

CARD PLAY FUNDAMENTALS: PART FIVE

DEFENSE AGAINST NO TRUMP CONTRACTS

Quote of the week: Growing older is mandatory. Growing up is optional.

In order of priority, the opening leads against the opponent's No Trump contract are as follows:

1. If partner has bid a suit during the course of the auction lead that suit.
2. If you hold a "solid honor sequence" in a suit holding five or more cards, lead the top of the sequence. For example: **KQJ98 QJT65 AKQ54 JT973**
3. Lead "fourth down" from your longest and strongest suit. When your partner ascertains that this is the case, he can apply the Rule of Eleven to determine how many cards that the declarer holds in that suit that are higher than the one led by partner. (See previous lesson for Rule of Eleven specifics).

How many cards does declarer hold that are higher than the one led by partner in each of the following examples?

Partner	Dummy	You
5	KQ43	J82

Partner	Dummy	You
2	9865	KJ3

Partner	Dummy	You
7	K54	AJ62

Partner	Dummy	You
K	976	T43

Contract = 3NT. Opening lead = Five of Clubs. This one is tough! 1. Recognize that your partner may have more than four cards in the led suit. 2. Your play of the cards must allow for your partner to "collect" all available winners in that suit.

Partner	Dummy	You
KT8 5 4	763	AJ2

- How many cards higher than the Five of Clubs does the declarer hold? _____
- Regardless of what card that declarer calls from dummy, what card should you play? _____ Assuming that you win the trick, what card must you return to your partner? _____

Answer: Declarer has two cards higher than the Five of Clubs as you can see four of them. Having this information, it is important to "knock out" the declarer's Club stoppers. To that end, you should immediately play your Ace and return the Jack. Why? First, if partner has four or more clubs, dummy has three and you have three, declarer has, at most, three. Second, by playing the Ace and returning the Jack you will force declarer to play his only honor. In this example, this works perfectly, as your partner will cover declarer's Queen (he started with the Q9) with his K and run the remainder of his suit.

Assume, however, that your partner had only four clubs (KT85) and declarer holds the (Q94). Your Ace will win the first trick and when you play the Jack if declarer ducks you continue with the two and partner will cash his fourth club.

In both instances, if you fail to play the Ace followed by the Jack, you will give the opponent the opportunity to, perhaps, score nine tricks in the other three suits.