Rule of 11

The [Rule of 11](#) is used for declarer play (or defence) at trick one. It assumes that the opening lead was "4th-best."

It is usually used in notrump, when the lead is assumed to be the 4th-highest card in the suit. By subtracting from 11, the declarer can tell how many cards higher than the card led are in the other three hands. For example:

	♥ J 9 7	
♥ K 10 8 5 2		♥ Q
	♥ A 6 4 3	

When West leads the ♥5, South does the following calculation:

11-5=6.

So there are 6 cards higher than the ♥5 in the three other hands (North, East, and South).

South can see 5 of those 6 cards (the A,J,9,7,6). So he knows that East has only one card higher than the ♥5. He can then also use bridge logic. He can assume that with ♥ KQ10, West would have led the King. So, probably East's one card above the 5 is the King, Queen, or 10. South will probably play the 9 (or 7) from dummy, in the hopes that East's high card is the king or queen (twice as likely as the ten).

A defender can also use the [Rule of 11]. Say that partner leads the ♦7 in this situation:

	♦K 6 5	
♦Q 10 8 7		♦A J 9 2

Declarer plays low from dummy. What should East do?

Assuming 4th-best, East uses the [Rule of 11] to get 11-7=4.

East knows there are 4 cards higher than the card led in the North, East and South hands. East can see all 4 of them (A,K,J,9). He knows that South has no card higher than the ♦7, and accordingly lets the ♦7 win the first trick so that West can continue the suit.

		Partner		
		♠4		
Declarer				Dummy
♠ ?				♠T96
		You		
		♠KJ5		

Partner leads the ♠4. Assuming this is a fourth-best lead, how many spades are in declarer's hand which are higher?

1. Partner's spot card is the 4, so 11 - 4 = **7**.
2. Dummy contains three spades higher than the ♠4, so 7 - 3 = **4**.
3. You hold three spades higher than the ♠4, so 4 - 3 = **1**.

Therefore declarer holds exactly one card higher than the ♠4 if partner's lead was fourth-best. The full suit distribution around the table:

		Partner		
		♠Q874		
Declarer				Dummy
♠A32				♠T96
		You		
		♠KJ5		

How do we know partner's lead is 4th highest? We will need to judge whether partner's lead is likely to be 4th highest by looking at the card led and the other cards we can see. The auction is also very important to help decide whether the lead is likely to be 4th highest. Consider these two auctions, both with a lead of the 6 of clubs

North	East	South	West		North	East	South	West
		1NT	Pass		1S	Pass	2D	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass		2H	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass

In auction 1 the 6C is very likely to be 4th highest. In auction 2 we can't be sure 6C is 4th highest, West is likely to choose a club lead from various combinations e.g. from 863 simply because it is the unbid suit.

Why 11?

The cards are numbered from 2 to 14, with the Ace being 14.

2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 , J (11), Q (12), K (13), A (14)

If partner leads his 4th highest he has 3 higher cards 14 - 3 = 11

This information is quite useful in deciding which card to play on the trick and how to play the suit if you take the trick. **If the answer does not make sense, the card led may not be fourth best!**