

Good bidding is the result of clear partnership agreements and bidding according to your agreements. Trust your partner and listen to her.

THE BONES OF BIDDING

Opening Leads

Avoiding the bad, seeking the good

YOUR PARTNERSHIP IS ON A QUEST TO FIND A MAJOR SUIT FIT.

1. Opening Leads is a subject too large for only 1 lesson. This lesson aims at getting you off on the right foot. It will suggest that some sorts of leads should be avoided, while others should be pursued. It demonstrates that the specific card you lead bears meaning to your partner.
2. The High-Low meaning. When you lead from a two-card suit, lead the higher and continue with the lower at your next chance. Leading high and then playing low signifies that you started with just two cards in that suit.

From 92, if you choose to lead this suit, lead the 9. Next play the 2 and partner will know you started with just these two cards.

Likewise, from 87, if you lead this suit, lead the 8 first.

Likewise, if you choose to lead from 42, lead the 4 first.
3. Down-the-line meaning. When you lead from a three-card suit, lead the higher and continue next with the 2nd highest, and then play the lowest last. This lead is called a “top of nothing” lead. When you lead “down the line,” you first show partner the highest card that you have in that suit. Now partner, who can see the honors in his own hand and in dummy, will know exactly which honors and higher cards are held by declarer. Further, once partner clarifies from your subsequent plays that you are coming “down the line,” he will know how many cards declarer has in that suit, or at least will be able to make a close estimate.

From 942, if you choose to lead this suit, lead the 9. Next play the 4 and the 2 thereafter. Partner will know you started with just these three cards. Notice that this play is a lot like the High-Low described above. But partner will have noticed at trick 1 that no one has played the 2. Then, at trick two, he will again notice that the 2 has not been played. The logical conclusion from the absence of the 2 is that the leader has it and is playing down the line.

4. Poor leads. Here are some words of advice on poor leads. If you simply stop making poor leads, your skill at leading will immediately improve.

- Do not lead an ace from space. If you have a suit headed by the ace but missing the king, don't lead that suit. There are occasional exceptions to this rule, but there are occasional exceptions to most all rules.
- Do not lead away from an ace against a suit contract. There is no worse lead at bridge.
- Do not lead into suits bid by the declarer.
- Avoid leading dummy's first bid suit, especially if it may contain five cards.
- Do not lead a singleton king.
Do not lead a singleton queen.
Do not lead a doubleton king.
Do not lead a doubleton queen.

Unless partner has bid this suit.

5. Good leads. These are a few general ideas for good leads. Try to stay attuned with them.

- Lead your partner's suit.
- Lead an unbid suit.
- Lead top of a sequence.
- If leading from an honor, it is better to lead from a king than from a queen. Leading from a jack is usually poor practice. When leading from a king or queen, lead low from a three or four card suit. From a five card suit, lead 4th down.

¶Notice. THE LEAD OF A SMALL CARD PROMISES AN HONOR IN THAT SUIT.

THE LEAD OF A HIGHER CARD IS TOP OF NOTHING, OR A DOUBLETION.

6. Leading your partner's suit is a very common lead. Know which card to lead in order to describe your holding to partner.

- From two cards, always lead the higher, whether it is king from Kx, queen from Qx, 9 from 9x, or 3 from 3x.
- From three or four cards to an honor, lead your lowest card. From five to an honor, lead 4th down. THE LEAD OF A SMALL CARD PROMISES AN HONOR.
- Lead top of touching honors or top of a sequence.
- From 3 or more small cards, lead top of nothing.

7. Leading a suit that your partner did not bid, such as an unbid suit is slightly different.

- Do not lead a suit that is just Kx or Qx.
- However, you can lead top of other doubletons, such as Jx or xx.
- From three or four cards to an honor, lead your lowest card. From five to an honor, lead 4th down. THE LEAD OF A SMALL CARD PROMISES AN HONOR.
- Lead top of touching honors or top of a sequence.
- From 3 or more small cards, lead top of nothing.