

At CHAT recently, there were a lot of questions about opening leads. Books have been written on this! There were several hands recently, where the difference between making or failing to make a bid depended on the opening lead.

Except for long pauses, frustration, and other body language, the main source of information comes from the bidding. I used to think that I was good at reading body language. Not! I have seriously curtailed that reading. "Why the long pause?" It could be inattention or indigestion or indecision. Hard to tell.

I am called to a table and hear, "what should I lead?" When I ask what the bidding was, I sometimes get "I don't remember". My advice then is: "pick the card that is closest to your index finger". If that doesn't appeal to you use your thumb.

The bidding and the makeup of your hand is the only information you have. You MUST pay attention to the bidding. Clues you might get are:

- Did your partner bid? Make sure you a very good reason if you choose to not lead partner's suit (like, you are void in his suit).
- What did declarer bid? Leading into strength is not typically a good idea.
- What did LHO bid? Leading through strength is better than into strength.
- The unbid suit might be a good choice, depends on your holding and what you have in that suit.
- 4<sup>th</sup> best is still a good choice if you have decided on a suit.
- Do you have a sequence that looks good? AK, KQ, QJT These are more aggressive and generally safer leads (less likely to give up a trick).
- Mike Lawrence says it is very rare for him to NOT lead from a suit headed by AK "his favorite lead by far". Lead the Ace, then you get to look at the board AND examine partner's attitude and Declarer's play to the trick before leading to trick #2. I am a sheep. If Mike Lawrence likes it, so do I.
- Maybe you have competed in the bidding and your partner keeps passing. If it looks like partner is "broke", you may want to consider a passive lead (often a 9 or an 8). Passive leads work well in other situations too. It lets your partner know you don't have any big cards in the suit. The idea is to NOT to give away a trick to declarer. Passive leads are not "killing" leads. They are more like dying peacefully.

- A singleton in a suit contract is usually a “killing” lead. Either you or your opponent get killed. I read an article recently that a study was done on singleton leads and it concluded that you win more than lose if you ALWAYS lead a singleton. I am skeptical. ALWAYS is always wrong. If you know your partner is broke, why lead a singleton? But I never overlook a chance to lead a singleton.
- If you are still perplexed, try the unbid suit or leading through Dummy’s strength. If you still can’t make up your mind, you are probably going to screw this up anyway – PLAY! (use the index finger technique).

**The key message here is:** Don’t go into the tank for 2 minutes and grimace and mumble to yourself. Even I might get some information from that body language. And of course, partner is going to be embarrassed by your long pause and might take a bathroom break ( this a universally understood gesture that sends you a message of what you can do with your long delay). Now, the Director is waiting and will likely put you on his “problem people” list. Your social life at the club is damaged, ... ALL DOWNSIDE.

**Bridge Articles.** I have written bridge articles for 3 years. I have enjoyed it. My intention was to give useful bridge advice for beginners and, more importantly, some insights on societies’ view of serious bridge players. How do we avoid the “geek” label (even though we are geeks). I prefer to embrace the “geek” label as “Special - somebody that functions above the norm”. Show sympathy for those that do not have these gifts. Keep your guest bathroom well stocked with Bridge Bulletins. During a family Pinochle game, throw in a “What would my life have been had I not found the **New Minor Forcing** technique. It supplements the **Support Double** so well”.

**This is my last article.** ...I invite others to write articles for the club. Articles from Chat players would be excellent. It would help us understand what you are thinking. Where you are at with your bridge game. Make some fun of the mentors. The mistakes they make could be much funnier than the mistakes that I tell about you.

AND, of course, it would be great to have “experts” in our club give us some suggestions. Share with us some of the secrets that have helped you succeed. Bidding technique. When to be passive. When to be aggressive. How to help the opponents get into trouble. Bidding/Playing insights.

Call me if you want help understanding the publishing process. Sue will alert the club when your article is available.

Thanks to all that have given me encouragement in this writing thing.

Arne