

## MIT Intermediate Bridge Lesson Series

### LEADS: The Decision Process

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### Goals

One is on lead 25% of the time. Thus, leading has a significant impact on one's results. Determine the lead is much deeper then ask "Which Suit?" and "Which Card?". We will discuss the decision process prior to selecting a card.

1. Lead Decision Process
2. Defensive Strategy
3. Lead Questions

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### Lead Decision Process

One should follow three steps when determining a lead:

1. Does this auction call for an aggressive or passive lead (what type of defense strategy is required)
2. What suit?
3. What card?

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### Defensive Strategies

There are five main defensive strategies and a few less common ones. They are:

1. Active Defense
2. Passive Defense
3. Forcing Declarer to Lose Control
4. Cutting Down Declarers' Ruffing Power
5. Creating Trump Trick(s)
6. Other (Deceptive Plans, Avoidance, etc.)

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## Active Defense

Going after your side's actual and potential winners as quickly as possible. Active defensive includes usually somewhat (or very) risky leads.

## Passive Defense

The opposite of an Active Defense. Usually occurs when the defending side tricks are safe. Being patient and making declarer earn their tricks. The goal is not to give any "cheap" or undeserved tricks to declare.

Note: Leading the King from KQJ is a passive lead. While one is setting up the defenders tricks, it will not give anything away.

## Forcing Declarer to Lose Control

The goal is to get control of the trump suit. When the defenders have enough high cards or an established suit, by repeatedly leading winners, they force declarer to ruff. Thus shorting declarer trumps length, allowing the defenders to seize control of the trumps.

Called either a Forcing Defense  
or Tapping Defense.

## Cutting Down Declarers' Ruffing Power

This strategy involves leading trump to reduce the number of times that a side suit can be ruffed. It also prevents a cross-ruff.

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### Creating Trump Trick(s)

Getting ruffs is the primary way to create a trump trick. Singleton leads or doubletons in partners suits can often produce ruffs. Another trump trick setup, is a trump promotion.

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### Are the Opponents' hands likely to be balanced?

If the answer is yes then a passive lead may be indicated. However, if there is any indication of a long suit somewhere then an aggressive lead is required.

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### Are the Opponents' suits likely to be breaking badly?

If the answer is yes then look at your holding in their suits. Passive leads are more likely to be effective with long honor holdings. A trump lead may be called for.

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### Is the hand likely to be played on a crossruff?

If the answer is yes then lead a trump.

## In doubt about leading aggressively or passively?

Most suggest lead aggressively. In general only lead passively when you know it right.

## Listen Example 1

Q: Dummy has shown a preference for opener's second suit. Often when dummy has passed opener's minor suit rather than preference to the major.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

## Listen Example 1

Q: Dummy has shown a preference for opener's second suit. Often when dummy has passed opener's minor suit rather than preference to the major.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Cutting Down Declarers' Ruffing Power. Aggressive!**

## Listen Example 2

Q: Declarer appears to be strong while dummy is weak.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

## Listen Example 2

Q: Declarer appears to be strong while dummy is weak.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Passive Defense. Passive!**

## Listen Example 3

Q: The Opponents' are sacrificing without much values or long side suit.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

## Listen Example 3

Q: The Opponents' are sacrificing without much values or long side suit.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Cutting Down Declarers' Ruffing Power. Aggressive!**

## Listen Example 4

Q: Dummy or Declarer has shown a long side suit.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

## Listen Example 4

Q: Dummy or Declarer has shown a long side suit.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Active Lead. Aggressive!**

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## Listen Example 5

Q: You're defending a suit contract where the opponents are fairly balanced.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

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## Listen Example 5

Q: You're defending a suit contract where the opponents are fairly balanced.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Passive Lead. Passive!**

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## Listen Example 6

Q: You have a clear advantage in overall power. Possible you have doubled their contract.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

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## Listen Example 6

Q: You have a clear advantage in overall power. Possible you have doubled their contract.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Cutting Down Declarers' Ruffing Power. Aggressive!**

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## Listen Example 7

Q: You have length in the opponents trump suit and a decent or good long suit of your own.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

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## Listen Example 7

Q: You have length in the opponents trump suit and a decent or good long suit of your own.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Force Declarer to lose control. Aggressive!**

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## Listen Example 8

Q: You have length in the trump suit and you know declarer is short in a side suit.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

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## Listen Example 8

Q: You have length in the trump suit and you know declarer is short in a side suit.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Force Declarer to lose control. Aggressive!**

## Listen Example 9

Q: You have a few small trump, medium length in partners bid suit and a singleton.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

## Listen Example 9

Q: You have a few small trump, medium length in partners bid suit and a singleton.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

**Create a trump trick by going for a ruff. Aggressive!**

## Listen Example 10

Q: You have QJT of trump, medium length in partners bid suit and a singleton.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?



## Listen Example 10

Q: You have QJT of trump, medium length in partners bid suit and a singleton.

Whats the Defensive Strategy? Are you making an aggressive or passive lead?

Active Lead – partners suit.  
Passive/Aggressive!

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The Decision Process**

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