

**Pay attention the the card chosen as the opening lead and make the most of the inferences given to you by that lead.**

**1** *How fast was the lead?* A defender with a naturally attractive lead will play at a normal pace. When there is significant hesitation before the lead, declarer may deduce that defender has no clear-cut lead and has some holdings that are unattractive.

**2** *Was the choice a trump lead?* That normally indicates that trumps are splitting evenly . A trump lead is uncommon from 4 trumps.

**3** *Is the lead in a suit bid by dummy or declarer?* If so, beware. That usually indicates a singleton lead.

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ 87	♠ A Q 932	1♥	1♠
♥ A 8764	♥ K 32	2♦	3♥
♦ A K Q 6	♦ 75	4♥	pass
♣ K J	♣ Q 75	lead ♠ 4	

Finessing the ♠ Q is an error you should not make twice. The likely upshot: South wins with the ♠K, gives North a spade ruff and a club to South's ace followed by another spade promotes a trump trick for the defence. Best is to rise with the ♠ A and play ♥ K, ♥ A. as long as the trumps break you are home.

**4** When the opening leader has bid a suit but does lead it, if you and dummy have no high cards, the opening leader's suit is likely headed by the A – Q or just the ace.

**5** When dummy has shown a longish suit and the lead is a trump, the defender on lead is likely to be strong in dummy's long suit. A good defender does not lead a trump if dummy's suit may run and provide declarer with several discards.

**6** When declarer bids 2 suits and dummy gives a preference, a trump lead indicates that the leader is strong in declarer's other suit.

**7** Against no trumps, if the opening lead is from a 4 card suit then the leader will probably not hold greater length in any other unbid suit.

**8** If a low card is led in a trump contract assume the leader does not hold the ace

**9** If you can tell that the lead is risky, such as leading an unsupported ace, or from holdings such as K xx, Q xx, J xxx or similar, the leader probably has dangerous holdings in all suits.

**10** If the lead is very unusual, see what follows

Dummy ♥ J 6 you are in 4♠ after LHO opened 3♥. The lead is the ♥2 . what do you make of that?  
Declarer ♥ 74

The ♥2 cannot be a true card ( cannot be fourth highest from a 7 card suit) A wildly abnormal lead

is used as a suit preference signal – in the case of a pre-empt , it usually indicates a void. The ♥2 suggests LHO is void in clubs. Play the ♥J from dummy just in case LHO was desperate enough to lead the ♥2 from AKQxxx in the hope of finding partner with the ♥J.

### **Some further thoughts!**

Bridge is a game of **inference**, especially on defense.

The basic assumption is that declarer and defenders play logically, even if the logic of their play isn't obvious. By assuming logical play (except for deceit, a characteristic of all good declarers), defenders can often "figure it out" by considering the inferences of actions taken or not taken.

**Inference from unexpected action** On opening lead, partner leads trump even though a long Club suit is expected in dummy.

Inference: partner has the Club suit under control and is choosing a Passive defense.

Partner bids Heart, but leads Clubs.

Inference: partner has something like ♥AQxxx and is reluctant to lead it:  
she wants you to lead Hearts through declarer. OR

Inference: she is leading a singleton and has an entry, intending to put you on lead later in your suit so she can get a ruff.

**Inference from action taken.** Defending Spades, you can see 10 Clubs between dummy and your hand. You lead the Heart King and partner overtakes.

Inference: partner is void in Clubs, or she would not overtake, hoping you will figure it out to lead Clubs.

Bridge is a partnership game so let partner help you, rely on partner for clues , tune into all these inferences and turn guesses into certainties!