

Lead-Directing Doubles

A **“Lead-Directing” Double** is a “Double”, by either Defender, which encourages a particular suit to be lead on defense. Such doubles usually encourage an unusual lead; i.e., either the lead of the opening leader’s bid suit, a lead of the doubler’s bid suit, or the first suit bid by Dummy, subject to Partnership agreement and the guidelines outlined herein. It may not always be feasible to tell which unusual lead from amongst several possible unusual leads is best, but at the very least, Partner should listen for Lead-Directing Doubles and make the attempt to discern which suit Partner may favor based upon the following principles:

Lead –Directing Doubles fall into four categories: (1) Leads against voluntarily-bid suit Slams, (2) Doubles of artificial bids and cue-bids, (3) Doubles of 3-NT, and (4) Miscellaneous lead-directing doubles.

- (1) **Doubles Against Voluntarily-Bid Suit Slams:** (Notice the words “voluntarily-bid”) – On occasion, the Opponents may bid a slam as a sacrifice. Doubling a sacrifice does ***not*** call for any particular lead. It is a penalty double, pure and simple!

A “Lightner Double” is a special lead-directing double. It is one against a voluntarily-bid slam. It asks Partner to make an unusual lead, the most common interpretation being to lead the first bid suit of the Opponent’s other than the trump suit, i.e., most often, the first side suit bid by the Dummy. Of course, if you can defeat a Slam contract irrespective of Partner’s opening lead, double anyway.

There are two main scenarios when one makes a “Lightner Double” – (A) Doubling a slam when neither Defender has bid a suit calls for an unusual lead, ***not*** a trump, and ***not*** an un-bid suit. If it’s a close call, the first suit bid by the Dummy is favored. (B) Doubling a slam where one or both Defenders have bid, forbids the lead of any suit(s) the Partnership has bid, as well as, of course, a trump. Once again, the first suit bid by the Dummy is favored.

- (2) **Doubles of Artificial Bids and Cue-Bids:** Doubles of all artificial bids (Stayman “2C”, Gerber “4C”, Western Cue-Bids, 4th-Suit Forcing Bids, Cue-Bidding first-round controls for Slams, and responses to Ace-Asking Conventions (Gerber, Blackwood, and Roman Key-Card Blackwood) are also all lead-directing. Failure to double an artificial bid, by inference, is also informative, in that Partner will assume you are not particularly interested in the lead of that suit, rather than you had fallen asleep. Remember, when Partner does not double an artificial bid or a cue-bid, you can rule out that suit as an opening lead choice if it’s a close call.
- (3) **Doubles of 3-NT Contracts:** Against a 3-NT contract, there are five scenarios when a Defender may make a Lead-Directing Double – (A) When no suit(s) has been bid by either side - calls for the lead of a suit (Usually the shortest Major) in which the leading Partner has no honors; (B) When neither Defender has bid, but Dummy has bid one or two suits – calls for a lead of Dummy’s first-bid suit; (C) When the Defender who has opened or overcalled at the 1-Level makes the “Double” – calls for the lead of the suit bid by the Defender; (D) When one Defender bids a suit and the other Defender doubles – unless the Doubling Partner has supported Partner’s bid suit it calls for the lead of Dummy’s first bid suit; and (E) When each Defender has bid a different suit – calls for the lead of Partner’s bid suit, ***not*** the suit bid by the one who Doubles.
- (4) **Miscellaneous Lead-Directing Doubles:** A Double of a 6-NT contract calls for the lead of the first suit bid by the Dummy.