

MINI UNIT D1 Leads ♠♥♦♣

The Opening Lead

Finding a good opening lead matters, because it can determine the fate of a contract. However, it isn't always straightforward. Here are some basic suggestions.

Against a suit contract:

Defenders can take tricks not only with top cards but also via ruffs. Your choice of opening lead should take account of the auction and in general, your order of preference should be:

1. A singleton, in the hope that partner can return the suit for you to ruff.
2. A suit partner has bid.
3. A suit that offers a good attacking combination – two or more touching honours (**KQ10x, QJ10, AKxx, J109**).
4. A suit the opponents have not bid.
5. If there are no unbid suits, a suit that dummy has bid.
6. A trump – this may reduce declarer's ruffs in dummy.

Avoid leading an unsupported ace (i.e. without the king) and do **not** lead a low card from a suit headed by the ace.

Against a notrump contract:

Defenders can take tricks not only with top cards but also via length tricks – at notrumps you are often in a race with declarer to establish your long suit and then regain the lead to cash winners. Therefore your order of preference should be:

1. A long suit that offers a good attacking combination – a sequence of three or more touching honours (**KQJx, QJ10x, J109x, AQJ10x** – lead the Q from this). Note that two touching honours is a good attacking combination in a suit contract, but a sequence of three honours is needed at notrumps.
2. The fourth highest card of your longest and strongest suit. Lead your fourth highest if you have only two touching honours.
3. If one of the opponents has bid that suit, your longest unbid suit.
4. Partner's suit.
5. A suit dummy has bid.

Again, avoid leading an unsupported ace. It's not usually a good idea to lead a suit that declarer has bid. Of course if declarer originally opened **1♣**, arrived in **3NT** and you hold **♣KQJ107**, you will know what to do.

Why is the leading the fourth best card against notrumps a good idea?

The reason is that it is very helpful to partner, who can apply the Rule of 11 to work out what to play and how to do the right thing in defence. The way this Rule works is that if a lead is fourth highest (fourth best) from a player's longest and strongest suit, you can subtract the face value of the card from 11 to give the number of higher cards in that suit held by the remaining 3 hands.

Example 1

	♦K 6 5	
	North (dummy)	
♦Q T 8 7		♦A J 9 2
West		East
	South	
	♦4 3	

Against South's notrump contract, West leads ♦7 which is his fourth best card in the suit. Declarer plays low from dummy. What should East do?

On the assumption that West has led fourth best, East applies the Rule of 11 to work out that $11 - 7 = 4$, so there should be only 4 cards higher than ♦7 between the North, East and South hands.

East can see all 4 of them (A,K,J,9) between his hand and dummy. Therefore if the lead is indeed fourth best, South has no card higher than the ♦7, so East should not play a high card. That allows West to win the first trick and continue the suit, which enables the defence to take 4 tricks in diamonds. Without using the rule of 11, an unthinking defender may rise with ♦A – gifting declarer a trick!

Example 2

	♥K T 8	
	North (dummy)	
♥7		♥Q 9 4
West		East
	?	
	South	

West leads ♥7 and $11 - 7 = 4$. However this time, East can see 5 cards higher than ♥7 between his own hand and dummy's, so can work out that the lead was something other than a fourth highest card.

Should You Return the Suit Partner Led?

A lead of an honour promises the honour below the card led. A lead of a small card promises at least one honour in the suit led. In both cases, these leads ask partner to return the lead when s/he gets the chance.

What card should you return? From 2 remaining cards you should return the higher card, but from 3 or more remaining cards you should return your original fourth highest.

Examples

♥ J 6

North (dummy)

♥ 5 (led)

♥ ?

West

East (you)

Defending against a notrump contract, after winning with ♥Q in the situation above, which card should East return from each of the following original holdings?

♥ K Q 8

play the K, then if that wins, continue with the 8

♥ K Q 8 3

return the 3

♥ Q 8 3

return the 8

♥ Q 9 8 4 3

return the 4 (it looks like declarer has the doubleton ♥A2)

Opening Leads

When card led is the same, whether the contract is suits or no trumps, the background is yellow.
 When the card led is different, then the background is grey.
 Special case, then the background is green.



The diagram shows 12 card hands arranged in a 3x4 grid. The first 8 hands are on a yellow background, the next 2 on a grey background, and the last 2 on a green background. Each hand shows a set of cards and the card to be led.

- Hand 1 (Yellow): Heart suit, cards K, Q, J, 4, 4. Lead: 4 of Hearts.
- Hand 2 (Yellow): Spade suit, cards Q, J, 10, 7, 7. Lead: 7 of Spades.
- Hand 3 (Yellow): Diamond suit, cards K, Q, 10, 9, 9. Lead: 9 of Diamonds.
- Hand 4 (Yellow): Club suit, cards J, 10, 8, 6, 5, 5. Lead: 5 of Clubs.
- Hand 5 (Yellow): Club suit, cards J, 10, 8, 4, 4. Lead: 4 of Clubs.
- Hand 6 (Yellow): Heart suit, cards Q, 10, 7, 5, 2, 2. Lead: 2 of Hearts.
- Hand 7 (Yellow): Spade suit, cards K, 7, 3, 3. Lead: 3 of Spades.
- Hand 8 (Yellow): Diamond suit, cards J, 10, 7, 7. Lead: 7 of Diamonds.
- Hand 9 (Grey): Heart suit, cards K, Q, 7, 6, 3, 3. Lead: 3 of Hearts.
- Hand 10 (Grey): Spade suit, cards Q, J, 5, 4, 4. Lead: 4 of Spades.
- Hand 11 (Green): Diamond suit, cards A, K, 8, 5, 2, 2. Lead: 2 of Diamonds.
- Hand 12 (Green): Club suit, cards A, K, J, 9, 6, 6. Lead: 6 of Clubs.

Labels for the grey and green backgrounds:

- Grey background: Suits, NT, Suits, NT, Suits, NT
- Green background: Suits

Text for the green background:

Exactly 2 cards in the suit:
 NT: Avoid this lead.

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- From 3 small there are different approaches. Diagram above plays the 7 from 975 (Middle Up Down). Alternatively you can play the 9 (Top of Nothing.) Agree with your partner!

Quizzes ♠♥♦♣ What do you Lead?

<p>1 The contract is 3NT & partner overcalled ♠. What do you lead?</p> <p>♠9 6 ♥9 6 5 4 2 ♦A 8 6 5 ♣K J</p>	<p>2. The contract is 1NT with no bidding from your side.</p> <p>♠K 6 5 4 2 ♥9 4 ♦A 8 6 5 ♣K J</p>	<p>3. The contract is 3NT after opponents opened bidding 1♠. What do you lead?</p> <p>♠K 6 5 4 2 ♥9 4 ♦A 8 6 5 ♣K J</p>	<p>4. Partner leads ♠Q against 3NT & you hold ♠K2. Dummy plays low. What do you play & why?</p>
<p>Answer ♠9. Give priority to leading partner's suit. Show your doubleton by leading your top ♠</p>	<p>Answer ♠4. 4th highest hoping to develop spades</p>	<p>Answer ♦5. Don't lead suits bid by opponents so try other long suit</p>	<p>Answer ♠K. You need to unblock. Partner has led top of sequence of or almost 3 cards, (eg QJ10 or QJ9).</p>

2 What does the lead mean?

<p>East is in NT & N/S have not bid. South leads ♥J.</p>	<p>East is in NT & North has bid ♥s. South leads ♥J.</p>	<p>East is in NT & N/S have not bid. South leads ♥4.</p>
<p>South could have: J109xx - top of sequence J108 - top of broken sequence KJ10x - interior sequence (or AJ10x) South does not have Q</p>	<p>South could have: J3 - top of doubleton JT3 - top of sequence J - singleton</p>	<p>South could have: KT942 - 4th highest of longest & strongest KT4 - low from 3 cards to an honour 43 - top of doubleton A954 Can lead away from Ace in NT</p>

Exercise 3: North East South West (you)

		1♣	P
1♥	P	1♠	P
2♠	P	4♠	All Pass

What do you lead?

<p>♠Q 7 4 ♥J 8 3 ♦Q J 6 2 ♣J 10 8</p>	<p>♠J 9 2 ♥J 7 5 ♦A J 9 7 5 ♣Q 4</p>	<p>♠K 8 ♥Q 9 7 ♦Q 10 8 4 2 ♣Q 5 4</p>	<p>♠A 9 3 ♥10 8 5 3 2 ♦6 ♣J 8 6 5</p>	<p>♠7 5 3 ♥A 10 5 ♦A Q 10 ♣K 10 4 2</p>
<p>♦Q- top of sequence</p>	<p>♦A - lead Ace rather than 4th highest. You get to see dummy before next lead</p>	<p>♦4- lead low (4th highest)</p>	<p>♦6 - lead singleton hoping you can win a trick before trumps are drawn. Partner likely has 7-10pts</p>	<p>♠3- Partner unlikely to have ♦K so you may be helping declarer. Lead a trump & leave the work to declarer.</p>

SET BOARDS ♠♥♦♣

Board 14 ♠ 8 2
East Deals ♥ Q J 6
None Vul ♦ 6 5 4 2
 ♣ Q 10 8 4

♠ 10 7 6 ♠ A K Q
 ♥ A K 9 8 2 ♥ 7 3
 ♦ 9 ♦ Q J 10 8 7 3
 ♣ A J 7 2 ♣ 9 3

♠ J 9 5 4 3
 ♥ 10 5 4
 ♦ A K
 ♣ K 6 5

West	North	East	South
		1 ♦	Pass
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 NT	All pass

Lead: ♠ 4

Theme: Discourage opening Lead
Lead: ♠4 4th highest (low from an honour)
Winners: 3♠ 2♥ 0♦ 1♣ = 6
Play: North plays ♠8 to discourage. E/W will need to promote ♦s to make the contract. When South wins ♦ trick they should lead a ♣ (through dummy's strength). Best to lead ♣K & continue ♣s if South encourages.

Board 15 ♠ J 4
South Deals ♥ K J 7
N-S Vul ♦ 8 6 4
 ♣ K J 8 7 3

♠ 10 8 6 3 2 ♠ A K Q
 ♥ — ♥ 9 6 4
 ♦ J 10 7 5 3 2 ♦ Q 9
 ♣ 9 5 ♣ A Q 10 6 4

♠ 9 7 5
 ♥ A Q 10 8 5 3 2
 ♦ A K
 ♣ 2

West	North	East	South
			1 ♥
Pass	2 ♥	3 ♣	4 ♥

All pass
 Lead: ♣ 9

Theme: Partner's suit top of doubleton
Lead: ♣9 - top of doubleton
Losers: 2 or 3♠ 0♥ 0♦ 1♣
Play: East wins opening lead. Dummy's main use will be to ruff ♠s so East should immediately lead a trump before winning any ♠s. This way North will have no trumps left to ruff the 3rd round of spades & East makes 3 spade tricks