

WASHINGTON BRIDGE LEAGUE

We offer our thanks to Washington Bridge league as we present a copy from their 2016 March-April bulletin on Rule of 11 by I/N Columnist, Vince Wilmot, vwilmot@comcast.net. Read original - [Here](#)

Rule of 11

One of the most important skills to develop to improve your bridge game is counting. One of the tools you can use, particularly at no-trump is the rule of 11. Here's how it works:

When the opening lead is fourth best, take the spot lead, and subtract it from 11. This will tell you the number of cards higher than the card lead in the other two hands. For example, consider the following layout.

<u>North</u>	
♠ Q54	
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ A7632	♠ KJ9
<u>South</u>	
♠ T8	

West led the [♠]3 against 3NT. East subtracts 3 from 11, getting 8. There are three cards higher in the dummy, and three in East's hand. Therefore, East knows that there are two cards higher than the 4 in South's hand. As you can see, the count is accurate. When the jack holds at trick one, East can continue with the king and a low spade to defeat 3NT.

Let's try another hand. In this instance, West leads the [♠]3. Dummy plays the [♠]Q. You should win the king, and search elsewhere for tricks. Subtracting 3 from 11 leaves 8. There are two in the dummy and one in the East hand. We know that South has five cards higher than the three. It likely won't be profitable to continue playing spades.

<u>North</u>	
♠ Q9	
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ A653	♠ K2
<u>South</u>	
♠ JT874	

In the next example, West leads the [♠]7 against 3NT. Subtracting 7 from 11 leaves 4. You can see one higher card in the dummy and three in the East hand. It is safe to follow with the [♠]2, as south cannot have any cards higher than the [♠]7. You will eventually cash five rounds of spades. If you overtake at trick one, West will have to get in again to lead spades through a second time.

<u>North</u>	
♠ K43	
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ QT876	♠ AJ92
<u>South</u>	
♠ 5	

The defenders are not the only ones who can use the rule of 11. Observe the following hand. West leads the [♠]8 against 1NT.

<u>North</u>	
♠ AQ5	
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ KJ986	♠ 732
<u>South</u>	
♠ T4	

South subtracts 8 from 11, and gets 3. South knows that East has no cards higher than the 8 since there are two in the dummy and one in his hand. He can play low from the dummy, win the [♠]T and later finesse the queen to get three spade tricks.

In the next example, the defender has to decide whether to go up or duck at trick one.

<u>North</u>	
♠ KT74	
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ AJ865	♠ Q92
<u>South</u>	
♠ 53	

West leads the [♠]6 against 3NT. Declarer puts in the [♠]7. If East is counting, she will know that declarer cannot have any card higher than the [♠]6 and can put in the [♠]9 with confidence. When it holds, they can continue with the queen, and set up multiple spade tricks for their side.

Things can go wrong. The most obvious one is when partner doesn't lead fourth best. In our last example, West leads the [♠]6 against 3NT. In this case, East again figured that West must have [♠]KJ96 and put in the [♠]8 confidently. This did not work out well as declarer won an undeserved trick with the Jack. A bit more thought would have shown that it couldn't have been wrong to win the ace and play a spade back. Even if declarer did have a small singleton, the suit still runs.

<u>North</u>	
♠ Q7	
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ K96	♠ AT8432
<u>South</u>	
♠ J5	