7 2

 Q 8 5 2

# Choosing the Card When You Lead Your Own Long Suit

- Lead the top of touching honors, when you have a 3 card sequence or a three card sequence with the low card one removed from the sequence.
  - K Q J 3 2 or Q J 10 7 3 or J 10 9 4 3
  - K Q 10 3 2 or Q J 9 7 3
- Lead the top card of an internal sequence.
  - A J 10 7 4 3 or K 10 9 6 5 2
- Otherwise, lead 4<sup>th</sup> best.



# Choosing the Card

- Consider this holding. Q J 7 4 2
- If this is the suit you need to lead, which card do you select?
  - Some say 4<sup>th</sup> best.
  - Some say the queen.
- No matter which card you choose, if partner has nothing but low cards, the lead will turn out badly.

# Choosing the Card

- If you lead the 7, you may not get the ace or king.
- However, if declarer had Q xx and you play the ace – king, and a small spade, you will have good spades you can never cash.

Hand 10

♠ A K 10 7 3

♥ J 3

♦ 10 5 4

♣ 8 6 4

North

1♥

2nt

East

pass

pass

South

2♦

3nt

West

pass

all pass

Hand 11

♠ A J 10 7

♥ A Q 6 2

♦ 5 4

♣ 8 6 4

Hand 12

♠ Q 8 4 3

♥ J 7

♦ 10 9 2

♣ Q J 9 3

Hand 13

♠ J 7 5

♥ Q 8 5 3

♦ 9 7 2

♣ 10 8 5

North	East	South	West
1♥	pass	2♦	pass
2nt	pass	3nt	all pass

Sometimes you  
 have to  
 disregard the  
 guidelines.

Hand 14  
 ♠ J 8 7 5 3  
 ♥ Q J 10 9  
 ♦ A K  
 ♣ A 5

# Passive vs. Active Defense

- Sometimes you will want to go all out in an attempt to set a contract.
  - Imp scoring.
  - Rubber bridge.
- When you do this, you might give up an overtrick or two, that you might otherwise have saved.
- Other times you might want to be more passive, to avoid giving away overtricks.

# Passive Defense

- You want to be passive when:
  - Declarer is strong and dummy is weak.  
2nt...pass...pass ... pass.
  - Opponents have struggled to a contract.  
1nt..2nt..3nt. Seem to have no extra values.
  - The opponents seem to have fairly balanced hands.
  - Opponents have bid a grand slam.
  - You have strength and your partner is very weak. 1nt...3nt... you have 9 or 10 points.

# Active Defense

- Active defense may be best when:
  - Opponents have shown extra values.
  - The bidding indicates that one of the opponents has a long suit which may be used, by declarer, to discard losers.
  - The opponents have bid a small slam.
  - In a general sense, given what we have said, it is better to be active than passive.

# Active Defense (cont.)

- Cashing good tricks before declarer can discard losers.
- Setting up a long suit of your own before declarer and get control of the hand.



# Defending Passively

- Lead from solid suits Q J 10 x x
- Leading nothing suits when you are sure you are not finessing partner.
- Leading suits the declarer already has established.
- When you win a finesse return that suit.

# Decide on an Aggressive or Passive Defense

- Consider this hand,

♠ 6 4

♥ Q 10 9 3

♦ A J 10 5

♣ K J 6

The bidding is 1nt ... 3 nt...

Time to go passive. Partner cannot have more than two or three points. Don't help the declarer by leading away from your strength.