

Opening Leads Based Upon the Bidding

General Concepts

1. The Opponents' bidding gives you a blueprint as to their holdings. Use that information to help you choose the suit that offers the best chance for an effective opening lead. From their auctions you can learn the size and shape of their respective hands, their combined strength, and how well they match, or do not match, in certain suits.

2. In addition, their bidding reveals a lot about your Partner's hand. To figure out Partner's point-count add your points to the Opponent's combined count and subtract the total from 40. To figure out Partner's length in a particular suit add your length there to what they have promised and subtract the total from 13.

3. Any bid that Partner makes can also help your selection of the opening lead. As a general rule, always give the highest priority to a suit that Partner has mentioned, unless you hold specific self interest in leading a suit of your own preference.

4. Against a no-trump contract the normal lead is from a long suit, trying to establish low-card winners. There are three exceptional circumstances, however, to avoid leading your own long suit: (1) the Opponents have bid it, (2) your Partner has bid another suit, or (3) you have a very weak suit in an entry-less hand.

5. Against a trump contract the normal lead is also from a long suit, looking for fast defensive tricks. Short-suit leads in a suit which Partner has bid, and trump leads, however, do have their place.

a) Singleton leads are enticing, but to be effective they must offer a very good chance for a defensive ruff. Ideally, Partner should have a strong hand with a fast entry to give you the ruff, and you should have at least one trump stopper, such as the A or K of trumps to prevent Declarer from drawing all of yours quickly. A word of caution: leading a singleton can be dangerous, since it often helps the Opponents to develop one of their long side-suits by giving Declarer a free finesse.

b) Trump leads work best whenever Declarer might try for a cross-ruff, whenever the Dummy has ruffing power, but not many trump cards, or whenever you have winners in one of Declarer's side suits that might be trumped away. Never lead trump from any of the following trump sequences as doing so, statistically, is likely to give up a trump trick to which your side would otherwise be entitled. (X, JX, JXX, QX, or QXX)