

## DEFENSIVE BASICS

Leading against notrump isn't too complicated. Essentially, we want to lead our best suit (as long as it wasn't bid by the opponents). Best means longest. If a tie for the longest, then the stronger of those two suits

We can lead from any holding, even from an ace (a no-no against suit contracts). Without a sequence, we lead our fourth-highest card in the suit. For example:

From A-Q-7-6-5, Lead the 6.

From J-10-6-4-2, Lead the 4

From J-10-9-4-2, Lead the J (because it's 3 in a row)

From A-10-9-8-2, Lead the 10 (top of an interior sequence)

From K-J-3-2, Lead the 2

If partner has shown a suit, we would tend to lead that suit instead of our own suit. Partner opens 1 club, and you don't have much in clubs, but Q-J-10-9 in another suit, lead it. If partner opens 1 Heart and you're on lead against 3 NT with: J8765 43 Q876 32 you should lead a heart trying to set up partner's suit, he has the stronger hand with the entries.

QUIZ: After 1NT – Pass – 3NT, All pass, what should you lead with:

1. QJ109 AJ32 54 432
2. AK8765 A103 A@ 654
3. J32 KJ1098 A32 Q2
4. Q832 J2 Q932 1032

After 1 Heart – 1NT – Pass – 3 NT, what should you lead with:

5. KJ32 10 7654 8765
6. KQJ109 2 832 8765

After the opponents bid 1 Diamond – Pass – 1 Spade – Pass – 1 NT – Pass – 3 NT – All pass  
What should you lead with:

7. A1032 J109 Q765 32
8. Q32 J932 J32 J32

## ANSWERS:

1. Q of spades, A safer and more attractive lead than a low heart
2. 6 of spades, Fourth from your longest and strongest, not the 8,  
We don't consider a "sequence" to be cards headed by anything below a 10
3. J of hearts, Your best suit and top of a sequence
4. 2 of spades, The diamonds are a little better but prefer the major,  
(the dummy won't have 4 spades but could easily have 4 or more diamonds)
5. 10 of hearts, Try to set up partner's suit (he's the one with the side entries)
6. K of spades, Ignore partner's hearts and lead top of this good sequence,  
Hopefully partner will understand if this is wrong
7. J of hearts, They've bid diamonds and spades, try this safe top-of-a-sequence lead
8. 2 of hearts, not a great suit, but better option than anything else

What if our 2 suits are approximately equal? Maybe we have K862 of spades and Q1053 of diamonds. We should prefer to lead the major. Our opponents would not have settled into 3 NT with an eight-card major suit fit (but they might easily have an eight-card or longer minor-suit fit).

Because length trumps strength, lead the 5 from 10-7-6-5-2 instead of the 2, from Q-9-7-2. Lead the Q from Q-J-9-8 instead of K from K-Q-10. Lead the 6 from Q-J-7-6-3 instead of a card from K-Q-7-2.

One doesn't lead the same against 3 NT as against 6 NT. Against 6 NT avoid leading from an honor unless you have a sequence.

To lead the top of a sequence at NT, the suit should have 3 adjacent honors, (KQJx). However, the 3<sup>rd</sup> honor can be missing by one place – KQ10x. KQ9xx is not and 4<sup>th</sup> best is normally lead.

When returning the suit partner has led, with 2 cards remaining return the higher; with 3 cards remaining, return the lowest.

If partner opens and the next hand overcalls 1 NT (natural), the only strong bid at your disposal is double. New suits and jump bids are not forcing.

Remember your lead directing double. When the opponents bid Stayman (2 clubs) over 1NT, double by you, says lead a club.

When the opponents transfer over their partner's 1 NT opening, a double by you, says lead that suit.