

OPENING LEADS AGAINST NT – CHOOSING THE RIGHT CARD

Against a NT contract, it is normally correct to lead the fourth highest from a long suit. But there are suits where another card should be chosen.

LEADING FOURTH HIGHEST

Suppose that the opening lead has decided to make an attacking lead from a 4+ card suit. In most cases, it's right to lead the fourth highest:

♠	5 4
♥	K J 7 4 2
♦	A 6
♣	10 8 3 2

Most of the time with this hand a heart lead will be best, in which case the ♥4 should be chosen. If the bidding suggests a club lead, then ♣2 is the right lead.

Even with a sequence of two honours, it's normally best to lead fourth highest:

♠	6 4
♥	Q J 7 5 4
♦	K Q 8 5 2
♣	10

Depending upon the bidding, the 5 of either red suit is likely to be best.

LEADING AN HONOUR

With a sequence of 3 or more cards, it's best to lead the top of the sequence. For example: K Q J 5, Q J 10 4 2. The same principle applies for a near-sequence such as: K Q 10 5 or Q J 9 4 2.

A sequence with a gap between the top and second highest cards is known as an interior sequence. Lead the second highest card, e.g: A J 10 4 3, Q 10 9 6.

The purpose of leading an honour is to avoid giving declarer a cheap trick.

WITH NO HONOUR IN A SUIT, NORMALLY LEAD SECOND HIGHEST

It won't often be correct to lead from a doubleton against a NT contract (unless partner has bid the suit), but if so, the higher card should be led. (This also applies if the higher card is an honour).

When 3 cards are held, follow the convention known as MUD (Middle Up Down). The opening leader starts with the second highest and follows with the highest.

Also lead the second highest from 4 or more cards. With exactly 4 cards, continue with the third highest. With 5 or more cards, continue with the lowest.

Following this approach informs partner that the suit led is weak, while retaining the highest card in case it turns out to be significant.