

Firing the First Shot: The Opening Lead – Exercises

Problem 1.

Dummy: ♠?
♥?
♦?
You: ♣?
♠532
♥AK642
♦64
♣754

Partner:

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
1NT – P – 2C – P
2D – P – 3NT – P→

Neither you nor partner bid. How many HCPs do you think partner has? What is the longest suit in your hand and partner's hand combined? *What do you lead?*

Problem 2.

Dummy: ♠?
♥?
♦?
You: ♣?
♠T4
♥T3
♦KT9752
♣QT8

Partner:

Auction: North – Partner – South – You
1S – 2H – 2NT – P
3NT – P – P – P

What are your thoughts on this hand? Partner bid a suit, but declarer bid no trump – and you have a six-card suit. *What do you lead?*

Problem 3.

Dummy: ♠?
♥?
♦?
You: ♣?
♠KT94
♥JT8
♦AT
♣K854

Partner:

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
1H – P – 3H – P
4H – P – P – P

Is an attacking lead indicated in this auction? How many HCPs does partner have? *What do you lead?*

Problem 4.

Dummy: ♠?
♥?
♦?
You: ♣? Partner:
♠3
♥9874
♦J876
♣AQ96

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
3S – P – 4S – P
P – P – P

The safe suit to lead is the heart suit, but you need to think about the bidding first. Most of the points probably sit in dummy's hand, and that hand may also have a good source of tricks. Taking your side's tricks may need to be done quickly. *What do you lead?*

Problem 5.

Dummy: ♠?
♥?
♦?
You: ♣? Partner:
♠Q862
♥AJT9
♦J
♣QJT2

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
1S – P – 2S – P
4D – P – 4S – P→

Should you make an attacking lead or a protecting lead? What about leading your singleton ♦J? Where are the majority of the HCPs? What do you know that declarer doesn't know? *What do you lead?*

Problem 6.

Dummy: ♠?
♥?
♦?
You: ♣? Partner:
♠65432
♥K9
♦A53
♣A72

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
1H – P – 2C – P
3C – P – 4H – P→

You know a lot about the opponents' hands, and your side needs at least four tricks to set the contract. If you identify those tricks, you'll be able to answer this question. *What do you lead?*

Problem 7.

Dummy: ♠Q5
♥AK5
♦Q62

Partner: ♣T9853 You:
♠? ♠JT962
♥? ♥T64
♦4 ♦KT5
♣? ♣76

Auction: South – Partner – North – You
1NT – P – 3NT – P
P – P

Partner led the ♦4 and declarer played the ♦2 from dummy. What does partner's lead tell you about his diamond suit? What card do you play to this trick? If you win another trick, what is your plan?

Problem 8.

Dummy: ♠KQJ8
♥KJ
♦T73

Partner: ♣KJ72 You:
♠? ♠2
♥? ♥98763
♦4 ♦A975
♣? ♣A93

Auction: South – Partner – North – You
1S – P – 2C – P
2D – P – 3S – P
4S – P – P – P

Partner led the ♦4. What kind of lead is this? Explain your answer. Declarer played the ♦3 from dummy. What do you do? What is your plan?

Problem 9.

Dummy: ♠J82
♥KQT6
♦AKJ5

Partner: ♣43 You:
♠? ♠94
♥? ♥84
♦? ♦T643
♣J ♣A8752

Auction: South – Partner – North – You
1H – 1S – 3H – P
4H – P – P – P

After this auction, partner led the ♣J. What kind of lead is this? Do you win this trick? When you win a trick, what do you do? Why?

Firing the First Shot: The Opening Lead – Answers

Problem 1.

Dummy:	♠AJ97	
	♥T97	
	♦K52	
You:	♣QT8	Partner:
♠532		♠K64
♥AK642		♥83
♦64		♦T98
♣754		♣A9632

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
1NT – P – 2C – P
2D – P – 3NT – P→

What do you lead? Assuming you and your partner lead fourth best from long suits, lead the ♥4. Your best chance to set the contract is four hearts and a trick from partner. You don't expect to win this trick, but you hope partner will win a trick and return your suit.

Problem 2.

Dummy:	♠AK986	
	♥54	
	♦AQ8	
You:	♣974	Partner:
♠T4		♠Q532
♥T3		♥AQJ86
♦KT9752		♦43
♣QT8		♣K6

Auction: North – Partner – South – You
1S – 2H – 2NT – P
3NT – P – P – P

Partner's bid suggests an attacking lead, so a protecting lead is not your best choice. Do you lead your six-card suit or partner's suit? Partner has the probable side entries, so lead partner's suit. Lead the ♥T.

Problem 3.

Dummy:	♠AJ85	
	♥AQ72	
	♦92	
You:	♣632	Partner:
♠KT94		♠632
♥JT8		♥9
♦AT		♦QJ8753
♣K854		♣JT9

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
1H – P – 3H – P
4H – P – P – P

You have so many HCPs that partner is not likely to take many tricks. It doesn't look like you have a safe attacking lead. Do you have a good protecting lead? Leading a trump is your only safe choice. Lead the ♥J.

Problem 4.

Dummy:	♠A85	
	♥AKQJ	
	♦K52	
You:	♣542	Partner:
♠3		♠76
♥9874		♥T32
♦J876		♦AQT
♣AQ96		♣JT873

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
3S – P – 4S – P
P – P – P

This auction says, “Grab your tricks!”
Play the ♣A. After looking at dummy,
what card will you play next? You hope
partner can take three diamond tricks, so
play the ♦J at trick two.

Problem 5.

Dummy:	♠J43	
	♥K742	
	♦765	
You:	♣K96	Partner:
♠Q862		♠9
♥AJT9		♥86
♦J		♦9843
♣QJT2		♣A87543

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
1S – P – 2S – P
4D – P – 4S – P→

You have four trumps, so a singleton –
especially one in declarer’s second suit
– is probably not a good idea. You have
a great protecting lead in the ♣Q. Try
to shorten declarer’s trumps. He may be
in for a big surprise.

Problem 6.

Dummy:	♠A	
	♥J84	
	♦KQ74	
You:	♣QJT98	Partner:
♠65432		♠JT87
♥K9		♥632
♦A53		♦T982
♣A72		♣43

Auction: South – You – North – Partner
1H – P – 2C – P
3C – P – 4H – P→

You have two side suit aces and a probable
trick with the trump king. Partner
probably doesn’t have many HCPs, but
partner does have known shortness! It
sounds like partner may have a doubleton
club. Break the rules and lead a club. The
♣A is best if you think partner might have
a singleton, but you can underlead it safely
in this auction.

Problem 7.

Dummy:	♠Q5	
	♥AK5	
	♦Q62	
Partner:	♣T9853	You:
♠?		♠JT962
♥?		♥T64
♦4		♦KT5
♣?		♣76

Auction: South – Partner – North – You
1NT – P – 3NT – P
P – P

The ♦4 suggests a fourth-best lead. If this is true, declarer has only two cards higher. Play the ♦T. If it holds, return the ♣7. Save the ♦K to guard dummy's ♦Q.

Problem 8.

Dummy:	♠KQJ8	
	♥KJ	
	♦T73	
Partner:	♣KJ72	You:
♠?		♠2
♥?		♥98763
♦4		♦A975
♣?		♣A93

Auction: South – Partner – North – You
1S – P – 2C – P
2D – P – 3S – P
4S – P – P – P

You don't know where the ♦2 is, but that's the only diamond card in question. It looks like partner's leading a singleton. Win this trick and return the ♦5 for partner to trump. This low card tells partner to return a club to your ♣A. One more ruff sets the contract.

Problem 9.

Dummy:	♠J82	
	♥KQT6	
	♦AKJ5	
Partner:	♣43	You:
♠?		♠94
♥?		♥84
♦?		♦T643
♣J		♣A8752

Auction: South – Partner – North – You
1H – 1S – 3H – P
4H – P – P – P

Partner bid spades, but partner led the ♣J, a protecting lead. It's probably a good idea to win this trick and return partner's bid suit. Return the ♠9, which suggests a doubleton. Hopefully, partner holds ♠AQ and a ruff in your hand will set this contract.