

THE KILLING LEAD

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OPENING LEADS

About half the time you and your partner will be defending. Instead of sitting there yawning and bemoaning the fact that you are not playing the hand, you must consider instead: "*How can I beat my opponents?*" You have a head start if it is your turn to make the opening lead. Make it count! There are certain basic techniques that you need to grasp and agree upon with partner so that you are both on the same page. You are a team.

Your first decision is the opening lead. Life would be grand if we could give you one small set of hard fast rules that apply to every hand but every hand and every situation is different. If it was always the same, we would quickly tire of the game. You have to use the clues to be found in the bidding in order to select a wise opening lead. Here are some general clues:

IF PARTNER HAS OVERCALLED, LEAD THAT SUIT.

If partner opens with 1C or 1D, for sure you are not obligated to lead that suit. If you have something better to lead (guidelines to follow) then choose something else. If partner has opened with 1H or 1S, it is usually right to lead that suit, unless you have a much better lead available e.g. AKx or KQJx in another suit.

But if partner has overcalled, it is always right to lead that suit as he/she has promised a quality 5 card or longer suit.

The rules that follow on leads apply all the way through the hand, not just on opening lead. They apply whenever a suit is being led by a defender for the very first time (this is called **BREAKING** a suit).



Lead a SPADE... you IDIOT!



How could I know?
You only bid 'em once.

What to Lead versus a No Trump Contract?

If the opponents are in no trump, it is best of all to lead your longest suit especially if you have at least five cards in that suit. The whole idea is to make declarer use up his stoppers in that suit, so that later, your remaining cards will be winning tricks when and if you regain the lead.

KQJx or **QJ10x** or **J109x** ... these are perfect sequences. Lead the top of your sequence. Best leads in bridge.

Next best are broken sequences where the top two honours are touching and then there is one space

KQ10x or **QJ9x** or **J108x**

With no sequence:

K7642 lead your fourth best of your longest and strongest suit.

With **A10542**, ditto. It is perfectly fine to underlead an Ace (that is what it is called) against a NT contract as your ace cannot later be trumped.

What to Lead against Suit Contracts?

Our favourite lead versus a suit contract is a suit headed by the ace and king because you will win the first trick and get to see the dummy before you decide what to lead next. You must now see what partner signals in order to decide whether to continue leading that suit.

A singleton is a good lead if your hand contains a few trumps, at least one of which is a low card. If partner happens to have the ace in the suit you have led, or if he can gain the lead early, you will be able to score a ruff.

Doubletons are not great leads unless you have CONTROL of THE TRUMP SUIT. i.e. Ax or Kxx in trumps. This means you will win the lead early on in the show and be able to pursue your suit, increasing the chances of scoring a ruff.

Do not lead a singleton if you have QJ10 of trumps as you have what is called a natural trump trick...i.e. you will always win one trump trick anyway... Otherwise, you prefer to make a safe lead such as an honor sequence or a weak suit — one that does not contain the ace or king. Below is a summary of the opening-lead strategy against a suit contract:

In the absence of the above, then leading tops of sequences would be the next best thing to lead.

KQJx or QJ10x or J109x ... these are perfect sequences. Lead the top of your sequence.

Next best are broken sequences where the top two are touching and then there is one space

KQ10x or QJ9x or J108x

If you have none of the above, then it is acceptable to lead KQ52 versus a suit contract. (Versus NT, you would lead the 2 in this situation but versus a suit contract, you cannot risk declarer winning with the J, then playing the Ace and then trumping your King later.)

If you do not have a sequence, then you may have

K742 or Q742 If the clues dictate that this is the suit you should lead, then you lead the **B**ottom **O**f **S**omething.

With 952, you lead the **T**op **O**f **N**othing

Remember the Acronym B.O.S.T.O.N. which stands for the **B**ottom **O**f **S**omething and the **T**op **O**f **N**othing!

But do remember that the **Top of a Sequence** takes precedence over **B.O.S.T.O.N.**

THIRD HAND PLAY

RULE:

WHEN PARTNER LEADS A SMALL CARD & DUMMY COMES DOWN WITH SMALL CARDS, YOU (in third seat) MUST ALWAYS PLAY YOUR HIGHEST CARD.

876 dummy

2 ■ A 10 3 You

Whether you hold one of the Ace, the King, Queen or Jack in this seat, in this situation, you **MUST** play your highest card. NOTE: Dummy has small cards.

765 dummy

QJ82 ■ K93 You

partner

A104

Partner led the 2 ... note this is usually from a 4 card suit, so use this in your card-counting deductions!!

You play the K. Declarer plays the Ace to win the trick, but NOW partner's QJ are high for next time. (Partner would only have led the 2 from QJxx against a No Trump contract. Against a trump suit contract, if you have to lead this suit, you would lead the Q) Note that if you had played only the 9 in third seat that declarer would win with the 10 and later would also win a trick with the Ace.

765 dummy

2 ■ KJ3 You

Well, which card would you play? The King or the J? What was the RULE above? When partner leads a small card and dummy comes down with small cards, ALWAYS play your highest card! Play the King.

Otherwise, the whole suit may be placed as follows:

765 dummy

A1082 ■ KJ3 You

Q94

Had you played the J, declarer would have won with the Q and scored one trick in this suit.

Okay, so you win the K...which card do you now lead back???

RULE:

WHEN RETURNING A SUIT (SUCH AS THE SUIT PARTNER HAS LED), WITH TWO CARDS REMAINING, ALWAYS LEAD BACK THE HIGHEST ONE. WITH THREE CARDS REMAINING, ALWAYS LEAD BACK THE ORIGINAL FOURTH BEST.

This is important so that partner can make deductions about how many cards remain in the suit in your hand and also, it serves to unblock the suit.

SO...What to do when dummy comes down with bigger cards??

K93 dummy

2 ■ Q105 You

If a low card is played from the dummy, play the Q, in an attempt to TRY to win the trick.

Partner may have had (remember this is No Trumps)

K93 dummy

A862 ■ Q105 You

J74

Play the Q (if low card played from dummy) then lead back the 10. Declarer will always get ONE trick with the King, but not TWO tricks.

Note that if declarer plays the K from dummy, you would just play a low card, not the Queen!

952 dummy

3 ■ KQ4 You

RULE:

WHEN PARTNER LEADS A SMALL CARD & YOU IN THIRD SEAT HAVE TOUCHING HONOURS, YOU MUST PLAY YOUR LOWEST OF THE EQUAL HONOURS...This says to Partner, "I may have the ones above this."

NOTE THAT IF YOU PLAY YOUR HIGHEST HONOUR, IT STATES ADAMANTLY TO PARTNER THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE THE CARD BELOW IT.

This may seem petty but it is extremely important to the inferences that now follow when partner must decide whether to continue with the suit or not!

853 dummy

K1064 ■ QJ2 You

A97

When you play the J, it says to partner, I may also have the Q.

If you play the Q, it says you do NOT have the J.

Thus, if you had played the Q, partner would deduce that the following is how the cards lie:

853 dummy

K1064 ■ Q72 You

AJ9

NOW, partner knows that if she continues leading the suit later from her side that declarer will score two tricks in the suit.

NOTE THAT WHEN DECLARER WINS A TRICK, HE / SHE IS UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO WIN THE TRICK WITH ANY *SPECIAL* CARD BECAUSE HER PARTNER IS MERELY THE DUMMY. BUT AS A DEFENDER, YOU HAVE A PARTNER WHO IS CAREFULLY OBSERVING WHAT YOU PLAY & DRAWING IMPORTANT INFERENCES FROM THOSE CARDS. YOU ARE PAINTING A PICTURE OF WHAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR HAND.

WATCH THE DUMMY!

K4 dummy

2 ■ AQ53 You

If partner leads the 2 and the 4 is played from dummy, naturally it is good enough to play the Q to win the trick. If you play the A, declarer scores a trick with the King in dummy later. This is easy for you to see.

The next part gets tricky...you can learn it by rote...

RULE:

WHEN PARTNER LEADS A SMALL CARD AND DUMMY COMES DOWN WITH HIGH CARDS, IF YOU IN THIRD SEAT HAVE AN HONOUR HIGHER THAN ONE IN THE DUMMY, TRY NOT TO PLAY THAT HONOUR CARD IF A SMALL CARD IS PLAYED FROM DUMMY...INSTEAD, INSERT YOUR SECOND HIGHEST CARD, PROVIDED IT IS THE 9 OR BETTER.

Q73 dummy

J965 ■ K104 You

Play the 10. If you play the K, here is the situation:

Q73 dummy

J965 ■ K104 You

A82

Declarer scores the Ace and the Q because you did not save your K to play when the Q was played.

Note that a lot of this will apply to defense against trump suit contracts also, but you will never underlead an Ace against a suit contract while you will in NT contracts. There are small other differences also.

QUIZ: DEFENSE AGAINST NO TRUMPS

Note that a lot of this will apply to defense against trump suit contracts also, but you will never underlead an Ace against a suit contract while you will in NT contracts. There are small other differences also.

1.

64 dummy

Q7532 □ 9 Partner

You

You lead the 3 against NT. Partner played the 9 and declarer won the Ace.

Who has the King?

Who has the Jack?

Who has the 8?

If you win the lead, can you safely lead another card in this suit?

2.

64 dummy

AJ752 10 Partner
K

You led the 5, partner played the 10 and declarer won the King.

Who has the Q?

Who has the 9?

If you win the lead, can you safely lead another card in that suit?

ANSWERS TO THIRD HAND PLAY QUIZ

1. Declarer has the K. If partner had it, he would have played it. Partner has the J. If declarer had it, he would have won trick # 1 with it, as it would have been cheaper to do so than to win with the Ace.

Declarer has the 8. Third hand NEVER holds the card directly under the card he played.

Yes, you can lead this suit from your side of the table because partner holds the J & the 10.

2. Declarer holds the Q and the 9. You cannot lead this suit again from your side without giving away a trick. Declarer has Q9 left and maybe others.

IF YOU HAD DIFFICULTY WITH THIS QUIZ, PLEASE LAY OUT THE HANDS AT HOME AND GO OVER THEM WITH REAL CARDS SO THAT YOU WILL SEE THE SITUATION MORE CLEARLY.

SECOND HAND PLAY

The player who plays fourth (last) to any trick has the best advantage; he will see three other plays before deciding his own. Therefore, when declarer or dummy leads a low card, the defender who plays second should generally play low, certainly on the first round of the suit being led.

OPENING LEADS VERSUS SUIT CONTRACTS

Most of the following is by Eddie Kantar

The opening lead is the most important card you will select whenever you are a defender. It is like a head start...it is your chance to wound the enemy and cause them to be at a great disadvantage. If you lead the wrong suit – or even the right one but the wrong card, you may never be able to recover.

WHICH SUIT TO LEAD

How does one select a good opening lead? You have to listen to the bidding. If you don't, it is impossible to make the correct opening lead. The more bidding the opponents do, the more information you have. Also, you must consider your partner's bidding or lack of bidding.

e.g. your LHO (Left hand opponent) opens 1 ♣, partner passes and RHO bids 1 ♠, you already know that your partner does not have a strong 5 card ♦ or ♥ suit as she failed to overcall at the 1 level.

Consider all of these before making an opening lead:

1. Does the dummy have trump support?

There is a big difference between making an opening lead against a dummy that has trump support as opposed to one that does not. e.g. It may be right to lead a trump against a dummy which has trump support. It is almost never right to lead a trump vs. a dummy that does not have support.

2. When should I lead a trump vs. a dummy that has known trump support?

There is one common sequences where a trump lead should be made.

a) Opener Responder

1♠ INT

2♥ pass

Responder is clearly short of ♠'s. Especially if you have strength in ♠'s, it is almost always right to lead a trump to prevent declarer from ruffing losing ♠'s in dummy. (If you don't have strength in ♠'s, your partner likely will.)

3. When shouldn't I lead a trump when dummy has known trump support?

It is always dangerous to lead a trump if dummy has a side suit that might be developed.

e.g. Opener Responder

1♠ 2♥

2♠ 4♠

Responder is known to have five hearts. Declarer will generally set up dummy's long suit to discard losers in other suits. When dummy is expected to have a long side suit, make an attacking lead in your stronger side suit. Given the bidding, if you hold

♠ 874
♥ Q8
♦ KJ54
♣ Q972

Lead a ♦, your stronger side suit. (♦ 4)

But if you were to hold

♠ 874
♥ Q8
♦ AJ54
♣ Q972

Lead a low club, as this is the side suit without an ace. It is never ever right to make an opening lead that underleads an ace, AGAINST A SUIT CONTRACT. All too often, declarer has the king and if you had just waited for partner to lead the suit, you could have captured the king with the ace.

4. Are there other times when a trump lead is the right lead?

Yes. When partner leaves in a takeout double, converting the double into a penalty double at the one or two level, a trump lead is mandatory.

S W N E
1♥ Dbl Pass Pass

Pass

You are west and you hold ♠KQ98 ♥2 ♦AJ54 ♣QJ87

lead the trump ♥2. Partner has told you (by passing your takeout double) that she has 3 sure trump tricks and an outside ace. Those are the requirements for passing partner's takeout double. Partner's trumps are great. She, as an opponent, wants to draw trumps to prevent declarer ruffing in dummy.

Another time that a trump lead is a good idea is when you have broken strength in each of the side suits (non-trump suits), partner has not bid and you doubt there will be a long side suit in dummy.

e.g. 1♠ - 3♠ (limit raise)

pass

You are on lead with ♠ 742 ♥ AJ8 ♦ K765 ♣ Q76

Rather than guess which suit to lead, lead a trump and hope for the best.

However, **never lead a singleton trump** (unless partner has passed your takeout double). The danger here is that you might finesse partner out of a protected honour.

Partner may have ♠Qxx, ♠Jxxx or Kxx. Declarer may not play this suit well, if she has to lead the suit herself. If you lead a trump, you may just hand her the contract, leading your singleton trump as this will "pick up" the trump suit's missing honour(s) for declarer. This is called giving declarer a free finesse. Partner will not be a happy camper!

5. When should I lead my partner's suit?

You should have a good reason to NOT lead partner's suit. **Especially if he has overcalled.** When in doubt, always lead partner's suit unless you have a clear-cut better lead.

When partner doubles an artificial bid such as Stayman, a Jacoby Transfer, a cuebid, or a Blackwood response, lead that suit. Here are some common lead directing double auctions:

S	W	N	E
INT	P	2♣*	Double
2♥	P	4♥	

* This is Stayman. Sitting west, you should lead a ♣

S	W	N	E
INT	P	2♦*	Double
2♥	P	P	P

*This is a Transfer. Partner has doubled an artificial bid, indicating strength in the suit. As West, lead a ♦.

S	W	N	E
1♠	P	3♠	P
4NT	P	5♦	Double
6♠	P	P	P

This time partner has doubled an ace –showing response to Blackwood, also an artificial bid. Partner is asking for a ♦ lead. If you like the partner you are playing with, lead a ♦.

6. What about Sequence Leads?

Sequence leads are the strongest of all leads. If you are lucky enough to have an honour combination headed by AKQ, AK, KQJ, KQ10, QJ10, QJ9, J109 or J108, you **usually** lead that suit.

7. Underleading an honour?

Leading bottom of something is a fine lead, if an aggressive lead is called for.

But: If opponents get to 7 NT and you have \diamond K752, don't lead a \diamond at all. This will give the declarer his 13th trick. We lead bottom of something (or 4th. best) when we have a hope of finding partner with some "stuff" in that suit. If the bad guys have 37 HCP in their combined hands and you have the 3 other points that remain, then declarer may have AQ of that suit. You will be leading into the "jaws". Better to make a passive lead (top of nothing).

Against a trump suit contract, it is rare that it is right to underlead an ace.

Declarer has \clubsuit Kxx. If you have led small from the Ace (Axxx) against a $4\heartsuit$ contract and dummy has a singleton \clubsuit now Declarer wins the \clubsuit K and trumps his remaining \clubsuit 's in dummy. You never scored a single trick in that suit. If opponents get to $5\diamond$ or $5\clubsuit$ and have bid every suit but one along the way, then you know that their side does not have a stopper in that fourth suit, or they would have bid NO Trump. Lead the unbid suit. If you have the Ace in the unbid suit in this case, then lead the Ace.

If you have chosen to make an aggressive lead (by that we mean underleading an honour), then the better your "something", the more favourable this suit is to lead. If you had K742 in one suit and J742 in another suit, pick the one in which you have the king. The king can be promoted into taking a trick sooner than the Jack.

If your partner is known to have nothing, then lead top of nothing.

You have KJ42
 AQ103
 KJ
 932

1NT - 3NT

You are on lead with the 1NT opening bidder on your right. What should you lead? Partner has NOTHING. Zip-nada. Do not lead one of these first three suits, lead the \clubsuit 9.

8. When are short suit leads best?

The best time to lead a short suit is when you have trump control. Trump holdings such as Ax, Axx or Kxx are particularly attractive. Declarer cannot draw trump without giving up the lead and once on lead, perhaps you can find partner's entry to get a ruff.

Singleton leads versus slams are right if opponents have indicated they are missing an ace. Perhaps partner will have the ace of the suit you are leading or the ace of trumps. That way she can give you a ruff.

Singleton leads vs slams are wrong if YOU have the missing ace or if the opponents have shown all 4 aces during the bidding. Your partner cannot win this and give you a ruff.

Avoid looking for ruffs when you have natural trump tricks like QJ10. In this case, you are always getting one trump trick. What would be the point of trying to score a ruff?

9. Long suit leads

Leading from a long suit works best when 1) you have four trump, no singleton and the opponents are playing a likely 5-2 or 5-3 trump fit. If you can force declarer to ruff in her hand once or twice, declarer could easily lose control of the hand.

If you have length in a suit that opponents have bid and raised, then your partner is surely short in that suit. If you have a quick trump entry, you may be able to give partner a ruff or two.

NOW THAT YOU KNOW WHICH SUIT TO LEAD, WHICH CARD DO YOU LEAD?

It is not enough to know which suit to lead, you must also know which card to lead in that suit so that partner will know what is going on.

1. Lead top of a doubleton.
2. Lead low from three cards headed by an honour. Exception: If you have Axx or Axxx, don't lead the suit. If you do have to lead the suit, it must be the ace against a trump suit contract. **DO NOT UNDERLEAD AN ACE** against a trump suit contract.
3. With any combination of cards headed by KQ, QJ, J10, lead the top honour.
4. If you have three small cards or four small cards, you usually lead the highest one e.g. 952 or 9742...top of nothing.

The exception here is that IF PARTNER HAS BID A SUIT AND YOU HAVE NOT RAISED, YOU MUST LEAD A SMALL ONE so that she does not think you may have a doubleton. It is more important for her to know how many you have than whether you are leading the bottom of something (she has the something's anyway!)

If you have 952 or 9742 and you HAVE raised partner, you can lead top of nothing as she KNOWS you would never have raised her with only two cards. Thus she cannot think you could have a doubleton.

Holding three or four small in a suit partner has bid, lead high if you have supported, low if you haven't.

	K3	
	AQ1094	
	K74	
	1052	
106		J985
52		K876
QJ92		653
AQ763		84
	AQ742	
	J3	
	A108	
	KJ9	

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	2D*	P * Transfer
2H	P	3NT	All Pass

Your odds are better for getting 5 tricks (what we need to beat the contract) by attacking your longest suit. East can only have approximately 5 HCP.

Lead your fourth best club: the 6. You will give away a club trick right away as declarer will win the trick, but when East gets in with H King, he will now lead back a club. West scores 4 Club tricks and declarer goes down as he has already lost to Heart King.

	QJ5	
	A64	
	KJ3	
	KJ98	
K9		76432
KQ73		1092
8765		1092
A64		32
	A108	
	J85	
	AQ4	
	Q1075	

S	W	N	E
1C	P	3NT*	P * shows 13-15 HCP & no 4 card major
P	P		

What would you lead as East. This hand begs for the lead of a major suit since none have been bid. Against NT, we strive to lead an unbid major. We have also learned that we lead our longest suit vs NT. BUT note that even if you manage to set up your long suit (Spades), you have NO ENTRIES to enjoy playing the remaining good cards in the suit. So, when you have a dreadful hand with no entries, you have to try to find a suit in which your partner may have length and entries. West should have approximately 12-14 HCP. Try as declarer might, West will score 5 tricks (3 H tricks, Club Ace and Spade King LEAD HEART 10 is our recommendation.

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	2C	P
2D	P	3NT	P
P	P		

W leads H 6. E does some arithmetic. E knows that there are 5 cards in N, E and S hands that can beat the Heart 6 (Rule of 11). E can see 4 of those cards (87 in dummy and J 9 in East's hand). E plays the J and S wins trick one with Heart King. S counts 8 tricks now for his side. He should cross to dummy with Club Ace and lead a small Spade (or Spade J) trying to "steal" a Spade trick. If E plays low (second hand low), then S now abandons the S suit and cashes his 9 tricks. Because E knows that S only had ONE CARD that could beat the Heart 6 and that it (the King) has already been played, East must hop up with Spade Ace on trick one of Spade suit and lead back a Heart to West's Heart suit which is all good now. Down one!

875	J1092	A64
AQ1065	87	J93
753	AKJ2	84
32	Q65	J10974
	KQ3	
	K42	
	Q1096	
	AK8	
	QJ	
	J87	
	7542	
	AJ86	
1086		975432
AKQ2		3
Q9863		J10
7		9542
	AK	
	109654	
	AK	
	KQ103	

S	W	N	E
1H	P	2H	P
4H	All Pass		

The big question here is: "WHAT SHOULD WEST LEAD?" He has a huge stack of trump and may be tempted to lead a singleton. If he does that, declarer easily makes the contract. The rule is: When you have a stack of trump, you do not wish ruffs. You wish to make declarer trump is his hand (called the long trump hand because declarer's hand usually has more trump than dummy). Thus you lead your longest suit (D 6). Declarer pulls trumps and every time W wins the trick, he leads another D. Eventually, declarer is trumping in his hand and W ends up with more trumps than declarer. It is always good to lead suits that dummy has that declarer has none of. This forces declarer to ruff in her hand. This is called "A FORCING DEFENCE" and is brutal defence.

Try defending both ways: Leading Diamonds and then try leading the singleton. Declarer will make the contract if you do the latter.

		Q2	
		Q73	
		63	
		AKJ1098	
83			4
862			AKJ109
A10872			QJ54
763			Q54
		AKJ109765	
		54	
		K9	
		2	
E	S	W	N
1H	1S	P	2C
2H	4S	P	P

West must lead partner's suit. Hearts. Which one.

When you have three small cards, we have been programmed to lead Top Of Nothing. That would generally be right BUT

When partner bids a suit and we have NOT raised it and we lead it, we lead a small one when we have three or four small cards in the suit. This is so that partner knows that our lead cannot be from a doubleton. W leads H2.

If we HAVE raised the suit, and have 952, we lead the 9 (Top Of Nothing) because partner knows that we would never have raised with a doubleton so we must have three cards or more.

On the hand above, East wins the first two Hearts and knows that S is out of Hearts now. (He can count three cards in West's hand, 5 in East's hand and three in dummy. The long magnificent Club suit in dummy is the problem. It looks as though declarer can throw away all his losers on dummy's long Club suit. It is time NOW to cash tricks in another suit before the mice get at them. East attacks dummy's weakest suit: Diamonds by leading the Diamond Queen. Poor S...whatever he does now will be wrong and the defence scores 2 D tricks and 2 H tricks.

All because West led a small Heart showing that he had 3 or more cards in partner's suit.

QUIZ BY JOHN RAYNER

In each example, you are WEST, ultimately on lead against South's final contract. The bidding is shown. It's YOUR LEAD!

1.
 ♠ Q9765
 ♥ 92
 ♦ 543
 ♣ 643

2.
 ♠ KJ54
 ♥ QJ98
 ♦ J108
 ♣ 4 3

3.
 ♠ KJ54
 ♥ QJ98
 ♦ J108
 ♣ 4 3

1.				
N	E	S	W	
	1H	1NT	P	
3NT				

2.				
N	E	S	W	
		1NT	P	
3NT				

3.				
N	E	S	W	
		1NT	P	
2C	P	2H	P	
3NT				

In each example, you are WEST, ultimately on lead against South's final contract.
The bidding is shown. It's YOUR LEAD!

4.
 ♠ KJ54
 ♥ QJ98
 ♦ J108
 ♣ 4 3

5.
 ♠ AK832
 ♥ 53
 ♦ 432
 ♣ 432

6.
 ♠ KQ
 ♥ A9762
 ♦ 987
 ♣ 642

7.
 ♠ KJ643
 ♥ K98
 ♦ 654
 ♣ 43

8.
 ♠ K54
 ♥ 7432
 ♦ 1098
 ♣ A43

9.
 ♠ AQ54
 ♥ KJ63
 ♦ KJ
 ♣ 952

10.
 ♠ 1097
 ♥ 1097
 ♦ 75432
 ♣ 109

4.			
N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
2C	Dbf	2S	P
3NT			
<hr/>			
5.			
N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
3NT			
<hr/>			
6.			
N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
6NT			
<hr/>			
7.			
N	E	S	W
		1NT	
4NT		6NT	
<hr/>			
8.			
N	E	S	W
		1C	P
1D	P	3C	P
3D	P	3NT	P
6NT			
<hr/>			
9.			
N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
2NT	P	3NT	
<hr/>			
10.			
N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
3NT			

In each example, you are WEST, ultimately on lead against South's final contract. The bidding is shown. It's YOUR LEAD!

11.

♠ AKQ10
♥ 762
♦ 543
♣ Q106

12.

♠ 543
♥ KJ32
♦ A654
♣ 43

13.

♠ J54
♥ J98
♦ AQ32
♣ 543

14.

♠ A4
♥ J1098
♦ 5432
♣ J109

15.

♠ KJ432
♥ 109
♦ 7543
♣ J10

16.

♠ 108
♥ QJ1098
♦ 543
♣ J106

17.

♠ 543
♥ 8742
♦ J109
♣ J109

11.			
N	E	S	W
		1S	P
1NT	P	2H	P
P	P		
12.			
N	E	S	W
		1S	P
2C	P	2S	P
4S			

13.			
N	E	S	W
		1C	P
1H	P	3C	P
3S	P	4C	P
5C			
14.			
N	E	S	W
		1S	P
2D	P	4D	P
4NT	P	5H	P
6S			
15.			
N	E	S	W
		1D	P
1H	P	1NT	P
3NT	Dbl	P	P
P			
16.			
N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
3NT	dbl	P	P
P			
17.			
N	E	S	W
		1S	P
2H	P	3S	P
4S	P	4NT	P
5D	P	6S	

In each example, you are WEST, ultimately on lead against South's final contract. The bidding is shown. It's YOUR LEAD!

18.

♠ 9754
♥ 87
♦ AQJ9
♣ 543

19.

♠ AKJ104
♥ 1098
♦ 543
♣ 109

20.

♠ 432
♥ KQ1092
♦ 754
♣ A10

21.

♠ 1098
♥ 10853
♦ 1098
♣ Q96

22.

♠ Q43
♥ 8742
♦ Q109
♣ 1092

23.

♠ QJ3
♥ 87
♦ J876
♣ 9876

24.

♠ AKQJ10
♥ 1098
♦ 543
♣ 109

18.

N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
2NT	P	3NT	

19.

N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
3NT			

20.

N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
3NT			

21.

N	E	S	W
		1C	P
1H	P	1NT	P
2NT	P	3NT	

22.

N	E	S	W
	1S	1NT	P
3NT			

23.

N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
2NT	P	3NT	

24.

N	E	S	W
1NT	P	3NT	

1. H9. To not lead partner's suit here would be a selfish and usually unproductive action. We'll soon be looking for new partners.

2/3/4 are all the same BUT each auction differs and we should be listening to the auction for clues.

2. HQ. There is every reason to lead one of our majors and generally the suit headed by a sequence type holding is to be preferred.

3. DJ. We know that that dummy has hearts, we know that declarer has spades, making either of our major suits far less attractive to lead now. The DJ therefore becomes a somewhat attractive choice.

4. C4 "Thank you, partner, for helping me to make good leads with you 'lead directing double'. I will do as you ask and lead that suit."

5. S 3. To lead an honour here almost always tangles up the suit or breaks communication between the defenders. We are hoping to get four spade tricks and leading 4th best is the best way to nurture those hopes.

6. S King. A very obvious lead.

7. D 6. This is a very important situation. When our opponents reach 6NT when we expect both to have balanced hands...and they are bidding slams based upon holding 33 HCP, as in this example, we must try to make the most passive lead...the most unhelpful lead. This will make declarer do her own work, which means, on this hand, taking some losing finesses.

To lead a spade here is likely to give declarer with a trick that she could not get, left to her own devices. Remember we have 7HCP, they have 32 or 33 HCP. How many does that leave for partner???

Against only 3NT, we would lead S4 because we would know that partner has some points.

REMEMBER THE RULE OF 40. Add declarer and dummy HCP and add your own to that number. The rest are in partner's hand. If your original total comes to 40, then there is nothing left for partner to hold. Make a passive lead in this case.

8. S4. This is a very different auction. Here we know that both opponents have a long suit. This is what we call a source of tricks. They are bidding slam expecting to get lots of tricks from their long suits. This is no time to be passive on lead. By leading a S, we are hoping partner has the Q or the J and that declarer will now go wrong. If she does and we win a trick with our S King later, we now cash our Ace for down 1 against the slam.

9. C 9. They have struggled to get to game and we know partner has virtually nothing (maybe 1 HCP). This is another time to lead passively and wait patiently for declarer to take losing finesses.

10. S 10. Or H 10 or even C 10. BUT NOT A DIAMOND...Major is preferred BUT never lead from this long suit when you have NO entries to get back to playing it once it is high. Try to "find" something good and some length in partner's hand in a major.

11. Any Heart. This lead stands out. When you are strong in declarer's first bid suit and dummy chooses to play in declarer's second suit, then declarer plans to ruff his losers in his first suit, so lead a trump. It screams for a trump lead.

12. Heart 2. An aggressive but frequently good lead on these types of auctions. We are hoping to take tricks quickly before declarer is able to discard losers on dummy's clubs.

13. D Ace. Leading from an Ace/Queen combo is generally a very poor choice of leads. However this auction screams out for the lead of a D. They have avoided NT like the plague...there is NO chance that S had the D King. We are trying to take some fast tricks before they get away.

14. Any Diamond. Opponents have given us a road map to the killing lead. We are leading a D in the expectation of giving partner a subsequent D ruff when we regain the lead with the S Ace.

15. H 10. We were going to lead a Spade but that was before partner voiced a strong opinion that a H lead was most likely to lead to declarer's demise. We shall comply.

In most cases, when partner doubles their 3NT contract (**when we have not bid**) that double asks us to make an unusual lead. That is usually dummy's first bid suit.

Partner's hand: 65 AKJ83 A82 543 (What a good partner we have!

16. S 10. This double says "find my long suit partner and I think we'll beat them." This usually means partner has a long suit ready to run. Most often that suit will be our shortest major.

Partner has KQJ94 76 A43 987

17. C J. Partner had an opportunity to make a lead directing double of the 5D response to Blackwood and he did not. Therefore we lead a C.

18. Textbook tells us to lead D Q. Top of interior sequence. But most likely you will be letting declarer win a trick with D King. This is a toss up what to lead.. We suggest you lead S 7. Looks like top of nothing and you have not wasted your S 9. You will hope for partner to win a trick and lead a Diamond through declarer's King.

19. S Ace. The lead of an Ace versus NT asks partner to unblock any honour that she has (K, Q or J) and if unable to do that, then she gives you COUNT (low=odd and high = even). The opening leader now (after seeing dummy and partner's play at trick one) has a much better chance of knowing what to do at trick 2. Try to cash the first 5 spades? Or switch to some other suit and hope partner gets in to lead a spade through declarer.

20. H King. Unless you are playing something fancy.

21. D 10. Why? They have struggled to get to game. What's going on here? Partner is marked with some points but did not bid after 1H so he cannot have had a good 5 card S suit (or he would have overcalled 1S) but maybe his 5 card suit is D and he would have had to bid at the 2 level so he did not want to risk it. If partner has a long suit it is more likely to be Diamonds, hence the D lead.

22. S 2. NOT the Queen. Lead bottom of something. NOT top of partner's bid suit. That was back in 1939!!

23. S Queen. Hoping to find partner with a good long S suit as we have a weak hand.

24. IT IS NOT YOUR LEAD!!!!!!