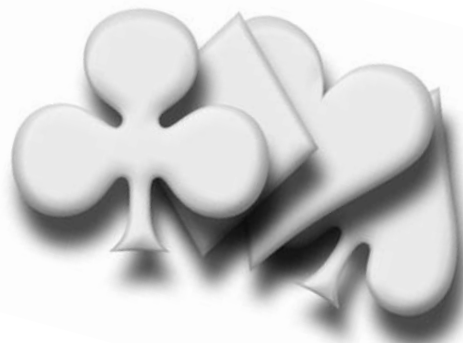


LESSON 7

Leads and Signals



General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



GENERAL CONCEPTS

This lesson covers the defenders' conventional agreements. Leads and signals against both suit and notrump contracts are discussed. This is a slightly different format from the other lessons in this series where bidding is the focus.

Leads and Signals

While it is assumed that the students in this course are generally familiar with opening leads against both suit and notrump contracts, these areas are reviewed. There is an emphasis on the less commonly used conventional agreements.

The students will probably be familiar with attitude signals, but may be less familiar with both count and suit preference signals and how to apply them.

The methods discussed are all standard carding. Topics such as upside-down carding, Rusinow and Journalist leads are outside the scope of this lesson.

Here are the topics covered:

Opening Leads against Suit Contracts

The emphasis is on choosing the appropriate — conventional — card to lead rather than choosing the actual suit to lead. Some discussion of choosing the suit is included, however. The main difference between leads against suit contracts and notrump contracts is that, against suit contracts, the top of a two-card sequence is often led, and it is usually not a good idea to lead away from an ace.

The partnership must agree on which card is led from three low cards, since there is no standard agreement. It's also a good idea to discuss which card is led from a suit headed by the ace and king. The standard lead is the king, but many players lead the ace — following the guideline of always leading the top of touching honors. This also affects the lead from a doubleton ace-king.

Opening Leads against Notrump Contracts

The choice of suit is discussed briefly, but the emphasis is on leading the conventional card from the chosen suit. Leading fourth highest, even when holding touching honors, is discussed. Leading the top of touching cards from an interior sequence is covered. Leads from a broken sequence such as A-K-J-x and K-Q-10-x are left until after the discussion on signals. The conventional leads from these sequences require the additional knowledge of attitude and count signals.

Rule of Eleven

In addition to the previous discussion of the advantage of leading fourth highest to keep communications open, the potential advantage from applying the *rule of eleven* is illustrated. The value of the rule of eleven is usually given too much emphasis. It is probably better to get the students to simply visualize the possible holdings partner could have, based on the opening lead. Nonetheless, the students should become familiar with the rule.

Attitude Signals

The students should already be familiar with attitude signals, so this is mainly a quick review. While introducing this topic, the appropriate card to play when returning partner's suit is also discussed.

The approach taken here is that attitude signals are the top priority. Count and suit preference signals are used only when attitude signals clearly do not apply. Not all experts would agree with this philosophy, but it is probably the best starting point for most players.

Count Signals

Count signals can be used in a number of situations, but the only example discussed here focuses on the standard use when holding up in a notrump contract. Many players confuse the use of count and attitude signals, so it is best to keep the discussion relatively straightforward. For example, many players automatically play high-low from a doubleton, when their partner leads from an ace-king against a suit contract. This is actually an attitude situation, not a count situation, and it is not always correct to play an encouraging card, as one of the sample deals will illustrate.

The trump echo is briefly mentioned, but is not discussed in any detail. Many players prefer to use the trump suit for suit preference, reserving the trump echo for very specific situations.

Suit Preference

Suit preference is a very important defensive signal that can be used in many situations. The students are taken through a couple of examples to give them the general idea. There is time to discuss only the standard agreements, since this course focuses on conventions and not on play and defense.

Leading from a Broken Sequence Against Notrump

The standard agreements for leading from holdings such as A-K-J-10-x and K-Q-10-9 against notrump contracts can become quite complex. This section could be omitted if the students have already been sufficiently challenged. Leading the top of touching honors from such holdings is a fairly good guideline for most players. Even expert partnerships don't always have sound agreements about the exceptions.

Play & Defense

The deals are examples of defensive leads and signals. The auctions are kept relatively straightforward.

The first deal has an example of getting a ruff against a suit contract when holding a doubleton ace-king. It is important for the students to have previously discussed their standard lead from a suit headed by the ace-king. In addition, the defenders have to make use of a suit-preference signal, so that the opening leader doesn't have to guess how to cross to partner's hand. This should be a very challenging deal for the group. It is a good illustration of how defensive conventions can help find the winning defense. Without good agreements, it is doubtful that any partnership would defeat the contract on this deal.

The second deal shows an example of the correct use of attitude signals when defending. Most of the students will make the automatic play of encouraging partner in a suit contract, when partner leads from a suit headed by the ace-king and they hold a doubleton. This is a good deal to emphasize that the defenders' conventions are tools that must be used wisely.

The third deal is an example of the use of the standard count signal, when defending against a notrump contract with a long suit in the dummy. Again, it's easy for the defenders to go wrong in such a situation, especially if declarer handles the suit combination deceptively.

The final deal is an example of the rule of eleven in action. Even though the concept has been discussed in the lesson, it will be challenging for the defenders to find the correct play at the table.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This lesson is in a different format than the earlier lessons, which have all focused on bidding conventions. It's essential to emphasize the importance of defensive carding conventions. The students will probably find a good knowledge of defensive techniques far more valuable than bidding conventions.

You might start the lesson like this:

“In the previous lessons, our focus has been on bidding conventions. These are important because both members of the partnership must be aware of these agreements to successfully work together during the auction. There's an equally important area where the defenders have to work together, and that is during the defense of a deal.

“Once your side has lost the auction, the contest is only half over. Now you have a chance to defeat the opponents' contract with good defense. This will happen on about half of the deals, so it's very important to be able to focus on this aspect of the game. The partnership has many conventional agreements during the auction. There are also many conventional agreements that can be used during the defense. You can exchange information with partner with every card you play. Let's see what sort of messages you can send to each other, starting with the opening lead.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Opening Leads against Suit Contracts

Introduction

“There are two decisions to make when you are on opening lead:

- Which suit to lead.
- Which card to lead in the chosen suit.

“The choice of suit is something that you must work out based on the auction you have heard. There are guidelines to help you make that decision, but there are no hard and fast rules. The choice of card, on the other hand, is dictated by the partnership agreement. You don’t have to lead the specific card prescribed by your conventional understanding, but if you don’t, you run the risk of leading partner astray.”

Instructions

“The cards are sorted into suits. Give each player one suit and construct the following hand in front of West.

“In spades: the six.

“In hearts: the queen and the jack.

“In diamonds: the king, the queen, the seven and the three.

“In clubs: the queen, the nine, the seven, the five, the four and the two.”

WEST	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 6				1 ♥
♥ Q J	Pass	2 ♥	Pass	4 ♥
♦ K Q 7 3	Pass	Pass	Pass	
♣ Q 9 7 5 4 2				

Check that each table has the correct starting hand set up dummy style in front of West. Note that the specific spot cards are being named in this lesson, so you may have to repeat the hand a couple of times to make sure everyone is in agreement.

“South opens 1 ♥. West passes, North raises to 2 ♥ and South bids 4 ♥. That puts West on lead. What is West’s opening lead? (♠6/♥Q/♦K/♣5.)

This is a typical opening lead challenge. With very little to guide you, there are sound arguments for and against leading any of the four suits:

- Leading the singleton might work well, if East can win a trick and return the suit for you to ruff before all of your trumps are drawn. It might not work well if, for example, East holds the ♠Q, and the lead helps declarer find that card. Or your lead might help declarer establish spade winners on which to discard losers once trumps are drawn.

- Leading a trump might work well by removing one or more of dummy's trumps, before they can be used to ruff losers in the dummy. It also might prevent giving up a trick by leading one of the other suits — following the adage, 'When in doubt, lead trump.' It also could work poorly by helping declarer draw trumps and giving declarer time to establish winners on which to discard losers.
- Leading a diamond might work well. If partner holds the $\spadesuit A$, you may be able to take two or three tricks in the suit, before declarer has an opportunity to discard any losing diamonds. Even if declarer has the $\spadesuit A$, you may establish a winner that can be taken when your side gains the lead. On the other hand, leading a diamond may cost a trick if, for example, declarer holds the $\spadesuit A J 10$ and would have lost two tricks if you didn't lead the suit.
- Leading a club might work best. If partner holds the $\clubsuit K$, for example, you might establish a winner in the suit, before declarer can establish a side suit on which to discard a club loser. Partner might have a singleton or a void in clubs, and you may be able to give partner a ruff before trumps are drawn. However, it might work out badly if, for example, it is into the jaws of declarer's $\clubsuit A K J$, or if partner holds the $\clubsuit A$ and declarer was going to have to guess which defender held the $\clubsuit A$ and which defender held the $\clubsuit Q$.

“Only after seeing all four hands will it be possible to know which suit gets the defense off to the best start. In fact, it might not matter which suit you choose. Declarer may be able to make the contract on any opening lead, or your side might be able to defeat the contract no matter what you lead.

“We won't spend a lot of time on the choice of suit. Anything could be right. Instead, the focus will be on the card you choose after selecting the suit to lead.

“If West chooses to lead a spade, which spade does West lead? ($\spadesuit 6$.)
Trick question! With a singleton, you have no choice of cards to lead. East will have to identify the $\spadesuit 6$ as a singleton based on the auction and the cards that are visible when dummy comes down. It won't always be easy for East to recognize your lead as a singleton. It could easily be construed as coming from a doubleton, or fourth highest, or from three low cards. That's one disadvantage of leading a singleton against an auction such as this one, where little information is given to the defenders.

“Of course, it would be unethical to lead the $\spadesuit 6$ very quickly after the auction is over. You have to take the same time as you would if you were leading from a doubleton or a longer suit. You can't use the tempo in which you make your opening lead to influence partner. East will just have to figure things out from the logic of the situation.

“If West chooses to lead a diamond, which diamond does West lead? ($\diamond K$.) Although you would lead a low card from this suit against a notrump

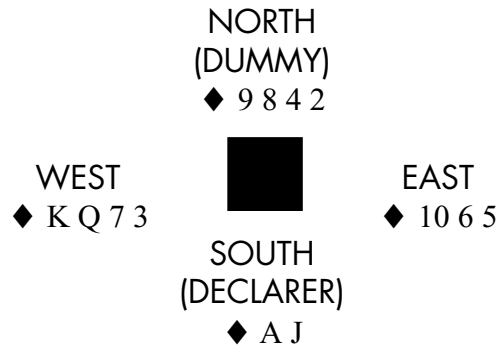
contract — since you don't have a solid three-card or longer sequence, or a broken or interior sequence — against a suit contract, you usually lead the top of two or more touching cards headed by an honor.

“To see why, turn West's spades, hearts and clubs face down and construct a possible layout for the diamond suit.

“North: the nine, the eight, the four, and the two.

“East: the ten, the six, and the five.

“South: the ace and the jack.



“**What would happen if West led a low diamond?** (East–West would get no tricks.) South would win the first diamond with the ♦ J and still have the ♦ A. Since North–South are playing with hearts as the trump suit, it's likely that East–West won't get any tricks from the diamond suit, since South will be able to ruff a third or fourth round of diamonds.

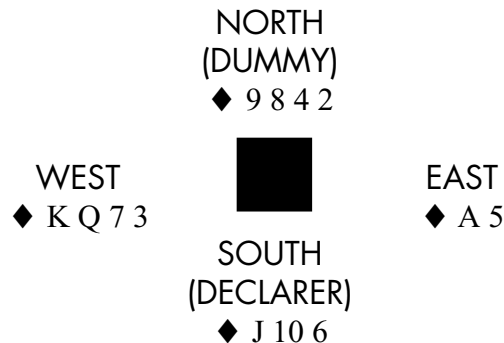
“In a notrump contract, leading a low diamond would not necessarily cost a trick. South would win the ♦ J and later get a second trick with the ♦ A, but West still might get two tricks with the ♦ K and the ♦ Q, since declarer can't ruff them once they are established.

“**What is the advantage of leading the ♦ K?** (One trick.) By leading the ♦ K, West immediately establishes the ♦ Q as a winner. West still isn't guaranteed a trick with the ♦ Q, since South may be able to discard the ♦ J on an extra winner in dummy, but West has at least created a potential winner for the defense.

“Change the diamond layout.

“East: give the ten and the six to South.

“South: give the ace to East.



“If North–South were in a notrump contract, what would happen if West led the ♦ K? (The diamond suit would be blocked.) If West leads the ♦ K, the defenders can’t take three diamond winners right away, because the suit would be blocked. West would need an outside entry to untangle the suit. It would be worse if East played the ♦ A on West’s ♦ K, since the defenders would now take only two diamond tricks.

“If North–South are in a heart contract, what happens if West leads the ♦ K? (East–West still may get three tricks.) It would have been better if West had led a low diamond since East–West could immediately get their three winners in the suit. If West leads the ♦ K, however, the defenders still may get three tricks. East can overtake the ♦ K with the ♦ A and lead the ♦ 5 to West’s ♦ Q. West can then lead a third round of diamonds for East to ruff. That is not the most efficient way to get three tricks from the suit, but it may be okay if East doesn’t ruff with a natural trump trick.

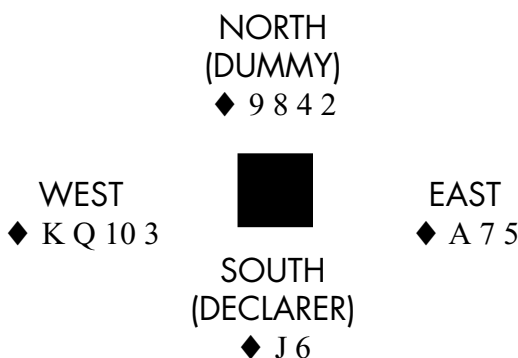
“In summary, leading the top of two touching honors is less likely to cost a trick in a suit contract than in a notrump contract.

“Leads from broken and interior sequences are similar to those against notrump contracts.

“Change the diamond layout.

“West: give the seven to East.

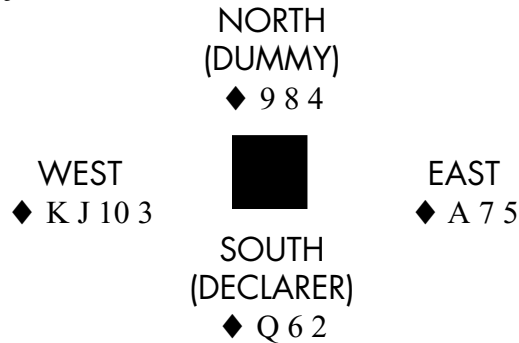
“South: give the ten to West.



“What would West lead? (♦ K.) West would lead the ♦ K, top of a broken sequence.

“Solid and broken sequences are usually good combinations to lead against a suit contract, because they are unlikely to give up a trick. They may be safer than leading from a long suit. In notrump contracts, you can often afford to give up a trick or two when leading from a long suit, because once your suit is established, you’ll be able to take your winners when you gain the lead. In a suit contract, giving up a trick or two to establish a suit is less likely to be effective. By the time the suit is established, declarer will usually be in a position to ruff your winners.

“Change the diamond layout.
 “West: give the queen to South.
 “North: give the two to South.
 “South: give the jack to West.

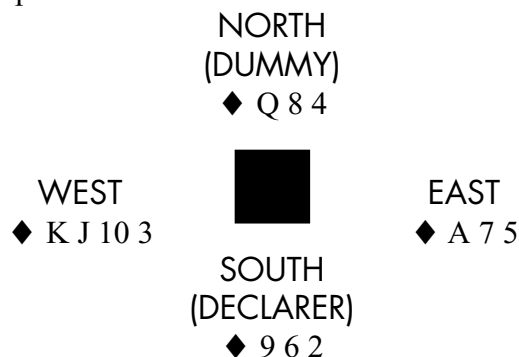


“Which card would West lead from this combination against a suit contract? (♦ J.) If West has chosen to lead a diamond, the appropriate card is the ♦ J, top of the touching cards from an interior sequence.

“It is risky to lead from a combination like this against a suit contract because declarer might hold both the ♦ A and the ♦ Q. Nonetheless, you must sometimes lead from a suit like this after listening to the auction, since it might represent your best chance. For example, it might be the only suit that the opponents have not bid—giving you a reason to hope that East holds either the ♦ A or the ♦ Q.

“When West leads the ♦ J, which card should East play? (♦ A.) It usually will be correct for East to play the ♦ A. From the lead of the ♦ J, the one card that East knows you don’t hold is the ♦ Q, since you would lead the top of touching cards. East can’t be sure whether you hold the ♦ K, but there will usually be no harm in playing the ♦ A in case the layout is something like this. If declarer holds both the ♦ K and the ♦ Q, the defenders won’t be able to prevent declarer from taking two tricks in the suit — except on the rare occasion when there are insufficient entries to the dummy.

“Change the diamond layout.
 “North: give the nine to South.
 “South: give the queen to North.



“Which card would West lead against a suit contract? (♦J.) The ♦J, top of the interior sequence.

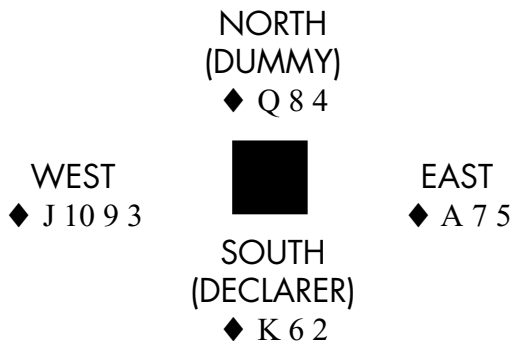
“If declarer plays the ♦4 from dummy, should East play the ♦A? (No/Yes.) If this is the actual layout, you can see that it would not be a good idea for East to play the ♦A. If East does play the ♦A, declarer will get a trick with dummy’s ♦Q. Instead, East should let West’s ♦J win the trick. The defenders will be able to take the first three tricks in the suit.

“Of course, East might be afraid that South holds the ♦K. That is a possibility, since West’s lead of the ♦J is ambiguous in this situation. It might be from an interior sequence including the ♦K, or it might simply be the top of a sequence headed by the ♦J. Most of the time, however, it will be best for East to withhold the ♦A, keeping the ♦Q trapped in the dummy.

“Change the diamond layout.

“West: give the king to South.

“South: give the nine to West.



“What would West lead? (♦J.) The ♦J, top of touching high cards.

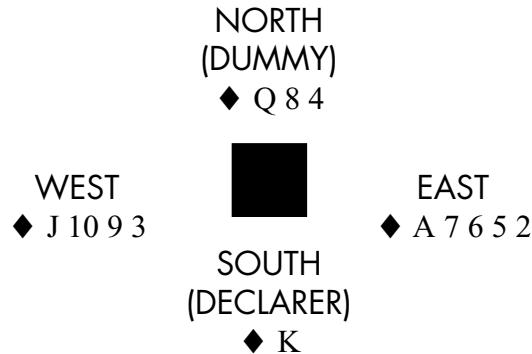
“If this is the actual layout, should East play the ♦A when the ♦4 is played from dummy? (No/Yes.) If East plays the ♦A, declarer will get two tricks, the ♦K and the ♦Q. If East withholds the ♦A, declarer will get only one diamond trick with the ♦K. If West can regain the lead before declarer can dispose of either of the diamond losers, the defenders will be able to trap the ♦Q and take two diamond tricks.

“There might be times, however, when East will need to grab the ♦A to defeat the contract. If declarer has some extra winners on which the diamond losers can immediately be discarded, East might have to take the ♦A before the defenders’ diamond trick goes away. That will be the exception, rather than the rule.

“East might have another concern.

“Change the diamond layout.

“South: give the six and the two to East.



“If West leads the ♦ J and dummy plays the ♦ 4, should East play the ♦ A? (Yes/No.) East might be concerned that declarer will take a trick with the singleton ♦ K. If that’s the case, the defenders will be unable to take any diamond tricks, since declarer can ruff the next round of diamonds. That’s a possibility, but East shouldn’t be in a hurry to play the ♦ A, unless East can clearly see that taking the ♦ A will defeat the contract.

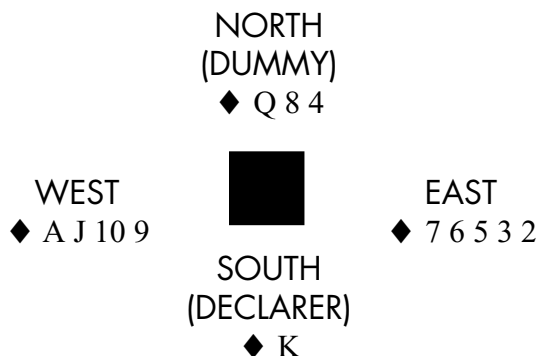
“If East does play the ♦ A, dropping South’s singleton ♦ K, then North’s ♦ Q is established as a winner. South may be able to discard a loser in another suit on dummy’s ♦ Q. Declarer still gets one trick in the diamond suit. If East doesn’t play the ♦ A on the first trick, South will win the singleton ♦ K, but won’t be able to use dummy’s ♦ Q to discard a loser. In other words, the defenders may not lose anything, even if South is allowed to take a trick with the singleton ♦ K.”

At this point, there is not much advantage to introducing the concept of playing “jack denies a higher honor” and “10 or 9 shows zero or two higher honors.” (This implies that the 10 is led from K–J–10–x or 10–9–8–x and the 9 is led from K–10–9–x or Q–10–9–x.) This convention is not recommended for most partnerships, since it is more likely to help an experienced declarer than inexperienced defenders in most situations.

“Change the diamond layout.

“West: give the three to East.

“East: give the ace to West.



“If West decides to lead a diamond, which card should be led? (♦ A.)

Although it is generally safe to lead away from a suit headed by the ace against a notrump contract, it is very risky to lead low when holding the ace against a suit contract. Instead, you should lead the ace, if you have chosen to lead the suit.

“Looking at this layout, you can see the danger of leading the ♦ J, top of the interior sequence. Declarer will win the first trick with the singleton ♦ K and will never lose a trick in the suit, thanks to the trump suit. Even if declarer held a doubleton, declarer might be able to dispose of the loser in the suit after winning the ♦ K, and the defenders would not get their trick in the suit.

“Pick up the diamonds in the North, East, and South hands.

“Turn all of the suits in the West hand face up.

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“Suppose North–South reach 4♥, and West decides to lead a club. Which club would West lead? (♣ 5.) When leading from a four-card or longer suit that is not headed by touching high cards or by an ace, lead fourth highest — the same card you would lead against a notrump contract.

“Change the West hand.

“In spades: add the four, the three and the two.

“In clubs: take away the seven, the four and the two.

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“Suppose North–South reach 4♥, and West decides to lead a club. Which club would West lead? (♣ 5.) You would lead a low club from a three-card or longer suit that is not headed by touching honors — or the ace. In this situation, that would mean leading the ♣ 5, low from an honor.

“Notice that this isn’t your fourth highest club. You can’t lead the fourth highest card from a three-card suit. The net result is that you lead fourth highest from a four-card or longer suit headed by an honor, but third highest from a three-card suit.”

Some partnerships prefer leading third and fifth best against suit contracts to help distinguish among three-, four- and five-card suits. That’s beyond the scope of this lesson.

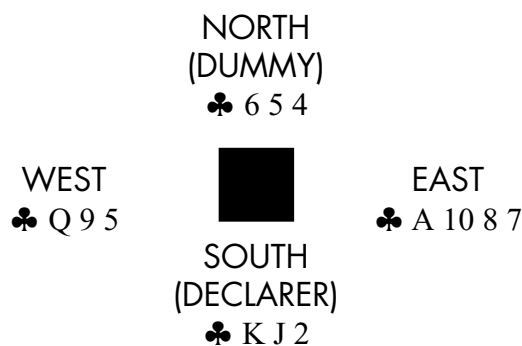
“**Suppose East has bid clubs during the auction. Which club would West lead now?** (♣5.) You still would lead low from an honor, the ♣5. There is an old saying about always leading the top of partner’s suit, but that isn’t generally a good idea. To see why, leave West’s clubs face up on the table and turn all of West’s remaining cards face down.

“Now put out the following layout:

“North: the six, the five and the four.

“East: the ace, the ten, the eight and the seven.

“South: the king, the jack and the two.



“**How many club tricks does declarer get if West leads the ♣Q?** (Two.) If East wins the first trick with the ♣A, declarer immediately gets two tricks. Even if East doesn’t win the first trick with the ♣A, declarer can win the ♣K and later lead from dummy toward the ♣J to get a second trick.

“**How many club tricks does declarer get if West leads the ♣5?** (One.) If West leads the ♣5, East can win the ♣A and return a club. Whether South plays the ♣K or ♣J, declarer is limited to one club trick. In summary, leading low from an honor in partner’s suit from a three-card or longer holding will usually work best.

“Pick up all of the clubs in the North, the East and the South hands.

“Turn all of West’s cards face up and change the West hand.

“In clubs: take away the queen and add the two.

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♠ 6 4 3 2	2♥	3♣	1♥																					
♥ Q J	Pass	Pass	4♥																					
♦ A J 10 9	Pass	Pass	Pass																					
♣ 9 5 2	Pass	Pass	Pass																					

“Suppose East bids clubs during the auction. Which card would West lead? (♣9/♣5/♣2.) With three low cards in a suit bid by partner, the partnership should agree on which card is led. There are three possible agreements:

- Lead low, ♣2. This tells partner that you hold three or more cards in the suit — or a singleton — but would not tell partner whether you hold an honor in partner’s suit. Of course, it won’t tell declarer either.
- Lead high, the ♣9. This is commonly referred to as leading top of nothing in partner’s suit. It will tell partner that you don’t hold an honor in the suit, but it will leave partner guessing whether you hold a singleton, doubleton, or three or more.
- Lead the middle card, the ♣5. This will be ambiguous on the opening lead, and partner may initially be under the impression that you are leading a singleton or a doubleton. When a second round of the suit is played, you can play up, the ♣9. That will let partner know that you don’t have a doubleton. By then, partner will probably also know you don’t have an honor, since the ♣2 is still missing. On the third round of the suit, you would follow down, with the ♣2. This is commonly referred to as leading MUD — Middle, Up, Down — from three low cards in partner’s suit.”

There is no preferred method. The students can discuss with their partners which choice they prefer. Most expert partnerships lead low from this combination, trusting partner to figure out whether they hold an honor.

“Change the West hand.

“In diamonds: take away the jack and the ten, and add the king.

“In clubs: add the three.

WEST	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 6 4 3 2	Pass	2♥	Pass	1♥
♥ Q J	Pass	Pass	Pass	4♥
♦ A K 9				
♣ 9 5 3 2				

“Suppose North–South reach 4♥, and West chooses to lead a diamond. Which diamond does West lead? (♦A/♦K.) Whether you lead the ♦A or the ♦K from this holding is a matter of partnership agreement. There are two schools of thought.

- The standard lead used to be the ♦K. This is because you rarely lead away from an ace against a suit contract, so you would often lead the ♦A when you are leading the suit, but don’t hold the ♦K. In other words, when you lead the ♦A, you are specifically denying possession of the ♦K, because you would lead the ♦K from a suit headed by both the ♦A and the ♦K.

“The downside of this approach is that partner can’t be certain whether you are leading the ♦ K from a suit headed by the ♦ A K or from a suit headed by the ♦ K Q. Of course, if partner holds the ♦ A or ♦ Q, or can see one of those cards in the dummy, the situation will be clear.

- Many modern partnerships prefer to lead the ♦ A from this holding. The advantage of this is that it is consistent with leading the top of touching honors, and if you lead the ♦ K, there is no ambiguity — you are leading from a suit headed by the ♦ K Q, not the ♦ A K.

“The downside of this approach is that partner can’t be certain that you hold the ♦ K when you lead the ♦ A. You would lead the ♦ A, if you decided to lead the suit, but did not hold the ♦ K, because you avoid leading low when you lead from a suit headed by an ace. Of course, if partner holds the ♦ K or can see that card in the dummy, the situation will be clear.

“The standard lead on the ACBL convention card is the king from a suit headed by the ace-king. Most of today’s students, however, have been taught to lead the ace from a suit headed by the ace-king, maintaining the straight-forward guideline of the top of touching honors.

“Change the West hand.

“In diamonds: take away the nine.

“In clubs: add the four.

WEST	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ 6 4 3 2	Pass	2♥	Pass	1♥
♥ Q J	Pass	Pass	Pass	4♥
♦ A K	Pass	Pass	Pass	
♣ 9 5 4 3 2				

“**Suppose North–South again reach 4♥, and West chooses to lead a diamond. Which diamond does West lead? (♦ A/♦ K.)** Against a suit contract, you might want to let East know that you hold a doubleton ♦ A K. You might hope to find an entry to East’s hand, so that East can lead a third round of diamonds for you to ruff. However, if you lead the same honor that you normally lead from a three-card or longer suit headed by the ace-king, East won’t be aware that you have only a doubleton.

“The standard way to send the message to partner that you specifically have a doubleton ace-king is to reverse your standard lead from this combination.

- If you normally lead the ♦ K from a suit headed by the ♦ A K, you would lead the ♦ A. Partner will think at first that you don’t hold the ♦ K. When you next play the ♦ K, your unusual lead will alert partner to the fact that you have only two diamonds.

- Similarly, if you normally lead the $\spadesuit A$ from a suit headed by the $\spadesuit A K$, you would lead the $\spadesuit K$ and then play the $\spadesuit A$. This reversal of your normal lead will alert partner to the fact that you have only two diamonds.

“All this, of course, relies on partner watching carefully which cards you lead and noticing when you do something unusual.

“Suppose North–South reach $4\heartsuit$, and West chooses to lead a heart rather than a diamond. Which heart does West lead? ($\heartsuit Q$.) Although you can reverse your normal honor lead when you have a doubleton ace-king, you should not do the same thing when you have other doubletons headed by an honor. Simply lead the top of the touching cards, the $\heartsuit Q$.

“The reason you can afford to lead your doubleton ace-king in an unusual order is that there is little chance of confusing your partner. You figure to win the first trick, and then you can clarify the situation by leading your other honor. The same would not be true if you led the $\heartsuit J$ from this combination. Partner would assume that you are leading the top of touching honors, or leading from a singleton or doubleton heart, and would likely go wrong when holding the $\heartsuit K$ or $\heartsuit A$. Instead, make your normal honor lead and hope that partner can determine from the auction and subsequent play that you hold only two hearts.

“Suppose North–South reach $4\heartsuit$, and West chooses to lead a trump. Which card would West lead? ($\heartsuit Q/\heartsuit J$.) Although you generally lead the top of touching honors against a suit contract, you are not compelled to do so, even if that is what is indicated on your convention card. The reason you usually lead the top of touching honors is to give useful information to partner. Unfortunately, you also give the same information to declarer.

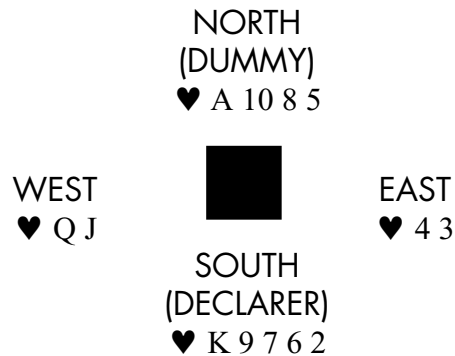
“If you decide that you want to fool both declarer and East, you can lead whatever card you want. This is especially true in the trump suit, where it is more likely that declarer rather than East will be more interested in your exact holding. If you were always to lead the $\heartsuit Q$ from this combination, it would help declarer locate the $\heartsuit J$. Instead, you should sometimes lead the $\heartsuit J$, hoping to conceal the location of the $\heartsuit Q$ from declarer.

“Leave West’s hearts face up on the table and turn all of West’s other suits face down. Take the remaining hearts and lay out the following combination.

“North: the ace, the ten, the eight and the five.

“East: the four and the three.

“South: the king, the nine, the seven, the six and the two.



“If you lead the ♥Q, declarer will probably win the ♥K and play a heart toward dummy’s ♥A 10. If you lead the ♥J, declarer may assume your partner holds the ♥Q. Declarer might win the first trick with dummy’s ♥A and then lead a second heart and take a finesse, losing a trick to your ♥Q. Of course, declarer might still guess correctly, but you’ve given declarer a losing option.”

Don’t get into a discussion of restricted choice. It’s likely to create considerable confusion at this level.

“Naturally, if you overuse this ploy, declarer won’t be fooled too often. If you think declarer will always suspect that you hold both the ♥Q and ♥J when you lead the ♥J in this situation, try occasionally leading the ♥Q. Now declarer may assume that you would never lead that card when holding the ♥J as well, and declarer might win dummy’s ♥A and take a finesse, losing to your ♥J — a small double cross!”

Summary

“Against a suit contract, the partnership should agree on what it conventionally leads from various combinations. The standard agreements are:

- Top of a doubleton.
- Top of two or more touching cards headed by an honor.
- Low from three cards headed by an honor; fourth highest from four or more cards.

“The partnership also should agree on whether the ace or king is led from a suit headed by the ace and king and which card is led from three low cards — high, middle, or low.

“Either partner can deviate from the standard agreements, either to send a special signal — such as a doubleton ace-king — or to deliberately mislead declarer and partner.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 1 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise One — Opening Leads against Suit Contracts

West chooses to lead a diamond against the following auction. Which card would West select from each of the following hands?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	3♠	Pass	1♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	4♠
1) ♠ 8 3 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ K Q J 6 ♣ J 7 4 2	2) ♠ J 5 ♥ J 9 7 5 ♦ Q J 9 2 ♣ J 8 4	3) ♠ 7 6 3 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ A K 9 5 ♣ J 8 3	
4) ♠ J 7 ♥ K 8 ♦ Q 10 6 4 2 ♣ J 6 5 3	5) ♠ Q 8 5 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ 9 6 2 ♣ J 7 5 3	6) ♠ J 8 5 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ A J 8 7 5 ♣ Q 5	

Exercise One Answer — Opening Leads against Suit Contracts

- 1) ♦K. Lead the top of touching high cards.
- 2) ♦Q. The top of touching high cards is led from a broken sequence.
- 3) ♦A. The partnership must agree on which card to lead from this holding. Without discussion, the standard lead from this combination is the ♦A, but some partnerships prefer to lead the ♦K.
- 4) ♦4. Without touching high cards, lead the fourth highest — unless the partnership has agreed to play third and fifth leads, in which case the ♦2 would be led.
- 5) ♦6 or ♦2 or ♦9. The partnership must agree on which card to lead from this holding. If the partnership uses MUD, the middle card would be led, the ♦6. If the partnership leads low from three or more cards, whether or not they include an honor, the ♦2 would be led. If the partnership leads top of nothing, the ♦9 would be led.
- 6) ♦A. Avoid leading a low card from a suit headed by the ace against a suit contract — the ace may never win a trick.

Opening Leads against Notrump Contracts

Introduction

“Leading against a notrump contract follows a similar approach to leading against a suit contract. First you choose the suit to lead, then you choose the specific card. The main difference is that leading from a long suit takes on a high priority. It may be worth giving up one or two tricks in the suit in order to establish winners. In a notrump contract, declarer can’t prevent you from taking established winners once you gain the lead.

“In general, use the following guidelines when choosing the lead against a notrump contract:

- Lead a suit bid by partner. This will frequently be the longest combined suit for the partnership.
- Lead an unbid suit. Avoid leading suits bid by the opponents, especially major suits.
- Lead fourth highest from your longest and strongest suit. With nothing else to guide you, this advice still works well against notrump contracts.”

Instructions

“Turn all of the suits in the West hand face up. Pick up all of the other cards and sort them back into suits.

“Change the West hand.

“In spades: add the ace.

“In diamonds: take away the ace.

“In clubs: take away the two and the three and add the ten and the seven.

WEST	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">WEST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">NORTH</th> <th style="width: 25%;">EAST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>♠ A 6 4 3 2</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♥ Q J</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♦ K</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>♣ 10 9 7 5 4</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	♠ A 6 4 3 2			1NT	♥ Q J	3NT	Pass	Pass	♦ K				♣ 10 9 7 5 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH																					
♠ A 6 4 3 2			1NT																					
♥ Q J	3NT	Pass	Pass																					
♦ K																								
♣ 10 9 7 5 4																								

“**South has opened the bidding 1NT, and North has raised to 3NT. Which suit would West choose to lead?** (Spades/Clubs.) With no help from the auction, choose your longest suit. With equal length in spades and clubs, choose the stronger. Determining the stronger suit might require some judgment. A suit headed by the ace is probably stronger than a suit headed by the ten and nine, but it isn’t clear-cut. If East holds both the ♠K and the ♠Q — or even four spades headed by the ♠K — you might take the first five tricks to defeat the contract. The same would not be true if East held the ♣K and the ♣Q or four clubs headed by the ♣K.

“Another factor is that North–South did not investigate a major-suit contract, looking for an eight-card fit. That provides you with an inference that North–South probably have length in the minor suits.

“You would not automatically lead a spade. Listen to the auction before selecting the suit to lead.

“If East had bid hearts during the auction, which suit would West lead? (Hearts.) It’s generally a good idea to lead partner’s suit, unless you clearly have a better alternative. If East has bid hearts, it may well be the longest combined suit for the partnership. Even if you have an equally long suit of your own, it still may be best to establish winners in East’s suit. If East has bid during the auction, East is more likely to have an entry to the long suit, once it is established.

“If West were going to lead a heart, which card would West lead? (♥Q.) The guidelines for leading partner’s suit are identical to those for leading against a suit contract:

- Lead the top of a doubleton;
- Lead the top of touching honors;
- Otherwise, lead low — fourth highest from four or more.

“Some partnerships change the lead from three or more cards when you have raised the suit during the auction:

- With an honor, you still lead low.
- With three or more cards that don’t include an honor, lead high — the top of nothing.

“There are other reasons why you might not lead a spade. If one of the opponents had bid spades during the auction, for example, you might choose a club instead. The opponents don’t even need to have bid spades in some situations. Consider this auction.

“South opens 1NT, and North responds 2♣, the Stayman convention. South bids 2♥, and North now jumps to 3NT. Would a spade lead be a good idea? (No.) North has used the Stayman convention, showing interest in finding a major-suit fit. South has shown a four-card heart suit, but North has chosen to play game in notrump. By inference, North must hold a four-card spade suit and was looking for a fit in that suit. South holds at least a doubleton spade for the notrump opening bid. Leading a spade against this auction is probably not a good idea. Lead a club instead.

“If West does choose to lead a club, which club does West lead? (♣10.) With a broken sequence headed by the queen, jack or ten, lead the top of touching cards —the ♣10 from this holding. This is the same card you would lead against a suit contract. We’ll discuss leads from broken sequences headed by the ace or king later.

“Change the West hand.

“In clubs: take away the seven and add the king.

WEST	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ A 6 4 3 2	Pass	2♣	Pass	1NT
♥ Q J	Pass	3NT	Pass	2♥
♦ K	Pass		Pass	Pass
♣ K 10 9 5 4	Pass			

“**Which club would West lead?** (♣10.) Lead the top of touching cards from an interior sequence, the ♣10.

“One of the touching cards must be an honor. So, you would lead the ♣10 from this holding, but you would lead fourth highest if your suit were ♣K 9 8 5 4.

“**If West leads a queen, jack or ten against a notrump contract, can East tell whether West has a higher honor?** (No/Maybe.) The lead of the queen, jack or ten is ambiguous. You may simply be leading the top of a solid sequence or a broken sequence, or you may be leading from an interior sequence. East can’t be sure unless the appropriate missing honors are in dummy or in East’s hand.”

This isn’t the time to mention that some partnerships attempt to resolve this dilemma by using the “jack denies a higher honor; ten or nine implies zero or two higher honors.” Using this approach, the ♣9 would be led from this holding — since there are two higher honors, the ♣K and the ♣10.

“Change the West hand.

“In diamonds: add the two.

“In clubs: take away the king and the ten and add the two.

WEST	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ A 6 4 3 2	Pass	2♣	Pass	1NT
♥ Q J	Pass	3NT	Pass	2♠
♦ K 2	Pass		Pass	Pass
♣ 9 5 4 2	Pass			

“**South has bid spades, and West chooses to lead a club against 3NT. Which club would West lead?** (♣9/ ♣5/♣2.) The partnership needs to agree on which card is led from three or more cards not headed by an honor.

“There are three common approaches:

- Low, the ♣2. The partnership can continue to lead low — fourth highest from four or more cards. Using this approach, a low card would not guarantee an honor.
- High, the ♣9. Some partnerships prefer to lead high. That way, partner can be sure that the opening leader does not hold an honor in the suit.

- Second highest, the ♣5. Some partnerships prefer to lead the second highest card from a suit not headed by an honor. This has the advantage of not wasting the ♣9, which might be a valuable card, while giving some indication to partner that no honor is held in the suit. Partner will sometimes have difficulty distinguishing between second highest and fourth best, but that should be clarified as the play progresses.

“There is no particular method recommended, but the partnership should reach an agreement.

“Let’s return to the original auction: 1NT by South and a raise to 3NT by North. With nothing else to go on, suppose West chooses to lead a spade.

“**Which spade does West lead?** (♠3.) The traditional lead from a four-card or longer suit is the fourth highest card — the fourth down from the top — the ♠3.

“There is no suggestion that you should avoid leading away from an ace against a notrump contract. You should get an opportunity to win your ♠A at a later point in the play, and you want to hold on to it as an entry.

“Change the West hand.

“In spades: take away the two and add the king.

“In diamonds: take away king and add the three.

WEST	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ A K 6 4 3	Pass	3NT	Pass	1NT
♥ Q J	Pass			Pass
♦ 3 2				
♣ 9 5 4 2				

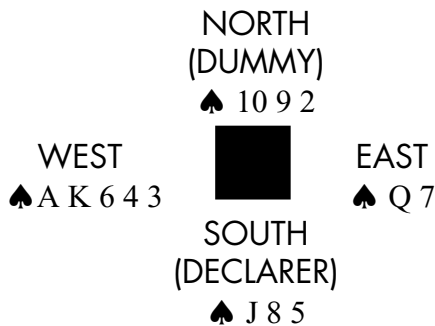
“**South opens 1NT, and North raises to 3NT. What would West lead?** (♠4.) Even with both the ace and the king, the standard lead is the ♠4, fourth highest.

“To see why the ♠4 is likely to work better than the ♠A or ♠K, turn the remaining suits in the West hand face down and lay out the entire spade suit as follows:

“North: the ten, the nine and the two.

“East: the queen and the seven.

“South: the jack, the eight and the five.



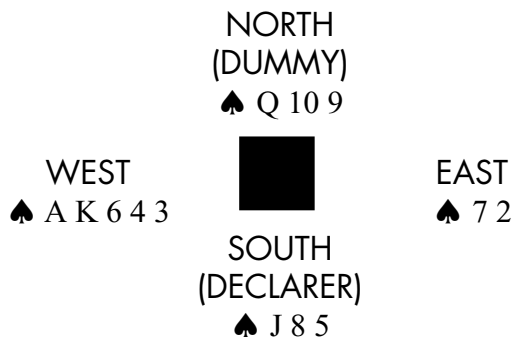
“If West leads the ♠A or ♠K, how many spade tricks could East–West take immediately? (Two tricks.) If you lead a high spade, the suit is blocked. Whether you continue with a low spade or play your other high spade, you can’t take more than two tricks in the suit right away.

“If West leads the ♠4, how many tricks could East–West take immediately? (Five tricks.) By leading fourth highest, the defenders can take the first five tricks.

“Change the layout.

“North: give the two to East

“East: give the queen to North.

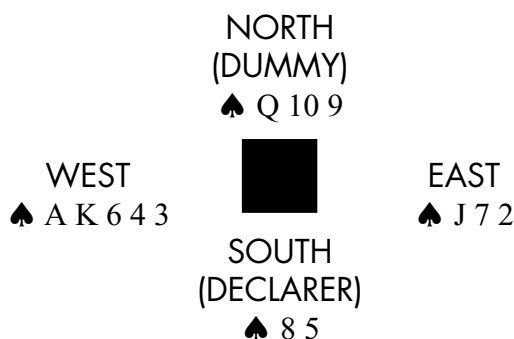


“Is there any advantage to leading the ♠4? (Yes.) Declarer is always entitled to one spade trick. If West leads the ♠A, ♠K and a third round of the suit, West’s spades will be established, but West will need an entry in another suit to take the winners. If, instead, West leads a low spade, declarer will win the first trick, but now the defenders are poised to take four winners if either West or East regains the lead.

“Leading a low spade may gain in other situations.

“Change the layout.

“South: give the jack to East.



“If West leads the ♠4, what is likely to happen? (East–West will take five tricks.) It’s easy to see that declarer can play dummy’s ♠Q to win the first trick and restrict the defenders to four winners in the suit. In practice, however, declarer can’t see the East–West hands. Declarer is likely to play the opening leader for one of the top two honors and the jack and finesse

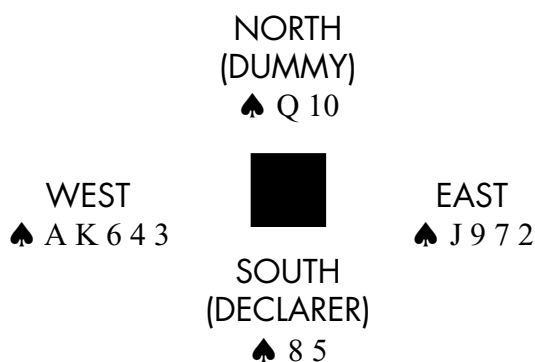
dummy's ♠9 or ♠10. This will lose to East's ♠J, and the defenders can take the first five spade tricks.

“Declarer would be going with the odds to play dummy's ♠9 or ♠10 at trick one. That would be successful, if West were leading from a suit headed by the ♠A J or ♠K J. It's only wrong if West is leading from a suit headed by the ♠A K. Declarer is going with the 2–1 odds that East holds the ♠K or the ♠A, rather than the ♠J.

“Is it possible that leading a low spade could work out badly?”

“Change the layout.

“North: Give the nine to East.



“**What might happen if West leads a low spade?** (East–West would take four tricks.) If West leads the ♠4 and declarer plays dummy's ♠Q — the correct play — East–West get at most four spade tricks. If West leads the ♠A and ♠K, the defenders could take the first five spade tricks.

“Even though this could be the layout, the percentages favor leading a low spade from the West hand. Even if this were the layout, the defenders might not get five tricks anyway. East would have to be careful not to play the ♠2 on the first two rounds of the suit, otherwise, the suit would become blocked — and the defenders would be back to taking only four tricks.”

Summary

“When leading your long suit against a notrump contract, if the suit is not headed by a three-card solid, broken or interior sequence, lead your fourth highest card.”

➔ “Let's do Exercise 2 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Two — Opening Leads against Notrump Contracts

What is West's opening lead from each of the following hands after the auction shown?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH						
Pass	3NT	Pass	1NT						
Pass			Pass						
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;"> 1) ♠ Q J 10 8 5 ♥ A 7 4 ♦ 6 2 ♣ 9 5 4 </td> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;"> 2) ♠ Q 7 3 ♥ J 10 8 6 5 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ 8 4 </td> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;"> 3) ♠ K J 10 7 3 ♥ 7 4 3 ♦ K 9 5 ♣ J 8 </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> 4) ♠ Q 8 ♥ 9 5 4 ♦ A K 7 4 3 ♣ J 7 3 </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> 5) ♠ J 5 4 ♥ K 6 ♦ 8 4 2 ♣ A K J 10 4 </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> 6) ♠ J 9 7 3 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ A 5 ♣ J 4 3 </td> </tr> </table>				1) ♠ Q J 10 8 5 ♥ A 7 4 ♦ 6 2 ♣ 9 5 4	2) ♠ Q 7 3 ♥ J 10 8 6 5 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ 8 4	3) ♠ K J 10 7 3 ♥ 7 4 3 ♦ K 9 5 ♣ J 8	4) ♠ Q 8 ♥ 9 5 4 ♦ A K 7 4 3 ♣ J 7 3	5) ♠ J 5 4 ♥ K 6 ♦ 8 4 2 ♣ A K J 10 4	6) ♠ J 9 7 3 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ A 5 ♣ J 4 3
1) ♠ Q J 10 8 5 ♥ A 7 4 ♦ 6 2 ♣ 9 5 4	2) ♠ Q 7 3 ♥ J 10 8 6 5 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ 8 4	3) ♠ K J 10 7 3 ♥ 7 4 3 ♦ K 9 5 ♣ J 8							
4) ♠ Q 8 ♥ 9 5 4 ♦ A K 7 4 3 ♣ J 7 3	5) ♠ J 5 4 ♥ K 6 ♦ 8 4 2 ♣ A K J 10 4	6) ♠ J 9 7 3 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ A 5 ♣ J 4 3							

Exercise Two Answer — Opening Leads against Notrump Contracts

- 1) ♠Q. West leads the top of a solid (three-card or longer) sequence.
- 2) ♥J. The top of touching high cards is led from a broken sequence.
- 3) ♠J. The top of touching high cards is led from an interior sequence. If the partnership has agreed to play zero or two higher, the ♠10 would be led from this holding since there are two higher honors (the ♠J would then deny a higher honor).
- 4) ♦4. With no solid, broken or interior sequence, lead fourth highest.
- 5) ♣A. This is the card that would be led from a broken sequence. The partnership may have an agreement that East will play the ♣Q at trick one when holding that card. If not, give a count signal. Otherwise East shows attitude.
- 6) ♥2. With a choice of four-card or longer suits, generally choose the stronger suit and lead fourth highest without a sequence in the suit.

Leading from a Broken Sequence against Notrump

This topic has been covered at various times during the ACBL Series courses. You may want to offer this review or skip it.

Introduction

“The standard lead from a solid sequence, an interior sequence or a broken sequence is the top of touching high cards. Using this guideline keeps things simple. Some partnerships, however, make an exception when leading from a broken sequence against a notrump contract.”

Instructions

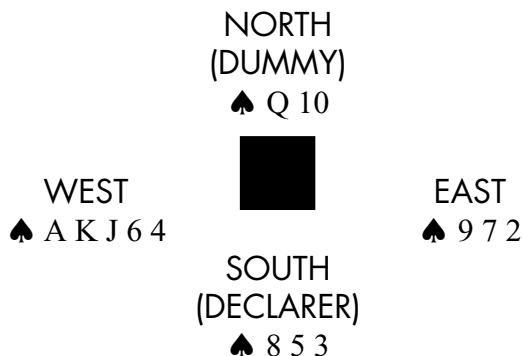
“Pick up all of the cards and lay out the following combination in the spade suit.

“West: the ace, the king, the jack, the six and the four.

“North: the queen and the ten.

“East: the nine, the seven and the two.

“South: the eight, the five and the three.



“South opens 1NT, and North raises to 3NT. Which spade would West lead? (♠A/♠K.) When holding a broken sequence, the partnership must agree which card should be led. When leading against a suit contract, the partnership also should have a specific agreement about which card is to be led from a suit headed by the ace and king. One common agreement is:

- The lead of an ace asks partner to play a high honor if one is held, otherwise to give a count signal.
- The lead of a king asks partner to give an encouraging signal when holding a touching honor — either the ace or the queen. The lead of the king can be from a suit headed by the ace-king or the king-queen.

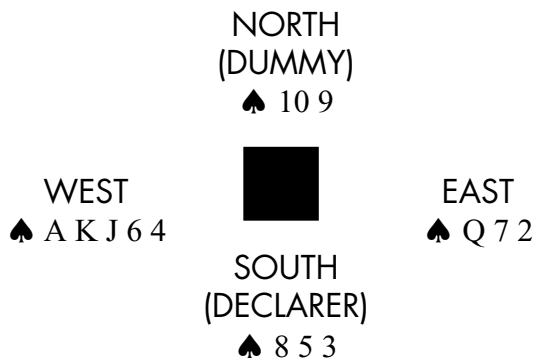
“This may sound a little confusing, so we’ll look at some examples.

“In this situation, it wouldn’t matter much whether West led the ♠A or the ♠K. On seeing dummy, West would know what to do.

“Change the layout.

“North: give the queen to East.

“East: give the nine to North.



“If West chooses to lead the ♠A, which card would East play? (♠Q.)

If the partnership has the agreement that a lead of the ace asks partner to play an honor, if one is held, East would play the ♠Q under the ♠A. West would now know what to do.

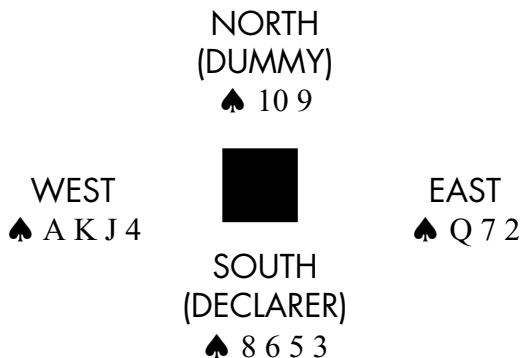
“If West chooses to lead the ♠K, which card would East play? (♠7.)

The lead of the ♠K would ask East to make an encouraging signal when holding either the ♠A or ♠Q. Holding the ♠Q, East would make an encouraging signal, the ♠7. West could continue with a low spade to East’s ♠Q, and the defenders would take the first five tricks.

“It may seem to make no difference whether West leads the ace or king from this holding, but let’s change the situation slightly.

“Change the layout.

“West: give the six to South.



“Can West afford to lead the ♠A? (No.) If the lead of the ace asks partner to play a high honor, leading the ace would not be a good idea. East would play the ♠Q under the ♠A, and the defenders could take only three spade tricks.

“Instead, West should play the ♠K, get an encouraging signal from East and then play a low spade to East’s ♠Q. The defenders would get the four tricks to which they are entitled.

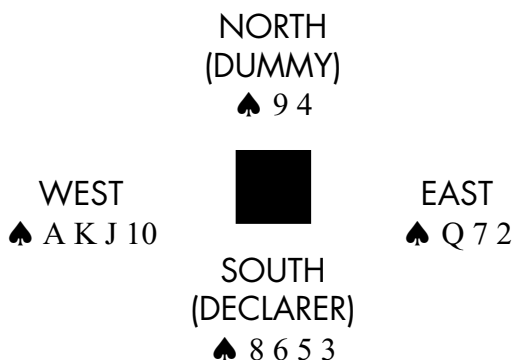
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“In choosing whether to lead the ace or the king from this type of holding, West must decide, before seeing the dummy, whether West can afford to lead the ace and have East play an honor under it.

“Change the layout.

“West: give the four to North.

“North: give the ten to West.

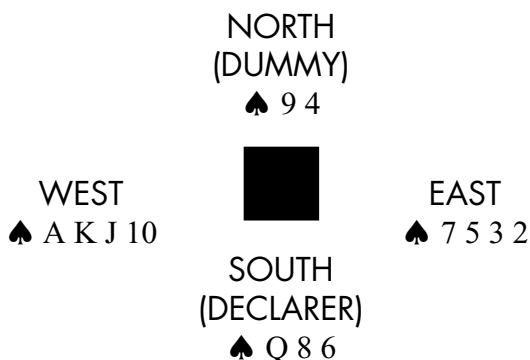


“**Can West afford to lead the ♠A?** (Yes.) Holding both the ♠J and the ♠10, West can afford to lead the ♠A. If East holds the ♠Q and plays it under the ♠A, West is assured of taking four tricks.

“Change the layout.

“East: give the queen to South.

“South: give the five and the three to East.



“**West leads the ♠A. Which card does East play?** (♠7.) Since East doesn’t hold an honor, East gives a count signal instead. With an even number of spades, East starts a high-low signal with the ♠7. Now West knows that declarer must hold the ♠Q and that East holds either two or four spades — East can’t hold a singleton spade, since that would give declarer a six-card suit for the 1NT opening.

“**What should West do after seeing East’s ♠7?** (Switch to another suit.) Since South’s ♠Q isn’t falling, West should probably shift to another suit and wait for East to gain the lead to trap declarer’s ♠Q.

“Note how important it is that East–West have a firm agreement on the meaning of the lead of an ace or king against a notrump contract. If East–West don’t have an agreement, West might mistake East’s count signal for an attitude signal and continue to lead spades, expecting East to hold the ♠Q.

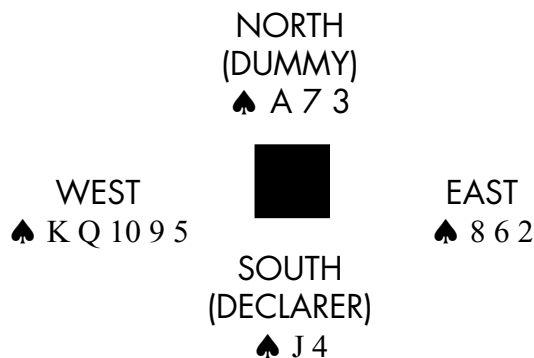
“Pick up all of the spades and put out the following layout.

“West: the king, the queen, the ten, the nine and the five.

“North: the ace, the seven and the three.

“East: the eight, the six and the two.

“South: the jack and the four.



“**South opens 1NT, and North raises to 3NT. Which spade does West lead from this combination?** (♠K/♠Q.) With a broken sequence headed by the king-queen, it appears natural to lead the ♠K, the top of the touching cards. Many partnerships, however, prefer to lead the queen from this combination. It asks partner to:

- Play the jack, when holding that card;
- Otherwise, to give a count signal.

“**With this agreement, which card would East play when the ♠A or a low spade is played from dummy?** (♠2.) Not holding the ♠J, East would play the ♠2, starting a low-high count signal to show an odd number of cards.

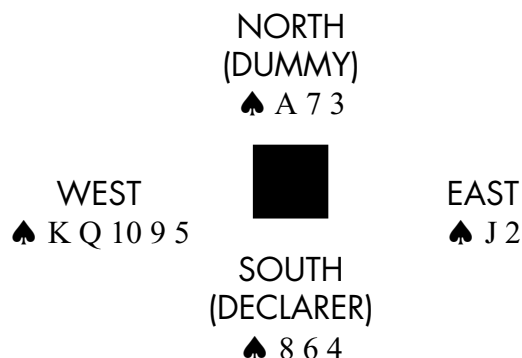
“**What would this tell West?** (It is probably safe to lead the ♠K.) West would know that East doesn’t hold the ♠J, so declarer must hold that card. In addition, West would know that East holds either a singleton spade or three spades. If East holds a singleton spade, then there is no way to continue leading spades without giving declarer a trick with the ♠J. It won’t do any good to wait for East to gain the lead, since East won’t have a spade to lead. If West holds three spades, however, South’s ♠J is falling under West’s other high honor.

“If West leads the ♠Q and a low spade is played from dummy, leaving West on lead, West can continue with the ♠K and then the ♠10 to drive out dummy’s ♠A and establish the suit. If declarer wins the first trick with dummy’s ♠A and West later regains the lead, West can play the ♠K, expecting declarer’s ♠J to fall. There is no need to look for an entry to the East hand.

“Change the layout.

“East: give the eight and the six to South.

“South: give the jack to East.



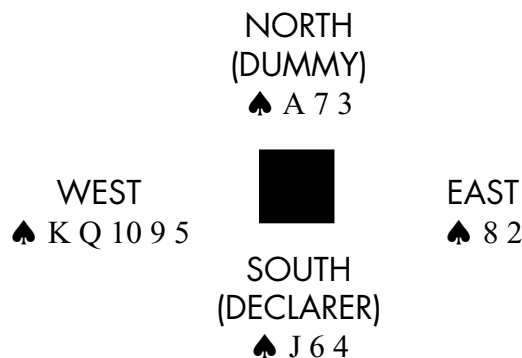
“Suppose West leads the ♠Q against South’s 3NT contract. Which card does East play? (♠J.) Holding the ♠J, South plays it when West leads the ♠Q, whether or not the ♠A is played from dummy. West knows that the suit can safely be continued.

“Note that East should recognize the opportunity to make this play. When West leads the ♠Q, East usually will expect that West is making a standard lead from a suit headed by the ♠Q J 10 or ♠Q J 9. When holding the ♠J, however, East knows that West has made an unusual lead from a suit headed by the ♠K Q 10 and is looking for the ♠J. East also would know that West is leading from ♠K Q 10 if the ♠J appeared in the dummy.

“Change the layout.

“East: give the jack to South.

“South: give the eight to East.



“West leads the ♠Q against 3NT, and declarer plays a low spade from dummy. Which card does East play? (♠8.) When not holding the ♠J, East gives a count signal when the ♠Q is led. With an even number of cards, East starts a high-low signal.

“What information does East’s play give West? West now knows that declarer holds the ♠J and that it is not going to fall if West continues leading the suit. If West doesn’t want to give up a second trick in the suit, West will have to wait until East gains the lead and can lead a spade to trap declarer’s ♠J.

“It is important for the partnership to agree on whether East gives a count signal or an attitude signal when West leads a queen. If East is holding the king or ten or can see one of those cards in the dummy, East knows partner isn’t leading from K–Q–10 and can make a normal attitude signal. Otherwise, East gives a count signal. Even experienced partnerships can sometimes get their signals confused in such situations.”

Summary

“The partnership should discuss which card is led against a notrump contract from suits headed by broken sequences such as A–K–J or K–Q–10. If there has been no discussion, it is probably best to stick with the standard guideline of leading the top of touching cards in all situations.”

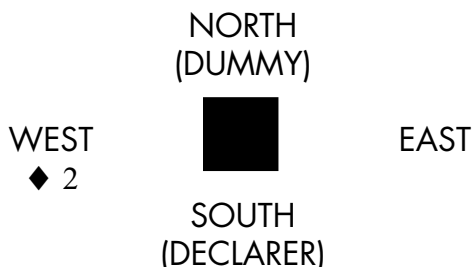
Rule of Eleven

Introduction

“The lead of the fourth highest card from a long suit gives a lot of information to partner.”

Instructions

“Pick up all of the cards and sort them into suits. Take the diamond suit and put the ♦ 2 face up in front of West.



“South opens the bidding 1NT, and North raises to 3NT. West leads the ♦ 2. What information does this give East about the West hand? (West has a four-card diamond suit and has no five-card suit.) West has no information from the auction and is probably leading the longest suit in the hand. If the ♦ 2 is the fourth highest card in the suit, West holds only four diamonds — since the three higher cards must be higher than the ♦ 2, and there is no lower card in the suit.”

If the students question this concept, have them try to construct a five-card or longer diamond suit for West that includes the ♦ 2 as the fourth highest card.

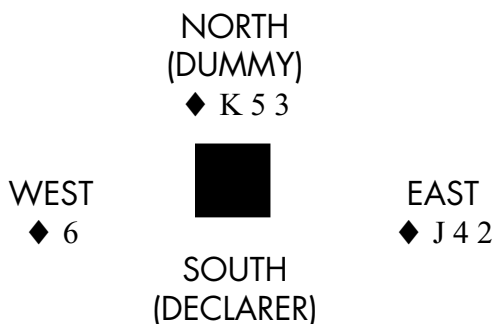
“Also, since West has chosen to lead from a four-card diamond suit, it is unlikely that West holds a longer suit. West’s distribution will be 4–3–3–3, 4–4–3–2 or 4–4–4–1, with diamonds being the strongest of the four-card suits. East can get all of this information from the lead of the ♦ 2.

“Change the layout.

“Give West the six.

“Give North the king, the five and the three.

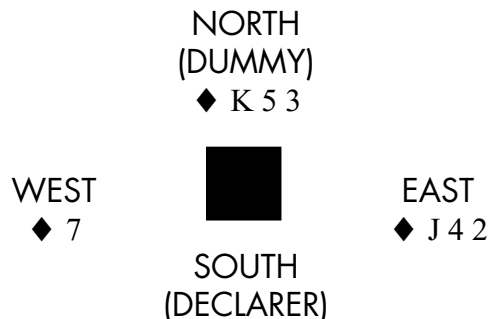
“Give East the jack, the four and the two.



“West leads the $\spadesuit 6$ against 3NT. North puts down the $\spadesuit K 5 3$ in the dummy, and East holds the $\spadesuit J 4 2$. What does East know about the length of West’s diamond suit? (Four-card suit.) The $\spadesuit 6$ is the lowest outstanding diamond. Assuming it is fourth highest, West has only a four-card suit.

“Change the layout.

“West: replace the six with the seven.

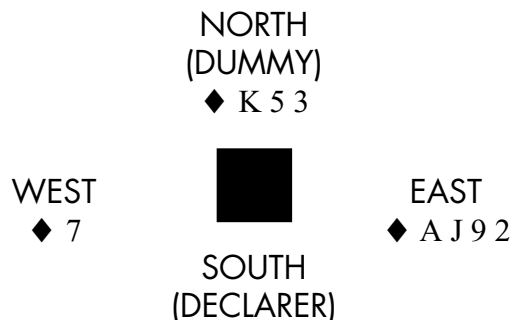


“West leads the $\spadesuit 7$, instead of the $\spadesuit 6$. How many cards does West hold in the diamond suit? (Four or five.) Since the $\spadesuit 6$ is missing, East can’t be sure whether West is leading from a four-card or a five-card suit. If declarer plays the $\spadesuit 6$ at some point during the play, East will know that West started with only a four-card suit. If West plays the $\spadesuit 6$ at some later point in the play, East will know that West started with a five-card suit — assuming East remembers that West originally led the $\spadesuit 7$.

“The lead of the fourth highest card can help partner determine how many cards are held in the suit, but there is more to it than that.

“Change the layout.

“East: replace the four with the ace and the nine.



“South opens 1NT, North raises to 3NT and West leads the $\spadesuit 7$. If the $\spadesuit 3$ is played from dummy, which card should East play? ($\spadesuit 2$.) If a low diamond is played from dummy, East should play the $\spadesuit 2$, letting West’s $\spadesuit 7$ win the trick! If the $\spadesuit 7$ is West’s fourth highest card in the suit, West must also hold the $\spadesuit Q$, $\spadesuit 10$ and $\spadesuit 8$, since these are the only three diamonds higher than the $\spadesuit 7$.”

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If the students question this, have them try to construct a holding for West from the remaining diamonds that does not include the \spadesuit Q 10 8.

“If you have difficulty visualizing West’s holding in this type of situation, you can make use of the rule of eleven:

- When partner leads fourth highest, subtracting partner’s card from 11 gives you the number of higher cards in the remaining three hands.

“**What is the result of subtracting partner’s card from 11?** (Four.) Eleven minus seven leaves four cards higher than the seven in the other three hands.

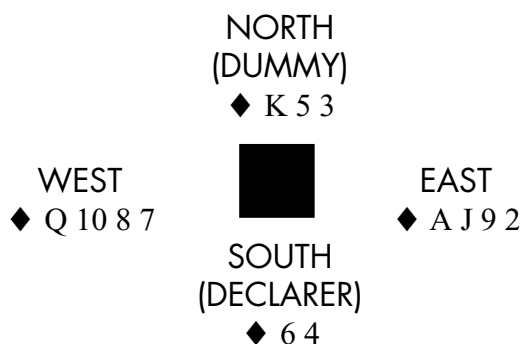
“**How many cards higher than the seven can East see?** (Four.) East can see the \spadesuit K in the dummy and the \spadesuit A, the \spadesuit J and the \spadesuit 9 in the East hand. That’s four cards higher than West’s \spadesuit 7.

“**How many cards higher than the \spadesuit 7 are in declarer’s hand?** (Zero.) Since East can see all four cards higher than the \spadesuit 7, there are no cards in declarer’s hand higher than the \spadesuit 7.

“Complete the layout.

“West: add the queen, the ten and the eight.

“South: add the six and the four.

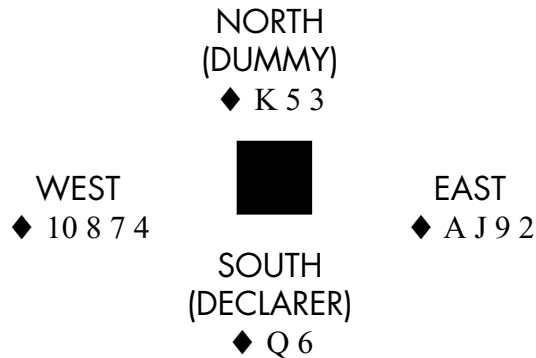


“**Which card should East play, when a low diamond is played from dummy?** (\spadesuit 2.) By playing the \spadesuit 2, East keeps West on lead, and the defenders can now take the first four diamond tricks. If East were to play the \spadesuit 9 or \spadesuit J on the first trick, East would win the trick and be on lead. East couldn’t lead the suit a second time, without giving a trick to dummy’s \spadesuit K.

“Change the layout.

“West: give the queen to South.

“South: give the four to West.



“**Which card would West lead?** (14.) West would lead the fourth highest card, the ♦ 4.

“**What information would West’s lead give to East?** (West has a four-card suit. Declarer has two higher cards.) Since East holds the ♦ 2 and can see the ♦ 3 in dummy, East knows that West is leading from a four-card suit. In addition, the rule of eleven tells East that declarer holds two higher cards than the ♦ 4. Eleven minus four is seven. East can see two higher cards than the ♦ 4 in dummy, the ♦ K and the ♦ 5. East holds three higher cards, the ♦ A, the ♦ J and the ♦ 9. That leaves two cards higher than the ♦ 4 in declarer’s hand.

“In this situation, East can’t tell which two higher cards declarer holds. East will have to discover which cards they are during the play.”

Summary

“Leading fourth highest sends information to partner about both the number of cards held in the suit and the number of higher cards held by declarer — by applying the rule of eleven.”

➔ “Let’s do Exercise 3 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Three – Rule of Eleven

After the following auction, West leads the ♥7, and a low heart is played from dummy. Which card does East play?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	3NT	Pass	1NT
Pass			Pass

	NORTH		
	♠ J 7 6		
	♥ K 6 2		
	♦ A Q 10 6 3		
	♣ K 9		
WEST		EAST	
♥ 7		♠ 9 5 4	
		♥ A 10 9 3	
		♦ K 8 2	
		♣ 7 4 2	
	SOUTH		

Exercise Three Answer – Rule of Eleven

♥3. Assuming West's lead is fourth highest, East can subtract from 11 to get the number of higher cards in the other three hands (11–7 = 4). One higher card is in dummy, and three higher cards are in East's hand. That means that declarer has no card higher than the ♥7. By playing low, East lets West win the first trick. West can lead the suit again to trap dummy's ♥K. West has led fourth highest from ♥Q J 8 7.

Attitude Signals

Introduction

“In addition to the information conveyed through the cards led, the defenders can exchange other information through defensive signals. You can give a defensive signal when you have a choice of cards to play, either when following suit or when discarding.

“The most important defensive signal is attitude toward a suit. You can tell partner that you would like a particular suit led or continued, or that you would prefer that partner not lead or continue a specific suit.

“The standard attitude signal is quite straightforward:

- A high card is encouraging.
- A low card is discouraging.

“The challenge comes in knowing which attitude signal to give.”

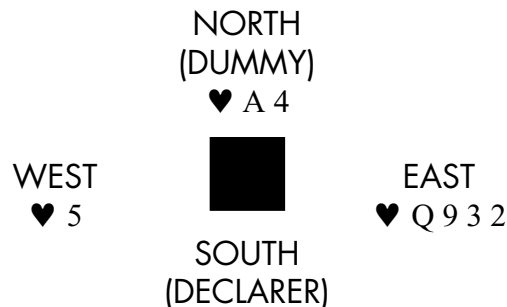
Instructions

“Pick up all of the cards and sort them into suits. Take the heart suit and put out the following cards.

“West: the five.

“North: the ace and the four.

“East: the queen, the nine, the three and the two.



“South opens the bidding 1NT, and North raises to 3NT. West leads the ♥5, and the ♥A is played from dummy. Which card does East play? (♥9.) Before choosing the card to play, East should look at the cards in the deal that are visible. If East would prefer that West lead a different suit after regaining the lead, East should make a discouraging signal by playing the ♥2. Assuming East likes the suit West has led, however, East plays the ♥9, an encouraging signal.

“East shouldn’t make a mini-encouraging signal with the ♥3, hoping that West will be able to interpret the signal. Make an encouraging signal with as high a card as East can afford. Assuming West holds four or more hearts, East isn’t likely to need the ♥9, so East can afford to make the signal as clear as possible.

“By making an encouraging signal, East tells West that East would like the suit continued if West regains the lead. If West holds the ♥K, for example, East’s play of the ♥9 tells West that it is safe to lead a low heart over to East’s known ♥Q.

“If East plays the ♥9 and East regains the lead before West, which card does East return? (♥2.) When returning partner’s lead, use the following guidelines:

- Lead back the top card from a remaining doubleton.
- Lead the top card from two or more touching cards headed by an honor.
- Otherwise, lead back the original fourth highest card from three or more remaining cards.

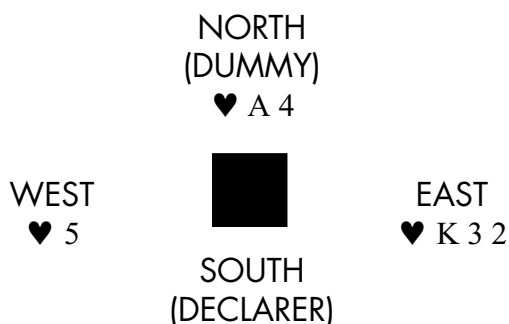
“Based on this, the correct card for East to return is the ♥2, East’s original fourth-highest card.

“If West leads the ♥5 and the ♥4 is played from dummy, which card does East play? (♥Q.) East can only signal when East has a choice of cards to play. If a low heart is played from dummy, East doesn’t have a choice. East must play high, the ♥Q, to prevent declarer from winning a trick with the ♥10 or the ♥J.

“If the ♥Q wins the trick, which card does East return? (♥2.) With three remaining cards, East returns the ♥2, East’s original fourth highest card.

“Change the East hand.

“Take away the queen and the nine and add the king.



“West leads the ♥5. If the ♥A is played from dummy, which card does East play? (♥3.) Assuming East still wants to make an encouraging signal in the suit, all East can afford is the ♥3. East will have to hope that West notices that the ♥2 is missing and will interpret the ♥3 as an encouraging signal.

“If East next gains the lead for the partnership, which card does East return? (♥K.) With the remaining ♥K 2, East returns the ♥K, top of the doubleton. This is to avoid blocking the suit.

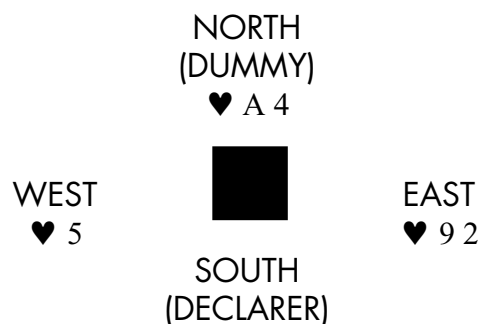
“If declarer plays the ♥4 from dummy on the first trick, which card does East play? (♥K.) East has no choice. East plays the ♥K to win the trick.

“After winning the ♥K, which card would East return, assuming East decides to continue leading the suit? (♥3.) East would return the ♥3, top of the remaining doubleton.

“Suppose West didn’t lead a heart originally. East, during the play, wants to encourage West to lead a heart after gaining the lead. How might East send that message? (Encouraging signal in hearts; discouraging signal in other suits.) With this holding, it’s difficult to directly encourage West to lead a heart. If East gets an opportunity to discard, East could try playing the high ♥3 as an encouraging signal, but West might misinterpret the ♥3 as a discouraging signal. Instead, East might try making discouraging signals in the other three suits, hoping that West will draw the inference that East wants a heart led when West gains the lead.

“Change the East hand.

“Take away the king and the three and add the nine.



“Suppose West leads the ♥5 against South’s 3NT contract and the ♥A is played from dummy. Which card does East play? (♥2.) East should play the ♥2, a discouraging card. Don’t get attitude signals mixed up with count signals — which we will discuss soon. The message East wants to send West is that East doesn’t like the suit, not that East holds a doubleton.”

Summary

“The most important defensive signal during the play is the attitude signal. High cards encourage; low cards discourage. All this is based on the premise that both partners are watching the cards that are played. Sometimes, a defender doesn’t have the appropriate high card to encourage or low card to discourage. Each defender will have to be keenly aware of the potential challenge that partner might face.


“Be careful to use the attitude signal wisely. Don’t encourage partner to lead a suit if you would really prefer another suit to be led. Also, don’t discourage a suit if you don’t want partner to shift to another suit. Sometimes, you have to encourage partner to keep leading a suit when all of the alternatives look worse.”

➔ “Let’s do Exercise 4 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Four — Attitude Signals

After the following auction, West leads the \spadesuit K, and a low diamond is played from dummy. Which card would East play?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 \clubsuit	Pass	1 \spadesuit
Pass	2 \spadesuit	Pass	4 \spadesuit
Pass	Pass	Pass	

	NORTH	
	\spadesuit Q 8 6 2	
	\heartsuit A Q	
	\diamondsuit J 7 4	
	\clubsuit A 9 6 4	
WEST		EAST
\diamondsuit K		\spadesuit 6 4
		\heartsuit J 7 5 2
		\diamondsuit Q 9 2
		\clubsuit Q 8 5 3
	SOUTH	

Exercise Four Answer — Attitude Signals

\spadesuit 9. This is an encouraging attitude signal asking West to keep leading the suit. If the partnership leads the king from ace-king, East-West will take the first three tricks in the suit, if declarer has more than a doubleton. Besides, East doesn't particularly want West to switch to another suit.

Count Signals

Introduction

“When an attitude signal won’t be of much use to partner, a defender can sometimes give a count signal, telling partner how many cards are held in the suit:

- High-low shows an even number of cards — two, four or six.
- Low-high shows an odd number of cards — three, five or seven.

“The signal isn’t perfect. For example, when partner shows an even number of cards, you can’t always be sure whether partner holds two, four, six or even eight cards in the suit. The auction and the logic of the situation, however, will usually allow a defender to know exactly how many cards partner holds when giving a count signal.

“If you know how many cards partner holds in a suit, you can tell how many cards declarer holds. You can see the number of cards in your hand and in the dummy, so any missing cards must be in declarer’s hand.

“Determining when to give a count signal is a challenge. If you give count signals all the time, you may help declarer more than partner. Still, there are some situations in which a count signal is very important. Let’s look at one common example.”

Instructions

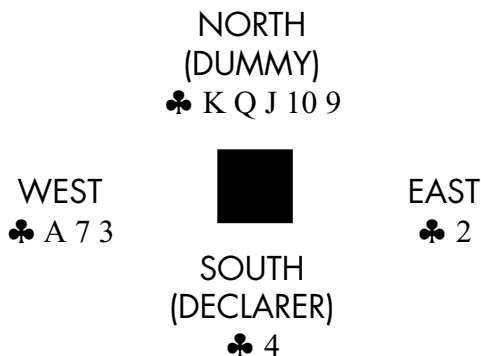
“Pick up all of the cards and sort them into suits. Take the club suit and put out the following cards.

“West: the ace, the seven and the three.

“North: the king, the queen, the jack, the ten and the nine.

“East: the two.

“South: the four.



“Suppose South is declarer in a notrump contract with the ♣K Q J 10 9 in the dummy and no outside entry to the dummy. The ♣K is led from dummy, East plays the ♣2, and South plays the ♣4. Should West win the ♣A or hold up? (Hold up/Depends.) Of course, this may depend on how the play has gone so far. If East–West have already established enough tricks to defeat the contract, West can win the ♣A and take the established winners.

“In most situations, however, West doesn’t want to take the ♣A right away. If South has opened 1NT, for example, South will have at least two clubs. If West wins the ♣A right away, declarer will have a club left in the South hand as an entry to dummy’s four established winners.

“The real question is how long West should hold up with the ♣A. If South holds a doubleton club, West only needs to hold up the ♣A for one round. If West wins the second round of clubs, declarer won’t have a club left to cross to dummy’s remaining winners. If South holds three clubs, West will have to wait until the third round to play the ♣A. If South holds four clubs, it won’t matter when West takes the ♣A.

“The only way West can determine how long to hold up the ♣A is for East to give a count signal. Once West knows how many clubs East holds, West can figure out how many clubs declarer holds.

“This is a perfect situation for a count signal. There’s not much point in East giving an attitude signal in this situation. West can see, from the dummy and the fact that declarer is playing the suit, that East doesn’t like the suit. East should recognize that this is a count situation and not an attitude situation.

“Assuming East–West are giving count signals, how many clubs does East hold? (One or three.) East’s ♣2 is the lowest outstanding club, so East must be starting a low-high signal, showing an odd number of clubs. East can’t have five clubs, since that would leave declarer with a void in clubs. East must have either one club or three clubs.

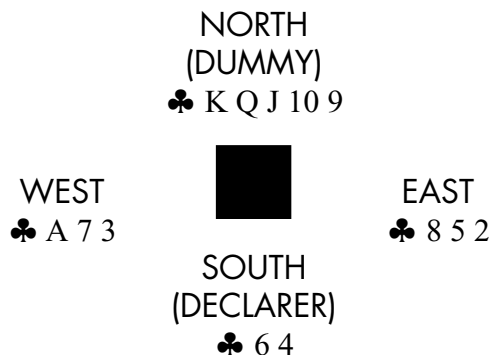
“If East has one club, does it matter when West takes the ♣A? (No.) If East has one club, declarer must hold all four of the missing clubs. West can’t hold up long enough to break the link between declarer and the dummy.

“If East holds three clubs, when should West take the ♣A? (Second round.) If East has three clubs, West should play the ♣A on the second round of the suit. Declarer must hold only a doubleton club and will then be out of the suit.

“Complete the layout of the club suit.

“East: add the eight and the five.

“South: add the six.



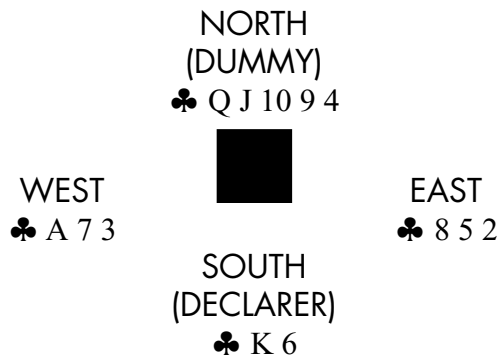
“How many tricks does declarer take in the club suit if the defenders make use of the count signal? (One.) East plays low-high to show an odd number of clubs — three. West takes the ♣A on the second round, and declarer has no entry to dummy’s remaining winners. Declarer is restricted to one club trick.

“Notice that East doesn’t actually need to complete the count signal for West to know how many clubs South holds. As soon as West sees East’s ♣2, West knows that declarer holds either two or four clubs.

“To see the importance of this, change the layout.

“North: give the king to South.

“South: give the four to North.

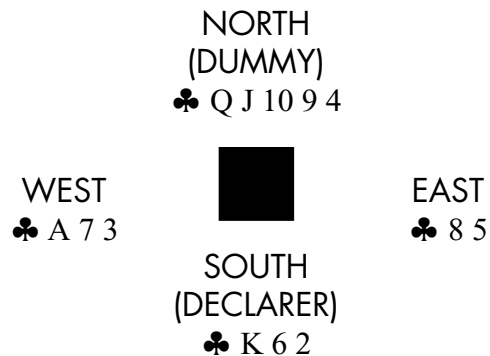


“Suppose South leads the ♣K, trying to promote winners in the suit. Does West play the ♣A? (No.) Presumably not. Declarer probably has at least two clubs.

“Which club does East play to the first trick in the suit? (♣2.) East starts a low-high by playing the ♣2.

“When declarer next plays the ♣6, does West play the ♣A? (Yes.) West doesn’t have to see the second half of East’s signal to know that East started with an odd number of clubs. If the ♣2 is singleton, taking the ♣A now doesn’t matter. If the ♣2 is low-high from a three-card holding, West should play the ♣A now. In either case, West should win the second trick.

“Change the layout.
 “East: give the two to South.



“Suppose South leads the ♣K, and West holds up the ♣A. Which club should East play? (♣8.) With a doubleton, East should start a high-low by playing the ♣8.

“When South leads a second round of clubs, should West take the ♣A? (No.) East’s ♣8 might have been a singleton, in which case, it can’t hurt to hold up the ♣A because South has four clubs. Otherwise, East’s ♣8 must be the start of a high-low signal showing an even number of clubs. East can’t have four, since that would leave declarer with a singleton. At most, East can have two clubs, leaving declarer with three. West should hold up the ♣A until the third round of the suit, restricting declarer to two tricks.”

Summary

“In addition to attitude signals, the defenders can use a count signal when attitude clearly does not apply. High-low shows an even number; low-high shows an odd number.”

With an advanced group, you can mention that this count signal is usually reversed in the trump suit. Low-high shows an even number; high-low — a trump echo — shows an odd number. Typically, this signal is used only when a defender is trying to get a ruff. Many partnerships rarely use the trump echo, preferring to use the trump suit for suit preference. There is a mention of the trump echo in the textbook.

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 5 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Five – Count Signals

After the following auction, West leads the ♠2, and the ♠K is played from dummy, winning the trick. Which spade does East play? The ♣3 is led from dummy to the second trick. Which club does East play?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	2NT	Pass	1NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	3NT

	NORTH	
	♠ K 5	
	♥ J 9 3	
	♦ 8 4 2	
	♣ K J 8 6 3	
WEST	<div style="background-color: black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	EAST
♠ 2		♠ Q 9 4 3
		♥ Q 10 5 2
		♦ 9 7 5
		♣ 7 4
	SOUTH	

Exercise Five Answer – Count Signals

♠9 and ♣7. The ♠9 is an encouraging attitude signal. When West gains the lead, East would like West to continue leading spades. Since East holds the ♠Q, that should be successful if West holds either the ♠A or the ♠J. The ♣7 is a count signal, the start of a high-low to show an even number of cards in the suit. West may hold the ♣A and need to know how many times to hold up in order to limit declarer to as few club tricks as possible.

Suit Preference Signals

Introduction

“There is a third type of signal that the defenders can use, the suit preference signal. This is used in very specific situations, when attitude and count signals don’t logically apply. A suit preference signal tells partner which of two suits you prefer.

“Let’s look at an example.”

Instructions

“Pick up all of the suits and construct the following hand in front of North.

“In spades: the queen, the ten, the seven and the five.

“In hearts: the king, the five, the four and the three.

“In diamonds: the king, the five, the four and the three.

“In clubs: the seven.

“Construct the following hand in front of East.

“In spades: the seven and the four.

“In hearts: the ace, the queen, the nine and the two.

“In diamonds: the nine, the eight, the six and the two.

“In clubs: the nine, the six and the two.

NORTH		
♠ Q 10 7 5		
♥ K 5 4 3		
♦ K 5 4 3		
♣ 7		
WEST		EAST
♣ A		♠ 7 4
		♥ A Q 9 2
		♦ 9 8 6 2
		♣ 9 6 2
SOUTH (DECLARER)		

“Suppose South opens 1♠, North raises to 3♠ and South bids 4♠. West leads the ♣A. Which card should East play on the first trick? (♣9.) There’s not much point in giving an attitude signal in clubs. Even if East likes clubs, it won’t do much good for West to lead another club, since it can be ruffed in dummy. There’s also little point in giving a count signal in the club suit. It’s unlikely to be important for West to know how many clubs East holds.

“After winning the first trick with the ♣A, West will want to know what to lead at trick two. This is the type of situation that calls for a suit preference signal. It works this way. East eliminates the suit led, clubs, from consideration. East also eliminates declarer’s trump suit, spades. That leaves a choice between hearts and diamonds. The club East plays can be used to indicate a preference for one of these two suits:

- A high card shows preference for the higher-ranking suit.
- A low card shows preference for the lower-ranking suit.

“In this situation, East would show preference for a shift to hearts, the higher-ranking of the two obvious suits, by playing the ♣9.

“Change the East hand.

“In hearts: take away the ace and the queen and add the eight and the six.

“In diamonds: take away the eight and the six and add the ace and the queen.


	NORTH	
	♠ Q 10 7 5	
	♥ K 5 4 3	
	♦ K 5 4 3	
	♣ 7	
WEST		EAST
♣ A	■	♠ 7 4
		♥ 9 8 6 2
		♦ A Q 9 2
		♣ 9 6 2
	SOUTH (DECLARER)	

“Suppose West leads the ♣A against North–South’s 4♠. Which club does East play to the first trick? (♣2.) With a preference for diamonds over hearts, East plays the ♣2 — a low card for the lower-ranking suit.

“Change the East hand.

“In hearts: add the ace.

“In diamonds: take away the queen.

	NORTH	
	♠ Q 10 7 5	
	♥ K 5 4 3	
	♦ K 5 4 3	
	♣ 7	
WEST		EAST
♣ A		♠ 7 4
		♥ A 9 8 6 2
		♦ A 9 2
		♣ 9 6 2
	SOUTH (DECLARER)	

“Suppose West leads the ♣A against North–South’s 4♠ contract. Which club does East play to the first trick? (♣6.) Now East doesn’t have a preference for either hearts or diamonds. Instead of playing a high card or a low card, East chooses the middle card, the ♣6, showing no preference for either suit.

“This leaves the next decision to West. West might have a preference for leading either a heart or a diamond, knowing East doesn’t care which suit. West might make a passive lead, leading another club and letting declarer ruff in the dummy or leading a trump.

“Change the scenario slightly. Suppose South opens 1NT, North responds 2♣, the Stayman convention, South bids 2♠ and North raises to 4♠. Against 4♠, West leads the ♥7. Put the ♥7 on the table in front of West.

“How many hearts does West hold? (One.) West’s ♥7 is the lowest outstanding heart. West can’t be leading low from a three or four-card suit. That would leave declarer with a singleton or void for the 1NT opening. West’s ♥7 must be a singleton.

“Based on this knowledge, how does East plan the defense? (♥A followed by ♥9.) East plans to win the ♥A and lead back a heart for West to ruff. That’s two tricks. If West now leads a diamond, East can win the ♦A and lead another heart for West to ruff.

“How will West know to lead a diamond, rather than a club, after ruffing the heart? (Suit preference.) This is where the suit-preference signal is useful. There’s no point in giving an attitude or count signal in the heart suit. Instead, the heart East returns should indicate preference between the two obvious suits, clubs and diamonds. Holding the ♦A, East should return the ♥9, a high heart, telling West to lead the higher-ranking suit, diamonds.

“What if East held the ♣A, instead of the ♦A? (East would lead the ♥2.) Then East should return the ♥2, showing preference for the lower-ranking suit, clubs.

“What if East held neither the ♣A, nor the ♦A? (♥6.) With no preference between clubs and diamonds, East returns a middle heart, the ♥6. This tells West, ‘You’re on your own from here.’”

Summary

“A suit preference signal can be used when it is clear that neither an attitude nor a count signal applies. It shows a preference for one of the obvious suits. A high card shows a preference for the higher-ranking suit and a low card shows a preference for the lower-ranking suit.

“In a trump contract, it is usually clear which are the obvious suits, since declarer’s trump suit can be eliminated as a possibility. Suit preference, however, also can be used in notrump contracts. When establishing a suit, you can sometimes show partner where your entry lies — when you have a choice of playing a high card, a low card or even a middle card, when leading the suit. The high card would ask partner to lead the highest-ranking suit when gaining the lead, the low card would ask for the lowest-ranking suit, the middle card would show no preference or, possibly, ask for the middle-ranking suit.

“There are lots of opportunities to give suit preference signals during the play, but the partnership must be clear on when a signal is attitude, when a signal is count and when a signal is suit preference. Even experienced partnerships can sometimes find this a challenge.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 6 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Six — Suit Preference Signals

After the auction has gone as follows, West leads a singleton heart. East wins the first trick with the ♥A and returns the ♥4. West ruffs the heart return. Which card does West play to trick three?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	4 ♠

	NORTH	
	♠ K 10 8 3	
	♥ Q J 7 2	
	♦ Q 5	
	♣ Q J 6	
WEST		EAST
♠ 7 4 2		
♥ 3		♥ A
♦ J 10 6 2		
♣ K 10 5 4 2		
	SOUTH	

Exercise Six Answer — Suit Preference Signals

♣4. East has returned the lowest outstanding heart. This should be a suit preference signal for clubs, the lower of the two “obvious” choices — diamonds or clubs. Although a club lead is unattractive and a diamond lead appears safer, West respects East’s signal. With an entry in diamonds, East would have returned a high heart. With no entry in either suit, East would have returned a middle heart. Partnership trust is what it is all about!

SAMPLE DEALS – LESSON 7*

General Guidelines for Teachers: The deals in this lesson provide opportunities for the students to use defensive leads and signals. The auctions are kept relatively straight-forward.

Bid and Play – Deal 1: Unusual Lead Signals a Doubleton

Guidelines for Teachers: The first deal provides an opportunity for a ruff against a suit contract when holding a doubleton ace-king. It is important for the students to have previously discussed their standard lead from a suit headed by the ace-king. In addition, the defenders have to make use of a suit-preference signal so that the opening leader doesn't have to guess how to cross to partner's hand. This should be a very challenging deal for the group. It is a good illustration of how defensive conventions can help find the winning defense. Without good agreements, it is doubtful that any partnership would defeat the contract on this deal.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where the defenders can get a ruff if they have previously discussed their agreements and can read partner’s signal.”

Instructions

“North is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 1 — Dealer, North)

Dealer: North	♠ A Q J 10 6				
Vul: None	♥ Q 2				
	♦ 9 8 6 3				
	♣ A Q				
♠ 7 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 8 2
N					
W E					
S					
♥ A J 10 7		♥ 9 8 6 5 3			
♦ J 5 2		♦ A K			
♣ J 6 4 3		♣ 10 9 8 5			
	♠ K 9 5 3				
	♥ K 4				
	♦ Q 10 7 4				
	♣ K 7 2				

* The explanation of each deal is the same as the material in the student text. Teachers should use this information as a starting point for an interactive discussion with the students covering the main points of the hand.

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

“North, with an unbalanced hand and a five-card major suit, opens 1 ♠. After East passes, South makes a limit raise to 3 ♠. North accepts the invitation and bids game.”

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, the students can proceed to play out the cards in a contract of 4 ♠ by North.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“East is on lead and should make a plan, before choosing the opening lead. With a doubleton ♦ A K, East can visualize the possibility of getting a diamond ruff to defeat the contract, if there is an entry to West’s hand. East should start by leading a high diamond. After seeing the dummy, there still may be time to change plans — if there is a singleton or doubleton diamond in dummy, for example.

“To alert West that the ♦ A K is doubleton, East should reverse the standard partnership agreement of leading from a suit headed by the ace and king. If the partnership agreement is to lead the king from a suit headed by the ace and king, East should start by leading the ♦ A. If the partnership agreement is to lead the ace from a suit headed by the ace and king, East should lead the ♦ K. This unusual sequence of plays is intended to alert West to the possibility of a diamond ruff.”

Suggested Play

“North’s 4 ♠ contract is precarious. There is one sure heart loser, and there are three potential diamond losers. If East leads something other than a diamond, North will have the opportunity to draw trumps and then play diamonds. If the diamonds lie favorably, as they do on the actual deal, declarer will lose one heart and only two diamond tricks and make the contract.

“If the defenders lead diamonds initially and get their diamond ruff, they will defeat the contract by taking two diamonds, one ruff and the ♥ A.”

Suggested Defense

“When East leads a high diamond, West will play the \spadesuit 2, a discouraging card. West can’t see much future in the diamond suit. After looking at the dummy, however, East should continue with the other high diamond. East can see that there is a possibility of getting a diamond ruff, if East can find a quick entry to the West hand.

“After leading the second diamond, East’s dilemma will be whether to lead a heart or a club to get to the West hand. With no help from West, this would be a pure guess. If East leads a club, declarer can win and draw trumps, making the contract. By leading a heart, the contract can be defeated.

“On the second round of diamonds, West has an opportunity to help East find the winning defense. From East’s unusual play in diamonds and the fact that East continued leading diamonds despite West’s discouraging signal, West should realize that East has a doubleton diamond. With an entry in the heart suit, but not the club suit, West should play the \spadesuit J on the second round of diamonds! This is a suit-preference signal for the higher-ranking of the two “obvious” suits, hearts and clubs. East should now lead a heart, rather than a club, preferably the \heartsuit 9, top of nothing, to show no interest in having the suit returned. West can win the \heartsuit A, and trusting East, lead a diamond for East to ruff in order to defeat the contract.

“If East–West find this defense, all North–South can do is congratulate their opponents and move on to the next deal.”

Bid and Play — Deal 2: Lead High to See the Dummy

Guidelines for Teachers: This deal demonstrates the correct use of attitude signals when defending. Most of the students will make the automatic play of encouraging partner in a suit contract, when partner leads from a suit headed by the ace-king and they hold a doubleton. This is a good deal to emphasize that the defenders' conventions are tools that must be used wisely.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where the auction is straightforward, but the defense is challenging.”

Instructions

“East is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 2 — Dealer, East)

Dealer: East		♠ 4												
Vul: N–S		♥ J 7 5 2												
		♦ A K 9 4												
		♣ 7 6 5 2												
♠ A K Q 7 6 2		<table border="1" style="margin: auto; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S			♠ 5 3	
	N													
W		E												
	S													
♥ 6 4				♥ A K 9 8										
♦ J 6 5				♦ Q 10 7 3										
♣ Q J				♣ A 9 4										
		♠ J 10 9 8												
		♥ Q 10 3												
		♦ 8 2												
		♣ K 10 8 3												

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

“East has a balanced hand, but it isn’t strong enough to open 1NT. Instead, East opens 1♦ and rebids 1NT after West’s 1♠ response. West has enough

to take the partnership to game and knows there is an eight-card spade fit, since East has shown a balanced hand. West then bids 4♠.”

When everyone understands the proper bids, have the students play out the cards in a contract of 4♠ by West.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“North is on lead. Despite East’s opening bid of 1♦, North should lead a high diamond. It may be possible to give partner a ruff in diamonds, or North can choose to shift to another suit after seeing the dummy. North would make the agreed-partnership lead from a suit headed by the ace and king.”

Suggested Play

“If the missing spades are divided 3–2, declarer would have no spade losers. Declarer has only two diamond losers and one potential club loser. If the defenders don’t lead clubs in time, declarer may be able to establish an extra winner in diamonds on which to discard the club loser.

“The spades are divided 4–1, giving West an unexpected loser in that suit. The club finesse also loses to South’s ♣K. Declarer has four losers and can be defeated. The defense, however is a challenge.”

Suggested Defense

“If North leads a high diamond, South’s play to the first trick will be important. North will interpret South’s choice of cards as an attitude signal. If South plays the ♦8, that would be an encouraging signal. North would continue with another high diamond and give South a ruff by leading a third round of diamonds.

“From North’s perspective, giving South a diamond ruff might be the only way to defeat the contract. South might have a singleton diamond and the ♠A, for example. It is up to South to give the appropriate attitude signal on the first trick.

“From South’s perspective, getting a diamond ruff will not help the defense. South has a natural spade trick without being given a ruff. After the ♠A K Q are played, South’s ♠J will always be a winner. Since North’s opening lead shows both the ♦A and ♦K, South knows the defenders already have three tricks, unless West holds a singleton diamond. The best source of a fourth defensive trick is in the club suit. If North can be persuaded to lead a club, South’s ♣K should be a trick for the defense.

“On the first trick, therefore, South should play the $\spadesuit 2$, a discouraging signal! South hopes that North will then shift to a club. Now declarer can’t prevent the defenders from taking two diamond tricks, one club trick and one spade trick to defeat the contract.

“If South plays the $\spadesuit 8$ on the first trick and North continues leading diamonds, South can ruff the third round, but now the defenders lose the race. Whatever South leads next, declarer can win, draw the remaining trumps and discard the club loser on dummy’s established diamond winner.

“If South makes a discouraging signal on the first trick, how does North know to switch to a club rather than a heart? It isn’t clear-cut, but with both the $\heartsuit A$ and $\heartsuit K$ in the dummy, a club switch looks more promising than a heart switch. The defenders would have to lead hearts twice to drive out the $\heartsuit A$ and the $\heartsuit K$. By then, declarer would probably have been able to establish dummy’s $\spadesuit Q$ on which to discard a heart loser. From North’s perspective, if South doesn’t want diamonds continued, a club lead may give the defenders their best chance. South might have the $\clubsuit K Q J$, for example.”

Bid and Play – Deal 3 – Declarer Determines the Dangerous Opponent

Guidelines for Teachers: This deal provides an excellent opportunity for the defenders to use the standard count signal when defending against a notrump contract with a long suit in the dummy. It’s easy for the defenders to go wrong in such a situation, especially if declarer handles the suit combination deceptively.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where careful defense can set the contract.”

Instructions

“South is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

(E-Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 3 — Dealer, South)

Dealer: South ♠ K 6 3
 Vul: E-W ♥ J 10 8 4
 ♦ 10 5 3
 ♣ A 5 4

♠ 5 4 2 ♥ 9 7 2 ♦ 7 2 ♣ K Q 10 6 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> N <hr style="width: 100%;"/> W <hr style="width: 100%;"/> E <hr style="width: 100%;"/> S </div>	♠ A J 8 ♥ A K Q 3 ♦ A K Q 4 ♣ J 2
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♠ Q 10 9 7
 ♥ 6 5
 ♦ J 9 8 6
 ♣ 9 8 7

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			Pass
Pass	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

“After three passes, East, with 24 high-card points, opens with a strong artificial 2♣. West makes a waiting response of 2♦, and East rebids 2NT, showing a balanced hand of 22 to 24 points. West has enough to raise to game, ending the auction.

“If the partnership doesn’t use weak two-bids and the strong artificial 2♣ opening, East can simply open 2NT, showing a balanced 22 to 24 points, and West will raise to 3NT.”

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, let the students play out the cards in a contract of 3NT by East.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“South leads against 3NT. The spades are slightly stronger than the clubs, so South should start with spades. South leads the ♠10, top of touching cards from an interior sequence.”

Suggested Play

“Declarer starts with seven sure tricks: one spade, three hearts and three diamonds. An eighth trick can be established in clubs, and a ninth trick might appear if the missing hearts divide 3–3.

“Dummy’s clubs would actually provide four tricks, if there were an entry to the winners once the ♣A is driven out. Unfortunately, there is no entry. It’s possible, however, that the clubs will provide two tricks, if the opponents hold up the ♣A until the third round. While that assumes a defensive error, it may offer a better chance than relying on hearts to divide 3–3.

“Declarer first has to decide what to do if South leads a spade and North plays the ♠K at trick one. There are two possibilities. If declarer feels that South has the ♣A, it may be best to win the ♠A and lead clubs immediately. South may not hold up with the ♣A exactly one round and may play the ♠Q, setting up East’s ♠J. Also, the hearts might divide 3–3. If declarer feels that North holds the ♣A, it may be best to hold up the ♠A in case South has a five-card spade suit.

“There’s no right decision for declarer. Winning the first spade is probably the best choice. If South holds the ♣A, declarer will have a couple of chances. If North holds the ♣A, declarer still will have some chances, if the spades divide 4–3.

“If East wins the ♠A at trick one, the best play is to lead two rounds of clubs, hoping the defenders duck twice. Then declarer can take nine tricks. If East chooses to hold up the ♠A until the third round, the best play is still to lead two rounds of clubs. East now knows for certain that the missing

spades are divided 4–3. If the defenders correctly take the ♣A on the second round, there is still the chance that hearts will divide 3–3. Even when hearts don't divide 3–3, declarer can make the contract by cashing the top diamonds, bringing the total to eight. Now, knowing that North holds a good heart and no spades, declarer can lead a heart to North's high heart and hope that North's last card is a club and not a diamond."

Suggested Defense

"If South does lead the ♠10 against 3NT, North must be careful to play the ♠K on the first trick. North can't tell whether South is simply leading the top of a sequence or is leading from an interior sequence. If South doesn't hold a higher honor, playing the ♠K is unlikely to make much of a difference, since declarer can always get three tricks from the ♠A Q J when North has the ♠K. If South is leading from an interior sequence, it is important for North to play the ♠K to prevent East from taking a trick with the ♠J.

"Playing the ♠K on the first trick is unlikely to lose and may gain. Playing the ♠K is essential on the actual layout and would also be necessary if South had led the ♠10 from something like ♠A Q 10 9 or ♠A 10 9 8 7.

"Declarer may win the ♠A at trick one or may hold up twice. In either case, the critical decision for North is when to play the ♣A. If North takes the ♣A on the first round, declarer has an easy route to nine tricks. If North waits until the third round, declarer will again make nine tricks.

"How does North know to win the ♣A on the second round of the suit? South should give a count signal in clubs by playing low-high to show an odd number of clubs, three in this instance. If South holds three clubs, declarer can hold only two, so it is safe for North to win the ♣A on exactly the second round. Provided the defenders are careful from that point onward, with North holding on to all four hearts and South holding on to all four diamonds, declarer will be held to eight tricks.

"North will have to watch South's play in the club suit carefully. The ♣7 may look like a high club at first, but when South follows with the ♣8 or ♣9 on the second trick, North should know what is going on."

Bid and Play — Deal 4 — The Rule of Eleven

Guidelines for Teachers: This deal shows the rule of eleven in action. Even though the concept has been discussed in the lesson, it will be challenging for the defenders to find the correct play at the table.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where all roads lead to a 3NT contract that can be defeated with careful play.”

Instructions

“West is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #7, Deal 4 — Dealer, West)

Dealer: West	♠ A K 8 6 4										
Vul: Both	♥ K 5 4										
	♦ A Q 5										
	♣ Q 5										
♠ Q J 7 5	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 9
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q 10 8 7		♥ A J 9 2									
♦ J 3		♦ 9 7 4									
♣ 8 7 2		♣ A 9 6 3									
	♠ 3 2										
	♥ 6 3										
	♦ K 10 8 6 2										
	♣ K J 10 4										

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

“West passes. With 18 high-card points plus 1 for the five-card suit, North is too strong to open 1NT. North starts the auction with 1 ♠. East doesn’t have quite enough for a takeout double and passes.

“South, without the strength to bid a new suit at the two level, responds 1NT. With a hand worth 19 points, North can invite game by raising to 2NT, showing 18 or 19 points. With 7 high-card points plus 1 point for the five-card suit, South accepts the invitation and bids 3NT. Aggressive North

players might raise directly to 3NT.”

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, the students can proceed to play out the cards in 3NT by South.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“West is on lead. Although the spades are better than the hearts, West should lead the unbid suit, hearts. With no sequence, West leads the ♥7, fourth highest.”

Suggested Play

“If the diamonds divide 3–2, declarer has five tricks in that suit to go with two sure tricks in spades. The remaining tricks needed for the contract can be promoted in the club suit.

“The only danger is the heart suit. If the missing hearts divide 4–4, there will be no problem if West holds the ♥A, since dummy’s ♥K will be a winner. Declarer, however, shouldn’t be in a hurry to play dummy’s ♥K at trick one. East might hold ♥A Q 10 or ♥A J 9, for example. Playing the ♥K at trick one would not be successful. Declarer should play a low heart from dummy on the first trick, hoping that East will win. Now East can’t continue leading the suit without giving a trick to dummy’s ♥K.

“Suppose East plays the ♥2 on the first trick. West wins and leads a second heart. Declarer can then play dummy’s ♥K, hoping that West has the ♥A. On the actual lie of the cards, however, declarer can’t avoid losing four heart tricks and the ♣A, if the defenders handle the heart suit correctly.”

Suggested Defense

“If West leads the ♥7 and declarer plays a low heart from dummy on the first trick, East must be careful to play the ♥2. This is not a discouraging signal. East should expect partner’s ♥7 to win the first trick!

“East determines this by applying the rule of eleven. Assuming West has led fourth highest, East can subtract 7 from 11, leaving four cards higher than the ♥7 in the remaining three hands. East holds three cards higher than the ♥7 and can see one higher card in the dummy. That leaves declarer with no cards higher than West’s ♥7.

“Playing the ♥2 on the first trick is the only way to defeat the contract. Once West’s ♥7 wins the first trick, West can lead a second heart, trapping North’s ♥K. The defenders get the first four heart tricks to go with the ♣A. If East plays the ♥J or ♥9 on the first trick, the contract can no longer be defeated. East can’t continue hearts without giving a trick to dummy’s ♥K, and declarer will be able to establish enough winners in clubs to make the contract.”