

Rule of 11

Note: This only works if partner leads their 4th highest card.

As Eddie Kantar (world class bridge writer and world champion) says, the rule has been around about 100 years and only third hand player and declarer can use it.

Against say a No Trump contract, partner leads the ♥5. Subtract the size of the card from 11 (11-5=6). This tells you that there are 6 cards higher than the ♥5 in the three remaining hands: dummy's, declarer's and yours.

Example 1/2

<div>♥ Q92</div> <div>♥ 87 ♥ A103</div> <div>♥ KJ654</div>	West	North	East	South
	3NT	All Pass	1NT	Pass
	South leads a fourth highest ♥5. North subtracts 5 from 11 which tells them that there are 6 cards higher than the 5 between dummy, their hand(North) and declarer's. They also know now that declarer must have 2 cards higher than the 5.			

Example 2/2

<div>♥ A1092</div> <div>♥K43 ♥ ??</div> <div>♥ 7</div>	West	North	East	South
	3NT	All Pass	1NT	Pass
	South leads a fourth highest ♥7. You(North) use the rule: 11-7=4. You can see one of the cards higher than the ♥7 in dummy and you have 3 which means declarer has no card higher than the ♥7 so you can play the ♥2. Partner should not be discouraged by the play of the ♥2, particularly when the ♥7 holds the trick.			

The advice here is to practise using the Rule. The benefits may not be immediately obvious, but it will help you to focus and build up a picture of the hands. And you (3rd hand player) will eventually see how it can help you to work out:

- how many cards partner has in the suit led
- when partner is not leading 4th highest
- when to switch and not return partner's suit

Note: In Example 2, if the lead had been the ♥8 then partner has not led their 4th highest as the rule tells us that there are only 3 cards higher and you can see 4! So the conclusion could be that partner has a very weak hand and is trying to find your suit. In some other cases they could be stuck for a lead, perhaps declarer has bid the suit they would have normally led.

Just for anoraks:

Some top players lead 3rd and 5th vs suits and 4th vs NT. So for 3rd highest use the rule of 12 and for 5th highest use the rule of 10. Not many if any at the Club use these leads so forget it!