

BEWARE of the FOLKLORE

K854 DEALER – 1 Club
43 3 NT
A9
AQJ87

Q1096		32	1 Heart
Q72	Pass	A10985	Pass
732	Pass	K654	
432		K5	

AJ7 2 NT
KJ6 Pass
QJ108
1096

The worse folklore is “Always lead the highest card in partner’s suit. This has prevented defenders from defeating contracts more than any other play. When should you lead the top of partner’s suit? When you have a doubleton – the right lead in any suit or when you have touching honors. You should lead the top of touching honors in any suit. When you have three small cards because “the top of nothing” is probably easier for partner to read. The lead of a highish card tells partner you have nothing significant in the suit. The problem comes when you have three (or even four) cards in partner’s suit headed by an honor. You should lead a low card. Why? If you and your partner have all the high cards in a suit, it makes no difference what you lead. But – if there is a missing honor – the odds are high that it’s in declarer’s hand, usually the stronger hand. You must keep your high card “behind” the declarer to trap his honor.

The bridge world is full of maxims. Most have validity. “Second hand low; third hand high” is almost always a good guideline. “Cover an honor with an honor” will usually prevent declarer from stealing undeserved tricks. “Eight ever, nine never” is a good tip on whether to finesse for a missing queen – unless, of course, you have a better clue from the opponent’s bidding. How about: When a suit is unevenly divided, always play the high cards from the short suit first.” That has kept many declarers from finding they have winners stranded in dummy with no way to get to them.

OPENING LEADS

STANDARD LEADS:

- | | | |
|---|------|------|
| a. Lead the top of touching honors | KQJ | QJ10 |
| b. Lead second highest from touching honors | AJ10 | KJ10 |
| c. Lead high from any doubleton | 94 | J7 |
- d. If you have to lead from a 3 card suit to an honor, it's better to lead from a K

LEADS AGAINST SUIT CONTRACTS

- The best lead is top of touching honors
- If partner has bid the suit – LEAD IT
- Lead trump if the opponents have each bid a suit of their own, & settled on a 3rd one
- If all other leads look hopeless, lead trump

WHEN NOT TO LEAD SINGLETONS or DOUBLETONS:

- If you give up a potential trump trick by ruffing
- If you have 4 or more trump, try to lead declarer's short suit to force him to ruff

LEADS AGAINST NT:

- Attack by leading 4th best from your longest/strongest suit, Length prevails over Strength, holding Q965 10985 73 853 Lead heart 10
- Lead partner's suit first, if he has bid
- Avoid leading from a 4-card suit headed by AQ or AJ
- Leading from Jxxx usually doesn't work well for your side
- If you have a bad hand, try to determine partner's suit and lead it

THREE STEP DECISION:

Select an opening lead is a 2-part decision, you choose the suit first, then the specific card. This decision will be easier and more successful if you back up and ask a broader question: Does this auction call for a passive lead or an aggressive lead?

AGGRESSIVE LEADS:

How do you know when an aggressive lead is the best choice? The strongest clues come when the opponent's auction identifies a long suit that can be set up as a source of tricks.

PASSIVE LEADS:

Your goal is to make a safe opening lead that won't give declarer a "cheap" or undeserved trick. Some of the contracts & types of auctions that call for a safe non-attacking opening lead.

- The opponents are in a 6 NT or a grand slam.
- Auction tells you that declarer has a strong hand and dummy is weak.

PICKING THE RIGHT SUIT:

- What did you learn from the bidding?
- Did partner bid?
- Do you have a short suit, try for ruffs, have trump control
- Strong honor sequence, KQJ, lead the K
- Length in declarer's suit, lead long suit, try to make declarer ruff