



Adventures in Bridge

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Opening Leads – Leading Partner’s Suit Notes

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When has Partner Shown a Suit

- Partner has opened the suit, showing at least 3-cards.
- Partner has overcalled the suit.
- Partner has made a lead-directing double by doubling an artificial bid.

Basic Agreements

When we are leading partner’s suit the meaning of our lead changes based on what we have done during the auction. If we have not supported partner, then we lead a count card:

- Low from an odd number (usually 3-cards).
- High from an even number (usually 2-cards).

We have this agreement because this is usually the most useful information for partner – it allows them to visualize the distribution of the suit around the table at trick 1.

If we have supported partner, then partner knows we have length (at least 3-cards), so it is more important for us to communicate the quality of our support and our attitude to partner. Thus, our leads in partner’s suit will be attitude-oriented:

- Low from an honor.
- Top of a bad holding.

Example – “Three Small”

When we are leading from three small cards in partner’s suit, we lead low (count) if we have not supported. We lead high (attitude) if we have supported.

Examples – “Common Holdings” – Count and Attitude Leads

- 97
 - Count – Lead the 9. High from a doubleton.
 - Attitude – Lead the 9. Top of nothing.
- Q9
 - Count – Lead the Q. High from a doubleton.
 - Attitude – Lead the Q. We do not lead low from a doubleton honor because it will block the suit and partner will never work out what is going on.
- 975
 - Count – Lead the 5. Low from an odd number of cards.
 - Attitude – Lead the 9. Top of nothing.



- K95
 - Count – Lead the 5. Low from an odd number of cards.
 - Attitude – Lead the 5. Low from an honor.
- 9753
 - Count – Lead the 7 (or 9.) High from an even number of cards. The 9 is the clearest card, but it might cost a trick later. We must use our judgment about balancing clarity in count with protecting our holding. The 7 seems high enough for partner to be able to read as a high card.
 - Attitude – Lead the 7 (or 9.) High from a bad holding. Similar discussion as above, so the 7 seems high enough.
- Q975
 - Count – Lead the 9. High from an even number of cards.
 - Attitude – Lead the 5. Low from an honor.
- 97532
 - Count – Lead the 2. Low from an odd number of cards.
 - Attitude – Lead the 7. Top of nothing. We must use our judgment about balancing clarity in count with protecting our holding. The 7 seems high enough for partner to be able to read as a high card.
- K9753
 - Count – Lead the 3. Low from an odd number of cards.
 - Attitude – Lead the 3. Low from an honor.

Lead from an Ace

When leading against a suit contract then leads from Ax, Axx, Axxx are tough decisions. When do we lead the Ace? Similarly problems exist when we are leading against notrump contracts.

Exceptions to the Rules -- Touching Honors

When we have a holding like KQx and have not raised partner, we usually still lead the King. We want to communicate with partner clearly and this card may confuse them, but it is most important to “play bridge” and not give up a trick first. This is true for KQx, QJx, and JTx, but not from 98x or 87x.

Exceptions to the Rules -- Notrump Unblocks

Following this idea that “playing bridge” is more important than specific agreements to its end brings us to some three and four card holdings where leading low can potentially block the suit against a notrump contract. Here are some examples:

- Q92
- QT82

In these cases, we want to unblock the suit by leading something other than our 2. We don't want to win the final round (3rd / 4th round) in our hand. Even in attitude situations when we have supported partner, the accepted play is to lead the 9 from Q92 and the 8 from QT82. This is how we unblock the suit, by saving our 2 until the end to force partner to win the later tricks.