

## IMPROVER LESSON 6: STUDENT NOTES

# Opening Leads

### Look at the auction before you make the opening lead

The following are the most commonly used guidelines for the defence

#### 1. Leads versus a Notrump Contract

The defenders aim to establish their longest or strongest combined suit

##### Which suit?

1. Lead partner's bid suit (if they have bid one; good for partnership harmony!)
2. Lead your longest or strongest suit (the suit that gives the best opportunity to win tricks)
3. Lead an unbid suit (a major before a minor)
4. Try to avoid leading a suit with an unprotected honour as this may promote declarer's lower honour (for example leading from K765 when declarer holds AQJx)

##### Which card?

The following are the most commonly used guidelines for card selection once you have decided to lead a particular suit.

*The lead is underlined*

1. Lead top of a sequence of 3 honours or broken sequence  
KQJ3      KQ109      QJ97
2. Lead fourth highest - **a low card promises an honour(s)**.  
AJ875    K932      Q64
3. Lead top from small cards - **a high card denies an honour (High for Hate)**  
942      8742      83
4. Lead top of an interior sequence of 2 or more honours  
KJ103    Q1094      AJ104

## 2. Leads vs a Suit Contract

The defenders aim to win quick tricks or to use their trumps for ruffing

### Which suit?

1. Lead partner's bid suit (if they have bid one)
2. Lead top of a sequence of 2 or more honours
3. Lead a singleton (or top of a doubleton) - you may be able to get a ruff
4. Lead low from your longest or strongest suit
5. Lead an unbid suit

**NB: Do Not** lead low at trick 1 from a suit headed by the ace

### Which card?

1. Lead top of a sequence of 2 or more honours  
**K**Q73    **Q**J98
2. Lead fourth highest - **a low card promises an honour**  
KJ**3**2\*            Q6**4**2\*
3. Lead top from small cards - **a high card denies an honour (High for Hate)**  
**8**74                **8**742
4. Lead top of an interior sequence of 2 or more honours  
K**J**103    Q**10**94    K**10**93

*\* Leading low from a holding with an unprotected honour can cost a trick and is usually best avoided unless partner has bid the suit.*

## Summary

- If there is an unbid suit and you do not have an obvious lead, lead that suit
- If you lead a **low card** you **promise an honour in that suit**
- If you lead a **high card** you **deny an honour in that suit**
- If you lead an honour card, **it should at least show the honour below**
- **DON'T** lead away from an Ace in a **suit contract at trick 1**- you may lose to a singleton King

**These principles apply throughout the defence**