

20 WHICH CARD TO LEAD - Defenders

Defence is the most difficult aspect of Bridge – it would be considerably easier if you could see partner's hand!

However just as there is a language in bidding, so too is there a 'language" in defence – you talk to your partner with the cards you play. You can give them an idea of the cards you have and also the ones you don't have. Your partner will try and tell you about their hand by the cards they play in response.

Language means that you have to have rules.

First rule – **ALWAYS OVER LEAD Honours** – this means that if you say lead a Queen you **ALWAYS** have the Jack and **NEVER** have the King (note 10 is an honour when leading)

(Exceptions to over lead Honours – with AK doubleton, lead K then A! – if this happens partner will know this isn't over leading honours so 'must be a doubleton'.)

Second Rule – use **STANDARD LEADS**

4th highest from an honour e.g. K 9 7 3 K 9 7 3 2

3rd highest from 3 headed by honour e.g. K 9 7

MUD (middle > up > down) from 3 without honour e.g. 9 7 3 i.e. 7 then 9 then 3

2nd highest from 4 without honour e.g. 9 7 3 2 (if lead top, partner will think you have a doubleton with next round) - *next trick play the highest.*

Doubleton - high then low e.g. 9 7

An Honour promises card below it and denies the card above it.

AGAINST A SUIT CONTRACT

Deciding which **suit** to lead is difficult - see topic 18.

ALMOST ALWAYS:

Lead PARTNER's SUIT using STANDARD LEADS (an exception may be if say you had A K Q in another suit, you may lead the ace (partner will know you have the K) to see what dummy holds – and then deciding next course of action).

Do NOT lead the highest card you have in partner's suit unless it is a supported honour e.g. Q J 3 – the only exceptions being a doubleton or perhaps an unsupported Ace.

NEVER lead an unsupported Ace in your suit

Try not to lead away from an unsupported A or K (esp A) – find another suit

Try NEVER to lead a DOUBLETON unless it is Partner's suit (if you lead an unusual card and partner is wondering 'Could this be a singleton or is it a doubleton?' – it will be a singleton, because partner knows you don't lead doubletons) – **or it is A K**

NEVER LEAD A SINGLETON TRUMP your partner may well have 3 or 4 trumps and you will be ‘killing their trumps’

DON’T LEAD A SINGLETON if you have 4 trumps of your own – they will be wasted trumping (*lead your longest suit, hoping to make declarer trump in their hand*)

LEADING AGAINST NO TRUMPS

Goal is to try and establish and run your long suit before declarer can establish and run theirs.

Option 1

Lead partner’s suit (if you know it) **using STANDARD leads** – using standard leads partner should be able to work out what cards you may have and possibly how many – so if you lead say the 3 of partners suit you are probably promising an honour in that suit etc

Option 2

Lead a SEQUENCE from a suit with at least 3 touching honours and at least 4 cards. This is an attacking lead because you force out declarer’s high cards while establishing your suit. Lead the top card from a **true sequence** – this promises the 2 lower cards and denies a higher one.

e.g. K Q J 7, A K Q 7 5 (see special note), J 10 9 8 2

Lead the top card from a **broken sequence** – where you have the top 2 cards and are missing only one in the ‘sequence’

e.g. K Q 10 9, Q J 9 8 2. You are still promising the card below and denying a higher one. Lead the top card from an **internal sequence** – still promising the card below it, but you may hold a higher non touching honour.

e.g. K J 10 9, A J 10 9 2, Q 10 9 8 2

(Exception: if you had a long suit headed by the ace but missing 1 honour e.g. A Q J 10 9 3 you lead the ACE – this says to partner ‘DISCARD YOUR HIGHEST CARD NOW’ – what you are hoping is that partner has the K and you will then be able to ‘run’ the suit without the risk of partner blocking it.

Option 3

Lead the 4th highest card from YOUR longest suit.

Note – even if the opponents have indicated that they have a stopper in you or partner’s long suit, it is usually best to still attack that suit immediately.