

7: Opening lead vs notrump: 4th from longest & strongest

This lead is an old standard and has stood the test of time. It is a strong lead to make, under the right conditions. Usually, you should have an honor or two at the top of the suit - that is what partner will expect of you when you make this lead. But it isn't always the best lead.

♥ AQ832: Lead the 3. Even if this lead allows declarer's king to win a trick, once the defenders get the lead there are four more heart tricks waiting to be taken.

♥ K9742: Lead the 4. 4th highest of a five-card suit headed by a high honor is a great lead.

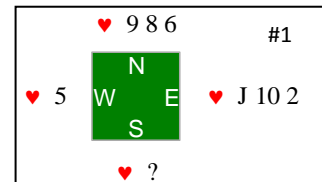
♥ AQ32: With a four-card suit, headed by the AQ, try to find another suit to lead and hope that partner will get in and lead a heart through declarer, sandwiching declarer's possible king.

♥ K653: Lead the 3 if you can't find another attractive lead.

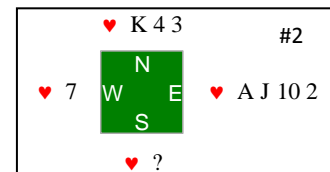
♥ 97653: If you must lead this suit, lead the 7, the 2nd highest. Partner will use the rule of eleven (see below) and will figure that it is not your 4th highest. Partner will then realize that you don't have any honors in the suit.

How can partner use the info available when you do lead 4th best?

1. **Rule of eleven.** This is a valuable rule that can be used by the partner of the opening leader, as well as by declarer. They simply subtract the value of the card led from eleven, to calculate the number of cards higher than the one led, held by dummy, 3rd hand (East) and declarer. In this example, the heart 5 is led. Subtract 5 from 11. Answer is 6. There are six cards higher than the 5 in dummy, East and South's hands. Dummy and East have five of the six higher cards, therefore declarer has just one!



2. Another example: West leads the heart 7. You are sitting with the AJ102. What do you play if the 3 is played from dummy? If the king is played?
3. Partner leads the spade 2. What can 3rd hand (East) work out about partner's spade length and likely distribution? The same deduction can be made any time that 3rd hand can see all the cards lower than the one led.



4. South opened one diamond, and West (your partner) overcalled one spade. After North bid two diamonds and East (you) bid two spades, declarer bid 3NT. Partner leads the 5 of spades, and declarer wins your 10 with the king.

	♠ 9 7 3	#4
	♥ K 6 4	
	♦ J 7 6 5	
	♣ K 10 5	You
♠ 5		♠ J 10 6
		♥ A J 7 2
		♦ 8 4
		♣ 9 8 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

He crosses to the king of clubs in dummy and leads the four of hearts. What now?

5. Partner leads the 7S. Dummy has Q98 and you (East) hold K103 in spades. What is happening here?

6. Here is a really neat one that comes up from time to time. West (your partner) leads the spade 3. You can tell that partner has just a four-card suit (how?). You can also tell, from your strong hand, that partner can't have many points. If declarer holds up the spade king until the third round, you can never get to partner's hand for that 4th spade trick

	♠ 9 8 2	#6
	♥ A 7 6 2	
	♦ 10 8 3	
	♣ K 7 6	
♠ J 10 7 3		♠ A Q 4
♥ 4 3		♥ K 8 5
♦ 9 5 4 2		♦ A 7 6
♣ J 10 9		♣ 8 5 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

3NT by South

that you need so badly. At trick one, what happens if you play third hand not so high?

7. West (your partner) leads the spade 6 against a contract of 3NT. Dummy comes down with the QJ108. You hold K7532. Declarer calls for dummy's queen. What card do you play?

8. The contract is 6NT after the bidding went 1NT - 4NT - 6NT. Choose your lead given the hand below:

♠ KQ ♥ K8632 ♦ 853 ♣ 1098

9. The contract is 3NT after the bidding went 1NT - 2NT - 3NT. What are the clues you have, and what is your lead?

♠ J10 ♥ 109864 ♦ 853 ♣ 876

10. The contract is 3NT after the bidding went 1NT - 3NT. What are the clues you have, and what is your lead?

♠ A83 ♥ A42 ♦ A7 ♣ 65432