

Defender's Number Rules

PASSIVE VS AGGRESSIVE LEADS

Lead guidelines are usually passive in nature. Knowing how many high card points (“HCPs”) Partner holds helps in determining whether to have a Passive or Aggressive Opening Lead. When Partner holds less than 4 HCPs, then a Passive Lead is called for on the hand.

THEORY OF DEFENDER'S NUMBER RULES

There are 40 HCPs in the deck. The Declaring side's HCPs are based on the bidding. Defenders have the remaining HCPs. Each Defender subtracts their HCPs from the Defender's total HCPs and the difference is the approximate number of HCPs each Partner holds.

The following Number Rules help Defenders figure out how many HCPs Partner holds:

Rule of 14 ~ When Declarer is in **Game** ~ 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠, assume the Declaring Side holds 26 HCPs. Subtract your HCPs from 14 and the difference is the approximate number of HCPs Partner holds.

$$40 - 26 = 14$$

Rule of 17 ~ When Declarer is in an **Invitational** contract ~ 2NT or any Three Level, assume the Declaring Side has 23 HCPs. Subtract your HCPs from 17 and the difference is the approximate number of HCPs Partner holds.

$$40 - 23 = 17$$

Rule of 19 ~ When Declarer is in a **Partscore** contract ~ less than 2NT, assume the Declaring Side has 21 HCPs. Subtract your HCPs from 19 and the difference is the approximate number of HCPs Partner holds.

$$40 - 21 = 19$$

FINE TUNING THE LEVEL

Listen to the auction to determine “How” the contract level was determined. Occasionally the Declaring Side is “Pushed” to the next level by Defenders. Other times the Declaring Side preempts themselves to a higher level.

Compare

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	3♥	AP
Number Rule of 17			

North	East	South	West
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♥	AP
Number Rule of 19			



North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	AP		
Number Rule 14			


North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	4♥	AP
Number Rule of 19			

Defender's Number Rules

Board 1

East Deals

None Vul

<p>♠ 6 4 2 ♥ K 8 5 4 ♦ K J 9 6 ♣ A J</p>		<p>♠ J 10 3 ♥ 7 ♦ Q 7 4 3 2 ♣ 7 5 4 2</p>	<p>♠ 9 7 5 ♥ A Q 10 6 2 ♦ A 10 8 ♣ K 3</p>
	<p>♠ A K Q 8 ♥ J 9 3 ♦ 5 ♣ Q 10 9 8 6</p>		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♥	Pass
2 NT	Pass	4 ♥	All pass

Lead: ♠ A. Top of touching honors.

Auction: East opens 1 ♥ showing 13-21 total points and 5+ hearts. North and South pass throughout. West's 2 NT is Jacoby 2 NT showing 4+ hearts and 13+ total points including 12 HCP, 1 Short Suit Point and 1 Honor Upgrade Point. East rebids 4 ♥ showing 12-14 total points and no singleton, void or 2nd 5-card suit.

Declarer: Counting losers from East's hand ~ the Master Hand: 3 spades and 1 diamond. The diamond suit is a Two-Way guess.

Defender:

Defender's Checklist:

1. Review the Auction to Determine Number Rule.
2. Calculate the Approximate number of High Card Points Partner Holds.
3. Work through the Opening Lead Checklist ~ versus Suits or Notrump to choose the suit.
4. Choose the card within the suit.

South uses the Number Rule of 14 because the Declaring Side reach game based on strength. South has 12 HCPs. Therefore, North holds approximately 2 HCPs. In a suit contract, Defender's must reevaluate when Dummy shows up to include Short Suit Points and Honor Upgrades. Here, West has 2 non-HCP points. Accordingly, North could hold up to 4 HCP.

Opening Lead Suit Checklist: 1. Short Suit Lead ~ Exception when Partner holds less than 4 HCPs. 2. Partner's Bid Suit. 3. Top of Touching Honors.

On the lead of the ♠ A, Declarer must guess the diamond to make 4 ♥. If South led the ♦ 5 instead, Declarer no longer has a guess for 4 ♥.

Defender's Number Rules

Board 2

East Deals

N-S Vul

	♠ 8		
	♥ 10 7 2		
	♦ 9 5 4 2		
	♣ 8 7 4 3 2		
♠ J 4 3 2	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A K Q 10 6	
♥ 9 4		♥ A Q 8 5	
♦ A Q 7 3		♦ 8 6	
♣ K Q 9		♣ 10 6	
	♠ 9 7 5		
	♥ K J 6 3		
	♦ K J 10		
	♣ A J 5		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♠	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 NT	Pass
4 ♠	All pass		

Lead: ♠ 5. Low card in trump suit.

Auction: East opens 1 ♠ showing 5+ spades and 13-21 total points. North and South pass throughout. West's 2 NT bid is Jacoby 2 NT showing 4+ spades and 13+ total points ~ asking Opener to describe shape and points. East rebids 3 NT showing 15-17 total points, semi-balanced hand with no singleton, void or 2nd 5-card suit. West signs off in 4 ♠.

Declarer: Counting losers in East's hand ~ the Master Hand: 3 hearts, 1 diamond and 1 club. There are finesses to take. Based on the Trump Lead, it is likely that South holds the missing honors.

Defender:

Defender's Checklist:

1. Review the Auction to Determine Number Rule.
2. Calculate the Approximate number of High Card Points Partner Holds.
3. Work through the Opening Lead Checklist ~ versus Suits or Notrump to choose the suit.
4. Choose the card within the suit.

South uses the Number Rule of 14 and calculates Partner holds approximately 1 HCP. A Passive Lead is called for because 3rd Hand has no honors to contribute to the trick. It is too dangerous to lead hearts, diamonds or club and therefore, a trump lead it is! When leading trump, lead low.

It turns out a diamond lead would have been "Safe" but South has no way of knowing before seeing Dummy.