

# Leads - Chuck Lane

## versus Suit Contracts

Before any lead, go over the bidding of the entire table and try to determine the best suit to lead. Once the suit is determined, decide which card you want to play and what that card is telling your partner.

Most times, if you lead a low card, it is encouraging and it tells partner you, more than likely, have something of value in that suit. Value is Queen or higher. The lead of a higher card (8, 9, or 10) tends to say you are not interested in that suit. It could also be a singleton or doubleton. Doubleton leads tend not to be too helpful.

The ace tends to promise the king.

From a doubleton lead the king, followed by the ace.

If you have a singleton ace only lead it if you have at least 2 trumps.

If partner has bid a suit and you have ace doubleton, lead the ace followed by your lower card in their suit.

The lead of a king either shows exactly 2 in the suit and then lead the ace; otherwise it promises the queen so it is important for your partner to show if they like/dislike your lead by the card they play on the very first trick. Carding is important and can help partner decide whether to continue the suit or to change.

Never lead an unsupported queen unless partner has bid that suit. It is fine to lead an unsupported queen singleton providing you have a minimum of 2 trumps.

Leads of a sequence tend to be quite good. It also does not give anything away. Lead of a jack from jack, ten, nine tends to be a safe lead. It is a very passive lead. The lead of the 10, promises at least the 9. A 10 is never led from KQ10 or AQ10.

Partnership agreement is very important with leads. Leads very often determines the end result of a particular hand. It is important to try not to give anything away with your lead. Some lead fourth best, even against a suit contract. Never lead away from an ace in a suit contract.

Some partnerships play coded 10's and 9's and jack denies. I think this can give too much info to declarer, especially if they ask about the lead of one of those cards. Coded 10's and 9's says you either have 2 cards higher or nothing higher. Your partner, when you lead one of these cards needs to look at their hand, dummy's hand and also see what card(s) declarer plays in order to figure out how this works. It is not that complicated; but I feel it can also help declarer with play of the hand.

When and if opponents bid slam, pay attention to the bidding and ace asking sequence before any lead. Try not to ask questions during the bidding unless there is a possibility that you might come into the bidding. If you are on lead, feel free to ask any all questions before you lead and if you do not understand the answer you can ask for further explanation. If you are not the one on lead, you must wait till your partner has led before you ask your question. You can always ask partner to lead face down, then ask your question(s). If opponents have shown shortness and during the ace asking they actually have an opportunity to show a void do not lead your ace. I find very neutral leads to be best against a slam contract. If they are in a suit contract

and it appears that they have all the honors in their suit, it is a very neutral lead of a trump that can be most advantageous, and not give away anything to the opponents.

## versus No Trump Contract

Fourth best is by far the most standard lead against a no trump contract. Some do third or fifth best as their lead; but this is not normal. A very good suggestion is if you are playing the contract to ask the partner of the person on lead about their leads and discards. It is alright to lead from an ace holding. Again, go over the bidding and see if you can determine the best suit to lead without giving anything away. If an opponent has bid be careful with your lead; so that it could prove helpful to your opponents. Leads thru strength tend to be best. Pay attention to adding including how they may/may not have supported their partners bid and what that can infer to the hand and play.

In general the lead of an ace tends to show strength and length in the suit. The discard that you give your partner can help a great deal to show encouragement or not.

The lead of a sequence can be quite a good lead. A four card sequence is ideal as it can help partner to unblock the suit. Lead of the Queen, Jack, 10, 9 is a great lead, especially if you have a fifth card in the suit led and you have an outside entry. If you lead the Queen it is important for partner to unblock immediately. If partner has the king and one or two low cards, they should play the King immediately and lead back to your sequence so you can hopefully set up the suit and try to defeat the contract.


Once you have led your card, look and review the bidding, count dummies points and add that to declarers points (most do 1 nt at 15-17), count your points and from there you can tell very closely the number of points your partner has to offer. I use 16 as the number of points when opponents play standard count nt.

The opponent on your left is declarer and they reached a 3nt contract and at some point the person on your left has shown some interest in one of the majors; yet declarer has ended up in nt, it very often can be to lead thru the strength on the board.

Also, if during the bidding partner has shown interest in some suit, lead their suit. Even if it is the wrong thing to lead this time, you will have shown partner that you have listened to the bidding and not is the best way to keep good partners!

Whenever the bidding goes 1nt, pass, 3nt all pass. It is best to lead a major suit as the responder clearly does not have a 4 card major. the only decision is which one.

## Board 1

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
|   | ♠ A 6 5 4   |  |  |
|   | ♥ Q 5   |  |  |
|   | ♦ K J 6 2   |  |  |
|   | ♣ 10 7 5  |  |  |
| ♠ Q J 10 7 3<br>♥ J 8 2<br>♦ 8 3<br>♣ A 9 4 |  | ♠ K 9<br>♥ 10 7 6 4<br>♦ Q 10 9 7<br>♣ 6 3 2 |  |
|   | ♠ 8 2   |  |  |
|   | ♥ A K 9 3   |  |  |
|   | ♦ A 5 4   |  |  |
|   | ♣ K Q J 8   |  |  |

3 NT by South

## Bidding

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1NT   | 2S   | 2NT   | Pass |
| 3NT   | Pass | Pass  | Pass |

## Play

- West leads SQ
- South must overtake with the SK and return S9. Otherwise West's spade suit is blocked.
- West has to play the S10, otherwise the spade suit is blocked. West continues to play spades until the SA is forced out
- EW takes 4 spade tricks and 1 club to set contract

## Board 2

|            |            |              |
|------------|------------|--------------|
| ♠ A Q 10 5 | ♠ K J 2    | ♠ 9          |
| ♥ K J 6    | ♥ 9 3      | ♥ A Q 10 8 4 |
| ♦ J 10 4   | ♦ Q 6 5 3  | ♦ A 7        |
| ♣ 9 5 3    | ♣ Q 10 8 2 | ♣ K J 7 6 4  |

♠ N  
W      E  
♠ S

|             |
|-------------|
| ♠ 8 7 6 4 3 |
| ♥ 7 5 2     |
| ♦ K 9 8 2   |
| ♣ A         |

4♥ by East

## Bidding


| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| Pass  | Pass | Pass  | 1H   |
| Pass  | 3H   | Pass  | 4H   |

## Play

- South leads the deuce of diamonds.
- East makes 4 Hearts

## Board 3

Is

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>♠ Q 10 7</p> <p>♥ J 9 5 4 2</p> <p>♦ 10 8</p> <p>♣ 6 5 3</p> | <p>♠ A J 8</p> <p>♥ A</p> <p>♦ A K 9 4</p> <p>♣ K 10 9 7 4</p> | <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <p>♠ 6 5 3</p> <p>♥ K Q 7</p> <p>♦ Q 7 6 5 2</p> <p>♣ Q 8</p> | <p>♠ K 9 4 2</p> <p>♥ 10 8 6 3</p> <p>♦ J 3</p> <p>♣ A J 2</p> |
|---|--|---|--|

### 3 NT by North

#### Bidding

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| -     | -    | 1C    | Pass |
| 1H    | Pass | 2D    | Pass |
| 3NT   |      |       |      |

#### Play

- South leads HK. Declarer makes 10 tricks off the top.
- With diamond lead, declarer can make 13 tricks
- With Spade lead, declarer can make 12 tricks

# Board 4

5

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>♠ A J 8</p> <p>♥ A</p> <p>♦ A K 9 4</p> <p>♣ K 10 9 7 4</p> | <p>♠ 6 5 3</p> <p>♥ K Q 7</p> <p>♦ Q 7 6 5 2</p> <p>♣ Q 8</p>   | <div style="text-align: center; background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 10px; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;">             N<br/>W     E<br/>S           </div> | <p>♠ K 9 4 2</p> <p>♥ 10 8 6 3</p> <p>♦ J 3</p> <p>♣ A J 2</p> |
|  | <p>♠ Q 10 7</p> <p>♥ J 9 5 4 2</p> <p>♦ 10 8</p> <p>♣ 6 5 3</p> |  |  |

3 NT by West

## Bidding

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| -     |      | 1C    | 1D   |
| x     | Pass | 2NT   | Pass |
| 3NT   |      |       |      |

## Play

- South leads D5 (fourth best)