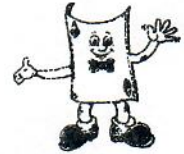


LEADING AGAINST SUIT CONTRACTS

DIFFERENT CONTRACTS - DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHIES



In a suit contract, the defenders have to be careful to take their tricks before they disappear. It could be disastrous to give declarer an undeserved trick. It can even hurt to give declarer an early trick before the defenders get all the tricks they deserve in that suit. Declarer has sneaky ways of avoiding losers (discarding them on other suits for instance). **The defenders' main sources of tricks are high cards and possibly trumps scored by ruffs.** Little cards in long suits are not usually a source of tricks in trump suit contracts.

In notrump contracts, the defenders can afford to be a bit more patient. They give declarer the tricks he deserves early and take more tricks themselves later. Long suits are valuable because declarer has no trump to stop the defenders. **In notrump, the defenders' main sources of tricks are their high cards and length.** Because of these differing philosophies, the same hand might choose different opening leads depending on whether it is played in a notrump contract or in a suit contract.

CHOOSING A SUIT TO LEAD

- Partner's suit is almost always a good lead.
- Listen to the bidding. When partner hasn't bid, it's usually better to lead an *unbid suit*. The suit you choose need not be your longest suit; long suits are more important in NT.
- Look at your own hand. Sequences of high cards are often good choices. If there's a trump suit, a sequence need only be *two touching high cards*.
- Short suits (singletons or doubletons) are sometimes a good lead. You hope to be able to trump (or ruff). These leads (especially the lead of a doubleton) are somewhat overrated. If you lead a short suit you must have a reasonable expectation of getting a ruff before trumps are drawn.
- Trump can even be a good lead. You may hear the bidding and decide that it sounds like declarer is going to get extra tricks by trumping in dummy. You can lead trumps to try to draw dummy's trump before declarer can use them. You might also choose a trump lead when any other lead seems dangerous.

CHOOSING THE CARD TO LEAD

- TOP of a sequence (in a trump suit contract may be from only two touching high cards)
- TOP of a doubleton
- LOW from three or more cards without a sequence – except *don't underlead an ace*. If you must lead a suit headed by an ace, lead the ace.

TIPS FOR DEFENDING

- Return partner's lead (unless it is clear that this is useless).
- It's usually best to take the setting trick if you have the chance.
- THINK! Try to picture the tricks you and partner will take on defense.