

# Lead Types and Signals? A Bridge Tip

By Neil H Timm

In the game of bridge most partnerships play more hands on defense than offence. While bidding conventions and play of the hand are important aspects of offense, the types of bridge leads and defensive carding signals are more important in defending a bridge hand.

What is the best defensive carding signals playing NT and suit contracts? And what are the best lead types against suit and NT contracts?

**The most common and perhaps the worst agreements are “standard signals” and 4<sup>th</sup> best leads for both NT and Suit Contracts. Why?**

They often cause insurmountable problems for one’s partner and provide too much information to the opponents and high cards, which may be important to the defense of the hand, are wasted. Hence, advanced players and bridge experts have devised other Lead Types and Defensive Signals, which I have summarized in the two tables below.

<b>Opening Lead Types</b>	
*Upside-down (as of January 2021 pre alert no long required)	*BOSTON (Bottom of Something Top of Nothing)
*Standard	Neapolitan
*3 <sup>rd</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup>	French Standard
*Rusinow	Scanian
*Journalist	Vinje Lead
*Coded 9’s and 10’s	
*Ace from AK	*Common in the USA

<b>Count Signals</b>	<b>Attitude Signals</b>	<b>Suit Preference Signals</b>
*Standard (high-low)	*Standard	*Upside-down
*Upside-down (low-high)	*Upside-down	*Roman (Odd-Even)
*Trump Suit Echo	*Smith Echo	*Lavinthal
Malmo	*Reverse Smith Echo	*Revolving
Rao	*Foster Echo	*Trump Suit Preference
Bechgaard	*Throw the Queen	Wirgen
Transferred Count	Cincinnati Carding	Crack
Encrypted	Scanian	
Blocked Echo	The Echo	
*Common to the USA		

## Complex Signals

Bethe and Vinje complex signals (special carding agreements) are used to give, for example count and suit preference signals simultaneously when in the third seat and on the second round of play delayed count signals.

On the Reverse Side of the Convention Card there are sections labeled Primary Signals, Defensive Carding, First Discard, Other Carding, Leads, Length Leads, and Special Carding, which must be completed to convey to your opponents you're agreed upon Lead Types and Signals.

### Primary signal to partner's leads

Attitude \_\_\_ Count Suit \_\_\_ Suit Preference \_\_\_

### DEFENSIVE CARDING

Standard vs. SUIT \_\_\_ vs. NT \_\_\_

Except \_\_\_

Upside-Down: Count \_\_\_ \_\_\_  
Attitude \_\_\_ \_\_\_

### FIRST DISCARD

Lavinthal \_\_\_ \_\_\_

Odd/Even \_\_\_ \_\_\_

### OTHER CARDING

Smith Echo \_\_\_ \_\_\_

Trump Suit Pref. \_\_\_ \_\_\_

Foster Echo \_\_\_ \_\_\_

### LEADS (circle card led, if not in bold)

Versus Suits      Versus      Notrump

**X x**    x x x **X**    **X x**    **X x x x**

x x **X**    x x x **X x**    **X x x**    x x x **X x**

A **K** x    **T** 9 x    A **K J** x    A **Q** J x

**K Q** x    **K J** T x    A **J** T 9    A **T** 9 x

**Q** J x    **K T** 9 x    **K Q J** x    **K Q** T 9

**J T** 9    **Q T** 9 x    **Q J T** x    **Q T** 9 x

**K Q T** 9            **J T** 9 x    **T** 9 x x

### LENGTH LEADS:

4th Best      vs SUITS \_\_\_ vs. NT \_\_\_

3rd/5th Best vs SUITS \_\_\_ vs. NT \_\_\_

Attitude vs. NT \_\_\_

SPECIAL CARDING \_\_\_ PLEASE ASK

Since this is a bridge "Tip" I will review and present the "best" options used by most advanced players and bridge experts' and leave the other alternatives methods for readers to investigate on their own.

## SUIT CONTRACTS – RUSINOW Honor Leads

The best Lead type for suit contracts is RUSINOW LEADS with standard count and attitude. **NEVER play Coded 9's and 10's with Rusinow Honor Leads.**

### Procedure

Against a suit contract, with three cards or more in a suit, one leads the **lower** of two touching honors, **with any doubleton, one leads the top card playing Rusinow leads.**

<b>Holding</b>	<b>Lead</b>
AKxxx; AKQx	K
KQx; KQJT	Q
QJ9x; QJT <sub>x</sub>	J
JT9 <sub>x</sub>	T
T93	9
98x; 97x	Second Highest
AK; KQ; QJ; Qx; JT; Jx; T9; T2; 9x	Top Card from Doubleton

With more than two honors in sequence, the second highest is still led (queen from KQJ, etc.), followed by a lower one in most cases. These leads blend nicely into Middle Upside Down (MUD) leads of second highest from three spot cards. **Rusinow leads should not be used when leading partner's suit and the lead of the A denies the K.**

One plays standard count and attitude with Rusinow leads both K and Q lead ask for attitude and NOT count. **Do not play UDCA with Rusinow Honor Leads.** The K leads asks for a high spot card if one holds the Queen or doubleton, which asks for the suit to be continued. However the play of the Q on the K guarantees that one is holding the J and asks partner to under lead his ace on the next trick, so one can NEVER play the Q from Qx.

After a Q lead, partner must again encourage, again plays high spot card if he holds the A/J which encourages partner to continue the suit, but discourage partner by playing a smaller spot card if he holds a doubleton so as to keep partner from losing a trick if declarer, holding the AJx, ducks the first round of play.

### **Advantages**

(1) Rusinow leads eliminate the ambiguities from both standard leads and the lead of the A from AK. **The A shows the A alone; K is led from AK; Q is led from KQ.**

(2) A doubleton honor may be clearly defined. If west leads the K and follows with the Q, dummy has 765, and east has A862, west must have a doubleton using Rusinow leads since the K was led without the A. East may therefore overtake the Q and give partner a ruff. Using standard leads east cannot overtake for fear of establishing declares J if west began with KQ4 say!

### **Disadvantages**

Ambiguity may arise in some cases. For example, with the lead of the Jack you cannot tell whether or not is from Jx /J or from QJ.

## SUIT CONTRACTS - 3/5 suit leads with Rusinow Honor Leads

### Procedure

Rusinow honor leads are made with two touching honors, without touching honors, and odd number of 5+cards one leads the 5th, and from an even number of cards one leads 3<sup>rd</sup> best (3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> suit leads).

<b>Holding</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Q865432	4 5 <sup>th</sup> from 5+
Q86543	4 5 <sup>th</sup> from 5+
Q8653	3 5 <sup>th</sup> from 5
Q863	6 3 <sup>rd</sup> from 4
Q86	6 3 <sup>rd</sup> from 3

### Advantages

Against suit contracts, we have already discussed the advantage of Rusinow honor leads, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> leads are superior to 4<sup>th</sup> best leads versus suit contracts because they are more helpful to your partner who desperately needs a count in the suit (using the rule of 12 and 10 respectively for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> leads).

Playing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> leads you can differentiate between 3 to an honor lead as opposed to 4 of an honor in suit contracts. With standard 4<sup>th</sup> best, you cannot tell the difference which can be fatal.

For example from 10873 or 108732, playing 4<sup>th</sup> best leads, one would lead the 3. Playing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> leads, one would lead the 7 and the 2, respectively. Now suppose declarer plays the ♠6 and the suit is distributed:

	North	
West	♠QJ6	East (You)
♠3 lead		♠AK94

You cover dummy's J with your K, and declarer plays the 6. You now may think that you have beaten the contract because you have the A, but declarer's 5 spot cards is singleton and he will ruff the A and may obtain a critical discard on his Q and make his contract. On the other hand, if you shift and declarer has another club, he may again be able to discard a side suit card and still make his contract.

Against suit contracts, we have already discussed the advantage of Rusinow honor leads, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> leads are superior to 4<sup>th</sup> best leads versus suit contracts because they are more helpful to your partner who desperately needs a count in the suit (using the rule of 12 and 10 respectively for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> leads). Playing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> leads you can differentiate between 3 to an honor lead as opposed to 4 to an honor in suit contracts. With standard 4<sup>th</sup> best, you cannot tell the difference which can be fatal.

### Recommendations

Play Rusinow Honor Leads (developed by Sydney Rusinow) for suit contracts because they are superior to both standard leads and the lead of the A from AK. And without touching honors, and odd number of 5+cards one leads the 5th, and from an even number of cards one leads 3<sup>rd</sup> best (3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> suit leads).

**(1) NOTRUMP CONTRACTS with Journalist Leads and BOSTON**

The lead of the **J** denies an honor in a suit and one should lead **Bottom Of Something** and **Top of Nothing (BOSTON)** against NT contracts where something denotes a high HONOR: AKQ not the J or 10. If you play Journalist Leads without coded 9's and 10's, the lead of the 10 denotes an interior sequence and SHOWS at least One Honor higher than the J (e.g. AKQ) **so Jack denies and 10 implies**. So one leads the nine from 1098. And the Jack from J10983, but one leads the 10 from AJ1093, KJ1094, A10983, K10973, or Q10983 or the 3 in each case, which promises an honor (AKQ). **Never lead 4<sup>th</sup> Best!**

The lead of the A in NT asks partner to unblock an HONOR. With no Honor (KQJ) playing standard carding one gives count (high card from even low from odd). However, playing UDCA one gives attitude (low says continue and high says do not continue).

**Advantages**

With Journalistic Leads where the lead of the Jack in NT contract denies a higher honor and 10 implies, with BOSTON again also resolve several ambiguities in standard methods.

To illustrate we consider the following hand:

	North	
	♠AJ1042	East (You)
♦ 10 lead		♠Q965
		♥QJ109
		♦A52
		♣Q3

The Bidding:

North	East	South	West
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Using the standard 4<sup>th</sup> best leads East has a problem. If the ♦10 is from an **interior sequence** and if South holds:

♠K4 ♥AK853 ♦QJ4 ♣652

East can beat the contract by winning the A and returning partner's suit. However, West must now duck the second round of diamonds if he carelessly wins the K and plays a

third round since South will win and lead a low club to the 10, establishing the suit without permitting West to gain the lead, and East will not have a diamond to play.

If however the lead of the ♦10 lead is the **top of a sequence** and declarer holds:

♠K4 ♥K853 ♦KQJ ♣J652

East wins the A and returns a diamond and declarer makes his contract.

Playing Journalistic Leads instead of standard methods the situation is much better.

If West leads the 10 East now knows it is from an interior sequence and plays his A and another diamond. From 10985 West leads the nine, which promises the 10 and no higher honor. East now knows not to return a diamond and shifts the Queen of hearts.

In NT it is best to tell partner when not to return a suit than to give count. Playing standard methods, playing standard method partner may have a difficult time if you lead the 8 from Q10982 or 842. Playing Journalist Leads or BOSTON you would lead the 10 or the 2 to encourage the return of the suit and lead the 8 to discourage the return of the suit. What if you had the 1072, you must lead the 7 since the 2 denotes a high honor (AKQ) as does the 10 (denotes at least one honor higher than the J).

### **Disadvantages**

Journalist Leads with BOSTON are not better than standard leads in all situations since the declare may profit from the lead whereas in standard declarer may be in doubt as is partner.

### **(2) NOTRUMP CONTRACTS with Coded 9's and 10's and BOSTON**

Against NT one may either play Journalist Leads with BOSTON as discussed above or one may play **Coded 9's and 10's** where the lead of the 9/10 says one has zero or 2 honors (AKJQJ and excluding the 10) when leading a suit against a NT contract. The lead of the 10 is made from 1098, the lead of the J is made from J10982, but the lead of the 10 is made from AJ1092, KJ1093. However, from A10983, K10972, Q10985, playing BOSTON, lead the 3, 2, 5, respectively. Note the conflict with the sequences: A10983, K10973, A10983, K10972, and Q10985 playing Journalist Leads one would lead the 10 in each case.

And the Jack lead denies an honor.

The lead of the A in NT asks partner to unblock an HONOR. With no Honor (AKJ) playing standard carding one gives count (high card from even low from odd). However, playing UDCA one gives attitude (low says continue and high says do not continue).

### **Reccomendation**

Against NT never lead 4<sup>th</sup> best but play (1) Journalist Leads with BOSTON, or (2) Coded 9's and 10's with BOSTON.

Never play coded 9's and 10's against suit contracts.

## SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNALS

**Playing UDCA signals when you cannot follow a suit a first discard of a low card says shift to the suit where low is defined as: 2345.**

### SMITH ECHO vs. NT only

Devised and published in 1963 in the "British Bridge World" magazine by I.G. Smith – of Great Britain. The Smith Echo is an attitude signal most often used against NT contracts to show partner either the desire to continue leading the opening suit, or to switch to another suit. Unlike the usual suit signals, the Smith echo is not made on the opening lead but when declarer is next on lead.

When declarer begins to run his own or dummy's long suit, a high-low signal in this suit by the defenders (opening leader and partner) has the following meaning:

If made by partner of the opening leader, it shows good support for the opening lead and asks partner to continue the suit led when regaining the lead. If made by the opening leader, it says that the suit led was weak and that partner should switch to another suit when gaining the lead.

When playing defense, we are all taught to return partner's suit! However, consider the following situation

North	
♠ 8 3 2	
♥ 9 4	
♦ A Q 3	
♣ A 10 8 6 3	
West	East
♠ A Q 10 4	♠ J 9 6 5
♥ Q 10 5 3	♥ J 8 6
♦ 7 6	♦ 10 9 2
♣ 9 4 2	♣ K 7
South	
♠ K 7	
♥ A K 7 4	
♦ K 8 5 4	
♣ Q J 3	

Against 3NT, West leads fourth best 3♥, which was covered by East's Jack; declarer wins the King and returns the ♣Q and west sees that that declarer has four club tricks, possibly 3 diamonds and two hearts. The only hope in setting the contract is in spades.

Playing Smith Echo, West follows with the 9♣ telling partner NOT TO RETURN HEARTS. Winning with the ♣K, East does not return a heart, his partner's lead. He can see that the only possible return is a spade: for down one!

For pairs that use UDCA singles, they use Reverse Smith Echo.

The Smith Echo is not used when declarer is not running his or dummy's long suit but is attempting to knock out defender's stoppers, nor can it be used when playing a high card can cost a trick (for this reason some play **REVERSE SMITH ECHO**, low-high encourages) or if declarer is trying to establish dummy's length lacking side entries. A disadvantage of the Smith Echo is that it interferes with partnerships that use count signals on leads. But, because attitude signals are more common some may want to incorporate into their carding agreement.

When used against a suit contract, the long suit is usually the trump suit.

### **FOSTER ECHO vs. suit contracts only**

Robert Frederick Foster of New York devised this carding procedure who also invented the "rule of eleven".

There are several versions of this convention used primarily against no-trump. One is used when the opening lead is an honor and the 3<sup>rd</sup> hand wants to show 4 cards in the suit headed by an honor.

With 4 cards, the Foster echo always begins by following with the third highest card. If the suit lacks an honor, on the second round partner follows with the 4<sup>th</sup> highest card, but if headed by an honor one follows with the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest. For example, suppose you (3<sup>rd</sup> hand) hold:

Hand (1) 8 7 5 2    Hand (2) Q 7 5 2

And, partner leads the king, with hand (1) you play the 5 followed by the 2 (high-low: have no honor); with hand (2) the 5 is followed by the 7 (low high: have an honor). This version of Foster echo allows the opening leader to locate the missing honors in the suit and to help choose the right continuation. If you were playing the upside down carding system, one would discard the 8 with hand (1) to discourage and the 2 with hand (2) to encourage. This shows count when you cannot beat dummy.

Another version (less used) combines an unblocking play with giving count. If the third hand cannot top either the card led or the card played by dummy, he follows with his second highest card; with a 4-card holding, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round plays the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest card, next the highest, reserving the lowest for the last round. However, with a 3-card holding, on the first round partner also plays the second-highest card in the suit and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round the highest card. This may cause some ambiguity if the suit is headed by two honors. Holding, for example, Q10x or J10x partner would play the 10 on the first round,



hence the leader doesn't know if the higher honor is the queen or the Jack. Or just remember, depending on your carding agreement, simple give count when you cannot beat the card in dummy on partner lead!

### TRUMP SUIT PREFERENCE vs. NT or Suit contracts

The most basic trump echo signal is when declarer begins to draw trump. A high low shows an odd number of trumps and a low-high shows an even number (upside down count).

**Instead of showing count, it is often better to tell partner where your strength is outside the trump suit (trump suit preference). Now going up the line shows strength in a lower-ranking suit and high low shows strength in a higher-ranking suit.**

### Completed CC for Rusinow Honor Leads (suits) with Journalist Leads and BOSTON vs. NT

#### Primary signal to partner's leads

Attitude   X   Count Suit    Suit Preference   

### DEFENSIVE CARDING

Standard vs. SUIT    vs. NT   

Except   X  

#### Rusinow Honor Leads with Journalist Leads

   with standard count on leads   

Upside-Down: Count        
Attitude      X  

#### FIRST DISCARD

Lavinthal        
Odd/Even        
   Upside Down   

#### OTHER CARDING

Smith Echo        
Trump Suit Pref.   X    
Foster Echo   X       
   REV SMITH ECHO      X  

#### LEADS (In Bold)

Versus	Suits	Versus	Notrump
<b>X</b> x	x x <b>X</b> x	<b>x</b> x	<b>x</b> x x x
<b>X</b> x x	x x x x <b>X</b>	<b>x</b> x x	<b>X</b> x x x x
A <b>K</b> x	<b>T</b> 9 x	A <b>K</b> J x	A <b>Q</b> J x
K <b>Q</b> x	K J <b>T</b> x	A J <b>T</b> 9	A <b>T</b> 9 x
<b>Q</b> J x	K <b>T</b> 9 x	K <b>Q</b> J x	K <b>Q</b> T 9
J <b>T</b> 9	<b>Q</b> T 9 x	<b>Q</b> J T x	<b>Q</b> T 9 x
K <b>Q</b> T9		<b>J</b> T 9 x	<b>T</b> 9 xx

#### LENGTH LEADS:

4th Best vs SUITS    vs. NT     
3rd/5th Best vs SUITS   X   vs. NT     
Attitude vs. NT   X  

SPECIAL CARDING   X   PLEASE ASK

## Why learn about Defensive Carding?

### For Defenders:

- It is said often that defence is the most difficult aspect of the game. So any help in this arena will certainly improve your game.
- Declarer has full knowledge of partnership assets so s/he has an advantage. Any information provided by partner that will improve your overall grasp of the total assets of the partnership will be helpful.
- Good defensive signalling makes for a good partnership. Your partner will appreciate it if you can guide her/him to the proper defence in particular if you possess info that s/he does not.
- Finding and sending the appropriate signal to partner can often be the difference between a top and a bottom on a particular board.
- Familiarity with various signalling methods may result in you finding one that you really fancy and use .....which will help your overall standing in the bridge world

### For Declarers:

- Familiarity with various systems is essential if you are interested in playing competitively.
- Opponents are permitted and often do play various signalling systems.
- You better figure out quickly what your opponents are up to in every board to be able to interpret as well as block their signals.
- For each defensive system, there are certain measures the declarer can take to “muddy the waters” for the defence. If you are not familiar with the defenders’ system you will not be able to counteract.
- As declarer always make note (or ask) about their signalling agreements. DO NOT ASSUME.
- General rule of thumb is to use their methods.... if they are using standard signals and you want a particular suit continued play high. If they play Upside down, play low etc....

### For All:

- All systems have advantages and disadvantages. There is no universal agreement as to a “best system”
- Systems are often dependant on individual likes and dislikes as well as the rest of your bridge knowledge/arsenal
- Systems certainly help but DO NOT make better bridge players. The importance of proper communication with partner can not be overemphasized signalling is only part of the communication.
- Choose a method that YOU and YOUR PARTNER are COMFORTABLE with. Then practice practice and practice.

## **SUMMARY – COMMON DEFENSIVE CARDING SIGNALS**

### **STANDARD SIGNALS**

#### **A) Attitude Signals**

When following suit to partner's lead or discarding:

1. A high card indicates strength in the suit and asks partner to continue or shift to that suit.
2. A low card shows weakness in the suit and suggests a shift to another suit

*Advantages:*

1. Method most players are familiar with. No changes in thinking or methods required
2. In unblocking situations, an encouraging high card is sometimes also a necessary unblocking card

*Disadvantages:*

1. A high card often cannot be spared when trying to encourage.
2. A defender must constantly worry about whether or not to waste an important spot card while encouraging.
3. When discouraging with a low card, it is not always clear what suit the partner should shift to

#### **B) Count Signals**

When following suit to declarer's or dummy's lead; or in situations where count has the priority:

1. A high card indicates even number of cards (unless no choice) in that suit.
2. A low card indicates an odd number of cards in that suit.

*Advantages:*

1. Method most players are familiar with. No changes in thinking or methods required
2. In case of a doubleton, a high low signal is consistent with attitude signal in case of confusion if attitude or count applies
3. Occasionally, an unblock from a doubleton is required

*Disadvantages:*

1. The top of a doubleton often cannot be spared.
2. Intermediate spot cards in a four card suit are often important and cannot be spared to provide a signal.
3. A defender must constantly worry about whether or not to waste an important spot card when trying to signal with an even number of cards.
4. The count is occasionally more valuable to declarer; or there maybe more important information to signal

#### **C) Suit Preference Signals**

When giving partner a ruff, or when a switch to another suit is obvious, or in situations where suit preference is clearly necessary or a defender's holding in a suit is already known:

1. A high card indicates interest in the higher ranking side suit.
2. A low card indicates interest in the lower ranking side suit

*Advantages:*

1. The ability to signal for a suit other than the one in which the signal is being given.

*Disadvantages:*

1. Infrequent use because most often, attitude and count are usually in play
2. Occasional ambiguity whether or not suit preference applies.

## **UPSIDE-DOWN SIGNALS**

### **A) Attitude Signals**

When following suit to partner's lead or discarding:

1. A low card indicates strength in the suit and asks partner to continue or shift to that suit.
2. A high card shows weakness in the suit and suggests a shift to another suit

*Advantages:*

1. A high card can usually be spared when a defender wishes to discourage.
2. Less worry about wasting important spot cards
3. A discouraging signal from (say from top of a sequence) often gives partner extra information

*Disadvantages:*

1. Occasionally, in unblocking situations, a high card must be played when really encouragement is desired.
2. Occasionally, a high card cannot be spared to discourage.
3. The count is occasionally more valuable to declarer; or the count of that particular suit is not particularly important to defence; or there may be more important information to signal
4. If this is a new system for you, mistakes are to be expected including the occasional catastrophe.

### **B) Count Signals**

When following suit to declarer's or dummy's lead; or in situations where count has the priority:

1. A low card indicates even number of cards (unless no choice) in that suit.
2. A high card indicates an odd number of cards in that suit.

*Advantages:*

1. An honor need not be played from a doubleton to show count.
2. Possible valuable spot cards need not be wasted to show a 4 card suit.
3. Less worry about wasting important spot cards

*Disadvantages:*

1. Occasionally, it is not safe to play a high or even a middle card from a tripleton
5. Lack of familiarity resulting in misunderstandings or errors when starting to play this system.

### **C) Upside –Down Attitude & Standard Count**

Upside-Down Attitude Signals may be played in combination to standard count. However many situations may arise where it is not totally clear whether it is attitude or count.

Unless you are very comfortable with your partner and have detailed understandings of different situations; it is better to play Upside-Down attitude in conjunction with Upside-Down Count to avoid the ambiguities that the combination generates.

**ODD-EVEN (ROMAN SIGNALS)** - Combined attitude and suit preference -

In normal attitude situations (when following suit to partner's lead or discarding) Often in Standard or Upside-Down signalling once you discourage partner; S/He often does not know what suit to switch to. This method combines attitude and suit preference.

- 1) An **odd** spot card is encouraging.
- 2) A **low even** spot card is discouraging **AND** suit preference for the **lower** ranking side suit.
- 3) A **high even** spot card is discouraging **AND** suit preference for the **higher** ranking side suit.

*Advantages:*

1. It is possible to give a suit preference signal in an attitude situation resolving the problem for partner as to what suit to switch to.
2. When discarding, a defender can pitch from whatever suit is convenient and still convey the message to partner; whether it be encouragement for that suit or a switch to a desired suit.

*Disadvantages:*

1. A defender may have not been dealt the right odd or even spot cards with which to signal.
2. The suit preference connotation is not always clear with the discard of an even card because the defender may not have had the choice of high or low even cards to discard.

<b>QUICK COMPARISON Chart for STANDARD, UPSIDE-DOWN and ODD EVEN Cards</b>									
	← Most Encouraging					Least Encouraging →			
<b>Standard</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Upside-Down</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Odd- Even</b>	<b>3, 5, 7, 9</b>					<b>10, 8, 6, 4, 2</b>			
<b>(Note: in Odd-Even Carding systems EVEN spot cards also indicate suit preference)</b>									

**LAVINTHAL DISCARDS** – No Attitude but strictly Suit Preference

**A defender's first discard is always a suit preference signal.**

1. A high card indicates strength in the higher ranking of the two remaining suits.
2. A low card indicates strength in the lower ranking of the two remaining suits.

*Advantages:*

1. A defender does not have to pitch from his strong suit to show strength in the suit.
2. A defender can choose the most convenient suit to discard from while transmitting the signal.

*Disadvantages:*

1. A defender (must discard) but may not want to particularly encourage ANY suit but partner will interpret the discard as suit preference.
2. Occasionally, the only safe pitch may be from a strong suit.
3. Potential ambiguity in situations where the suit discarded has previously been led. Is the discard indicating count or suit preference??

## **Very quickly for the KEENERS and the REALLY CURIOUS .....**

If you are interested in any of these ....let me know and I will provide you with more info and/or specific examples

### **THE SMITH ECHO**

When following suit to declarer's first lead at No Trump Contracts, both defenders signal attitude about the **Opening Lead**.

The idea being that the defender, who first wins a trick, will know whether to continue the suit originally led; or switch to another suit.

*Advantages:*

1. Information about the opening lead is important and gets conveyed quickly.

*Disadvantages:*

1. The count of the suit declarer attacks is usually a higher priority.
2. If the signaller does not have many cards to choose from, the signal may not be readable.

### **THE DISTRIBUTIONAL SIGNAL**

When declarer starts drawing trump, playing high low or alternatively low high provides partner on the distribution of your hand.

The principle behind this system is that every bridge hand falls into one of two categories:

- a) Three odd length suits and one even length suit (e.g. 5-4-3-1)
- b) Three even length suits and one odd length suit (e.g. 4-4-3-2)

So by letting partner know which of the two types of hand you have; s/he will often have a very early and a complete count of the hand.

*Advantages:*

1. Defenders often get a complete count of the hand very early in the play.

*Disadvantages:*

1. The signal must be given very early. So a defender often does not know whether or not he can afford to false card in the trump suit to lead declarer astray.
2. The normal use of the trump echo is lost.

### **ENCRYPTED SIGNALS (for the lovers of the esoteric.....)**

These signals can be used when both defenders know something about the hand that declarer does NOT. (Such as the exact distribution of a suit that declarer has shown out of). This info then becomes the key to encrypt the signals. This is as close as you can get to a dynamic (changing) carding system.

As an example: Once declarer shows out of a suit; each defender would know exactly how many cards each of them started with. So the agreement can be:

If opening leader started with even No. of cards in that suit; then standard signals are in effect

If opening leader started with odd No. of cards in that suit the Upside-Down Signals are in effect

A few examples of Upside Down attitude signals vs Standard signals

In each of the following 8 hands you are East, South is playing in 4♥ and West (your partner) leads ♠K (from A K or K Q)

You see the following dummy to your right:

♠ 10 6 5  
♥ Q J 3  
♦ K Q J 4 2  
♣ K 7

A) ♠ 9 2  
♥ 7 4  
♦ A 8 6 3  
♣ J 8 6 5 4

B) ♠ 9 7 2  
♥ 7 4  
♦ 9 8 6 3  
♣ A J 8 6

C) ♠ 3 2  
♥ 7 4  
♦ A 8 6 3  
♣ J 8 6 5 4

D) ♠ 9 8  
♥ 7 4  
♦ A 8 6 3  
♣ J 8 6 5 4

E) ♠ 4 3 2  
♥ 7 4  
♦ 9 8 6 3  
♣ A J 8 6

F) ♠ 9 8 7  
♥ 7 4  
♦ 9 8 6 3  
♣ A J 8 6

G) ♠ J 2  
♥ 7 4  
♦ 9 8 6 3  
♣ A J 8 6 5

H) ♠ J 8  
♥ 7 4  
♦ 9 8 6 3  
♣ A J 8 6 5

- A) East certainly wants spades continued.....to get a ruff. So, standard signallers will encourage with the ♠ 9; Upside-Down Signallers with the ♠ 2. Both signals will be easily understood.
- B) East does NOT want spade continued but would like West to switch to Clubs..... Standard Signallers will signal with the ♠ 2, Upside-Down Signallers with the ♠9 (For clarity signal with the ♠9 and NOT ♠7)  
Both signals are easy to read ..... A diamond switch is not looking good so a club switch appears to be the obvious  
**Tip: When signalling high, always signal with the highest card you can afford**
- C) Upside-Down signallers signal with the ♠ 2 While Standard Signallers play the ♠ 3 and hope for the best! This layout favours the Upside Downers.
- D) On this layout, the Standard signallers happily play the ♠9 while the Upside Downers play the ♠8 and hope for the best!!  
Compared to C) shows that occasionally the luck of which cards you have sometime determines which method is superior.
- E) Standard Signallers discourage with the deuce While Upside Downers try their best by playing the Four. The ♠4 is probably readable as both the ♠3 and the ♠2 are missing but still favours the standard signallers.
- F) This is the reverse of hand E) Upside-Downers can easily signal with the 9 while the standard signallers will play the ♠7. Again likely that East will get the message as the ♠8 and the ♠9 are still missing.
- G) This is the type of hand where Upside-Down signals have a clear gain. If the lead is from King and Queen West CANNOT afford to drop the ♠J. So standard players are "forced to encourage" with the ♠2 when it really is the most discouraging card. Of course the Upside-Downers happily encourage with the deuce
- H) This may appear to be the reverse of Hand G) but it really is not. While in Hand G) East was playing the lowest (most discouraging) card to encourage, at least in this hand the Upside-Downer is actually using his lowest card ♠8, to do what s/he wants which is... to encourage.

As a footnote to the hands where a club switch is requested: to guide the defence properly, if West has the ♣Q he/she should switch to a low club otherwise a high club would be the appropriate card.



One of the biggest advantages of the Upside-Down Signallers is that while they can almost always afford their lowest card to encourage; Standard signallers have to keep worrying about wasting a crucial spot card ..... **sometimes at trick one!**

This is particularly a real possibility when holding a four card suit and wanting to encourage

Four examples: In each case ..... **What does East play at trick 1?!?!?!?**

**Depending on your system ..... You will get a top or a bottom**

1) South is playing 4♠ and the lead is ♥Q

	♠ J 10 7 4	
	♥ A 5 3 2	
	♦ 9 5 2	
	♣ K 9	
♠ Q 6 3		♠ 2
♥ Q J		♥ K 10 6 4
♦ J 8 3		♦ Q 10 7
♣ Q 10 7 5 2		♣ J 8 6 4 3
	♠ A K 9 8 5	
	♥ 9 8 7	
	♦ A K 6 4	
	♣ A	

2) South is playing 3NT. From his worthless hand West tries the lead of ♥10 which from East's perspective is a great lead. Dummy plays low, how can East convey that message to West to continue hearts when West gets in with the ♦K?

	♠ Q 8	
	♥ Q 7 4 3	
	♦ J 10 8 3	
	♣ A K 6	
♠ 10 7 6 2		♠ A 9 4 3
♥ 10 9 5		♥ K J 8 2
♦ K 2		♦ 6 5
♣ J 9 7 4		♣ 10 5 3
	♠ K J 5	
	♥ A 6	
	♦ A Q 9 7 4	
	♣ Q 8 2	

It is not always rosy for the Upside-Downers either. As discussed there are a few disadvantages. Sometimes you are just not dealt the cards for Upside-Down carding

A couple of examples of **Critical decisions at trick one:**

3) South is playing 4♠ ( West has overcalled 2♣ during auction) and the lead is ♣ K ( or ♣A depending on your system)

	♠ A J 8 6 ♥ Q J 10 6 ♦ Q 7 ♣ Q 10 7	
♠ 2 ♥ K 8 4 ♦ J 10 8 3 ♣ A K J 6 5	♠ K Q 10 7 5 4 ♥ A 9 2 ♦ A 6 ♣ 9 8	♠ 9 3 ♥ 7 5 3 ♦ K 9 5 4 2 ♣ 4 3 2

East plays the ♣4 to discourage and south ♣8 ...A diamond shift is essential here to beat the contract.....However from West's perspective was that an encouragement from a holding of ♣9 4?!?!?

Of course Standard signallers are happy to discourage with ♣2

4) South is playing 4♠ and the lead is ♣ K ( or ♣A depending on your system)

	♠ K 9 6 4 ♥ A K 6 3 ♦ A K ♣ Q 8 5	
♠ A 5 ♥ 8 5 4 ♦ 9 8 6 ♣ A K 9 7 4	♠ Q J 8 3 2 ♥ J 9 2 ♦ Q 4 2 ♣ 10 6	♠ 10 7 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ J 10 7 5 3 ♣ J 3 2

Again a shift to hearts is essential to beat the contract. Playing Upside-Down Signals which card should East play at trick 1 to discourage a club continuation?????

## EXAMPLES OF ODD-EVEN (Roman) Signals

Hands A) and B) are the type of hands Odd-Even Signals work well:

A) South Playing 3NT  
Lead ♠K  
(or ♠A per partnership Agreement)

♠ J  
♥ A K J 10 3  
♦ K 10 9 3  
♣ 6 5 4

♠ A K 10 7 3      ♠ 8 6 5 2  
♥ Q 8              ♥ 7 6 5 4  
♦ Q 7 5            ♦ A 6  
♣ J 10 2           ♣ 9 8 3

♠ Q 9 4  
♥ 9 2  
♦ J 8 4 2  
♣ A K Q 7

B) South Playing 4♠  
Lead ♠5

♠ J 10 6 4  
♥ A 10  
♦ Q 10 7  
♣ J 7 4 2

♠ A 5 3              ♠ 2  
♥ J 9 6 4           ♥ 8 7 5 2  
♦ 9 6 3             ♦ K J 4 2  
♣ 10 9 6            ♣ A K 5 3

♠ K Q 9 8 7  
♥ K Q 3  
♦ A 8 5  
♣ Q 8

Hands C) and D) are the type of hands Odd-Even signalling runs into trouble. Hand (D) being worst case scenario

C) South Playing 4♠  
Lead ♥K

♠ A 7 4  
♥ 10 5 3  
♦ K 8 4  
♣ A K Q J

♠ 8 3                      ♠ K 6  
♥ A K J 6              ♥ Q 8 2  
♦ J 10 9 6              ♦ Q 7 5  
♣ 10 8 2              ♣ 9 7 6 5 4

♠ Q J 10 9 5 2  
♥ 9 7 4  
♦ A 3 2  
♣ 3

D) South Playing 4♠  
Lead ♦K

♠ K J 3 2  
♥ 10 3  
♦ A 8 2  
♣ K J 10 9

♠ 7                      ♠ 9 8 6  
♥ 9 7 5 4 2          ♥ Q J 8 6  
♦ K Q 10             ♦ 9 7 3  
♣ 8 7 5 2            ♣ A Q 6

♠ A Q 10 5 4  
♥ A K  
♦ J 6 5 4  
♣ 4 3

## TWO EXAMPLES OF LAVINTHAL Discards

The first of course shows a situation where this system shines .....and the second well.....  
 Not as much Remember the key to this system is that a defender's first discard always is for  
 suit preference.

### 1) South is playing 3NT and the lead is $\heartsuit 3$

Declarer wins first trick in dummy with the 9 and chooses to continue with a diamond from  
 dummy at trick 2 ..... East knows that defence's best  
 chance is in hearts ....how can s/he tell partner?

North	East	South	West
-	-	-	P
P	P	2NT	P
3 $\clubsuit$	P	3 $\heartsuit$	P
3NT	P	P	P

	$\spadesuit$	<b>K 7 6 3</b>		$\spadesuit$	<b>J 8 4 2</b>
	$\heartsuit$	<b>J 9</b>		$\heartsuit$	<b>K 10 8 2</b>
	$\diamondsuit$	<b>Q 10 9 4</b>		$\diamondsuit$	<b>7</b>
	$\clubsuit$	<b>J 7 4</b>		$\clubsuit$	<b>A 8 5 3</b>
$\spadesuit$	<b>10 9</b>				
$\heartsuit$	<b>Q 7 4</b>				
$\diamondsuit$	<b>K 8 6 3 2</b>				
$\clubsuit$	<b>10 9 2</b>				
	$\spadesuit$	<b>A Q 5</b>			
	$\heartsuit$	<b>A 6 5 3</b>			
	$\diamondsuit$	<b>A J 5</b>			
	$\clubsuit$	<b>K Q 6</b>			

### 2) South is playing 4 $\heartsuit$ and the lead is $\heartsuit 6$ .

This is the situation when East rather NOT give preference  
 for a suit but MUST!

North	East	South	West
-	-	1NT	P
2 $\clubsuit$	P	2 $\heartsuit$	P
3 $\heartsuit$	P	4 $\heartsuit$	P
P	P		

	$\spadesuit$	<b>J 6 5</b>		$\spadesuit$	<b>K 10 4 2</b>
	$\heartsuit$	<b>Q J 10 2</b>		$\heartsuit$	<b>8</b>
	$\diamondsuit$	<b>J 6 5</b>		$\diamondsuit$	<b>K 10 4 2</b>
	$\clubsuit$	<b>K J 9</b>		$\clubsuit$	<b>A 8 5 2</b>
$\spadesuit$	<b>8 7 3</b>				
$\heartsuit$	<b>A 6 5</b>				
$\diamondsuit$	<b>Q 8 3</b>				
$\clubsuit$	<b>7 6 4 3</b>				
	$\spadesuit$	<b>A Q 9</b>			
	$\heartsuit$	<b>K 9 7 4 3</b>			
	$\diamondsuit$	<b>A 9 7</b>			
	$\clubsuit$	<b>Q 10</b>			

East wants west to lead spades or Diamonds whichever Q West holds in this case D but since east  
 is not sure s/he rather West make the call. West has to figure out that since East's signal was so  
 ambiguous, s/he must have about equal strength in  $\spadesuit$  and  $\diamondsuit$  and hopefully switch to diamonds