

Pay attention the the card chosen as the opening lead and make the most of the inferences given to you by that lead.

1 *How fast was the lead?* A defender with a naturally attractive lead will play at a normal pace. When there is significant hesitation before the lead, declarer may deduce that defender has no clear-cut lead and has some holdings that are unattractive.

2 *Was the choice a trump lead?* That normally indicates that trumps are splitting evenly . A trump lead is uncommon from 4 trumps.

3 *Is the lead in a suit bid by dummy or declarer?* If so, beware. That usually indicates a singleton lead.

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
♠ 87	♠ A Q 932	1♥	1♠
♥ A 8764	♥ K 32	2♦	3♥
♦ A K Q 6	♦ 75	4♥	pass
♣ K J	♣ Q 75	lead ♠ 4	

Finessing the ♠ Q is an error you should not make twice. The likely upshot: South wins with the ♠K, gives North a spade ruff and a club to South's ace followed by another spade promotes a trump trick for the defence. Best is to rise with the ♠ A and play ♥ K, ♥ A. as long as the trumps break you are home.

4 When the opening leader has bid a suit but does lead it, if you and dummy have no high cards, the opening leader's suit is likely headed by the A – Q or just the ace.

5 When dummy has shown a longish suit and the lead is a trump, the defender on lead is likely to be strong in dummy's long suit. A good defender does not lead a trump if dummy's suit may run and provide declarer with several discards.

6 When declarer bids 2 suits and dummy gives a preference, a trump lead indicates that the leader is strong in declarer's other suit.

7 Against no trumps, if the opening lead is from a 4 card suit then the leader will probably not hold greater length in any other unbid suit.

8 If a low card is led in a trump contract assume the leader does not hold the ace

9 If you can tell that the lead is risky, such as leading an unsupported ace, or from holdings such as K xx, Q xx, J xxx or similar, the leader probably has dangerous holdings in all suits.

10 If the lead is very unusual, see what follows

Dummy ♥ J 6 you are in 4♠ after LHO opened 3♥. The lead is the ♥2 . what do you make of that?
Declarer ♥ 74

The ♥2 cannot be a true card (cannot be fourth highest from a 7 card suit) A wildly abnormal lead

is used as a suit preference signal – in the case of a pre-empt , it usually indicates a void. The ♥2 suggests LHO is void in clubs. Play the ♥J from dummy just in case LHO was desperate enough to lead the ♥2 from AKQxxx in the hope of finding partner with the ♥J.

Some further thoughts!

Bridge is a game of **inference**, especially on defense.

The basic assumption is that declarer and defenders play logically, even if the logic of their play isn't obvious. By assuming logical play (except for deceit, a characteristic of all good declarers), defenders can often "figure it out" by considering the inferences of actions taken or not taken.

Inference from unexpected action On opening lead, partner leads trump even though a long Club suit is expected in dummy.

Inference: partner has the Club suit under control and is choosing a Passive defense.

Partner bids Heart, but leads Clubs.

Inference: partner has something like ♥AQxxx and is reluctant to lead it:
she wants you to lead Hearts through declarer. OR

Inference: she is leading a singleton and has an entry, intending to put you on lead later in your suit so she can get a ruff.

Inference from action taken. Defending Spades, you can see 10 Clubs between dummy and your hand. You lead the Heart King and partner overtakes.

Inference: partner is void in Clubs, or she would not overtake, hoping you will figure it out to lead Clubs.

Bridge is a partnership game so let partner help you, rely on partner for clues , tune into all these inferences and turn guesses into certainties!