

Opening Leads – The Trump Lead (January 18, 2021)

Last week we covered the three basic types of leads:

1. Forcing Lead
2. Attacking Lead
3. Passive Lead

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

West	North	East	South
			1S
P	2C	P	2S
P	4S	P	P
P			

You are West and hold the following hand:

Q93
KJ82
J96
1085

What is your opening lead? Why?

With the 2/1 bidding system, the bid of 2C (unless it is alerted as “could be short as 2”) promises length in the club suit. You need to consider the possibility that declarer may try to establish clubs to obtain discards.

You must **ATTACK** in one of your red suits to establish winners in that suit before declarer can discard losers on dummy's clubs. But which one? The heart is more promising than the diamond. If you find partner with the ace or queen of hearts, you are well on your way to scoring some tricks. The diamond suit is not as attractive because you may give away a trick and gain little momentum in establishing diamond tricks for your side.

Below is the complete hand:

	Kxx	
	10xx	
	Kx	
	AQJxx	
Q93		J
KJ82		Qxx
J96		Qxxxxx
1085		Kxx
	A10xxxx	
	A9x	
	A10	
	xx	

When you lead the two of hearts, partner will play his queen of hearts. Your attacking lead has set up two heart tricks. Declarer has no chance to make his contract!

NOTE: After any other opening lead, declarer will have time to establish dummy's clubs and make an over trick.

THE TRUMP LEAD

How often have you heard someone say, “When in doubt, lead a trump.” The last reason for ever leading a trump is, “When in doubt.”

Trump leads are extremely desirable in the following situations:

1. When the declarer has bid two suits and dummy takes preference over the first bid suit, lead a trump at every possible opportunity.

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

South	West	North	East
1S	P	1N	P
2H	P	P	P

You are West and hold the following hand:

AJ98
862
A93
J106

Every heart you lead cuts down on the declarer being able to ruff spades in the dummy. Eventually, you may get a couple of spade tricks.

2. If your partner passes your low level takeout double, he is converting it to a penalty double. Your partner has length in the trump suit and is asking you to lead a trump in order to cut down ruffs of your high cards.

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

South	West	North	East
1H	X	P	PASS!!!!

You are West and hold the following hand:

KQ93
42
AJ83
Q105

Lead a heart!

3. You and your partner hold the majority of points and the opponents have sacrificed against some high-level contract. They are obviously relying on ruffing values to score their tricks. By leading trumps, you may be able to reduce the number of ruffs.

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

West	North	East	South
		1S	P
2C	4D	4S	5D
X	P	P	P

You are West and hold the following hand:

Kx
 Kxx
 xxx
 AQJxx

Lead a diamond!

4. Sometimes you may have to lead a trump because your holdings in the other suits preclude leading one of them.

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

South	West	North	East
1S	P	4S	P
P	P		

You are West and hold the following hand:

932
 K754
 J73
 A107

You rule out a club lead. Unless you also hold the king, leading from an ace-high suit can be very costly. Leading away from a jack usually gives away a trick. If your hearts were KJxx, you would lead a heart hoping to establish some tricks there. In the above example. Your second best card is the seven-spot, which makes the heart lead unattractive.

So, you are left to make the PASSIVE lead of a low trump.

PRACTICE EXERCISE

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

West	North	East	South
			1S
P	1N	P	3D
P	3S	P	4S
P	P	P	

You are West and hold the following hand:

1063
K1052
KQ103
84

What is your opening lead? Why?

Warned by South's rebid of 3D, there is likely to be diamond shortness in the dummy. In addition, you hold tremendous strength in diamonds. The best way to protect your diamond winners is to lead a trump. Each trump you remove from the North hand means one less diamond loser that can be ruffed by the declarer.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Listen to the bidding before you make your opening lead.

If dummy's only value lies in having a side suit shortness, lead a trump.

If you have a strong holding in declarer's second bid suit, lead a trump.

If your partner converts your low-level takeout double to a penalty double, lead a trump.