

Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to jeryhelms@aol.com.

Ask Jerry



Dear Jerry: If I decide to lead an unbid suit that has three low cards, which card should I lead?

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Dear N.I.: Few issues generate more discussion than what to lead from three low cards, such as ♣8–5–2, in an unbid suit. Some lead top of nothing, the ♣8; some lead low from three or more cards, the ♣2; others lead the middle card, the ♣5, planning to play middle, up, then down—MUD.

In my opinion, MUD is the least effective. The acronym is apt. The message conveyed is murky until the third card in the suit is played. I prefer to lead top of nothing and to lead low

only when I have an honor and might want the suit returned. To illustrate:

NORTH (DUMMY)		EAST	
♠ A K Q 5	♠ 10 7 4 2	♠ 10 7 4 2	♠ 10 7 4 2
♥ Q 4 2	♥ 5	♥ 5	♥ 5
♦ 8 6 3	♦ J 10 9 4	♦ J 10 9 4	♦ J 10 9 4
♣ 9 6 3	♣ A J 10 7	♣ A J 10 7	♣ A J 10 7
WEST (YOU)		SOUTH (DECLARER)	
♠ J 9 8 3	♠ 6	♠ 6	♠ A K J 10 8 6
♥ 9 7 3	♥ A K J 10 8 6	♥ A K J 10 8 6	♥ K Q 2
♦ A 7 5	♦ K Q 2	♦ K Q 2	♦ Q 8 4
♣ K 5 ②	♣ Q 8 4	♣ Q 8 4	♣ Q 8 4

As West, you decide to lead a club after the following auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

If you lead the ♣2, partner wins the ♣A and returns the ♣J, defeating the contract. A diamond return would let the contract make. Now let's change the West and South hands:

NORTH (DUMMY)		EAST	
♠ A K Q 5	♠ 10 7 4 2	♠ 10 7 4 2	♠ 10 7 4 2
♥ Q 4 2	♥ 5	♥ 5	♥ 5
♦ 8 6 3	♦ J 10 9 4	♦ J 10 9 4	♦ J 10 9 4
♣ 9 6 3	♣ A J 10 7	♣ A J 10 7	♣ A J 10 7
WEST (YOU)		SOUTH (DECLARER)	
♠ J 9 8 3	♠ 6	♠ 6	♠ A K J 10 8 6
♥ 9 7 3	♥ A K J 10 8 6	♥ A K J 10 8 6	♥ K 5 2
♦ A Q 7	♦ K 5 2	♦ K 5 2	♦ K Q 4
♣ ⑧ 5 2	♣ K Q 4	♣ K Q 4	♣ K Q 4

If you lead the ♣2 and partner wins the ♣A, a club return let's declarer make an overtrick. Instead, lead the ♣8, top of nothing. Now partner is likely to switch to the ♦J and defeat the contract. —JH