

Here are some reasons to lead a trump

- Your opponents have clearly bid higher than their High Card points would justify.
 - Their only chance to make the contract is to score several ruffs in dummy or their only chance is to cross-ruff the hand
 - 1N 2S 2N 3S
X AP They have about 16 HCPs so way under High card need for 3S (23 total pts typically). Their only chance is to score lots of ruffs, so lead trump every chance you get

- You are behind declarer, with a stack in declarer's side suit
 - You have S AJ98 H xxx D A9x C JT6 in 2nd seat (behind declarer)
1S P 1N P
2H P P P Declare has 5 spades and must do something to avoid losing many of them. Your AJ98 represents 3 natural tricks unless declarer can ruff some of them -> lead trump

- Partner has converted your low-level takeout double into a penalty double **by passing**, instead of taking it out. Partner has a VERY good trump holding of 5 cards or more. The only way declarer can come close is if she makes lots of cheap ruffs in her hand, so the **defense** should endeavour to draw trumps as quickly as possible .
 - You have S Ax H KQJT8 D xxxx C Qx; In 2nd seat
1H P P X
P P P **Lead the HK** to start the process of drawing declarer's trumps. When you get in with the SA, play all your good trumps

- The bidding and contract infer that leading any side suit would be likely to cost the defense a trick, so lead a trump. Trump is safer as opponents likely have all the high cards. Partner has next to nothing and the usual chance of an honour in 3rd seat to help promote a winner for the defense is likely to fail miserably.

- You have S 9xx H Qxx D KJxx C Kxx
Bidding has gone (opps silent)
1N- 2H
2S - 4C
4S - 6S Their HCs, say 31+ plus your 9 leave your partner with 0, maybe 1 HCP, hence leading away from any honour is rarely going to find partner with a helping honour; lead trump

Bidding can often provide a clear reason for a trump lead

1S – 4C

4S – AP

4C is a splinter showing 1 or 0 clubs. Declarer may need several club ruffs in dummy to make the most tricks, so consider a trump

- When partner doubles a part-score, a trump lead is often best. The double implies that your side has extra HCPs - and hence opps are short of HCs, hence must need tricks from ruffing.
or partner has a trump stack, and would welcome a trump lead

What trump holding is good/bad for a trump lead

- With 1 (or 4) of them not as good an idea to lead trump.
 - If you have 1, partner may have 4, and you are telling declarer how to play the suit. If you have 4, same issue.
 - Consider declarer has AJTxx opp K9x in dummy. You lead stiff trump, partner's Q of Qxxx has now been located and finessed
 - Also, if partner has 4, he has a nuisance holding, and best defense may be a forcing one, meaning to force declarer to ruff in long hand, reducing her ability to control the trump suit.
 - Defending 4S, with S x H KQTxx D Qxx C JT9x; lead KH, hoping partner has A or J and you can pound declarer with ht leads every time. (see note on forcing defense in web site's Defense booklet)
 - Defending 4S, with S JTxx H x D KQJx C xxxx; lead KD, not your singleton. You do NOT want a ruff, as you have a "nuisance" trump holding, including a natural trick. If you ruff a club, you actually help declarer, who now only has to draw 3 (not 4) rds of trumps (Hand __)
- With Ax. Seems safe but partner had Jxx and declarer had to guess who to play J for
 - K98xx opp QTx
- With any holding that can cost a trick. Remember, declarer has to play entire suit, cannot discard a trump to avoid a loser, be patient. Do not lead these suits....
 - KQx -- declarer had AJT9x opp xxx and had 2 losers, now one
 - AKT -- declarer has QJ9xx opp xxx and had 3 losers, now two

But QJT is fine, as is JT98, ie a solid sequence

- Auction has gone 1S - 1N
 3S - 4S
 - is a trump lead okay from QJx? What if dummy comes down with ATx, and declarer has K98xx, bye bye trump trick
- Best time to lead trumps is when you have 2 or 3 small and a reason to lead them
 - Consider bidding of 1S - 3S 4S
 - Why is a trump lead safe here? You know opps have 9+ trumps, so if you have 2 small, partner has no honour or one that is not harmed by your lead; with Kx, for example, getting finessed anyway. With Qx, declarer will play for drop. If A is in dummy, partner gets his Kx trick.

- Do not lead a trump when opps are on a misfit.
 - 1S 1N
 - 2S 3C
 - 3S POpps trumps might be KJT8532 opposite stiff (or void) and you are just helping her draw trumps. Also entries to dummy limited

Putting your decisions together

- When you have a reason to lead trump but not a good holding to lead from, you have to judge what is best. If you should lead a trump but have, for example, Kx of trumps, you have conflicting guidelines. Here, while a trump lead may gain your side a trick, leading from Kx will almost certainly cost you a trick, so don't lead a trump
- Similarly, holding 8653 of trump and a reason to lead trump, the odds favour the trump lead rather than guideline not to do so with 4 trumps (a forcing defense may or may not work out).

Other resources

- omahabridge.org/Library/mh_Trump_Leads.pdf
- [When to lead trumps – Bridge Webs – \(google it\)](#)