

Defense - Which card to lead?

Every card you play on defense carries a message. There is a message with top card, bottom card, top of touching honors, bottom of touching cards, 4th highest, 2nd highest, high card, and low card - all depending on the context.

ON LEAD: From touching honors

- *Lead the top of touching honors.* (10 or higher)
- Message: Denies card above it, promises card below it.
- vs. suit contract, lead from 2+ card sequence: **A**Kxx, **Q**Jx, **K**J10x
- vs. notrump contract lead from 3-card sequence (any three honors in four cards): **K**QJx, **A**KJx, **K**J10x.

ON LEAD: From a suit with at least one honor

- *Lead low from an honor.*
- Often 4th highest; could be 3rd highest from a 3-card suit.
- Message: You have something good in this suit.

ON LEAD: From small cards

- Against a notrump contract, lead top of three but second highest from four or more.
- Against a suit contract, lead top card.
- Message: You have nothing here.

UNDERLEADING AN UNSUPPORTED ACE: Ax(x)

- Against a suit contract on opening lead (Trick One), do not lead low card. If you must lead the suit, lead the Ace to take a look at the dummy and see partner's signal. After Trick One okay to underlead having seen the dummy.
- Against a notrump contract okay to underlead Ace anytime.

LEADING PARTNER'S SUIT

- If you did not support, show count (how many you have). Lead bottom of 3 or more, top of two or lead top of touching honors.
- If you supported, lead low from honor, top of nothing, or top of touching honors.

Defense - Third Hand Play & Signals

THIRD HAND PLAYS HIGH *ENOUGH* (when trying to win the trick)

- From equal cards play the LOWEST OF EQUALS. Consider cards in the dummy.
- **K**Qx, **Q**Jx, 1098
- Message: Denies the card below it. Could have the card above it, but no promise.

THIRD HAND RETURNS PARTNER'S SUIT - **Show count!**

- Play bottom of 3 or more remaining cards but top of touching honors to unblock.
- Play top of 2 remaining cards.

ATTITUDE SIGNALS

- When you have a choice of cards to play (not trying to win the trick), your card suggests whether to continue the suit.
- A high card encourages; play *highest of touching cards* denying card above it. A low card discourages.
- Common to play high-low vs. suit contract to show a doubleton for a possible ruff.
- When attitude is obvious, show count.

ATTITUDE DISCARD

- When you cannot follow suit, the first card played from another suit suggests whether you like the suit.
- High encourages; play *highest of touching cards* denying the card above it. Play the 10 from A**10**95. Low discourages.

SUIT PREFERENCE

- On trick one, when the dummy comes down with a singleton or void in the led suit, play a low card to suggest you like the lower-ranking suit and vice versa.
- When you are expecting your partner to ruff your lead, the card you play, low or high, gives a clue of how to get back to your hand.