

# Four Suits, Four Leads

## World Champion Donna Compton

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Free Weekday Zoom Bridge Tips with Donna Compton ~ 9:45am-10:15am Central.

### OPENING LEADS

Defense is the most difficult part of the game because you and your partner must be on the same wave length in order to take maximum tricks. A notrump contract is race for tricks. Declarer develops a plan to take the required tricks to make the contract, while the defenders develop a plan to take enough tricks to prevent declarer from making the contract. The opening lead is critical as it is the defenders' first chance at taking the lead in this race to the finish line. Even though we call them "Opening Leads", the same lead guidelines discussed in this lesson are applied throughout the hand.

### PASSIVE VS AGGRESSIVE LEADS

Lead guidelines are usually passive in nature. Knowing how many high card points (HCPs) partner holds helps in determining whether to have a passive or aggressive opening lead. When partner holds at least 3 HCPs, then a passive lead is called for on the hand. The following number rules help the opening leader figure out how many HCPs partner holds:

**Rule of 14** ~ When the opponents are in game (3NT, 4♥ or 4♠), subtract your HCPs from 14 and the difference is the number of HCPs your partner holds.

**Rule of 17** ~ When the opponents are in an invitational contract (2NT or any three level bid), subtract your HCPs from 17 and the difference is the number of HCPs your partner holds.

**Rule of 19** ~ When the opponents are in a partscore contract (less than 2NT), subtract your HCPs from 19 and the difference is the number of HCPs your partner holds.

### CHOOSING AN OPENING LEAD IS A TWO-STEP PROCESS

- First, choose the suit based on the guidelines below.
- Second, choose the card within the suit based on the guidelines below.

### CHOOSING THE SUIT

The opening leader wants to start with the suit that offers the most potential for the defenders. It is best to develop the longest suit between both defenders' hands. Since only 13 cards are available to make this decision, guidelines are available to determine the best suit for the defenders.

You have probably heard "Lead 4<sup>th</sup> best from your longest and strongest suit." This is a great guideline however there is more to the story. The bidding is often the key to choosing the right suit. In all cases, keep an eye on the total number of tricks needed to set the contract!

- If you partner has bid a suit, then that is the suit to lead unless:
  - The opening leader is "dead" or "void"
  - The opening leader has the setting tricks in hand.
- If partner has not bid in the auction, then lead the longest suit.
  - With a choice of long suits ~ choose the stronger
  - Major vs Minor ~ lead the major
  - Avoid leading a suit bid by an opponent unless your suit is solid

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### FOUR NOTRUMP CONTACTS...FOUR SUITS TO LEAD

The East hand below is an example where the suit choice is dependent on the auction. In this example, each suit is chosen to be the opening lead!

East	
♠	7 4
♥	10 9 8 5 3
♦	K Q
♣	A 7 6 4

North	East	South	West
1NT	AP		
<b>Heart Lead</b>			

North	East	South	West
1NT	Pass	6NT	AP
<b>Diamond Lead</b>			

North	East	South	West
		1♣	1♠
1NT	Pass	3NT	AP
<b>Spade Lead</b>			

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	AP
<b>Club Lead</b>			

### HONOR LEADS IN NOTRUMP VS SUIT LEADS

There are two differences in the honor leads when the contract is notrump versus suit.

- When an honor is led versus a notrump contract, the opening leader is promising at least a four-card suit and at least three honors.

♠ <u>K</u> Q J 6
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♠ <u>Q</u> J 10 4
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♠ K 7 6 <u>5</u>
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♠ 9 6 <u>5</u>
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- When an honor is led versus a suit contract, the opening leader is promising no minimum number of cards and only two honors.

♥ <u>K</u> Q 6
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♥ <u>Q</u> J 8 4
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♥ K 7 6 <u>5</u>
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♥ 9 6 <u>5</u>
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### FOUR SUIT CONTACTS...FOUR SUITS TO LEAD

You are on lead against 4♠ with the hand below. What would you lead?

♠	7 4 3
♥	Q 7 5
♦	Q 8 5
♣	K Q 5 2

- The opponents bid all four suits during the auction.
  - ♠3. When leading trumps, lead low.
- You partner overcalled in diamonds during the auction.
  - ♦5. Lead low from three or more cards.
- The opponents bid spades and clubs during the auction.
  - ♥5. An attacking defense is required. Lead major over minor.
- The only suit bid during the auction was spades.
  - ♣K. Top of touching honors.

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