

Opening Leads

Masterclass, August 2023

India Natt

- General advice
- Passive vs. active leads
- Leading against NT
- Leading against suits

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General advice – Any contract

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 - If Partner has a really strong holding, you might be able to cash the first few tricks, putting pressure on Declarer

General advice – Suits

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- If you lead the A, you set up Declarer's K (and the Q too if he has both!)
- If you lead low, may cost a trick on many layouts, e.g. singleton K or Kxx opp Qxx.

- General advice
- Passive vs. active leads
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Passive vs. Active - Overview

- ▶ **Passive leads** aim to not give away tricks
(but are unlikely to create any)
- ▶ **Active leads** aim to establish tricks quickly
(but can easily give them away if Partner does not have a miracle holding)

Passive vs. Active - Overview

- ▶ **Passive leads** tend to be from suits without honours,
e.g. 9852, 984
- ▶ **Active leads** tend to be from suits with unsupported honours or “gappy” honour holdings,
e.g. K852, KJ52, AQT8

Passive vs. Active - Overview

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e.g. KQJT

Leading the K creates tricks by pushing out the A.

Leading the K does not establish the opponents' 9 as you still have three cards above it.

Passive vs. Active – How to choose

▶ **Passive leads** are advisable when:

- The opponents have had an unconfident auction,
e.g. 1♠ - 2♠ - ; 3♠ - 4♠

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- In doubt.

Passive vs. Active – How to choose

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 - The opponents have had a very confident auction, e.g. 1♠ - 3♠ ; 4♣ - 4♠
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 - You know your partner has far more HCP than you do.

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Leading against NT – When not to lead from length

▶ When **lacking in outside entries**

e.g. ♠ 632 ♥ Q6 ♦ J7532 ♣ 874



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e.g. ♠ 632 ♥ Q6 ♦ J7532 ♣ 874

- ▶ When **Declarer has shown length** in that suit
- ▶ When your partner has **asked you to lead a different suit**

Leading against NT – A special auction

1NT – 3NT

Think about negative inferences here.

Responder has not bid Stayman or transferred;
therefore, he is at most 3-3 in the majors!

Lead a major most of the time against this auction.

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Leading against suits – When not to lead from shortage

- ▶ When you are also **short in Trumps**

You are unlikely to get your ruff.



Leading against suits – When not to lead from shortage

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You are unlikely to get your ruff.

- ▶ When you **would be ruffing with a trump trick**

Better to give Declarer a headache with your strong trump holding; no point in weakening it for no extra tricks!

Leading against suits – When not to lead a singleton

▶ Against a **slam when you hold an ace**

Partner is not also going to hold an ace.



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Lead the A and then decide what to do.



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- ▶ When your **singleton is an honour**

Can give away a guess and Partner will find it difficult to read.

Leading against suits – When to lead Trumps

- ▶ With a strong hand that has unattractive side-suit leads

} Being passive



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Cutting down short-hand ruffs

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- ▶ When the opponents stop in Opener's second suit in a preference auction
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- ▶ Against a doubled part-score with the balance of power
- ▶ When they sacrifice

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Cutting down cross-ruffs

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- ▶ When you have a **very weak hand**



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▶ When **Declarer or Dummy has shown a source of tricks**

▶ When you have a **very weak hand**

▶ When you are **long or short** in Trumps

- Could give away a trump trick
- Missed opportunity for ruffing/forcing defence

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} A trump is too passive!

Now, head to the
Opening Leads tournament
and try the
practice hands!