

4: Opening leads against suit contracts

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

- Did partner bid a suit? If so, that is often the best choice.
- Do you want to try for a ruff? Don't look for a ruff if it would take away a natural trump trick (e.g., you have QJx of trumps). If you have a quick trump entry, like Ax or Axx, you have a better chance of setting up a ruff.
- Have you got a suit with a strong honor sequence? If so, this is a very strong lead.
- Is there an unbid suit? An unbid suit is often a good lead if opponents have bid the other suits and have avoided notrump. The unbid suit is likely to be their weak spot.
- Does the bidding suggest that declarer wants to get some ruffs in dummy? You can try to foil him by leading a trump. An example would be when declarer bids two suits, and dummy prefers the second one. Dummy is likely to be short in the first suit.
- Have the opponents struggled to get to game, or have they stopped in a part score? If so, this could be a borderline contract, so you should probably play safe. Don't make a risky lead (like x from Kxx(x)) that could give declarer a cheap trick.
- Have opponents sailed merrily into game? If so, you may have to take some risks to cash your winners early in the play.
- Do you and partner have most of the points, but the opponents outbid you? If so, they are probably sacrificing, so lead a trump - your winners in other suits are not going to go away.
- Have they had a misfit auction? If so, don't lead a trump; it may give declarer a free finesse against your partner!
- Did partner double a conventional bid (such as the Stayman 2C bid, or an answer like 5D to an ace-asking bid) by the opponents? This is usually lead-directing - she wants you to lead that suit if you get a chance.
- Did partner avoid doubling a conventional bid by opponents? Unless partner was dozing off, that probably means she isn't much interested in that suit.
- Did you make a takeout double, and partner passed it? If your partner knows what she is doing, she should have a strong trump holding, like KQ109x. Lead a trump. Your tricks in the other suits won't go away!
- How many tricks do you need in order to set the contract? Of course!

Sometimes the bidding doesn't offer you many clues about what to lead. In that case, choose a suit based on the following list (1 is best, 9 is worst)

1. Suit headed by AK - this allows you to get a look at dummy while keeping the lead. If partner encourages, you may want to continue the suit. But having seen dummy and partner's card, you may want to switch to a different suit.
2. Singleton, if you desire a ruff
3. Safe honor sequence (KQJx.. or KJ10x.. or KQ10x..)
4. Long suit without A or K
5. Safe trump lead
6. Unsafe honor sequence (KQx)
7. Worthless xx
8. Worthless xxx
9. Long suit with A or K
10. (Other holdings generally are generally worse to lead from)

Choosing a **card** to lead vs suit contract: same as vs NT except:

1. Avoid underleading an A against a suit contract!
2. Lead low from xxx in a side suit (leading high would look like a doubleton)
3. Lead low from xx or xxxx in trumps
4. Lead middle card from xxx in trumps, or highest with touching cards

This page based on Richard Pavlicek's website info: www.rpbridge.net Look for the link to "Advanced Lessons". This is an excellent website, loaded with useful information and quizzes suitable for all levels.