

Opening Lead Decisions: study the bidding carefully and choose your opening lead for each of the following hands.

1 West	West	North	East	South
♠ 10 9 8 4				1NT
♥ 10 6 5 4 2	pass	3NT		all pass
♦ A 3				
♣ K 3				

2 West	West	North	East	South
♠ Q J 10 7		1♠	pass	2NT
♥ Q 6 3	pass	6NT		all pass
♦ J 4				
♣ 9 8 4 2				

3 West	West	North	East	South
♠ K J 2		1♣	pass	1♥
♥ 7 6	pass	3♣	pass	3♥
♦ 9 8 5 3 2	pass	4♥		all pass
♣ J 10 9				

4 West	West	North	East	South
♠ A 3				1♠
♥ J 10 9 8	pass	2♦	pass	3♦
♦ 7 6 4 2	pass	3♠	pass	4♠
♣ A 8 5				all pass

5 West	West	North	East	South
♠ J 5 2				1♠
♥ A Q 10 8	pass	2♣	pass	2♥
♦ Q J 10 9	pass	2♠	pass	3♥
♣ 6 3	pass	4♠		all pass

1

	North	
	♠ K 3 2	
	♥ K J	
	♦ 8 6 5 4	
	♣ Q J 7 2	
West		East
♠ 10 9 8 4		♠ J 7 6
♥ 10 6 5 4 2		♥ 9 7 3
♦ A 3		♦ J 10 9
♣ K 3		♣ A 8 5 4
	South	
	♠ A Q 5	
	♥ A Q 8	
	♦ K Q 7 2	
	♣ 10 9 6	

Lead the four of hearts. The declarer must drive out the ace of diamonds and the ace and king of clubs before he can win nine tricks, so, even though he has three heart stoppers, you can establish two long cards in hearts and beat the contract if you and your partner lead hearts at every turn. The four of hearts - the 4th highest – is the correct card to lead: this indicates that you are trying to establish long heart tricks, and would like your partner to return the suit when he gets the lead.

If you chose a spade lead, you would not beat the contract because only one long card could be established. Leading a 5 card suit is preferable to leading a 4 card suit versus a 3NT contract, unless the 5 card suit is very weak and the 4 card suit is very strong.

2

	North	
	♠ A 9 8 6 3	
	♥ K 7 2	
	♦ A 5	
	♣ A K J	
West		East
♠ Q J 10 7		♠ 4 2
♥ Q 6 3		♥ J 8 5 4
♦ J 4		♦ Q 10 7 6 2
♣ 9 8 4 2		♣ 5 3
	South	
	♠ K 5	
	♥ A 10 9	
	♦ K 9 8 3	
	♣ Q 10 7 6	

Lead the two of clubs (or any club)

2 Continued: *Lead the two of clubs (or any club)*

Declarer has 10 top tricks. Since the spade suit offers the only chance for two extra tricks, he will be set because the suit does not divide favourably. The queen of spades lead would be desirable if spades were an unbid suit, but it is very dangerous when dummy has bid the suit. In this case declarer can manoeuvre to win 4 spade tricks if you lead a spade.

Note that the opening lead of a heart or diamond would give declarer one extra trick, not enough to make his bid *this time*, but leading from these combinations should be ruled out. Against notrump slams, the best opening lead is the one least likely to give declarer an unearned trick, in this case, it is a club.

3

	North	
	♠ 7 6 3	
	♥ K 10	
	♦ A J	
	♣ A K Q 7 5 4	
West		East
♠ K J 2		♠ A 10 9 4
♥ 7 6		♥ Q J 5
♦ 9 8 5 3 2		♦ Q 6 4
♣ J 10 9		♣ 8 6 3
	South	
	♠ Q 8 5	
	♥ A 9 8 4 3 2	
	♦ K 10 7	
	♣ 2	

Lead the two of spades. The bidding tells you that dummy has a powerful club suit, and, given time, declarer is going to discard some of his losers. This clearly is a time to attack – lead from strength. Granted, it is lucky to be able to win the first three spade tricks, but, whether you lead the suit or not, it is very unlikely that you will ever win any spade tricks unless your partner has the ace or queen. Note that a spade lead beats the contract, while declarer can win twelve tricks with any other lead.

4

North

♠ Q 8 5

♥ 7 2

♦ A Q 10 9 3

♣ K 6 3

West

♠ A 3

♥ J 10 9 8

♦ 7 6 4 2

♣ A 8 5

East

♠ 7 6 2

♥ K 6 4 3

♦ 5

♣ Q J 10 9 4

South

♠ K J 10 9 4

♥ A Q 5

♦ K J 8

♣ 7 2

Lead the two of diamonds. North and South both bid diamonds, so your partner figures to have at most one. Since you have the ace of trumps and can regain the lead before declarer can draw trumps, there is an excellent chance to give partner one or two diamond ruffs. Assume declarer wins the first diamond trick and leads a trump. You should win with your ace and **lead the four of diamonds**, (leading your lowest diamond is a suit preference signal asking partner to return the lowest ranking suit, in this case a club) which your partner will ruff. If partner returns a club, you will win with the ace and give partner a second diamond ruff. Note that declarer would make his contract with an overtrick if your opening lead was a heart.

5

North

♠ A 10 8

♥ 7 3

♦ 7 6 2

♣ A K 9 5 4

West

♠ J 5 2

♥ A Q 10 8

♦ Q J 10 9

♣ 6 3

East

♠ 6 3

♥ 9 4

♦ K 8 5 4

♣ Q J 10 7 2

South

♠ K Q 9 7 4

♥ K J 6 5 2

♦ A 3

♣ 8

5 continued: *Lead the five (or two) of spades.*

With length and strength in declarer's side suit – hearts – the obvious choice is a trump lead to cut down on dummy's ruffing power. Note that declarer must give up two heart tricks before the dummy is void in hearts. If you lead a spade each time you get the lead, the dummy will have no more trumps. As a result, declarer will be unable to ruff any hearts and you will win four heart tricks. Without a trump lead, the declarer could always ruff at least one heart in dummy and make his contract.