

The Percentage Play

Cribbage is a numbers game, and certain numbers combine with other numbers in a logical manner to form runs, the fifteens, and the pairs. These logical combinations can be played *offensively* and *defensively* to your best advantage if you study the odds and make the *percentage* play.

It's surprising how many players--even experienced players--misplay these common combinations. In most cases, these players have fallen into the trap of habitual play, and have ceased to *think*. And without thinking,

the percentage play slips away. Many times it slips away unnoticed. Other times the play is recognized too late and the "golden opportunity" is lost. And in many cases, this opportunity was simply missed because the *percentage play* was not recognized.

The following diagrams illustrate a few plays that are misplayed regularly by many players. Study the combinations, and play the percentage way, and your pegging score will certainly improve, both offensively and defensively.

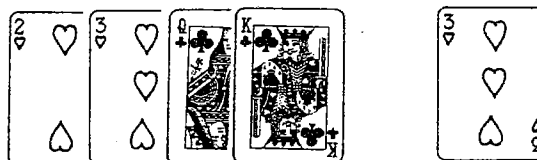
The Percentage Play

The ace-4 (or ace-4-4)...lead the 4



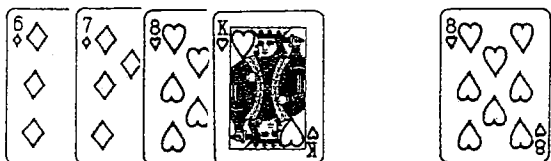
Leading the 4 forces Jake's 5 or 6 off the play, increasing your odds of catching a "ten" card. Leading the ace allows Jake to safely play a 5-6-8-9.

The 2-3 (or ace-2-3, 2-3-4)...lead the 3



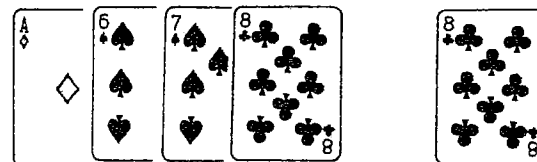
The 3 lead forces Jake's 4-5-6 off the play. The 2 lead allows Jake to safely play a 5 or 6. You want to entice a "ten" card here.

The 6-7-8-"ten"...lead the 8



The 8 lead keeps the 5-trap play intact. The king (or any "ten" card) would entice a 5 response (the very card you want to trap later). However, if Jake is playing desperation defense, lead the "sleeper" king.

Middle card combinations vs. a "ten" lead

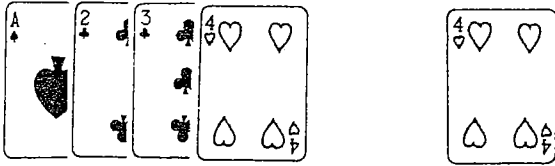


The key to scoring with middle value cards vs. a "ten" lead is to keep combinations that combine with Jake's probable 5 for a trap attempt.



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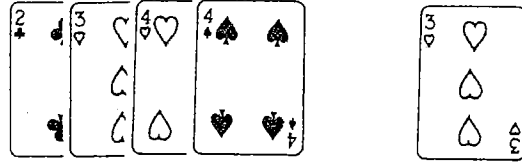
The ace-2-3-4...Jake's "ten" lead...play the 4



When Jake leads a "ten" card, odds dictate he holds all "ten" cards with a 5 or 5's. Playing a 4 on his "ten" lead forces any possible 5's off the play and keeps your ace-2-3 run intact if Jake follows with another logical "ten" card for "24." Play your 3 for "27" for a likely "go." Then collect your run of three.



Small combinations vs. a "ten" lead:

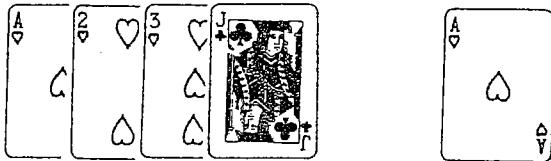


The secret of scoring with the small-card combinations vs. the "ten" lead is holding your counters for last and running the count over "26" with your second play. In this example, if Jake plays a "ten" card for "23," you counter with a 4 for "27," setting up your probable pair of 4's for "31" and four points.



If your hand is a 2-2-3-4, your first card played would be the 4, then the 3. If your hand is a 2-3-3-4, your first card played is again the 4, then the 3 (the 2 would be "26"...a no-no!).

The ace-2-3-"ten"...Jake's "ten" lead...play the ace



Playing a 2 or 3 on a "ten" lead instead of the ace takes away your chances of scoring "31" if Jake has all "ten" cards. However, in playing *desperation offense* in this situation, play the jack on the 10. Your play is covered by a retaliation "31" if Jake plays a queen, or 9, for a run of three. Your ace or 2 will make "31" for two much needed points.

