

BRIDGE ARTICLE 5

MALENY CONTRACT BRIDGE CLUB

This is the fifth bridge article for members of our club.

Suggestions for hands from last week

In all hands you are North, on lead and the question is what you should lead. There is no completely right or wrong answer but the aim is to find a lead that will maximise your chance of defeating the opponent's contract. Some of the hands require some thought and some of the thought processes presented may be new to you.

The opponents' bidding is normal for our club (1NT opening is 15-17 HCP, balanced with no 5-card major).

♠ 9 8 6
♥ Q J 10 9
♦ A Q 5 3 2
♣ Q

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass

Lead 3 ♦. This is the standard fourth best of longest and strongest. A heart lead seems attractive too because it is a major suit and is very unlikely to cost a trick. However, after a diamond lead, if your partner can manage to win a trick and play back a diamond you may be able to take 4 diamond tricks as well. It is your best chance.

♠ 8 7 4
♥ 8 7 6 5 4 3
♦ K 5
♣ K 5

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass

Lead 5 ♥. Again, this is the fourth highest of your longest and strongest. Your hearts are weak, and you may need your partner to have some spade honours or side suit winners and be able to lead hearts. Unless your partner has and keeps the 2 ♠, he won't be able to give you the lead in hearts even if all the opponents' hearts are gone. You will hope that one of your kings provides an entry.

♠ Q 9 3
♥ K J 7
♦ A J 9
♣ 9 7 6 5

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass

Lead 5 ♣. This is your longest suit but the reason for leading it is not to establish the club suit. You need to hope South does not have a simple play for his contract and you do not want to risk giving away a critical trick by leading another suit. Your partner will probably have at

most 4 HCP. He may have a long suit but it would be unwise to try to guess which one. It may be clubs!

♠ K J 9 6 5
♥ 5 3
♦ Q 10 6 2
♣ 6 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	2 ♣ ¹	Pass
2 ♥ ²	Pass	3 NT	All pass

1. Stayman
2. 4 hearts, maybe 4 spades

Lead 2 ♦. Your longest suit is spades headed by KJ9 so spades seems an attractive lead. However, ask yourself why did East bid 2 ♣? He doesn't have hearts so he should have spades. (It is normal for West to bid 4 ♠ after this auction with 4-4 in the majors as Stayman is only used with a 4 card major). This makes spades a less attractive lead. To make sure you should enquire about the auction and find out if the use of Stayman requires a 4 card major before leading.

♠ A Q 9 4 3
♥ 4 2
♦ J 9 8
♣ 5 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♦	1 ♥
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass

Lead 4 ♥. Without the 1 ♥ overcall, you would lead the 4 ♠. As your partner's hearts are likely to be as good as or better than your spades, it is probably better to lead them. If nothing else, your partner will be happy you noticed they overcalled.

The top of a doubleton is virtually always the recommended lead. As an aside, if you ever want to lead a 3 card suit with an honour card (not a sequence), lead the lowest card.

Opinions vary as to what to lead from 3 small cards and you should clarify this with your partner. A popular option is called MUD (Middle Up Down), where you start off with the middle one, then the top one on the second round (to distinguish it from a doubleton where the card on the second round of the suit will be lower than the first). This is only relevant if your partner is watching small cards, as they should.

♠ 8 7 5
♥ 7 6 2
♦ 6 5 4 3 2
♣ 4 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	2 ♣ ¹	Pass
2 ♥ ²	Pass	3 NT	All pass

1. Stayman
2. 4 hearts, maybe 4 spades

Lead 4 ♣. You have no prospect of ever getting in again. Even if your partner has diamond honours, he can't put you in to win tricks with your small diamonds. The best you can do is to try to guess your partner's suit. Since West has 4 hearts and East 4 spades (because he used Stayman), your best bet is clubs. In any case, it will be very hard to defend with all the strength in one hand.

♠ 6 4 3 2			
♥ 8 4 2			
♦ 8 7 5			
♣ Q 4 3			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♦	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

Lead 3 ♣. Again, you should try to guess your partner's suit. The opponents have diamonds and spades, so you should choose between hearts and clubs. There are two reasons to prefer clubs. Firstly, if you have guessed right, you have the queen which will help your partner in setting up the suit. Secondly, your partner may have a reasonable hand (up to about 13 HCP). With a good heart suit, he might have overcalled 1 ♥. As usual, nothing here is certain, but it just pushes the odds in your favour.

♠ A K 7 3 2			
♥ A 8 5			
♦ 9 7			
♣ K 9 3			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♦	Pass
1 NT	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

Lead 2 ♠. You were lucky you did not bid 2 ♠ on your first opportunity, because West would then know where all the high cards were and playing the hand would be easier for him. It is clear that you want to lead spades. The normal lead from this holding would be the fourth best, the 3. You do this to give your partner information. However, your partner is unlikely to have any role in this hand, so giving him wrong information will not cost anything. It is West you want to give the wrong information. On the bidding, the opponents will have 6 diamond tricks, the A♣ and a spade trick if you lead a small one. Where will their ninth trick come from? It could come from the club finesse or setting up hearts. If West is convinced you have only 4 spades (after all you led the 2), he will lead a heart, "knowing" you can take at most one heart and three spade tricks. Taking a losing club finesse risks losing a club, a heart and 3 spades and going down, whereas leading hearts seemed a "sure thing". Wrong! (Note that West won't have 4 spades since he didn't bid 1 ♠ in response to 1 ♦. He is likely to have 3 when he bids NT twice.)

♠ A K 7 3			
♥ A 8 5 4			
♦ 9 7			
♣ K 9 3			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		2 ♦	Pass

3 NT All pass

1. Weak, 6 diamonds, 6-10 HCP

Lead A♠. This hand is like the last one. Your partner will probably have no high cards. The opponents are likely to have 6 diamond tricks and the A♣ for the seventh trick. If they can set up two heart tricks, they will make their contract. You have two chances. Firstly the opponents' spades may be 2-2 and will fall under the AK (so don't lead a small spade). Secondly, they may only be able to set up one heart trick. Then they will need to try the club finesse for their ninth. That will lose since this time it is West that is the strong hand and almost certainly has the A♣. You have only 4 spades and must give yourself the best chance or 3 spade tricks, which together with the A♥ and K♣ will defeat the contract. Playing the A and probably the K and then a small one will give you the best chance of 3 spade tricks if either opponent has 4 spades, which is quite possible on the bidding. (You probably need to try it to see).

♠ K 8 6
♥ 6 5 2
♦ A 6
♣ 8 7 4 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	4 NT ¹	Pass
6 NT	All pass		

1. Invitational to 6 NT with a maximum

Lead 3♣. The opponents have determined they have 33 HCP, but sometimes opponents get carried away with good hands and your partner may have a little bit. They will have lots of tricks from high cards and may have 12 tricks, in which case there is nothing you can do. However, they may be struggling to find their twelfth trick and you want to find the lead that is least likely to be helpful. A spade or diamond may cost a vital trick and a club is ever so marginally safer than a heart. Leading the long suit here has nothing to do with the normal reason for leading your long suit against NT (to set up small cards as tricks). It can't matter here whether you lead your fourth highest or not, so any club will do. Your best chance is that they must take a losing spade finesse, so a heart lead is almost as good.

♠ K 8 6
♥ 6 5 2
♦ A 6
♣ 8 7 4 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♥	Pass
3 ♦ ¹	Pass	4 ♥ ²	Pass
4 NT ³	Pass	5 ♦ ⁴	Pass
6 NT	All pass		

1. 16+ HCP, good 6+ card diamond suit
2. Good 6+ card heart suit
3. Blackwood, asking for aces
4. One ace

Lead 6♠. This is the same hand and contract. The bidding is quite different. This time the opponents are relying on their long and strong diamond and heart suits and your partner may

have a one or two high cards. You can tell any heart finesse will work if it is needed, so the opponents will have lots of tricks after they knock out your A♦. The only real hope is that your partner has the Q♠. In this case, if you lead a small spade, you will be able to take your K♠ when you get in with the A♦. You will have noticed that the card you should not lead with the previous hand bidding is exactly the card you must lead with this bidding.

Summary of ideas for opening leads against no trump contracts

Lead long suit

On most hands (i.e. hands where we don't have reasons not to), lead your longest suit in the hope of establishing tricks from our small cards.

Normal card to lead from a 4+ card suit

With a 3-card sequence of high cards (e.g. QJ10), lead the top one.

With a 3-card near sequence (e.g. QJ9), lead the top one.

With a 3-card interior sequence (e.g. Q109), lead the top of the interior sequence (the 10 in this example).

Otherwise, lead the fourth highest.

Check what you would lead from these suits:

AQ1053 (lead the 5; no 3-card sequence)

AK42 (lead the 2; no 3-card sequence)

KQ102 (lead the K; top of near sequence)

109832 (lead the 10; top of 3 card sequence)

8642 (lead the 2; fourth highest)

When might we not make the normal lead?

If our partner has bid a suit, we would normally lead their suit.

We would normally not lead our longest suit if the opponents had bid or shown length in that suit, unless we had 4 top cards.

If we have no prospects of getting in to cash tricks in our long suit, we would lead our best guess of our partner's long suit.

If the auction indicated that passive defence was required, we may lead a short suit. This will be the case if we judge that the risk of giving away a trick by our lead is greater than the prospect of gaining tricks later with our small cards. For example, we have no 5 card suit, most of our partnership's high cards and no high card sequence.

If we were sure that it didn't matter that our partner is not misled, we might not lead the normal card from our suit. Declarer may then be misled.

What card should we lead from a suit of three cards or fewer

From a doubleton lead the top card (e.g. from 42, lead the 4)

From a 3-card suit headed by a 2-card sequence, lead the top card (e.g. from QJ3, lead the Q).

From a 3-card suit headed by an honour, lead the lowest card (e.g. from Q103, lead the 3).

From a 3-card suit with small cards, lead the middle card and usually play the top card on the second round (e.g. from 973, lead the 7). This is called MUD (middle-up-down) and is the most common convention. Some partnerships prefer to lead the top card or others the bottom card from 3 small cards in a suit.

If there is no chance that it matters if our partner is misled and we want to mislead the declarer, choose another lead.

