



What are opening leads for?

- To send a message to partner
- To set up tricks
- To win tricks

Clues from the auction

1. A suit that partner has bid
2. Un-bid Suits; especially un-bid majors
3. DON'T LEAD Suit bid by declarer; AVOID Suit bid by dummy

Looking at the Suit Holding

BEST: Four card suits with touching sequences of three or more honours or broken sequences of three or more honours

GOOD: A long suit (at least four) with honour (against No Trumps)

NEUTRAL (Passive) Top or second card (7-9) from a four-card suit with no honours

POOR – Suits with less than four cards



Message to Partner

	<u>Lead</u>	<u>Message</u>
HONOUR ZONE	Top of a sequence e.g. K (From KQJ10)	Denies the next highest card; promises the next two lower. Looking to set up tricks by getting the higher honours played; asks for return.
	Top of a broken sequence against NT e.g. K (From KQ109)	Denies the next highest card; promises two out of the next 3 lowest; looking to set up tricks by getting the higher honours played; asks partner to play the missing honour to show it and to "unblock" ; asks for return.
FOURTH HIGHEST ZONE	Low ranking card e.g. 5 (From K9853)	Promises at least four cards in this suit, with at least a ten at the top. Asks for the highest card you have; asks for return. Especially against No Trumps asks for multiple returns.
"SOGGY MIDDLE" ZONE	Middle ranking card e.g. 8 (From 9873)	"Top of nothing", no interest in this suit and no better idea. Hopes for winner in partner's hand; asks for switch to another suit on return.



“Standard Leads”

<u>Suit</u> <u>Holding</u>	<u>Vs</u> <u>NT</u>	<u>Comments</u>
K Q J 4 Q J 10 4 J 10 9 4	K Q J	Attacking and safe against both suit and no trump contracts
K Q 4 2	2	Two touching honours, lead fourth highest against a no trump contract (hoping for more than one trick), but against a suit contract, sure of one trick
K Q 10 2 Q J 9 2	K Q	Two touching honours, missing the next, holding the third honour or nine.
A J 10 4 2	J	Top of interior sequence. Too likely to give a trick away against a suit contract, but fairly good attacking lead against NT.
K J 10 4 2	J	
A K J 5 2	K	In No Trumps, lead of the King asks partner to play the Q. Against suit, promise the K with the Ace lead. Special case of the first line above. Leading Ace should be same message and consistent with above.
A K 5 4 2	4	Fourth Highest.



<u>Suit</u>	<u>Vs</u>	<u>Comments</u>
<u>Holding</u>	<u>NT</u>	
A K 4 2	2	Fourth Highest.
A K	Avoid	Against suit contract King followed by Ace shows a doubleton looking for a ruff
10 2	Avoid	If partner has bid, the highest of any doubleton
A 4 3 2	2	Fourth Highest.
H 3 2	Avoid	Avoid, but if partner's suit, lead the Honour.
8 7 4	7	Avoid, but if partner's suit, with three worthless cards, lead the middle card, then the top, then the lowest ("MUD" = Middle, Up, Down). Signals holding of three or five, and implies no interest.
8 7 5 4	7	Second of four worthless cards. Playing a relatively high card followed by a lower card signals a holding of two, four or six and no interest in the suit. Fourth highest against no trumps will encourage partner to return.



A Special Agreement about 10's against No Trumps

Leads from the top of an internal sequence are often ambiguous.

"Journalist" leads, often called "Strong Tens" are designed to fix some problems with the standard opening lead system.

The partnership agrees that a lead of a 10 of a suit promises a) either the 9 or the J AND b) the Ace or King.

The proposed advantage of Journalist leads is shown in this deal:



If West leads the J his partner may win the Ace and switch to another suit. When the 10 is led East will know to return the suit.

NOTE from 10 9 8 7, the correct lead is now the 9, promising the 10.



How to use a fourth highest lead

1. Usually against No Trumps, but possible against a suit, partner leads a low value card.
2. Subtract the value (number of "pips") from 11. This is the number of cards in that suit, with a higher value than the card led, not held by partner.
3. Count the number of cards, in that suit, above the opening lead value, in dummy. Subtract the count from your result from (2) above.
4. Count the number of cards, in that suit, above the opening lead value, in your hand. Subtract the count from your result from (3) above.
5. Now you have the number of cards, above the lead value, held by declarer.

Sometimes partner leads an ambiguous card, perhaps the 7.

You do the subtraction, $11 - 7 = 4$.

If you can see more than 4 cards whose value is higher than the 7, you can deduce that partner has led a "discouraging" middle order card, and not fourth highest. Don't bother looking for good cards in this suit in partner's hand.



Partner has led his fourth highest Heart.

(Partner has either four, five or six Hearts because you have the 2♥).

Partner leads 5♥

Declarer

Dummy

♥ ?

♥ 9 8 7

Your hand

♥ K 10 2

1. Subtract the value of partner's card from 11. $11-5=6$. There are 6 cards in Hearts, higher than the 5♥, and not in partner's hand.
2. There are three Hearts in dummy, all higher than the 5♥. Subtract three: $6-3=3$.
3. There are three Hearts, two higher than 5♥ in your hand: $3-2=1$.
4. There is one card above 5♥ in declarer's hand.

Play the King from your hand on partner's lead. Watch for the high Heart from declarer's hand. If your K♥ wins, lead the 10♥. This will help to drive the high card out of declarer's hand. Look for the 4&3♥. When you see them, you will know how many Hearts partner & declarer started with.