

Ultimate Defence 21

Here is another example of the “Rule of 11” in action.

Partner leads the FOUR. Dummy puts down J 8 and you hold Q 9 3

If it is a trump contract, which card will YOU follow with?

If it is a No Trump contract, which card will you follow with?

If this is a side suit against a TRUMP contract, it is more than likely that partner has led from the king, therefore you should play your queen as it will promote a trick for the defence, and there will not be any more available in that suit for you, so hope for your one certain trick if partner has the king. A simple rule is that third hand should play as high as necessary to help partner.

But what if it is a NO TRUMP contract? The rule of 11 tells you that declarer has three higher cards than the four. Partner may have the two as well, or declarer may have a four card suit. It looks like declarer has ample stoppers in the suit, at least two of them anyway, with a four card suit, or a certain stopper and only three cards. If there is anything in the bidding that tells you that declarer has four cards in the suit, you should play the NINE! Why? Because, with no trump suit against you, you hope to develop more than just one trick in the suit, and your queen is going to be much more useful next time round (if you gain the lead, and your play here would also depend on what the rest of your hand and dummy's is of course). It is quite possible that the suit is distributed as follows:

	Dummy	
	J 8	
Partner		You
A 7 6 4		Q 9 3
	Declarer	
	K 10 5 2	

You will 'slot' the nine and declarer win what seems to be a cheap 10. But when you gain the lead, you will THEN play your queen, in the process forcing the king from declarer and crushing dummy's jack. You will have just succeeded in doing what seems to be the impossible: turning declarer's combined holding into just one trick. The answer is in the Rule of 11 and in you being aware of the odds against following with your queen at trick one.

Final Note: For those people who like to lead what I call indiscriminate middle cards, and also 'thirds and fifths' which I personally have no time for, just look at what happens if the lead is the SIX instead of the four. You slot the nine and when you gain the lead, push the queen and if it is covered by the king, partner will have the seven and four left and declarer's FIVE will have become a stopper and a trick if the seven is cashed. Even a card as low as a six can become a trick, which is why the recommended lead for us primitive ones is the fourth highest.