

Watch the OPPONENTS' COUNT CARDS

Giving partner count is helpful on defense, but when you're declarer, you should watch the opponents' count cards and use them to piece together the full deal. Counting starts in the bidding, especially point count. Review the bidding before you start to play. West opened 1 diamond, East passed, East has less than 6 hcp.

987 Pass
K86 2 Spades
AQ32 Pass
1053

Q52	DEALER – 1 Diamond	104	Pass
AQJ	Pass	10743	Pass
K965	Pass	J10874	Pass
Q96		K4	

AKJ63
952 1 Spade
Void 4 Spades
AJ872

Opening lead: Ace of Hearts. All follow and then comes the Q of Hearts from West. Quite a lead! You win the King, East in the meantime, follows with the 4 and the 3. If he's honest, he has 4 hearts. He can't have 2 hearts, because West would then have 5; West didn't open 1 heart. At trick 3, you discard a heart on the Ace of diamonds, as East follows with the 4; low suggests an odd number. It looks like he has an even number of hearts (four) and an odd number of diamonds (five). If he has 3 diamonds, West would have 6, and would probably have rebid 2 diamonds over your 1 spade bid. So this means East has only 4 black cards.

What do you play at trick 4? You can try to finesse the Q of spades or lead a Club, hoping East has a doubleton honor. In that case, you lead low toward Your jack, (losing to west) planning to play the ace later and drop East's honor. West's unusual choice of opening leads indicates he might not have a safe lead. This makes it more likely he has the trump queen.

Tips:

- (1) Review the bidding before you plan your play.
- (2) When someone makes an unusual risky lead, he holds high cards in every suit.
- (3) Watch their carding closely. They are telling each other what they have and you may as well benefit from the information.

962 DEALER – 1 Diamond
K52 1 NT
A853
AQ4

Q		J105	Pass
J96	Pass	Q1084	Pass
10942		KJ6	
J10985		K73	

AK8743 1 Spade
A73 4 Spades
Q7
62

West leads the J of clubs, you try the Q, but no luck. East plays the K and returns the 7 to drive out dummy's ace. Where do you plan to go from here?

First, count your losers. The defense has already scored a club trick, and you have a diamond and a heart loser. If spades are 2-2, you're safe, but if they're 3-1, can you still make it? You should lead a low diamond towards your queen at trick three, hoping east has the king. East rises with the K and shifts to a low heart. Be sure to win the ace (you need the king for a later dummy entry), cash AK of spades, cash the queen of diamonds, enter dummy with the king of hearts and discard a heart on the diamond ace. The lose a club, diamond, and a spade.

KEY PLAYS:

The first play was the diamond to the queen at trick 3, and the next play was winning the heart shift with the ace.

Note that east could defeat the contract by shifting to a heart at trick two, which kills the late entry to the diamond.

ACTIVE opening leads:

1. The opponents have shown extra values
 2. One opponent has shown a long side suit that will provide a source of tricks
 3. The opponents have bid a small slam, and you need to set up a second trick
 4. You know honors are sitting well and suits are breaking well for the declarer
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