

Look at the auction before you make the opening lead

1. Leads versus a Notrump Contract

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)
5. Try to avoid suits bid by your opponents

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 top of an interior sequence of 2 or more honours

KJ103 Q1094 AJ104

3. Lead fourth highest or lowest of three - **a low card promises an honour(s).**

AJ875 K932* Q64*

** Leading low from a single unsupported honour is dangerous and should be avoided unless other options are worse.*

4. With just small cards, lead **High for Hate** to help partner distinguish from fourth highest leads. With a poor 3+ card suit, lead second highest unless it is a low card, so with 972 lead the 7 (followed by the 9), which partner should hopefully read as 'High for Hate', but with 932 lead the 9. If you lead the 3 partner will read you as leading 4th highest. You will often have difficult choices to make, and will often find that a different lead would have worked better.

97432 7632 972 932

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 fourth highest from your longest or strongest suit
5. Lead an unbid suit
6. Try to avoid suits bid by your opponents (exception: it is sometimes correct to lead a trump to cut down ruffs).

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
KQ73 QJ98
2. Lead fourth highest - **a low card promises an honour**
KJ3* Q64*
3. Lead top of an interior sequence of 2 or more honours
KJ103 Q1094 K1093
4. Lead second highest from a poor (no honour) 3+ card suit. With three spot cards follow up with the higher card on the next round – this tells partner that you do not have a doubleton so are not seeking a ruff.
97432 753

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

3. Returning Partner's Suit

To avoid potential blockage:

1. Lead top of two remaining cards (you will have started with three cards).
2. Lead low from three or more cards (you will have started with four or more).

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 shows the honour below and denies the one above**
- **DON'T** lead away from an Ace in a **suit contract at trick 1**

These principles apply throughout the defence