

Lead Problem Solutions

Problem 1. Various choices you might have considered are: (a) diamond, (b) A♣, (c) 9♥, (d) A♠. I've given them in the order best to worst. Here's the thinking behind this choice. The lead most likely to cost a trick in a suit contract is from a suit headed by the Ace without the King. Generally reject this first. Another dangerous lead is a singleton trump unless the auction screams for a trump lead. I rated the A♣ lead as high as I did because it is almost certain that North holds K♣ for his redouble.

Problem 2. In order of preference (best to worst) lead a club, heart, diamond, or spade. Here's the reason. Against a no trump contract you'd like to lead from a 5 or 6 card suit. A 4 card suit isn't so good (unless headed by an honour sequence); and leading from a 4 card suit headed by one honour is particularly risky. Here the opponents have had an invitational sequence to game so they just have enough values and teeter on the brink of going down; don't help them make their contract by giving a trick on the lead. The most passive lead is a club. Let them set up their own tricks without help from you.

News Letter 2005

Taieri Bridge Club

Issue Number 104 August 2005



Tournaments

As I write this our Cancer Society charity tournament is about to take place. Next in the club's tournament season is the Graded Pairs on 20 August. This is a fine opportunity for players of all abilities; you have a chance for a prize irrespective of your experience.

Contributed humour

Two elderly ladies had been friends for many decades. Over the years they had shared all kinds of activities and adventures. Lately, their activities had been limited to meeting a few times a week to play cards.

One day, while playing cards, one looked at the other and said, "Now don't get mad at me; I know we've been friends for a long time, but I just can't think of your name! I've thought and thought, but I can't remember it. Please tell me your name."

Her friend glared at her. For at least three minutes she just stared and glared at her. Finally she said "How soon do you need to know?"

Lead Kindly Light

One of the most important parts of bridge is the opening lead. I must confess I didn't used to understand just how important it is, and I imagine that many others have the same problem. Getting off to a good lead can easily make the difference between defeating the contract or not. Sometimes a good lead will start getting your side's winners established before declarer can develop her own winners. At other times a good lead is just one that gives declarer the least assistance.

Unfortunately, leads designed to establish winners (active leads) are entirely different from those designed to give declarer the least help (passive leads); distinguishing when you should try for one rather than the other is part of expert defence. I intend to give some lead problems over the next few months with a discussion of how you might have solved them. I'm indebted to Stewart Kerr for this suggestion, as well as for a large number of sample problems.

In choosing your lead all you have to go on is the bidding and your own hand. Not much information usually! However, it is not so hard to pick up the basic principles of good leading. So be heartened: this is one of the most effective ways of improving your game. Before we get into the problems, let's just refresh our memories about the basic lead conventions.

A Director Writes

Would You Rather Have a Major or a Minor Penalty Card?

Everybody knows that it is better to hold a major suit than a minor suit; but how many know the difference between a major and a minor penalty card? First of all, there is no simple definition; therefore if you think a card is a penalty card, call the Director to ascertain which kind it is. Briefly a minor penalty card is one that is "below the rank of an honour and exposed inadvertently". (In Bridge, an 'honour' "is any Ace, King, Queen, Jack, or ten.") However, there are many minor penalty cards that 'turn into' major penalty cards, so always call the Director. To answer the question - a minor penalty card is better.

From the Archives

One of the major problems facing the comparatively young club was a scoring facility. Computers were not in vogue in Bridge Clubs and electronic calculators were not considered suitable for the work. Scoring was done manually with a team of 3 or 4 adding up both East/West and North/South scores, working out the percentages and then placing the participants in order of achievement. Inevitably mistakes were made and tempers became frayed, particularly when results were still being calculated one hour after play finished.

Perhaps present day members could think back to those days when it takes a bit longer than normal on Wednesday nights.

From sequences like JT9, QJT, KQJ you lead the top card. From AK you can, in principle, choose either; some partnerships have the understanding that the lead of an Ace asks for Attitude, and the lead of King asks for Kount; others reverse those meanings. Also, don't underlead an Ace against a suit contract. Then there is the venerable "fourth best" rule; if you lead from a strong holding not headed by consecutive honour cards then lead your fourth best card (eg lead the 5 from K J 9 5 2). Enough of the basics, here's the first set of problems. Solutions on page 8.

You are West to lead in both cases.

Problem 1.

Auction:	West	North	East	South
	Pass	1NT ¹	Pass	2♣ ²
	Dbf	Rdbf ³	Pass	2♥
	Pass	4♥	All pass	

1. 15-17 HCP. 2. Stayman 3. Happy to play here.

Your hand: ♠ A Q J 3; ♥ 9; ♦ 9 6 3; ♣ A Q T 7 4

Problem 2.

Auction:	West	North	East	South
	P	Pass	Pass	1NT ¹
	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
	All pass			

1. 15-17 HCP.

Your hand: ♠ A 6; ♥ Q 9 4 3; ♦ J 8 7 6; ♣ 8 5 4

The unpleasant American

Frieda and Gordon's honeymoon bridge cruise was coming to an end. They had had a wonderful time and their bridge had gone very well. They had manage to avoid Mr and Mrs Delano Sr III most of the time and the rest of the ship's company was very congenial. On the last night however they had to play the last hand against the Delanos with whom they were running neck and neck for first place.

	♠ J 4	
	♥ 7 3	
	♦ K Q J T 7 4 3	
	♣ A 6	
♠ T 9 5		♠ A 8 7 6
♥ J 9 8 2		♥ Q T 6
♦ void		♦ A 6 5
♣ T 9 8 7 5 2		♣ K 4 3
	♠ K Q 3 2	
	♥ A K 5 4	
	♦ 9 8 2	
	♣ Q J	

Mrs Delano was the dealer. She bid 1D while fingering the ostentatious diamond ring she was wearing. In the Delano's system that meant a solid diamond suit. Gordon (East) passed awaiting developments. Mr Delano bid 1NT, an eccentric bid

unless you knew that it was forcing. Mrs Delano saw no reason to alert her opponents to this aspect of their agreements and bid 2♦. Mr Delano bid 2NT, Mrs Delano 3♦, and Mr Delano 3NT (the ultimate "husband" bid).

Frieda decided to lead T♠ hoping to strike her partner's suit. Mr Delano covered with dummy's Jack and Gordon won the trick with his Ace. Already the critical point of the hand had been reached. Gordon realised from the bidding that all the outstanding cards were held by declarer. After half a minute's thought he returned the K♣ sacrificing his club trick. Mr Delano puffed up his shoulders now that he had no club loser and won with dummy's Ace. He now started leading diamonds. However, Gordon held up his Ace until the third round and dummy's magnificent diamond suit was dead as dust.

In due time Mr Delano was held to 8 tricks (2 spades, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds, 2 clubs) and was the only declarer to go down. Frieda was quietly appreciative, it not being seemly to publicly draw attention to Gordon's brilliancy; especially as they would now win the event. The Delanos suffered from no such delicacies and departed muttering imprecations and threats about "bombing Noo Zealand".