



Ask Jerry

Jerry Helms

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Dear Jerry,

Holding A-K-x(x) of a side suit on opening lead, there seem to be conflicting opinions about the proper card to lead. My teacher insists that leading the king is correct, while my new partner insists that we lead the ace. Is one superior to the other?

Rehbock in Cyberspace

Dear Rehbock,

What a shock! I have a very definite opinion of what is best. For starters, let's consider the following situation where partner leads the king against a suit contract:

	4 3 2	
K Q 10 9		J 8 5
	A 7 6	

On this layout, using standard carding, you should clearly signal encouragement by smiling and playing the 8. (Just kidding about the smile.) What if the layout was this, however?

	4 3 2	
A K 10 9		J 8 5
	Q 7 6	

This time, playing standard, you should discourage with the 5, hoping to gain entry in another suit to return partner's lead and take three tricks against declarer's suit contract.

If the lead of the king could be A-K-x or K-Q-x, it's often impossible to signal intelligently. To avoid these ambiguous situations, I prefer leading the king from K-Q-x and to

lead the ace from A-K-x. This works very well, especially if you try to avoid leading an "ace from space," a phrase that means leading an unsupported ace. On most auctions, if partner leads an ace, assume he has the king and signal accordingly.

The agreement to lead ace from A-K-x applies to opening leads versus suit contracts only! In the middle of the play, the king could be from K-Q-x or A-K-x in as much as there are certainly cash-out situations where an unsupported ace will be the right shift.

Incidentally, if your partner leads a king, ostensibly denying the ace, then follows by playing the ace, it should signify a doubleton in that suit, or ... that he forgot your agreements!

Hi Jerry,

I would appreciate your thoughts on the following disagreement my partner and I have. For instance, I bid 1♦, partner responds 1♥, and I bid 1♠. Partner rebids hearts at the two level.

One of us feels that it's very important to let partner know that there are five hearts in responder's hand and that the five hearts don't have to be very strong. The other says the rebid of 2♥ has to show at least six or a very strong five-card suit. Help!

Louise T.

Hi Louise,

The answer to your question is found in an often cited Jerry-ism: When responder rebids a suit at

A good bid is the one that most resembles the cards held.

the two level after a new suit rebid by opener, as in your example, he

expresses minimum values and suggests a possible final resting spot. Be aware that after opener has bid two suits, he could be void in responder's suit. Therefore, I side with whomever suggested a six-card or longer suit or at a minimum, a strong five-card suit.

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
1♦	1♥
1♠	?

♠Q6 ♥Q8753 ♦92 ♣QJ105

1NT is clearly superior. If partner happens to hold three hearts, and the auction stops in 1NT, it's okay: you can use your eight-card fit to take tricks in notrump. If you rebid this motley suit, however, and partner passes, partner better have heart support or you are in deep trouble!

♠8 ♥KQJ105 ♦75 ♣87642

Bid 2♥. This fits the Jerry-ism cited above. □