

# Explanation of Lead Conventions and Signaling Agreements

## Leads Against a Suit

**Unbid Suits** refers to leads that you make in a suit that neither you nor partner have bid; these leads are also the default leads in other situations. **Partner Bid** refers to leads that you make in a suit that partner has bid, but you have not; **Both Bid** refers to leads that you make in a suit that both you and partner have bid. **Unbid Later Lead** refers to leads that you make in a suit that neither you nor partner have bid, *after* the first trick.

**Rusinow** leads make it easy for partner to tell whether you've led from a suit headed by the Ace, the Ace-King, or the King-Queen. With touching honors, you lead the second highest. Thus, you lead the King from a suit headed by Ace-King, the Queen from a suit headed by King-Queen, and so forth. The only exception is that if you have bare doubleton touching honors, you lead the highest; then, when you play the second-highest, partner knows that you have no more of the suit. Thus, with Ace-King bare, you lead the Ace and then the King; with King-Queen bare, you lead the King and later play the Queen.

The complete list of Rusinow leads in Bridge Baron is: K from AKx, Q from KQx, J from QJx, T from JT9/JTx, 9 from T9x; Q from KQT9/KQTx, J from QJ9x, T from JT8x; J from AQJ, T from AJT, T from KJT<sub>x</sub>, 9 from AT9, 9 from KT9<sub>x</sub>, 9 from QT9<sub>x</sub>; A from AK bare, K from KQ bare, Q from QJ bare, J from JT bare, T from T9 bare. Rusinow leads are only used against a suit contract.

**Journalist** leads against a suit are very similar to Rusinow leads (and very different from Journalist leads against notrump). In addition to leading the second highest from touching honors, you lead your third best from a strong holding of three or four cards (without touching honors), your fifth best from a strong holding of five or more cards (without touching honors), and your highest card below a 9 from a weak holding.

The complete list of Journalist leads against a suit in Bridge Baron is: highest from xx, xxx, xxxx, or xxxxx; K from AKx, Q from KQx, J from QJx, T from JT9/JTx, 9 from T9x, 8 from 98x; Q from KQT9/KQTx, J from QJ9x, T from JT8x; J from AQJ, T from AJT, T from KJT<sub>x</sub>, 9 from AT9, 9 from KT9<sub>x</sub>, 9 from QT9<sub>x</sub>; third/fifth from Hxx+ (including Txx) and HHx+, where H is an honor and HH are (not touching) honors; second-highest from 9xx.

**Zero or two higher** leads are sometimes known as “Jack denies” leads or “coded Nines, Tens, and Jacks”. The lead of a Jack shows that the leader holds no cards higher than the Jack. The lead of a Nine or Ten shows that the leader holds either no cards higher than the card led, or two cards higher than the card led.

The complete list of zero or two higher leads against a suit in Bridge Baron is: Q from QJ/QJx, J from JT/JT9/JTx, T (or low) from T9x, T from T9; Q from QJ9x, J from JT8x, T from KJTx, 9 from KT9x, 9 from QT9x; any but the 9 from KQT9; Q from AQJ, T from AJT, 9 from AT9.

**MUD** leads are used when leading from three small cards (or 9xx or 98x). The middle card is led; later, the highest card is played, leaving the lowest card for last. MUD stands for Middle, Up, Down.

**Against suit** leads fall into two general cases. If leads against a suit are **third/fifth**, the third best card is led from a strong holding of three or four cards (without touching honors), and the fifth best card is led from a strong holding of five or more cards (without touching honors). If leads against a suit are **fourth**, the third best card is led from a strong holding of three cards (without touching honors), and the fourth best card is led from a strong holding of four or more cards (without touching honors). These general cases apply when leading from Hxx+ and HHx+, where H is an honor and HH are (not touching) honors.

## Leads Against NT

**Unbid Suits** refers to leads that you make in a suit that neither you nor partner have bid, and that the opponents have also not bid; these leads are also the default leads in other situations. **Partner Bid** refers to leads that you make in a suit that partner has bid, but you have not; **Both Bid** refers to leads that you make in a suit that both you and partner have bid. **Opponents Bid** refers to leads that you make in a suit that one or both of the opponents have bid. **Unbid Later Lead** refers to leads that you make in a suit that neither you nor partner nor the opponents have bid, *after* the first trick.

**Journalist** leads against notrump are as follows. Lead the Ace from AKQT or AKJT/AKJx, asking partner to unblock a high honor if possible or to give count. Lead the Queen if leading high from Queen-Jack (or if leading from KQT9, asking partner to drop the Jack if possible). Lead the King if leading high from other holdings including the Ace-King or the King-Queen. Lead the Jack if leading high from Jack-Ten, showing that the Jack is the highest card. Lead the Ten from holdings including *both* the Jack-Ten or Ten-Nine *and* the Ace, King, or Queen; thus your lead of the Ten promises the Ace, King, or Queen in addition to the Jack or Nine. Lead the Nine from Ten-Nine without the Jack, Queen, King, or Ace. Lead highest or second highest from a weak holding of to discourage partner from continuing the suit. Lead the lowest card from a suit headed by one or two honors.

The complete list of Journalist leads against notrump in Bridge Baron is: highest from xx or xxx; lowest from xxxx or xxxxx; lowest from Hxx (including Txx) and Hxxx, where H is an honor; A from AKQT, A from AKJT/AKJx, Q from KQT9; K from AK, K (or low) from AKx, K (or low) from KQx, Q (or low) from QJx, J (or low) from JTx, 9 from T9x; K from KQJx/KQTx, Q from QJTx/QJ9x, J from JT9x/JT8x; Q from AQJx, T from AJTx, T from AT9x, T from KJTx, T from KT9x, T from QT9x; 9 from 9xx, 8 from 98x; lowest from Hxx+ and HHx, where H is an honor and HH are (not touching) honors.

**Zero or two higher** leads are sometimes known as “Jack denies” leads or “coded Nines, Tens, and Jacks”. The lead of a Jack shows that the leader holds no cards higher than the Jack. The lead of a Nine or Ten shows that the leader holds either no cards higher than the card led, or two cards higher than the card led.

The complete list of zero or two higher leads against notrump in Bridge Baron is: A/K from AKQT, A/K from AKJT, T (or K/Q) from KQT9; Q (or low) from QJx, J from JTx, T (or low) from T9x; K from KQJx, Q from QJTx/QJ9x, J from JT9x/JT8x; Q from AQJx, T (or low) from AJTx, 9 from AT9x, T from KJTx, 9 from KT9x, 9 from QT9x.

**MUD** leads are used when leading from three small cards (or 9xx or 98x). The middle card is led; later, the highest card is played, leaving the lowest card for last. MUD stands for Middle, Up, Down.

**Against NT** leads fall into three general cases. If leads against NT are **third/fifth**, the third best card is led from a strong holding of three or four cards (without touching honors), and the fifth best card is led from a strong holding of five or more cards (without touching honors). If leads against NT are **fourth**, the third best card is led from a strong holding of three cards (without touching honors), and the fourth best card is led from a strong holding of four or more cards (without touching honors). If leads against NT are **lowest**, the lowest card is led from a strong holding of three or more cards (without touching honors). These general cases apply when leading from Hxx+ and HHx+, where H is an honor and HH are (not touching) honors.

## Non-Lead-Convention Signals and Advanced

Most of the non-lead-convention signals and advanced signals are self-explanatory, but here are some details.

The selection of **Primary signal to partner's lead** determines the meaning of the play of a spot card by leader's partner. **None** means that leader's partner's spot cards have no particular meaning. **Count** means that the leader's partner will play spot cards based on the number of cards that defender holds in the suit. **Attitude** means that the leader's partner will play spot cards based on whether the leader's partner wants to encourage the leader to continue the suit or not.

The selection of **Carding to partner's lead** determines the meaning of attitude spot cards by leader's partner. **High encourages** means that a high card encourages, and a low card discourages. **Low encourages** means the reverse is true: a low card encourages, and a high card discourages. **Odd encourages** means that the leader's partner will play an odd card to encourage the leader to continue the suit, or an even card to discourage the leader from continuing the suit; to discourage when holding only odd cards, the leader's partner will play the highest odd card available; to encourage when holding only even cards, the leader's partner will play the highest even card available.

If **Count carding to partner's lead** is set to **High-low shows even**, then any time a player signals count to partner's lead with a high card, it shows even length, and any time a player signals count to partner's lead with a low card, it shows odd length. Otherwise, if set to **High-low shows odd**, the reverse is true: a high card shows odd length, and a low card shows even length. **Count carding on discard** works similarly.

The selection of **Primary discard is generally** determines the meaning of the discard of a spot card by a defender when void in the suit led. **Irrelevant** means that there is no meaning to the first card discarded by a defender. **Attitude** means that a defender will discard a spot card based on whether that defender has strength in the suit discarded. **Attitude, high encourages** means that a high spot card shows strength, and a low spot card shows weakness. **Attitude, low encourages** means the reverse: a low spot card shows strength, and a high spot card shows weakness. **Count** means that a defender will discard a spot card based on the number of cards that defender holds in the suit discarded. **Attitude, odd encourages** means that a defender will discard an odd spot card to show strength in the suit discarded, or an even spot card to show weakness in the suit discarded; to show strength when holding only even cards, the defender will discard the highest even card available; to show weakness when holding only odd cards, the defender will discard the highest odd card available. **Lavinthal** and **Revolving (Attwood)** mean that a defender will discard to show weakness in the suit discarded, and to show strength in another suit, as follows.

In **Revolving (Attwood) discards**, all discards encourage in suits other than the discarded suit. There are two possible suits for encouragement, since the discarder is discarding *on* one suit (having no cards in that suit) and discarding *from* another suit (not encouraging in that suit). A high discard encourages in the suit "above" the suit discarded from, and a low discard encourages in the suit "below" the suit discarded from. So if you are discarding *from* diamonds *on* spades, you are encouraging hearts if you discard a high diamond, and you are encouraging clubs if you discard a low diamond. If you are discarding *from* diamonds *on* hearts, you are encouraging spades if you discard a high diamond (since you can't be encouraging hearts, you go to the next higher suit), and you are encouraging clubs if you discard a low diamond. If you are discarding *from* spades *on* hearts, you are encouraging *clubs* if you discard a high spade (there are no suits above spades, so you wrap around to the lowest-ranking suit, clubs), and you are encouraging diamonds if you discard a low spade (since you can't be encouraging hearts, you go to the next lower suit.) If you are discarding *from* clubs *on* spades, you are encouraging diamonds if you discard a high club, and you are encouraging *hearts* if you discard a low club (there are no suits below clubs, so you wrap around to the highest-ranking suit, spades; since you can't be encouraging spades, you go to the next lower suit.)

In **Lavinthal** discards, again, all discards encourage in suits other than the discarded suit. There are thus two possible suits for encouragement again. A high discard encourages in the higher-ranking of the other two suits, and a low discard encourages in the lower-ranking of the other two suits. Thus a high discard *from* spades *on* hearts encourages diamonds, and a low discard *from* spades *on* hearts encourages clubs.

**Smith signals by leader's partner** are used by the partner of the opening leader when defending against a notrump contract. If **None**, there are no Smith signals by leader's partner. Otherwise, when declarer or dummy leads a suit (*a different* suit than the opening lead suit), if leader's partner follows suit with a spot card, and if this is not a situation in which the leader's partner wants to signal count, then the rank of the spot card will have the following meaning. If **Smith signals by leader's partner** are **High-low for shift**, then the leader's partner will follow suit with a high spot card to discourage continuation of the suit of the opening lead by the opening leader; the leader's partner will follow suit with a low spot card to encourage continuation of the suit of the opening lead by the opening leader. If **Smith signals by leader's partner** are **Low-high for shift**, then the leader's partner will follow suit with a low spot card to discourage continuation of the suit of the opening lead by the opening leader; leader's partner will follow suit with a high spot card to encourage continuation of the suit of the opening lead by the opening leader.

**Smith signals by leader**, similarly, are used by the opening leader when defending against a notrump contract. If **None**, there are no Smith signals by leader. Otherwise, when declarer or dummy leads a suit (a *different* suit than the opening lead suit), if the opening leader follows suit with a spot card, and if this is not a situation in which the opening leader wants to signal count, then the rank of the spot card will have the following meaning. If **Smith signals by leader** are **High-low for shift**, then the opening leader will follow suit with a high spot card to discourage continuation of the suit of the opening lead by the leader's partner; the opening leader will follow suit with a low spot card to encourage continuation of the suit of the opening lead by the leader's partner. If **Smith signals by leader** are **Low-high for shift**, then the opening leader will follow suit with a low spot card to discourage continuation of the suit of the opening lead by the leader's partner; the opening leader will follow suit with a high spot card to encourage continuation of the suit of the opening lead by the leader's partner.

If **Count signal to opponent's lead vs suit** is set to **Never**, then defenders do not signal count to a lead by declarer or dummy at a suit contract. Otherwise, if **Count signal to opponent's lead vs suit** is set to **Always (if count unknown)**, then when declarer or dummy leads a suit, if a defender plays a spot card, that spot card is based on the number of cards that defender holds in that suit, unless declarer's or that defender's exact length in that suit is already known. Finally, if **Count signal to opponent's lead vs suit** is set to **When dummy has a long suit**, then defenders signal count with spot cards only when declarer or dummy leads a suit in which dummy has four or more cards and three of AKQJ, or four or five of AKQJ109. (Again, defenders signal count only when declarer's or that defender's exact length in that suit is not already known). **Count signal to opponent's lead vs NT** works similarly.

If **Trump parity to opponent lead** is set to **None**, then defenders do not make signals in the trump suit when it is led by declarer or dummy. Otherwise, if **Trump parity to opponent lead** is set to **High-low with 3+**, then a defender follows suit to a trump lead with a high spot card to show three or more cards in trump, or with a low spot card to show two or fewer cards in trump. Otherwise, if **Trump parity to opponent lead** is set to **High-low with odd trump length** or **High-low with even trump length**, then a defender follows suit to a trump lead with either a high or a low spot card, depending on whether that defender has an even or odd number of cards in the trump suit. Otherwise, if **Trump Signal** is set to **Vinje**, then when a defender is following suit with a spot card to the lead of the trump suit, that defender will play a high spot card to show an "odd hand" or a low spot card to show an "even hand". An "odd hand" has three suits of odd length (for example, 4-3-3-3, 5-3-3-2, or 5-4-3-1) and an even hand has three suits of even length (for example, 4-4-3-2, 5-4-2-2 or 5-4-4-0). **Trump parity when ruffing** and **Trump parity when leading** work similarly.