

Beginner Corner 99

The four leading rules

Turning to the defence, there are four rules that tell you which card to lead in a particular suit. They apply to the first round of each suit, not merely to the opening lead. They are not designed to tell you whether to lead the suit, merely which card to lead if you do decide to lead the suit.

(1) Lead top of a sequence. AK63, KQ32, QJ832, J1082, KJ104, 10932, Q1093. So the lead (say) of a jack shows the ten and denies the queen (but doesn't deny the king). Note, ten from ten-nine is the lowest sequence.

(2) Lead low from a suit you like. KJ62, Q104, AJ53, K842, Q86, KJ7. Note it is dangerous to lead from broken honours and you'd never lead from AJ53 before dummy was tabled ("don't lead away from an ace"). Typically, the low (for like) leads are twos, threes and fours but could be higher, as in KJ7 — it's all relative.

(3) Lead high from a suit you hate. 9542, 9532, 8432, 932, 982, 532. Nines, eights and sevens are classic high (for hate) leads but it's all relative and a five (from 532) may be the high (for hate) card. Partner must scrutinise the evidence in front of him to gauge.

(4) Lead top of two cards. 92, 84, J6, Q3, 42. You'll have spotted some conflicts here. The queen-lead could be top of a doubleton or top of a sequence. Yes, but Q from (say) Q4 is very unattractive, unless it's partner's suit; partner should assume it's top of a sequence (unless he can see

the jack in his hand or dummy, in which case the queen is singleton or top of a doubleton).

The nine-lead could be top of a doubleton or a high for hate lead. In either case, the leader has no higher card than a nine. However, because the nine followed by a lower card may or may not be an indication the leader has no more cards left (and can ruff), it is sensible to lead the eight from 982, following next with the nine, to avoid that ambiguity.

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

	♠ Q86	
	♥ KJ43	
	♦ 63	
	♣ J1042	
♠ 92		♠ 43
♥ A985		♥ Q1062
♦ QJ98		♦ A1052
♣ AQ5		♣ 983
	♠ AKJ1075	
	♥ 7	
	♦ K74	
	♣ K76	

S	W	N	E
1 ♠	Dbl	2 ♠	Pass
4 ♠ (1)	End		

(1) Loves his shape and fit.

Contract: 4 ♠, Opening Lead: ♦ Q

West's ♦ Q lead denied ♦ K so East played ♦ A. At trick two, he switched to a high-for-hate club round to dummy's weakness but carefully chose ♣ 8.

West won ♣ Q and cashed ♣ A but East was able to follow with ♣ 9, so West knew East had a third club. Instead of trying to give East a club ruff, West instead cashed ♥ A — down one.

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