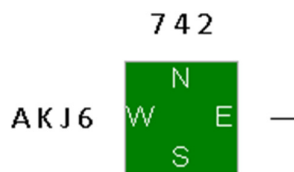
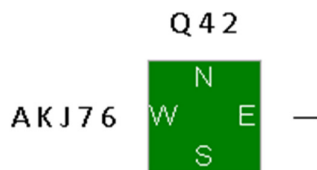


Signalling on Partner's Opening Lead

When partner leads an honour against a suit contract it is often not clear to them whether to continue the suit or switch. It is up to you to help them out by playing a card which either encourages or discourages a continuation of the suit that was led. Many partnerships use a low card to encourage partner to continue the suit and a high card to indicate that they don't want the suit continued.



If West leads the ace on opening lead they can safely continue spades if East has the queen, but they should switch to another suit if declarer has the queen. East must help them out by playing a low card to encourage them to continue spades or a higher card to encourage them to switch.



West leads the ace against a suit contract. Continuing the suit may not be best if East has three cards and declarer has two, but will work well if East has the doubleton. East must play low to encourage partner to continue the suit; play high to encourage them to switch.

By and large you encourage a continuation if you have

- An honour card that is touching the sequence that partner has shown. If partner leads the king (showing that they have the queen) you should encourage if you have the ace or the jack – you know that a continuation will not give declarer a cheap trick
- A shortage and you want partner to continue so that you can eventually trump. If partner leads the ace (showing that they have the king) you should encourage with a doubleton because you can trump the third round.

South Deals

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

South opens 1 NT and becomes declarer in 3 NT. West's opening lead is the A♠. If spades are continued the defence will take the first five tricks. If West switches to another suit at trick two the contract will make. East must help West out by playing the 2♠ at trick 1, encouraging a continuation of the spade suit.

South Deals

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

South opens 1 NT and becomes declarer in 3 NT. West's opening lead is the A♠. If West continues spades the Q♠ will be declarer's 9th trick and the contract will make. If West switches at trick 2 the contract will fail. East must help West out by playing their highest spade at trick 1, discouraging a continuation of the spade suit.