LEADING AGAINST NO TRUMPS

We have all been told:-

lead the fourth highest of your longest suit.

It has been passed down from generation to generation in clubs throughout the country, and quite possibly throughout the world.
And it is right in one important respect -

a primary aim is to set up tricks in a long suit.

BUT, it is also wrong because:-

- ***the lead of a small card from an honours holding will frequently give declarer a cheap trick in hand;***
- ***sometimes you should try to set up a trick in partner's long suit rather than your own;***
- ***the lead of fourth highest from a four-card suit will hardly ever set up an extra trick.***

The mantra above will not infrequently indicate the best or safest lead, but not always, and even when it does it's not the right way to think about the problem.

So what should you lead?

1. ***Listen to the bidding.***

Did partner indicate a suit to lead - did he bid a suit or double an artificial bid?

Is there an unbid suit?

How about leading the second suit bid in dummy (it's always good to lead through strength rather than towards strength.)

Or can you deduce a weakness from the opponents bidding - e.g. did they try Stayman and then settle for no trumps - that places them with 6 or 7 cards in the suit - if you have a singleton you might find partner with 5 or 6 in the suit?

Making deductions from the bidding is fairly advanced - but it is a habit you should try to inculcate.

2. ***A lead from a three-card honours sequence, particularly in a suit of 4 or more cards is frequently excellent - at worst it gives nothing away.***

Occasionally you will make such a lead from a three-card sequence just to take a look at dummy before deciding where to go next.

Three-card honours sequences may be unbroken - AKQ, KQJ, QJT, JT9, T98;
they may be 'broken sequences' - AKJ, AKT, KQT;
and they may be 'interior sequences' - AQJ, AJT, AT9, KJT, KT9, QT9.
In each case lead the card highlighted in red.

3. ***Another excellent lead is fourth highest of a five-card or longer suit lacking a three-card honours sequence - this stands every chance of setting up the fifth card as a winner.***

Failing any of the above you will just have to do the best you can - it might occasionally be fourth highest of a four-card suit.