

Fifth Chair



Journalist Leads

A method of opening leads advocated by the Bridge Journal, in 1964-1965. It is still in wide use today, sometimes called Jack Denies, 10 or 9 promises.

Against no trump contracts: A usually from AKJX (XX) or AK10S (XX). Third hand is requested to unblock a high honor if he can afford it, otherwise to give a length signal (high with an even number, low with an odd number of cards in the suit. K from AK or KQ, (assuming a high honor should be led). Q from QJ (or KQ109; third hand is requested to play the jack, if he has it). J from J10. The lead of the jack denies a higher honor. 10 from A109, K109, Q109, AJ10, KJ10. The ten guarantees a higher honor, (queen, king or ace). 9 from 109. The nine promises the ten AND a higher honor. Second highest or highest from lower spot cards to discourage suit continuation. Usually lowest card from a long suit headed by one or two honors to encourage suit continuation.

The purpose of these leads is to make it easier for third hand to know whether to continue the attack on the suit led, or to shift. The following hand shows what can happen when journalist leads are not used.

Bidding had proceeded:

North	East	South	West
1C	pass	1H	pass
1S	pass	3NT	pass
pass	pass		

DUMMY

AJ1063

5

74

AK1072

Partner to opening lead

Q952

QJ104

A63

Q5

Using standard leads, West led the 10 of diamonds to East's ace, south playing the deuce. Now, if declarer, south, started with Kx AKxxx QJx xxx, East must continue diamonds. But if the 10 was West's highest diamond, a heart shift is called for.

East actually continued with diamonds, and found South with Kx Kxxx KQJx Jxx Declarer won the diamond, cashed Ace and King of clubs (because he could hardly afford to lose a finesse to East and get a heart through, and made 10 tricks.

Using journalist leads, West would have lead the 9 of diamonds, and East would have shifted to a heart, defeating the contract.

Against suit contracts, Journalist Leads follow a different pattern. From two touching honors, the second highest is lead: K from AK Q from KQ, etc

From spot cards the highest card below the nine may be lead to indicate a weak holding; otherwise the 3rd highest is led from an even number of cards, or the lowest from an odd number of cards.