

## OPENING LEADS TO AVOID by Maritha Pottenger

### When leading to a suit contract, AVOID:

\* Leading an unsupported Ace without the King unless you have no choice (**Why are you defending with four Aces?!**) or the auction demands the lead of that suit or you are at the 5 level or higher and believe it is right.

\* Underleading an ace (Do NOT lead a small card from a suit headed by an Ace—unless you KNOW King is in Dummy; partner might have Queen and Declarer has at least two cards in the suit & might mis-guess).

\* Underleading broken honor combinations (e.g., KJxx, K10xx, etc.) unless it's in partner's suit; the auction demands that suit; or a forcing defense is appropriate; or an aggressive lead is called for by the auction.

- Leading a suit declarer has bid (unless you're leading trumps in auctions that demand a trump lead; or leading a suit because you believe partner has shortness and will be able to ruff; or your holding is SO STRONG you don't CARE that Declarer bid it, e.g., KQJ9).
- Leading a singleton trump (often finesses partner out of a trump trick) unless the auction demands a trump lead or you know from auction partner only has two trumps (e.g., “Weak Freak” raise).

Be wary of leading trumps when you have a vulnerable holding (Jx, K10x, Ax, A10x, Jxx). You may lose a trick by leading the suit. (For example, you lead from Jx and partner has Qxx. Whether you lead high or low, your side will probably lose the one trump trick to which you would have been entitled.)

### When leading to a no trump contract, AVOID:

\* Leading a short suit, unless it's the suit partner has bid; or it is Dummy's 4-card suit in which partner is marked with *at least* 4 cards and has the positional advantage; or you have a strong holding and know from the auction you are getting very few tricks and must be aggressive; or you think from that auction this suit is LIKELY to be partner's suit and you have a weak hand with no entries so are trying to “hit” partner's suit.

\* Leading aces or “unprotected” high cards, especially ones in your short suits—again unless it's partner's suit or you HOPE it's partner's suit.

- Leading a suit declarer has bid (unless it is a second suit or you are pretty sure you have length tricks to develop—good spots, etc.).