

# Ultimate Defence 01

*Welcome to this new series aimed at developing the reader into the ultimate defender. Initially, I was going to title this series 'Perfect Defence' but in so far as there is no such thing as perfect in the game of bridge, have retitled it to "Ultimate Defence", which has somewhat different connotations. By the time you read the final instalment I hope that you will have reached the ultimate as a defender, especially when you are defending in partnership with your most regular partner. If you are going to follow this series through, I suggest it is most important that you ensure that your regular partner also reads each instalment in detail, because defence is definitely a PARTNERSHIP thing, and you should both be on the same track every time you defend a hand.*

All defence begins with the OPENING LEAD. Before we go into more detail on opening leads, we should cover what is NORMAL, rather than what might be considered superior by our avant garde brigade. I will talk about opening leads, and later, signals, from the point of view of what has been in existence since bridge players wanted to be able to defend better than they were defending at the time. Not things like 'reverse attitude', 'odds and evens', 'reverse count' etc etc. If at the end of this series you decide that what the pedlars of such innovations have to offer you is even better to handle and get results from than defending the 'simple' way that I will show you, feel free to turn your hand to any special defensive methods that you would like to adopt, or even develop for yourself. My task here is to help you follow the logic of the NORMAL way of defending that has been in existence for many more years than anything else, and build on that by adding some helpful logical tips that you can use within the structure of a 'normal' defence.

Now let me return to the opening lead. In coming chapters I will try and show you how to choose your opening lead: which SUIT to lead, and then WHICH CARD to lead. But for now let's just look at WHICH CARD you will lead when you have decided on the suit you will lead as a start to your defence.

Before I suggest what is the NORMAL card to lead from certain holdings, let me say that the opening leads will vary depending on whether opponents play with a suit that has been designated as trumps, or whether you are defending against a No Trump contract. There may even be variation in cards you lead in certain situations where the "normal" may be eschewed based on the information you have derived from all that has been available to you from the bidding. You will see what I mean during the course of this series, but for now, let's concentrate on the normal.

Here are a number of different holdings that you may have in the suit you decide to make your opening lead in:

AK 8 4 3; AK 8 3; AK 3; A 9 5 3; A 9 3; A 3

KQ 8 4 3; KQ 8 3; KQ 3; K 8 4 3; K 4 3; K 3; KJ 10 3; KJ 3

QJ 8 3; QJ 3; QJ 10 3; Q 10 4 3; Q 4 3; Q 3

J 10 9 3; J 10 5 3; J 9 5 3; J 10 3; J 5 3; J 3

10 9 8 3; 10 9 6 3; 10 6 3; 10 6

9 8 5 3; 9 7 3; 9 2

7 5 3; 7 3

The very basic structure of your opening leads is to lead the HIGHER of TOUCHING cards, or your 'fourth highest' from a long suit that does not have a solid sequence where you would lead the higher of your touching cards. From four card suits (or longer) the lead is 'fourth highest', from three cards you won't be able to lead your fourth so you lead your LOWEST if you have an honour card in the suit, or your TOP card (this is known as 'top of nothing' but I will mention "MUD" at a later stage). If you have a DOUBLET, you should lead the HIGHER card.

We'll take a closer look at the examples above in the next column.