

Rule of 11

The Rule of 11 has many beginners (and some not so beginners) seriously puzzled. What is the significance of this mysterious number 11 ? Let me explain. Every suit in a pack of bridge cards consists of 13 cards. If we were to continue the numbers for the picture cards ranked above the 10 the numbers would be

11 for the Jack - 12 for the Queen - 13 for the King - 14 for the Ace

If we want to know how many cards in a suit are **higher ranking** than for example the **6** we simply subtract **6** from **14** (the highest ranking card) to find the answer : $14 - 6 = 8$



If you lead the **6** as the **4th highest** card in your hand this means of course that you hold **3 higher cards** in that suit **yourself**. The other players combined therefore hold

$14 - \text{your } 3 - 6 = 5$ or simply : $11 - 6 = 5$ cards higher than the 6

	Dummy ♠Q72			According to the Rule of 11 there are 5 spades higher than the six shared by dummy, declarer, and you. You can see all five of them. If declarer plays low and as long as partner has led fourth best, your
Partner ♠6 led	Declarer ♠???	You ♠A108		eight of spades will win the trick! In fact partner holds ♠KJ96.
	$11 - 6 = 5$			

	Dummy ♥J92			The ♥5 opening lead reveals that there are $11 - 5 = 6$ cards higher than the 5 in the combined hands of yourself, Dummy and Declarer. You can see five of these cards in Dummy and in your own hand. Declarer therefore can hold only one, probably the Ace or perhaps the King. Also the ♥2 is exposed in Dummy, but the two other cards below partner's 5 (the 3 and 4) are missing. Partner may therefore well hold 5 cards in the Heart suit, but not 6, as this would leave Declarer with a singleton only, which is most unlikely for a NT bidder.
Partner ♥5 led	Declarer ♥???	You ♥Q107		Declarer must hold either A (or K) 4 3, leaving your partner with a 4-card Heart suit, or A (or K) 4 or A (or K) 3, in which case your partner holds 5 Hearts.
	$11 - 5 = 6$			It is clear that Declarer will make 1 trick in Hearts only and your side 3 or perhaps 4. Therefore if Dummy plays the Jack cover it with your Queen, otherwise play your 10. This will force out Declarer's King.
				If Declarer plays low instead and you win the 1st trick, lead your remaining highest Heart (Q or 10) at the next trick. This will avoid blocking partner's long suit

It should be noted that the Rule of 11 will also work for declarer! Consider your play after an opening lead in the spade suit while in a 3NT contract:

	Dummy ♠AKJ9			Left to your own devices you might have taken a spade finesse in order to take an extra spade trick. Just because the opponents led the spade suit does not change that possibility. If anything the fact that LHO led a spade should encourage you into thinking that the spade finesse will likely be successful. Before you play the ♠J you should apply the Rule of 11.
LHO ♠6 led		RHO ♠???		$11 - 6 = 5$. There are only five spades higher than the ♠6 in the dummy, your hand, and with RHO. You can see all five of them! Do you see that you can take four spade tricks? The ♠9 will win the first trick and you can later take the "marked" finesse against the ♠Q. Not a play that you would have made if left alone
	You ♠72			