

Showing "Attitude" When Partner Initially Leads to Dummy With "Touching" Honors

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An initial leading to Dummy from the "top" of "touching" non-trump honors (e.g., Ace, King; King, Queen) can be a smart move, so that (1) you can take winners before Declarer has the opportunity to slough losers in your strong suit, such that Declarer can then trump your top honors from either Dummy or the Declarer's own hand, and (2) possibly even take additional tricks either using a Queen, or by you trumping the third round of the suit your Partner led. Leading an honor **always** promises Partner that you (1) hold the "touching" honor, and (2) you are next going to lead the second-highest of the touching honors.

Do not lead an Ace singleton, or an Ace from a doubleton. Remember that "Aces are for killing Kings," except when defending against a slam bid. Only play you Ace to kill opponent's King, or perhaps Queen.

When your partner leads "touching" honors to you, **you** then immediately become the **Captain** of your partnership. By showing your "attitude" toward this suit, you **must** order your Partner what your Partner **must** lead on Partner's **third** lead. Partner should not mutiny against your order!

Your order to Partner is, of course, only given once Dummy has come down. Your partner will know that your order has taken into account the cards in the Dummy.

Example Showing "Attitude"

1. The contract is in Spades, and you are on defense. Partner leads the Ace of Diamonds. This lead **promises** holding the King, and that the King will be led next, assuming the Dummy will not be able to trump the King.
2. Dummy comes down, and holds 3 small Diamonds.
3. Your hand holds Q, 7, 3 of Diamonds. Assuming you are playing "inverted" or "upside-down" attitude ("Hi" = "No!");

"Low" = "Yes!"), play your 3 on Partner's Ace. This tells Partner, "**I can take the 3rd trick.**"

4. Your second discard on Partner's King is called the "**echo**". This card confirms your order to Partner regarding the third round of play. Play your 7. This tells Partner, "I really meant my *Order*. I did not play the 3 on your Ace because I had no other card, or because I wasn't paying attention."
5. When you play 2 cards, it is their order of play that is important, rather than whether your cards are >6, or <6. For example, playing a 2, then a 4, orders Partner to play the suit again on the third round. Or playing, a 7, then an 8, also orders Partner to play the suit again on the third round. Conversely, playing (1) a 4, then a 2, or (2) an 8, then a 7, or (3) a 7, then a 3 tells Partner that Partner should switch suits for the third lead. The "echo" allows you to signal even when you lack cards below the 6, or you lack cards greater than the 6.
6. You will tell Partner not to lead the suit in the third round if you do not have the Queen, or you have 3 small cards in the suit and therefore *can't trump in the third round*, or you have a doubleton but no trump, or you believe that Declarer will trump the third round of the same suit.

Example Showing "Suit Preference"

Let's say that you are defending against a Heart contract. Partner's initial lead is the Ace of Clubs. The Dummy comes down, and it holds either (1) Q, 5, 4 of Clubs, or (2) a doubleton pair of 2 smalls Clubs. You do not really need to tell Partner not to lead a Club in the third Round, unless Partner is profoundly oblivious, in which case the correct solution is to *get a new partner*. Instead, you want to tell Partner what suit you want Partner to lead.

Let's say that you hold either (1) the Ace, Queen of Spades, with the King of Spades showing in the Dummy, or (2) you are void in Spades. If you play "**high**" on the Ace lead (>6 of Clubs), you are telling Partner, "In the third round of play, I want you to play the higher of the 2 suits, (1) not including Hearts as trump, and (2) not including the originally led suit (Clubs)." In other words, you are saying, "Please lead a Spade to me in the third round of play."

If you play a "**low**" Club on the initial lead of the Ace (<6), this says, "I want you to play the 'lower' of the 2 suits, not including trump (Hearts), and not including the initially

played suit (Clubs). The lower of the 2 remaining suits is Diamonds. Playing <6 of Clubs tells Partner, "Please lead me a Diamond."

If you do not have a suit preference, play an intermediate Club, and hope that Partner can figure out from Partner's hand and the Board that you were just dumping a Club card, and not really showing "suit preference." For example, if the Dummy contains the top honors in Diamonds, and you play the 3 of Clubs on Partner's lead of the Ace of Clubs, maybe Partner can see this, and infer that you are not asking for a Diamond lead. It's difficult to show Suit Preference, but sometimes it is worth a stab.

Note. When you have bid a suit during the auction, Partner will already know that you have some preference for the bid suit. What if neither player in your Partnership has bid? *Some Partners play that if you lead a low card on your first slough, you may be able to take one or more tricks in the sloughed suit if Partner leads that suit to you.*