

Rule of Eleven

Ever since bridge became a popular game, players have been trying to come up with new ideas to improve the game. Some have succeeded and some have not succeeded very well. The bridge community is quite selective and sometimes a new idea takes a long time before becoming accepted.

This is especially true if the new idea is based on mathematics. Anyone, who can count up to 13, can play bridge. There are 13 cards in every suit and once they are played, there are no more to be played.

Here is another mathematical calculation, equation, formula. Its application becomes active, only when you are absolutely sure that the lead is the fourth down from the suit lead. Once you have ascertained this possibility, then you start counting. **The principle behind the Rule of 11 is the same whether the contract is a suit contract or a No Trump contract.**

This formula was devised by someone who was actually playing Whist at the time, **Mr. Robert Frederick Foster** in 1881, and also by **Mr. E.M.F. Benecke** of Oxford around the same time. Mr. Robert Frederick Foster established his reputation with his publication of the book ***Foster's Complete Hoyle***, published in the year 1897, and a copy of which was embedded into the time capsule at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

Source - Page 168: Author Mr. E.V. Shepard, Scientific Auction Bridge: A Clear Exposition of the Game to Aid Both the Beginner and the Experienced Player, With explicit and Easy Rules for Bidding and Playing, 1913, Publisher: Harper, New York, New York, United States, and London, England, LC: 13006351

However, his Rule of Eleven was published in his writing of the ***Foster's Whist Manual: A Complete System of Instruction in the Game***, published presumably in the year 1885, published by Brentano, of New York, New York. The source of this information is from Bibliographies of Works on Playing Cards And Gaming by Norton T. Horr, 1905, published by Longmans, Green and Co., of London, England.

The Rule of Eleven states that the player subtracts the number of the ***first card lead*** from the number 11, and then the result is the number of cards ***higher*** contained in the hands of the **partner** of the leader and the **declarer** and the **dummy**. This information is useful not only to the declarer, but also to the partner of the leader, who can apply the same mathematical calculation. This principle applies only to the opening lead, not to any other leads when leading to the second trick or any trick thereafter.

This information can be useful in deciding to play which card, either from the hand of the partner of the leader, or the hand of the declarer or from dummy.

Example 1:
Declarer: South
Contract: 3 No Trump
Vulnerability: None
Lead: 6 of Diamonds

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|---------------|---|
| | ♠ A K 9 8 | | |
| | ♥ 9 8 7 | | |
| | ♦ Q J 5 3 | | |
| | ♣ J 4 | | |
| ♠ J 5 3 2 | N | ♠ 10 4 | |
| ♥ K 5 4 | W | ♥ J 10 2 | E |
| ♦ K 10 7 6 | S | ♦ 8 2 | |
| ♣ 10 7 | | ♣ A 9 6 5 3 2 | |
| | ♠ Q 7 6 | | |
| | ♥ A Q 6 3 | | |
| | ♦ A 9 4 | | |
| | ♣ K Q 8 | | |

According to the Rule of Eleven, the partner of the leader subtracts 6 from 11 and the result is 5. There are 5 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds in the hands of the dummy, declarer and the partner of the leader. Likewise, the declarer subtracts the number 6 from 11 and the result is 5 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds in the hands of the dummy, of the declarer, and of the partner of the leader.

The partner of the leader looks at dummy and his hand, and counts 3 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds. The partner of the leader has 1 card **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds. The partner of the leader is not happy about the lead.

Declarer looks at dummy and his hand, and counts 4 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds. Declarer has 4 cards **higher** than the 6 of Diamonds. Declarer is happy about the lead.

Example 2:
Declarer: South
Contract: 3 No Trump
Vulnerability: None
Lead: 7 of Spades

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|---|
| | ♠ K 5 2 | | |
| | ♥ 9 8 7 | | |
| | ♦ K Q J 5 3 | | |
| | ♣ J 4 | | |
| ♠ Q J 8 7 | N | ♠ A 10 9 3 | |
| ♥ K 5 4 3 | W | ♥ J 2 | E |
| ♦ 10 7 6 | S | ♦ 4 2 | |
| ♣ 10 7 | | ♣ A 9 6 5 3 | |
| | ♠ 6 4 | | |
| | ♥ A Q 10 6 | | |
| | ♦ A 9 8 | | |
| | ♣ K Q 8 2 | | |

Declarer sees the 7 of Spades, and assumes it is the fourth down from the longest and strongest suit. Declarer subtracts 7 from 11 and counts 4 **higher** cards than the 7 of Spades. Declarer counts only 1 card in his hand and dummy **higher** than the 7 of Spades. This spells trouble for the declarer.

The partner of the leader also assumes that the 7 of Spades is fourth down from the longest and strongest suit of his partner. East also arrives at 4 cards **higher** than the 7 of Spades. East can see all of these 4 cards: King of Spades in the dummy, Ace-10-9 in his own hand. If declarer calls for the King of Spades, East plays the Ace of Spades and returns a Spade. With this lead, East-West win 4 Spade tricks and the setting trick is the Ace of Clubs. If declarer decides to play low on the first trick, East lets the 7 of Spades ride, because he knows that there is no **higher** Spade than the 7 of Spades in the hand of the declarer. West continues to play the 8 of Spades, and declarer plays low, as does East. There is no way that declarer will take one Spade trick. East-West set the contract by applying the Rule of Eleven.

The Rule of Eleven has a lot of merit and can be used effectively. Each partner must be attuned to recognize when it is appropriate to use it, or even to consider it. The Rule of Eleven has its most application against a No Trump contract since it is generally accepted practice that the leader plays the fourth card down from his longest and strongest suit. The Rule of Eleven can also be effectively employed against a suit contract.

Source: "Rule of Eleven," *The Bridge Guys* - <http://www.bridgeguys.com/Conventions/Rule11.html>