

OPENING LEADS AGAINST A SUIT CONTRACT – CHOOSING THE RIGHT CARD

Against a suit 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
♦	A 6
♣	Q 9 8 3 2

Against a 4♠ contract, much 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 ♣3 is the right lead.

It's often correct to lead from a three card suit against a suit contract. With a single honour, or two non-touching honours, the lowest card (third highest) should be led.

LEADING AN HONOUR

With a sequence of 2 or more cards, it's normally best to lead the top of the sequence. For example: **K** Q 8 5, **Q** J 4 2.

With the ace always lead it: **A** K 4 2, **A** Q 8 (when the bidding makes it appropriate).

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: K **J** 10 4 3, K **10** 9 6.

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

With J10xx or 109xx, it's reasonable to lead highest or lowest.

WITH NO HONOUR IN A SUIT, NORMALLY LEAD SECOND HIGHEST

It will sometimes be correct to lead from a doubleton against a suit contract, in which case 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.