

## 6: Opening leads against notrump contracts

Some questions to consider that will help you choose a **suit** to lead:

- Has partner bid a suit, especially an overcall? Overcall suggests a stronger suit
- What suits have been bid (or implied through Stayman) by declarer or dummy?
- What suits have **not** been bid by declarer and dummy?
- What help can you expect from partner?
- Have opponents sailed merrily into game, have they struggled to get there, or have they stopped in a part score? What is the contract – 1NT, 2NT, 3NT, 6NT, ....?
- Do I want to make tricks in my own long suit/find partner's long suit/make a safe lead?

The following auctions all give you different information about opponents' HCP, and hence partner's HCP:

1NT pass 2NT all pass  
1NT pass 2NT pass 3NT all pass  
1NT pass 3NT all pass

Likewise with auctions involving Stayman or transfer sequences

What are the pros and the cons of the following leads against notrump contracts? Bold and underlined cards are the standard lead for each card combination. Consider What the contract might be; what helpful cards partner might have in the suit; whether you have outside entry/entries; whether partner could have entries; what is the length of the suit you are leading....

**K**QJx(x) or **Q**JTx(x) ("safe", 3+ card honor sequence)

K**J**Tx(x) or A**J**Tx(x) or A**Q**Jx(x) (top of a 2 card internal honor sequence)

**A**KJx(x) or **K**QTx(x) (top of a 2 card honor sequence with another honor 1 rank lower)

AQx**x** (4<sup>th</sup> from longest and strongest)

AQx**x**x (4<sup>th</sup> from longest and strongest)

Qxx**x**(x) (4<sup>th</sup> from longest and strongest)

AKx**x**(x) (4<sup>th</sup> from longest and strongest)

**x**xx

**x**x

**Q**J

## Choosing an Opening lead, when the bidding hasn't provided any clues

(First, decide on the suit to lead, then on the card to lead)

### Choosing a **suit** to lead vs No Trump (1 = best, 7 is worst of this list)

1. 5+ card suit, if you have enough entries
2. Safe honor sequence (safe = no chance that it will help declarer)
3. Four card suit without A or K
4. Worthless xxx
5. Worthless xx
6. Unsafe honor sequence (unsafe = there is a chance it will help declarer)
7. Four card suit with A or K (especially if RHO has opened the bidding)
8. (Other holdings are generally worse to lead from)

### Choosing a **card** to lead vs No Trump

1. Top of a 3+ card honor sequence
2. Top of a 2+ card honor sequence IF (a) next card is one rank apart OR (b) you hold a higher honor OR (c) you hold only 3 cards. Otherwise, see item 6 below.
3. Low from 3 cards to an honor
4. High from xxx
5. Top of a doubleton except AK
6. 4<sup>th</sup> highest from all other holdings headed by an honor

The above material is based on Richard Pavlicek's website info: [www.rpbridge.net](http://www.rpbridge.net)

Test yourself - rank these opening leads, best to worst:

♠ KT843
♥ J942
♦ JT
♣ 73

♠ 64
♥ AQ94
♦ JT8
♣ T862

♠ K864
♥ 942
♦ T98
♣ 876

♠ AQ654
♥ QJ4
♦ 84
♣ 643