

Opening Leads

What card should I lead against a notrump contract?

- Top from “perfect sequence” of 3 or more honors: ace from **A**-K-Q, king from **K**-Q-J
- Top from “broken sequence” of 3 or more honors: ace from **A**-K-J, queen from **Q**-J-9
- Top of touching honors from an interior sequence: jack from K-**J**-T, ten from Q-**T**-9
- From a holding of 4 or more cards with at least 1 honor card, lead 4th best: 2 from K-8-7-**2**, 4 from Q-J-6-**4**-3
- Bottom card from holding of 3 cards with 1 honor or 2 non touching honors: 5 from Q-8-**5**, 3 from K-J-**3**
- Top from 3 card holdings with two touching honors: king from **K**-Q-4, jack from **J**-T-5
- Top from a doubleton

Opening Leads

What card should I lead against a suit contract?

Most of the time you choose the same card from a given combination, except:

- Don't underlead an ace: ace from **A**-T-8-6-3
- Don't underlead an unsupported king if you have other choices
- Lead higher of touching honors: king from **K**-Q-8-5-2 (in NT contract 5 is a good lead)

When partner leads, we need to:

Work out what possible holdings partner has in that suit?

Look at dummy and work out what declarer may have?

Consider our own cards and decide what card we need to play?

Let's see some examples:

What card would you lead against a 3NT?

- 1) ♠ A 9 7 6 2 4th best
- 2) ♥ Q J T 5 2 Top of sequence
- 3) ♦ 8 6 3 Top of nothing
- 4) ♣ K Q 6 3 4th best
- 5) ♠ J T 8 5 2 Top from a broken sequence
- 6) ♥ Q T 9 2 Top of interior sequence
- 7) ♣ J 7 6 3rd from 3 cards with an honor

What card would you lead against contract of 4 H?

- 1) ♠ K J 3 3rd from 3 cards and two nontouching honors
- 2) ♦ T 6 Top from a doubleton
- 3) ♣ K Q 6 3 Top from two touching honors
- 4) ♠ A K 6 2 Top from two touching honors
- 5) ♣ K T 9 3 Top from interior sequence

Defense - 3rd Hand High

A common advice handed down from the days of Whist, grandpa to Bridge: Third Hand High

Implying you should contribute your highest card to the trick in 3rd position

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 <u>5</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>2</u>		♠ <u>A</u> 4 3
	Declarer	

Here we play the ace to win the trick for our side. But what if our card is not high enough to win the trick for our side?

Defense - 3rd Hand High

Suppose we change the holding:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 <u>5</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>2</u>		♠ <u>K</u> 4 3

If partner has the ace, our king will win the trick. What if declarer has the ace?

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 <u>5</u>	
Partner		You
♠ Q J 8 <u>2</u>		♠ <u>K</u> 4 3
	Declarer	
	♠ <u>A</u> T 9	

Defense - 3rd Hand High

How high should you play? Suppose this is the layout

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 <u>5</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>2</u>		♠ K J 3 ?

If partner has the ace, our king will win the trick. If you play the jack, declarer will win with the queen! If you play the king, highest card you can afford, you get all the tricks.

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 <u>5</u>	
Partner		You
♠ A T 8 <u>2</u>		♠ <u>K</u> J 3
	Declarer	
	♠ Q 9 4	

What if declarer has the ace?

Defense - 3rd Hand High

It won't do any harm to play the king even if declarer has both ace and queen. For example:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 <u>5</u>	
Partner		You
♠ T 8 4 <u>2</u>		♠ <u>K</u> J 3
	Declarer	
	♠ <u>A</u> Q 9	

Defense - 3rd Hand High

Playing “*as high as you can afford to play*” also applies in the following situation:

	Dummy	
	♠ K 9 <u>3</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>2</u>		♠ <u>Q</u> T 5

If declarer doesn't have the ace, you will save a trick by playing the queen

	Dummy	
	♠ K 9 <u>3</u>	
Partner		You
♠ A 8 6 <u>2</u>		♠ <u>Q</u> T 5
	Declarer	
	♠ J 7 <u>4</u>	

3rd Hand Not So High: Equal cards

Playing “*as high as necessary*” to win the trick for your side:

	Dummy	
	♠ 8 5 <u>3</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>4</u>		♠ Q J 2 ?

Queen and jack in this situation are equals. In this case we play as high card as necessary, in this case the jack rather than the queen.

	Dummy	
	♠ 8 5 <u>3</u>	
Partner		You
♠ K T 6 <u>4</u>		♠ Q <u>J</u> 2
	Declarer	
	♠ <u>A</u> 9 7	

3rd Hand Not So High

What difference would it make if you play the queen?

Dummy

♠ 8 5 3

Partner

♠ 4

You

♠ Q

Playing the queen denies having the jack so partner might think the complete layout of the suit is like below and if he gets the lead will not lead the suit from his hand!!

Dummy

♠ 8 5 3

Partner

♠ K T 6 4

You

♠ Q 7 2

Declarer

♠ A J 9

A complete hand

Dummy

♠ 6 3
♥ 9 4 2
♦ Q J 7 2
♣ A Q J 8

Contract: 3NT

Lead: ♠ 4

♠ K 9 7 4 2
♥ Q 7 5 3
♦ A
♣ 9 7 3

♠ Q J T
♥ K T 8 6
♦ 9 5 4
♣ T 4 2

♠ A 8 5
♥ A J
♦ K T 8 6 3
♣ K 6 5

Dealer

We play the ten, as highcard as necessary. What if we play the Queen?

A complete hand

Dummy

♠ 6 3
♥ 9 4 2
♦ Q J 7 2
♣ A Q J 8

Contract: 3NT

Lead: ♠ 4

♠ K 9 7 4 2
♥ Q 7 5 3
♦ A
♣ 9 7 3

♠ Q T 5
♥ K T 8 6
♦ 9 5 4
♣ T 4 2

♠ A J 8
♥ A J
♦ K T 8 6 3
♣ K 6 5

Dealer

If you play the queen, partner might think the complete hand looks like this!

3rd Hand Not So High: Finessing against Dummy

Another situation in which you play “*as high as necessary*” is the following:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q <u>5</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>3</u>		♠ K <u>J</u> 8 4

If partner leads 3 and queen is played, we cover with king. However if 5 is played, no need to play the king. Playing the jack is all that's necessary.

	Dummy	
	♠ Q <u>5</u>	
Partner		You
♠ 9 7 6 <u>3</u> 2		♠ K <u>J</u> 8 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A T	

Your king and jack effectively trap dummy's queen similar to a finesse.

3rd Hand Not So High: Finessing against Dummy

Visualising what partner might hold come handy. Let's change the situation slightly:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7 <u>3</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>5</u>		♠ K <u>T</u> 4

Ace and Jack are missing and you strongly suspect that partner has at least one of them. If partner has them both, playing ten is sufficient and will let your king trap dummy's queen.

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7 <u>3</u>	
Partner		You
♠ J 9 6 <u>5</u>		♠ K <u>T</u> 4
	Declarer	
	♠ <u>A</u> 8 2	

3rd Hand Not So High: Finessing against Dummy

Visualising what partner might hold. Suppose this is the layout:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7 <u>3</u>	
Partner		You
♠ A 9 6 <u>5</u>		♠ K <u>T</u> 4
	Declarer	
	♠ <u>J</u> 8 <u>2</u>	

Finally, suppose declarer has both the ace and the jack:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7 <u>3</u>	
Partner		You
♠ 9 8 6 <u>5</u>		♠ K <u>T</u> 4
	Declarer	
	♠ A <u>J</u> 2	

Here another example in a complete deal

Dummy

♠ K T 5
♥ K 8 4
♦ K 5
♣ Q J T 6 2

Contract: 3NT

Lead: ♥ 2

♠ J 8 4
♥ J 7 6 2
♦ T 4 2
♣ A K 8

♠ Q 7 6 2
♥ A T 9
♦ 9 8 6 3
♣ 7 5

♠ A 9 3
♥ Q 5 3
♦ A Q J 7
♣ 9 4 3

Dealer

We keep the ace to have the dummy's king trapped and play the 9, lower of the two touching cards.

3rd Hand Not So High: Trap dummy's high card

A similar situation to keep declarer's high card trapped:

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7 <u>4</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>8</u> 6		♠ A J <u>T</u> 5 3
	Declarer	
	♠ K 9 2	

Partner leads the 8 and a low card is played from dummy. If we play the ace, dummy's queen is no longer trapped and declarer ends up with two tricks.

Here is more 3rd Hand situations

Dummy

♠ 8 5 2

Partner

♠ 6

You

♠ K Q 3

With touching high cards, we play as high as necessary, the queen. If declarer wins with the ace, partner know that you don't have the jack but may have the king,

Dummy

♠ J 6 2

Partner

♠ 5

You

♠ Q 10 4

Playing the ten will have dummy's jack trapped

Dummy

♠ Q 6 2

Partner

♠ 3

You

♠ A J 5

Playing the jack will win if partner has the king. If declarer has the king, dummy's queen will remain trapped

3rd Hand play: When partner leads a High Card

When partner leads a high card, your play depends on what cards are in dummy.

	Dummy	
	♠ K 6 2	
Partner		You
♠ <u>Q</u>		♠ A 7 5 3

Since we see the king in the dummy, we let partner's queen to win the trick.

	Dummy	
	♠ K 6 2	
Partner		You
♠ <u>Q</u> J T 8		♠ A 7 5 3
	Declarer	
	♠ 9 4	

The complete layout might be something like this.

3rd Hand play: When partner leads a High Card

Situation differs if you can't see the high card you would like to trap:

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 <u>2</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>J</u>		♠ K 8 3

When partner leads the jack, you know declarer has the queen. If we don't go up with the king, declarer will win with the queen. This may cost if partner is leading from an interior sequence.

	Dummy	
	♠ 7 6 <u>2</u>	
Partner		You
♠ A <u>J</u> T 9		♠ <u>K</u> 8 3
	Declarer	
	♠ Q 5 <u>4</u>	

3rd Hand play: When partner leads a High Card

In this situation, we know declarer has the queen. What now?

	Dummy	
	♠ K 7 2	
Partner		You
♠ <u>J</u>		♠ A 8 6 3

If we play the ace, declarer will get two tricks, the queen and king later. By letting the jack run, queen wins but later partner will lead the ten and king is trapped.

	Dummy	
	♠ K 7 <u>2</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>J</u> T 9 5		♠ A 8 6 <u>3</u>
	Declarer	
	♠ <u>Q</u> 4	

Here is more example of partner leading a high card

	Dummy	
	♠ Q 7 <u>4</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>J</u>		♠ A K <u>8</u>

Here no need to play high, we let partner's jack win.

	Dummy	
	♠ K <u>4</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>J</u>		♠ A <u>7</u>

Even though we know declarer has the queen, if 4 is played from dummy, we will let go and later capture the king with our ace.

	Dummy	
	♠ 6 5 <u>4</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>J</u>		♠ <u>A</u> 7

Here we play the ace and return the 7.

An example in a complete deal

Dummy

♠ Q 6 2
♥ Q J 7 3
♦ A K 8 4
♣ 8 7

Contract: 4 ♥

Lead: ♠ T

♠ T 9 8 3
♥ A 8
♦ T 5 2
♣ A 5 4 2

♠ A J 7
♥ 5 4
♦ Q J 9 6
♣ T 9 6 3

♠ K 5 4
♥ K T 9 6 2
♦ 7 3
♣ K Q J

Dealer

Partner leads the ten, and declarer plays a low card from dummy. We should play low to trap the queen. If we go up with ace, we will give away two tricks and will not trap any of their high cards.

An example in a complete deal

Dummy

♠ 9 4 2
♥ 6 4 3
♦ A 9 6
♣ A Q J 4

Contract: 3NT

Lead: ♥ Q

♠ J 7
♥ Q J T 9 7
♦ 8 4 3
♣ 9 5 3

♠ Q T 6 5
♥ A K 5 ?
♦ T 7 5
♣ T 7 6

♠ A K 8 3
♥ 8 2
♦ K Q J 2
♣ K 8 2

Dealer

Partner leads the queen. With queen winning, if you let it go, your ace and king wins and you end up with 3 heart tricks. You need to unblock immediately.

3rd Hand play: Unblocking

In this situation, partner leads the king, if we don't overtake with the ace, suit will get blocked.

	Dummy	
	♠ 9 7 <u>4</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>K</u> Q J 7 5		♠ A 3 ?
	Declarer	
	♠ T 8 6	

If partner leads the queen, we need to overtake with the king so that suit doesn't get blocked.

	Dummy	
	♠ A 6 <u>2</u>	
Partner		You
♠ <u>Q</u> J T 5 3		♠ <u>K</u> 8
	Declarer	
	♠ 9 7 4	

Defense - 3rd Hand High

North (Dealer)

Hand 1

♠ A Q J 8

♥ 5 3

♦ Q 9 2

♣ K Q T 2

♠ 5 4 3

♥ T 9 4

♦ A J 5

♣ 9 7 6 4

♠ 9 6

♥ J 7 6 2

♦ K T 6 3

♣ A 8 3

♠ K T 7 2

♥ A K Q 8

♦ 8 7 4

♣ J 5

South

Defense – Trapping High Cards

West

Hand 2

♠ Q 7 2
♥ Q J 3
♦ K 7 6 2
♣ 9 8 3

♠ A J T 9 4
♥ A K 6
♦ 8 5 3
♣ 6 2

♠ 6 5
♥ 9 7 5 2
♦ Q J T 4
♣ A 7 5

♠ K 8 3
♥ T 8 4
♦ A 9
♣ K Q J T 4

East (Dealer)

Defense - 3rd Hand not so High

South (Dealer)

Hand 3

♠ Q J 6 3

♥ A 8 4

♦ A Q 8

♣ K 8 6

♠ A 7 4

♥ K T 5

♦ T 4 3

♣ J 7 4 2

♠ K 8 2

♥ Q 9 6 3

♦ 9 6 2

♣ T 9 3

♠ T 9 5

♥ J 7 2

♦ K J 7 5

♣ A Q 5

North

Defense - Unblocking

West (Dealer)

Hand 4

♠ 9 7 3
♥ T 4 2
♦ K 8 4
♣ T 8 6 2

♠ 9 8 4
♥ K Q J 9 5
♦ T 6 5
♣ 9 3

♠ T 6 5 2
♥ A 6
♦ 7 3 2
♣ J 7 5 4

♠ A K Q
♥ 8 7 3
♦ A Q J 9
♣ A K Q

East

Defense – 3rd hand play, as high as necessary

Dummy

Hand 5

♠ 6 3
♥ 9 4 2
♦ Q J 7 2
♣ A Q J 8

♠ K 9 7 4 2
♥ Q 7 5 3
♦ A
♣ 9 7 3

♠ Q J T
♥ K T 8 6
♦ 9 5 4
♣ T 4 2

♠ A 8 5
♥ A J
♦ K T 8 6 3
♣ K 6 5

Dealer (South)

Defense – Trap Dummy's high card

Dummy

Hand 6

♠ K T 5
♥ K 8 4
♦ K 5
♣ Q J T 6 2

♠ Q 7 6 2
♥ A T 9
♦ 9 8 6 3
♣ 7 5

♠ J 8 4
♥ J 7 6 2
♦ T 4 2
♣ A K 8

♠ A 9 3
♥ Q 5 3
♦ A Q J 7
♣ 9 4 3

Dealer (West)

Defense – Trap Dummy's high card

Dummy

Hand 7

♠ Q 6 2
♥ Q J 7 3
♦ A K 8 4
♣ 8 7

♠ T 9 8 3
♥ A 8
♦ T 5 2
♣ A 5 4 2

♠ A J 7
♥ 5 4
♦ Q J 9 6
♣ T 9 6 3

♠ K 5 4
♥ K T 9 6 2
♦ 7 3
♣ K Q J

Dealer (North)

Defense - Unblocking

Dummy

♠ 9 4 2

♥ 6 4 3

♦ A 9 6

♣ A Q J 4

Hand 8

♠ J 7

♥ Q J T 9 7

♦ 8 4 3

♣ 9 5 3

♠ Q T 6 5

♥ A K 5

♦ T 7 5

♣ T 7 6

♠ A K 8 3

♥ 8 2

♦ K Q J 2

♣ K 8 2

Dealer (East)