

# Journalist/Rusinow Opening Leads

## Introduction

This is based on the book “Journalist Leads” by Lawrence Rosler & Jeff Rubens which really should have been Journalist and Rusinow Leads as there are two distinct methods when leading against notrump contracts ([Journalist](#)) and suit contracts ([Rusinow](#)).

In the following West is always the opening leader, East is leader's partner.

**Journalist** leads against notrump give East a good idea of honor holdings in the suit lead, or West's interest in the suit when a spot card is lead.

**Rusinow** leads remove the ambiguity from honor leads while spot card leads allow partner to get a good idea of the suit length quickly.

**Spot card leads** usually are low from interest against notrump, and length (odd or even) against suit contracts, particularly when leading a suit bid by East.

## Journalist Leads against Notrump Contracts.

Defending notrump contracts is often a matter of tempo, who can establish their suit(s) first. Thus the opening leader's goal is to establish what suit to attack, and where the defender's strength lies so honor leads are designed to help defenders locate honors, hopefully more than they help declarer. Spot leads indicate opening leader's interest in the suit lead, not the length of the suit.

- **Honor sequence leads**, basically **Jack Denies** which give partner a good idea of West's honor holding in the suit. When holding AK, lead of the ace asks partner to unblock a high honor or give count lacking, lead of the King from AK asks for attitude.
- **Spot card leads** are low from interest. They **do not** try to show length (e.g. not 4<sup>th</sup> longest). Lead the highest spot card below the 9 with no interest in continuing the suit. Often this will be an unbid major suit, perhaps short looking for strength in partner's hand.

## Rusinow Leads against Suit Contracts

When defending suit contracts it's critical that the defender's know where honors lie, and to understand the shape of the hands.

- **Honor sequence leads** are second of touching honors unless leading from a doubleton, thus the lead of an ace isn't ambiguous as it denies the king unless it's from an AK doubleton. **NOTE** these are not on when leading a suit bid by East partner.

- Rusinow Leads give the partner information about the holding, but the Rusinow Leads are used only on the first trick against a suit contract. This fact is very important to remember concerning the communication with the partner.
- **Spot card leads** are usually 3<sup>rd</sup> from even, low from odd so East can quickly determine the length holding of West's suit. This is particularly important when leading a suit East has bid as he can usually tell how many tricks can be taken in the suit before a shift is necessary. West will still lead high from a doubleton. East may be able to use the “**Rule of 12**” to determine Declarer's holding in the suit when West has led 3<sup>rd</sup> best. **NOTE:** this is different than the article linked above which recommends **MUD** (Middle Up Down) as West will always lead lowest from odd holdings. Thus any lead other than the lowest card indicates an even number of cards, either top of two cards or 3<sup>rd</sup> from 4, 6, ...

Journalist/Rusinow Honor Opening Leads		
Against Notrump		Against Suit
Demands unblock of K, Q, or J or count from East.	Ace	Denies K except for AK doubleton
AK or KQ when East's unblock is not desired.	King	A or at most two.
QJ, AQJ, perhaps AQT, sometimes from KQT, demands J from East.	Queen	K or at most two.
JT denies a higher honor	Jack	Q or at most two.
AJT, KJT, AT9, KT9, QT9, perhaps AQT	Ten	J (possibly KJT) or at most two
T9, denies higher honor	Nine	T (possible KT9 or QT9) or at most two. The 9 may also be led from KJ9, KJ9x, KJ9xxx, or KJ9xxxxx (3 <sup>rd</sup> from even).

Convention Card

LEADS (circle card led, if not in bold)

versus Suits		versus Notrump	
<b>x x</b>	x( <b>x</b> )x x	<b>x x</b>	x( <b>x</b> )x x
x x( <b>x</b> )	x x x x( <b>x</b> )	x( <b>x</b> )x	x( <b>x</b> )x x x
A( <b>K</b> )x	<b>T</b> (9)x	(A) <b>K</b> J x	A( <b>Q</b> ) J x
<b>K</b> (Q)x	K <b>J</b> (T)x	A <b>J</b> (T)9	A( <b>T</b> )9 x
<b>Q</b> (J)x	K <b>T</b> (9)x	(K) Q J x	(K)( <b>Q</b> ) T 9
<b>J</b> (T)9	Q <b>T</b> (9)x	( <b>Q</b> ) J T x	Q( <b>T</b> )9 x
<b>K</b> (Q) T 9		(J) T 9 x	<b>T</b> (9)x x

LENGTH LEADS:

4th Best	vs SUITS	<input type="checkbox"/>	vs NT	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd/5th Best	vs SUITS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	vs NT	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd from even, low from odd vs suits	Attitude	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	vs NT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rusinow v suits, Journalist v notrump				

Primary signal to partner's leads

Attitude	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Count	<input type="checkbox"/>	Suit preference	<input type="checkbox"/>
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