

THE INITIAL LEAD - THE FIRST CARD PLAYED

The initial card played is often the key to successful pegging. Following is a general analysis of potential leads.

A, 2

These two cards are grouped together since they are the cards of lowest values and can better be utilized at end of play. It is not wise, however to hold a single small card to end of play. In those cases, lead the small card. Examples: 2-J-Q-K, A-6-7-8, 2-7-8-9. In the event, you are holding an ace with three ten point cards (A-10-Q-K), lead one of the ten-point cards. You may also dump a single small card as second card played.

3, 4

These are grouped together as they represent the best possible leads in cribbage. Remember nearly one-third of the deck are ten-point cards. If holding five point couplet (1-4 or 2-3), lead the larger card to force the five off the play. Such play leads to one of the most frequent 15-2's in crib.

5

This card is not a popular opening lead as any ten-point card will score 15-2. It is a good lead when holding three fives with one ten-point card. In situations where you must have two pegs, leading the five from three ten-point cards increases the chance to score those two pegs. Once you have seen some of your opponent's cards and they are middle cards, leading the five can escape a five-trap planned by the dealer.

6

Although this card is not a spectacular lead, it is generally preferable to other single middle cards. Compared to a single nine, this is much preferred.

7, 8

Leading from a single 7 or 8 is not advised in most situations. If dealer has middle cards (deck is 30.77% middle cards 6-7-8-9), 15-2 will be scored and a run of four on end of play is almost guaranteed. Exchange of six pegs for three you might gain in most situations is not good play.

9

If you do not have 3-4, ten point card, or 6 spot the 9 is an acceptable lead. Most who study the game do not consider the nine a good lead. It improves substantially when led from a pair of nines. If opponent plays six on nine lead for 15, it is not advisable to pair the six for a count of 21. By pairing the six for 21, you give your opponent four options to gain points: a go; 31 for 2; run; or pairs royal (triple the six for count of 27).

10, J, Q, K

Cards of ten value are the best lead if you do not have a Trey or four spot. Dealer five spot may be discarded to crib. If not an occasional 15-2 is not highly damaging in the pegging portion of the game. These cards are not equal. The Jack, contrary to what has been written by crib authors and believed by most players, is the safest. Why is that so? The dealer will discard the Jack in preference to other 10-point cards to the crib. How often do you toss 5-J, J-J, J-Q, 10-J to your own crib? The dealer will retain the king most frequently. Examples: 2-3-4-J-Q-K (dealer discard J-Q); 6-7-8-J-Q-K (dealer discard J-Q); A-2-3-J-J-K (dealer discard JJ). When discarding to own crib with weak cards, the Jack will often be discarded with a single small card (3-J, 2-J, 4-J, 1-J). It will be included with a single middle card in preference to Q or K (7-J, 9-J, 8-J, or 6-J). The averages support this. The Jack has a higher average when combined with these cards than does the 10, Q, or K; so dealer ought to place it in crib frequently.