

“WHAT CARD TO LEAD” AGAINST NO TRUMPS

1. WHAT SUIT?

Has your partner bid?

If so, your best choice is to lead partner's suit. Of course, the opposition probably have one or even two stoppers – they've bid NT – but this is your contribution to getting rid of those so partner can cash the remaining tricks in that suit when they get in.

*If not,
Have the opposition given any clues in the bidding as to their suit holdings?*

Make what inferences you can from the bidding: what does it promise or deny in each hand, in terms of length and/or strength?

If either of them has indicated 5 or more in a suit, it's best to avoid leading that suit, even if you're strong in it. Wait until they lead it to you! Your best choice would be a suit they haven't bid.

If not (for example, if the bidding has just gone 1NT-3NT)

In this case, you've nothing to guide you but your own hand. Generally, lead your longest, strongest suit.

2. WHAT CARD WITHIN THE SUIT?

You need to agree in advance what your lead shows. Common preferences are:

- 3-card honours sequences (may or may not have 4 or 5 cards in the suit)
 - Sequence (e.g. KQJ): lead top (K).
 - Broken sequence (e.g. KQ 10): lead top (K).
 - Interior sequence (e.g. K J10): lead the top of the interior sequence (J).
- Suits of 4 or more cards headed by an honour, no 3-card sequence (e.g. Q 10 8 5 4): lead 4th highest (5). ***This is the most common lead against a NT contract.***
- 3 cards:
 - No honour (e.g. 9 6 5): lead “top of nothing” (9).
 - Honour at top (e.g. J 6 5): lead low (5) – but try to avoid leading from this combination unless it's partner's suit.
- 2 cards: lead high-low.

3. WHY YOU LEAD THE 4TH HIGHEST CARD

Leading your 4th highest card allows your partner to apply the “Rule of 11”. Here’s an example:

	N (dummy)	
	K 5 2	
W (your partner)		E (you)
Q J 8 7		A 10 9 3
	S (declarer)	
	6 4	

The lead from West is the 7.
 Take 7 from 11: leaves 4
 i.e. there are 4 cards higher than the 7 in the 3 other hands (N, E and S)
 You can count 3 in your own hand and see 1 in dummy – so South has none!
 You know you can safely duck the lead (play the 3), so W can lead again through the King.

You can apply the rule without understanding it ☺, but Wikipedia has a good explanation, and you can Google many more.

NOTE that whatever you lead, Declarer is entitled to ask your partner what your agreement is regarding leads.

4. WHAT WOULD YOU LEAD IN THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS?

4.1 Bidding:

1NT	P	2C (Stayman)	P
2S	P	3NT	All pass

Your hand: **S** 10 7 2; **H** Q 9 7 5 4; **D** A 8 3; **C** 5 2

4.2 Bidding:

1D	1H	2NT	P
3NT	All pass		

Your hand: **S** Q 9 7 5 4; **H** 9 7 2; **D** A 8 3; **C** 5 2

4.3 Bidding:

1NT	P	3NT	All pass
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Your hand: **S** Q J 9 3; **H** A 10 5 3; **D** 8 5; **C** 9 3 2