

# Basic Defender Communication in Play

## Introduction

- Defender communication helps you avoid embarrassment by knowing what to lead and what not to throw away
- Worth the learning - you defend about 50% of the time
- Much more satisfying (and legal) than relying on sighs and facial expressions

## Unspoken Foundations

- Normally first and second player play low and third and fourth play high - so when this doesn't happen there is generally a reason
- Leading a suit has a purpose

## Opening Leads - which card?

1. Suit choice is decided first - based on bidding as well as card holding - big separate topic not covered here
2. Once the suit is decided there is only one right card to lead (certainly both partners should lead the same card from the same holding)
3. Normally leading goal is to be safe (avoid giving away tricks) as well as informative
4. Safest leads are tops of sequences - *lead denies holding the next higher card*
  - Solid three cards sequence **KQJ**
  - Almost solid three card sequence **KQT**
  - Interior sequence **KJT** - lead top of interior sequence
  - Two card sequences **KQx** - less safe, but often good against suit contracts
5. Low card lead suggests 3+ card suit with one or top honours not in sequence **QT5**
  - Not necessarily safe but informs partner of a possible return lead
  - But be wary of underleading A in **Axx** - normally lead A if leading this suit
  - In NT normally lead the fourth in a suit with an honour or more - rule of 11 **AKxxx**
6. Middle card normally shows none of the above - ie no high honour **T74**
  - Not necessarily safe but informs partner of a non-return suit
7. *Later Leads – as above though obviously influenced by dummy and the play to date*

## Signals on Partner's Lead

- Most people play “attitude” – showing whether you like or dislike the suit led
- Best is “reverse attitude” – Low card = Like, Higher card = Hate
- Partner will often need to judge whether the card played is “low” or “high” by considering dummy's and her own cards in the suit
- *Where possible* also provide count
  - High then low shows an even number initially held **9853** then 3
  - Low then high card shows an odd number initially held **953** then 5
- Suit preference signals when obvious such as when dummy has singleton in suit led
  - High card suggests higher ranking of other two suits (excluding trumps)

- Low card suggests lower ranking suit

**Test Examples** – normal leads against a suit (in bold) and NT contracts (underlined) if this is the suit to be led

1. **KQJ**
2. **Q**J93
3. Q**T**5
4. **AK**5**3**2
5. 9**8**54
6. 9**7**4
7. **AK**J**7**3
8. **K**5