

What to Lead Against NT and Suits?

Opening Lead is often called the most difficult thing in bridge. Often we do not know much about our partner's hand and only limited information on what the opponent holds. Here are some simple thoughts on leads against notrump and suit contracts when partner has not bid a suit. If partner is in the bidding, generally we want to lead partner's suit.

Leads against Notrump

If the contract is notrump, it is a good strategy to lead your longest suit with at least five cards. The objective is to force declarer to win his stoppers (if any) in that suit, after which your remaining cards will be winners if you regain the lead.

If you don't have a five-card or longer suit, an honor sequence (such as Q-J-10) is an excellent lead regardless of length. Failing that, prefer to lead from a weak suit. Avoid leading a four-card suit that contains the ace or king — you are likely to lose a trick in that suit.

Below is a summary of the opening-lead strategy against notrump (assuming partner has not bid a suit):

| Choice | Notrump Opening Lead |
|--------|----------------------|
| 1 | 5+ card suit |
| 2 | Honor sequence |
| 3 | Weak suit |

Advanced Tip – When you do not have many HCP (0-5), you might consider finding partner's suit instead of leading your own. Usually from the bidding you can get a count on the opponent's major suit holding. If you have a doubleton or singleton in a major you can consider leading it in this situation. Note, you should only consider this when you know opponents have your suit stopped, partner cannot return your suit after it is stopped and you have no outsider entry to run your suit.

Leads against Suits

The objectives at a suit contract are different. The best lead is a suit headed by the ace and king because you will win the first trick and get to see the dummy before you decide what to lead next.

A singleton is an excellent lead if your hand contains several trumps, at least one of which is a low card. If partner has the ace in the suit led, or if he can gain the lead early, you will be able to get a ruff.

Otherwise prefer to make a safe lead such as an honor sequence or a weak suit — one that does not contain the ace or king. Below is a summary of the opening-lead strategy against a suit contract:

| Choice | Suit Opening Lead |
|--------|--------------------|
| 1 | Suit headed by A-K |
| 2 | Singleton |
| 3 | Honor sequence |
| 4 | Weak suit |

Leading the Proper Card

Once you have chosen the suit to lead, the choice of card is based on standard agreements. Below are the most important rules:

| You Hold | Lead | Example |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| Ace and king | Ace | <u>A</u> K J 2 |
| Honor sequence | Top | <u>J</u> 10 9 3 |
| Doubleton | Top | <u>8</u> 2 |
| 4+ cards | Fourth best | Q 9 7 <u>6</u> 2 |