

Leading and Play in NT Contracts

Opening Leads against No Trump Contracts

There are 2 decisions to be made before making your opening lead

1. Which suit to lead and
2. Which card to choose

The choice of lead against suit contracts and against NT is not necessarily the same, but whatever you choose don't forget the bidding!!

Leads against No Trump contracts

Choices of lead

- 1) Your own suit
 - 4th *highest* from the longest suit (if you have 2 suits of equal length lead from the stronger)
 - Top of a *sequence* (preferably 3 or more) for example leading Q from Q J 10 x
 - **Don't lead the opponent's bid suit**
- 2) If the opponents have bid your suit
 - Lead an unbid suit, preferably a major suit.
- 3) If your partner has bid a suit
 - Lead partner's suit. Generally your top card.
 - **Don't lead your own suit unless it is strong.**

Continuing Play

To add to your knowledge from the bidding, you will glean more information from the lead and seeing dummy. You will know more, trick by trick, as the play proceeds. Don't forget to *count cards* and *count points*.

For example a declarer who has opened 1NT has 12, 13 or 14 points. Count the points as declarer plays them. You will then have a good idea of what they have left.

Generally:-

- Partner should play their biggest card on the lead, if dummy plays low
- Continue with the suit lead even though the opponents may be holding cards in that suit.
- 2nd player plays low, 3rd player plays high
- try not to lead the opponents suit
- Lead to weak suits in dummy, lead through strong suits in dummy
- **Don't lead to dummy's ten-aces because you will trap your partner's high cards.**

For example

if you lead towards dummy's A Q you will trap partner's K

if you lead towards dummy's K J you will trap partner's Q

Declarer Play

You know how many tricks you need to make the contract.

When you see dummy count how many top tricks you can get in your hand and dummy. The difference is the number of tricks you have to get to make up the shortfall.

You can only do this in two ways :-

1 Establish your long suit

Do this by losing the top tricks in order to make tricks with the low cards when your opponents run out. It is a good idea to set about this task as soon as you can.

		NORTH (Dummy)					
		♣	♦	♠	♥		
		K	A	A	9		
		Q	8	J	6		
		J		10	3		
WEST		3					
		2					
		SOUTH					

Lead high clubs to *force out* the Ace. Then *cross to dummy* and *cash* the little clubs.

NB It is important to make sure you preserve an *entry* to dummy. If you play the A♦ and A♠ before you have established the clubs you may have trouble getting back to dummy to win the little clubs.

2 Finesse

		NORTH (Dummy)					
		♣	♦	♠	♥		
		A	A	A	x		
		Q	K	J	x		
		x	J	10			
WEST		x	x				
		SOUTH					

Lead a low club from your hand, if West plays low, play the Q♣ from dummy. If West plays K♣, play the Ace. Note that if you lead clubs from dummy you are certain to lose a trick to the King.

Lead a low diamond from your hand, if east plays low, play the J♦ from dummy. If East plays Q♦, play Ace (or King). Note that if you lead diamonds from hand you are almost certain to lose a trick to the Queen.

How would you play the spades to have the best chance of making 2 tricks?