

# Defense at Bridge

Experts agree: defense is the most difficult aspect of the game, both to learn and to teach. It is a help to become aware that there are five different types of defense playing at a suit contract. In doubt? Go passive. Each of these five starts with the opening lead.

<i>Defense Type</i>	<i>Opening Lead</i>	<i>Applicable When</i>
<b>Passive Defense</b> (60%)	Top of sequences, top of nothing from 3 cards (some prefer MUD leads) or 2nd card from 4+ spot cards	No side suit for declarer to run; weak dummy and/or strong declarer; You see bad splits in their key suits.
<b>Active Defense</b> (40%)	Top of sequence, or even away from broken honours which we normally avoid at a suit contract.	Dummy's bid suit is a threat. Strong bidding by opps; we are afraid our potential tricks will go away.
<b>Cut down opps ruffing power</b>	Lead a trump  (Avoid leading a singleton trump.)	Declarer has bid two suits, and dummy has preferred one of them. You suspect a misfit. Partner converted a t.o double to penalty. Declarer playing after Michaels or UNT. Or, all other leads look worse.
<b>Getting ruffs or Trump promotion</b>	Lead a singleton, or (less effective) a doubleton	You are rather weak and partner may be strong enough to have an Ace or King. Or, you have the A of trumps and can get back to partner to get your ruff.
<b>Forcing defense</b>	Long suit headed by a sequence or 4th from longest strongest suit. (You hope to run your long suit as in No Trump)	You or partner have 4 or more trumps. Or, declarer is known to have a two-suiter. You aim to force declarer to use up all his trumps, after which we run our long suit.

One of the best leads at suit contract is the A from AK. Poor leads at suit contract are away from an Ace or leading out an unsupported Ace (unless partner bid the suit). Leads away from Jacks are also likely to cost a trick.

A full sequence is three honours in row, eg., KQJx, QJ10x, J109 x or even 10 9 8 together. These are rare, but when you have one of these the lead of the top of the sequence is both safe and constructive. Partial sequences such as KQxx, or QJx are also useful when at suit we lead the top honour.

HELD signals are how the defenders speak to each other about their ATTITUDE to leads, opening and later ones. Your first DISCARD is normally a low card from some suit in which you have no interest. Be very wary of throwing 9's or 10's as signals as they may be needed later in the play of the hand.