

# THE RULE OF 11

When partner leads fourth highest we can use the Rule of 11 to work out how many cards higher than the lead card are in declarer's hand.

The Rule of 11 is most commonly used:

- In a No Trump contract
- By 3<sup>rd</sup> player when partner has led 4<sup>th</sup> highest of their longest suit

It helps us to work out whether our side can play cheaply to win or promote a trick. It can also tell 3<sup>rd</sup> player that continuing the suit is hopeless and that a switch to another suit could be a good idea.

## How it Works

When we are third hand and the opening lead might be the 4<sup>th</sup> highest of a long suit, we deduct the number of the card led from eleven. The result tells us how many cards, higher than the one led, are in the other three hands (i.e. in our hand, the dummy and declarer's hand). Once we see the dummy we can then work out how many of those higher cards are held by the declarer. Let's look at an example.

	North	
	K 9 2	
West		East
Lead: 7		A J 3

Partner (West) leads the seven and dummy plays the two. Subtract the card led, the seven, from eleven giving four. This tells us that there are four cards higher than the seven in our hand, the dummy hand and declarer's hand. We can see four cards higher than the seven between our hand and dummy so we know declarer has **no card higher than the seven**... we therefore play the three and partner wins with the seven. If the nine was played from the dummy we would win the trick with the Jack.

Here are all four hands:

	North	
	K 9 2	
West		East
Q 10 8 7 4		A J 3
	South	
	6 5	

## Why 11?

The cards are numbered from 2 to 14, with the Ace being 14.

2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, J (11), Q (12), K (13), A (14)

If partner leads his 4<sup>th</sup> highest he has 3 higher cards  $14 - 3 = 11$ .

## How do we know partner's lead is 4<sup>th</sup> highest?

We will need to judge whether partner's lead is likely to be 4<sup>th</sup> highest by looking at the card led and the other cards we can see.

The auction is also very important to help decide whether the lead is likely to be 4<sup>th</sup> highest. Consider these two auctions, both with a lead of ♣6

1	North	East	South	West
			1NT	Pass
	3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

2	North	East	South	West
	1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
	2♥	Pass	3NT	Pass
	Pass			

In auction 1 the ♣6 is very likely to be 4<sup>th</sup> highest. In auction 2 we can't be sure ♣6 is 4<sup>th</sup> highest, West is likely to choose a club lead from various combination e.g. from ♣863 simply because it is the unbid suit.

## Rule of 11 for Declarer

Declarer can also use the Rule of 11 in the same way to work out how many cards higher than the lead card are held by his right hand opponent. e.g.

		North	
		K J 8 2	
	West		East
	Q 10 6 5 3		9
		South	
		A 7 4	

West leads the 5. Subtract 5 from 11 to give 6. Declarer has two higher cards, dummy has three, so East has just 1. Declarer plays low from dummy and sees East play the 9. After winning with the ace he deduces that West started with Q1065 or Q10653 and therefore (at some stage) takes the deep finesse of dummy's 8. This allows him to make 4 tricks in the suit.

But declarer should beware if this is the unbid suit, since West might then have led from Q65, in which case the deep finesse would cost a trick.