

LIGHTNER DOUBLES (and Doubles of NT Games)

The Lightner Double (named after Theodore Lightner who originated it) is used when opponents freely bid to slam. (It does NOT apply if the opponents bid a slam as a sacrifice over your game or slam.) The reward for doubling a slam and it going down is very small compared to the risk of what you lose if you double the slam and then it makes. Thus, the double is reserved for situations when you believe a special lead is essential to defeat the slam.

The rules for a **Lightner Double** are:

- 1) This double calls for an unusual lead.
- 2) If you and your partner have bid a suit (or suits), do NOT lead that suit (or suits).
- 3) Do not lead a trump. That is NOT an unusual lead.
- 4) Do not lead the unbid suit. That would be a usual lead.
- 5) Usually, the double indicates that the doubler is void in a suit (if the slam was bid in a suit contract). Try to locate partner's likely void (usually your longest suit) and lead that suit.
- 6) If you think the bidding and your hand make it unlikely that your partner has a void, then lead the first-bid suit of dummy. Partner may have two quick tricks in that suit.
- 7) If you think the bidding and your hand make it unlikely that your partner has a void, and dummy has not bid a suit, then lead the second bid suit of Declarer. (That would be unusual.)

If you are aware of Lightner Doubles, you must be careful NOT to double in circumstances when you think your partner's normal lead will set the contract. (If, for example, you have bid a suit and you have the Ace in that suit and another Ace, do NOT double. First of all, one of the opponents may be void in your suit. Second of all, a double would ask partner for an unusual lead and guarantee that s/he does NOT lead your suit!)

Doubles of NT Games

Generally a double of a NT game suggests one of the following leads:

- 1) **If you or your partner has bid a suit, lead that suit.** Your partner is saying that either s/he has help in the suit that you bid, or that his/her suit is so good that it is imperative you lead it despite the opponents having guaranteed at least one stopper for NT.
- 2) **If both you and your partner have bid a suit, the double should suggest that you lead your suit.** (The assumption is that you would normally lead partner's suit.) [Note that you can have a different partnership agreement if you choose.]
- 3) **If neither you nor your partner has bid, the double usually asks for the first bid suit of dummy.** (For example, 1C-P-1H-P-1NT-P-3NT-* your partner is asking for a heart lead against three no trumps.)
- 4) **If no one has bid a suit, your partner is saying: "I have a suit in my hand that will defeat 3NT if you just lead it. I hope you can figure it out!"** Generally, that means a suit that is solid or missing only one top honor (e.g., KQJ109x or AKQJ10x, etc.). Usually, the opening leader will lead his/her weakest suit, i.e., the suit in which it would be possible for partner to have such a strong holding.