

Rule of 11 ...It's Magic!

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There are many “RULES” in bridge. Most rules and conventions are just tools to help you reach the optimum contract or help in play of the hand or defense. It is used mainly with No Trump contracts.

It is a mathematical formula used when opening leads are fourth-best. It enables the third hand player to count how many cards Declarer holds that are higher than the opening lead. The Rule works as follows:

The third player subtracts the number of the first card led from the number 11.

The result will be the number of cards higher contained in the hands of the Partner of the Leader, the Declarer, and the Dummy.

Example:

	DUMMY	
	♠AQ8	
PARTNER		YOU
♠6		♠K93

In this example, Partner leads the ♠6. We subtract 6 from 11 and get 5.

Five is the number of cards higher than the ♠6 that are not in the opening leader's hand.

We can see three in Dummy, and we have two in our hand = 5 We can surmise Declarer had no card higher than the ♠6 in his hand. Therefore, we can confidently put in the ♠9 if Declarer plays the ♠8!

Example A

	♠Q843	
	♥KJ	
	♦QJ105	
	♣AQ4	
♠AJ97		♠K105
♥A943		♥10853
♦8432		♦76
♣5		♣10862
	♠62	
	♥Q76	
	♦AK9	
	♣KJ973	

Contract: 3NT

The ♠7 is led. If Declarer plays the ♠3, what card should East put in?

He should play the ♠5.

11 - 7 = 4. East can see all four cards higher than the ♠7.!

Example B

	♠AQ102	
	♥AKJ	
	♦A1054	
	♣J3	
♠KJ974		♠6
♥732		♥8654
♦QJ3		♦K983
♣87		♣KQ109
	♠853	
	♥Q109	
	♦72	
	♣A6542	

Contract: 3NT

Declarer can also use the Rule of 11. $11 - 7 = 4$. Four cards can beat the ♠7 and you are staring at all four of them. East has no spade higher than the 7 so play low from the board and win the trick with your ♠8. Now you will be able to make two finesses in spades taking four spade tricks.

Example C

	♠KJ2	
	♥J107	
	♦AQ104	
	♣964	
Lead: ♥6		♠10854
		♥A83
		♦K8
		♣QJ73

Contract: 3NT

Your partner led the ♥6, declarer plays the ♥7. You win the ♥A and declarer plays the ♥9. What card do you play next?

	♠KJ2	
	♥J107	
	♦AQ104	
	♣964	
♠973		♠10854
♥6542		♥A83
♦765		♦K8
♣K52		♣QJ73
	♠AQ6	
	♥KQ9	
	♦J932	
	♣A108	

Using the rule of 11 tells you North, East and South began with five hearts bigger than the ♥6. Dummy has three, you have two, so that accounts for all five and south played the ♥9!

Does this mean that the rule of 11 doesn't always work? No. Remember it only applies when the opening lead is fourth best. So, you conclude that partner led top of nothing and playing back a heart is futile; so play back your ♣Q