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BEGINNING BRIDGE- MAKING THE OPENING LEAD

The player to the right of the dummy makes the opening lead. This is your opportunity to try to establish a suit in which you can take tricks, or to show shortness, so your partner can play this suit and you can trump.

When playing in a suit contract:

If your partner has bid a suit, you will want to lead it!

1. If you have a singleton in your partner's suit, lead it.
2. If you have 2 cards in your partner's suit, lead the high card first. When you play the lower card the next time that suit is played, your partner will know that you are out of that suit, and you could trump it.
3. If you have touching honors, lead the highest one.
4. If you have an Ace in your partner's suit, lead it.
5. If you have 3 cards in your partner's suit, lead BOSTON (Bottom Of Something, Top Of Nothing).
6. If no other conditions apply, lead low.

NOTE: If your partner makes the opening lead by playing an honor card in your bid suit, you can give him a signal to play the suit again by playing a card higher than your lowest card. This is called *encouraging*. If you have bid a suit in which you do not have an honor, play a low card to discourage him from playing that suit back.

If your partner has not shown you a suit of his own, you will want to play a card from **your** best suit. What should you lead?

1. Play the top of touching honors.
2. Lead the ace .
3. If neither of these two situations exist, lead low.

If both you and your partner have not bid, what do you lead?

1. Lead a touching honor in an unbid suit.
2. Lead a singleton in any suit except trump.
3. Lead the higher card in a doubleton (playing high-low)
4. Otherwise, lead low in an unbid suit.

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When defending against a no trump contract:

1. Lead your partner's bid suit.
2. Lead the 4th down from your longest and strongest suit.
3. Lead an unbid suit. This may be the opposition's Achilles heel.

DO NOT LEAD SINGLETONS OR DOUBLETONS IN NO TRUMP. Voiding yourself in a suit does you no good.

Leading Cards During the Play of the Hand:

There are several things to consider when you are on the lead after the first play:

1. If your partner led a suit, generally you want to play back a card in that suit.
2. If your partner bid a suit, generally you want to lead that suit (unless you've counted, and the opposition is out of that suit).
3. If you've counted, and there's only one card left in a suit (not the trump suit), lead that suit. Maybe it's your partner that's out, and he can trump. Or, if your partner is out of that suit, and you have the winning card in that suit, he can discard something.

NOTE: Remember, when not following suit, and not trumping, you get to discard any card in any suit. Your first discard is a clue to your partner as to what suit you would like him to play when he's on lead.

4. Generally, you want to lead to the strength of the board (the dummy), if it's on your left, and the weakness of the board if it's on your right. Remember the old adage, "LEFT-HEFT/RIGHT-LIGHT".
5. Even though we usually don't lead trump, there are times when it might be the best decision. If you see that dummy doesn't have many trump on the board, and declarer is not pulling trump, maybe declarer is saving the board's trump to use for a suit in which he is short (singleton or doubleton). In that case, if you lead trump, you may be ruining his plans. Also, if you suspect that your partner is out of trump, then for every time you lead trump, you are getting two of opponent's trump cards for every one of yours.

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SAMPLE HAND # 1- South is the Dealer

NORTH
Spades- K 4 3
Hearts- 4 2
Diamonds- K J 10
Clubs – Q 9 8 5 3

WEST
Spades-9
Hearts- J 9 8 6 5 3
Diamonds- A 6 5
Clubs- A K 7

EAST
Spades- 7 6 5
Hearts- Q 10 7
Diamonds – Q 8 4 3 2
Clubs- 10 2

SOUTH
Spades- A Q J 10 8 2
Hearts – A K
Diamonds- 9 7
Clubs – J 6 4

SAMPLE HAND # 2 – East is the Dealer

NORTH
Spades- A K J
Hearts – 4 3 2
Diamonds- A 8 4 3
Clubs- 7 6 5

WEST
Spades- 5 4 3
Hearts- J 7
Diamonds- K 10 5 2
Clubs- K 10 8 2

EAST
Spades- 7 6 2
Hearts- 10 9 8 6
Diamonds- 9 7 6
Clubs- A J 3

SOUTH
Spades- Q 10 9 8
Hearts- A K Q 5
Diamonds- Q J
Clubs- Q 9 4