

## Lesson – Opening leads against suit contracts by MARVIN 1/24/13

**Concept** – One of the single most important defensive decisions in bridge is what to lead to the first trick. In a suit contract, it is important for you and your partner to get your defensive tricks early. Your winners in the non-trump suits should be cashed before the opponents can get rid of their losers in that suit. It is also important to try to “steal” trump tricks by being able to ruff their side suits.

The intent of this lesson is to provide general principles to use in making that initial lead. There are no absolutes and in any given game. An opening lead could be the one that allows the opponents to make or defeat a contract. Thus is the mystique of bridge. This lesson describes logical and reasonable initial leads that might be used to defeat those “pesky” opponents’ contracts.

In general, first trick lead choices are as follows:

- 1 A suit that was artificially doubled by partner (e.g. 2 Club - Stayman was doubled, calling for a club lead)
- 2 The A or K from your suit headed by AK (gives you a chance to see dummy and take a quick trick early)
- 3 A singleton Ace or other **NON-HONOR** singleton (provides an opportunity to get a ruff, when partner gets lead)
- 4 Partner’s suit, if partner has bid, especially if partner overcalled (provides early opportunity for partner to take a trick). When leading partner’s suit, the following applies:
  - Low from 3 to an honor
  - Top of touching honors
  - High of 2 cards
  - Top of worthless 3 cards and
  - 4<sup>th</sup> from 4 or more
- 5 Trump, particularly if:
  - You have strong cards in a suit bid by the opponent
  - The opponents bid 2 suits and end up in a third (For Example: 1H – 1S; 3C – 4H shows that declarer has a 5 card heart suit and 5 Clubs; LEAD HEARTS)
  - Partner passed your take out double at a low level (3 and below)
- 6 A suit with touching honors (i.e. provides an opportunity to take tricks early)
- 7 Longest suit with no touching honors, generally 4<sup>th</sup> best
- 8 Opponents’ side suit if you have length and stoppers (QJ10 or better, could provide partner with opportunity to ruff and not establish the suit)
- 9 Suit they did not bid or unbid major suit, particularly if they end up in a minor
- 10 A short suit or anything else!!!

**Practice/examples:** WHAT IS YOUR OPENING LEAD?

Bidding:                    P     1♥     P  
                               2♦     P     3♦     P  
                               3♥     P     4♥     P  
                               P     P

1     ♠ A6   ♥ 876   ♦ A842   ♣ J984

2     ♠ AK7   ♥ J3   ♦ Q983   ♣ 10983

Bidding:                    1♣     1♠     2♥  
                               P     4♥     P     P  
                               P

3     ♠ 953   ♥642   ♦ 9762   ♣ KQ7

4     ♠ K9   ♥ 942   ♦ AQ7   ♣ 76432

5     ♠ 6542   ♥ A82   ♦4   ♣ 97654

**Note:** There are no absolute rules in Bridge!

**References -**

**Opening Leads and Signals in Contract Bridge** by John Mallon

**100 Winning Bridge Tips for the Improving Player** by Ron Klinger

Practice/examples: WHAT IS YOUR OPENING LEAD?

1      ♠ A6   ♥ 876   ♦ A842   ♣ J984

ANS Opponents appear to hold 8 diamonds. Therefore, your partner must have one. Lead ace and follow with 8. 8 asks for a spade return. Expect to take ace, diamond ruff, ace club, diamond ruff and any tricks partner can take.

2      ♠ AK7   ♥ J3   ♦ Q983   ♣ 10983

ANS. Best to take your A and K of spades before leading Diamonds. May not get them otherwise!

3      ♠ 953   ♥ 642   ♦ 9762   ♣ KQ7

ANS. Lead partners suit, 9 of spades. Although KQ is a good attacking combination. It isn't here since opponent opened suit.

4      ♠ K9   ♥ 942   ♦ AQ7   ♣ 76432

ANS. Lead King of spades. Leading unprotected honor here is safe since partner bid suit. Also offers high low opportunity if partner has ace.

5      ♠ 6542   ♥ A82   ♦ 4   ♣ 97654

ANS. Lead 4 of Diamonds. Partner has to assume you had a good reason not to lead his suit. If partner has diamond ace, partner should return a diamond. You will get another chance to lead partner's suit when you take the ace of trump.