

# SUMMARY OF DEFENSIVE SIGNALS

There are many ways to indicate, show, promise and inform a partner by the lead of a certain card or via a discard of a specific card the expectation of the ensuing play. These defense signals have a definite meaning and belong in every partnership agreement. These different leads and/or discards have been posted separately on this site and should be reviewed. The purpose of this web page is to give the reader a short summary of the different approaches, which a partnership may employ. This summary does not include every possible lead, defensive signal, and/or discard method, rather only those which frequency is higher than usual for the general partnership.

## General Rules of Defensive Signals

1. When following to a suit or when discarding in a suit, the relative spot of a card is used to send signals.
2. Signals are usually given with cards from the Two spot to the Nine spot.
3. A signal can be, with a high frequency, interpreted:
  - A. From the bidding.
  - B. From the cards visible in the dummy.
  - C. From the cards held in your hand.
4. It is sometimes necessary, if not prudent, to wait until partner plays to the second round in a suit to fully understand a signal.
5. It is not always appropriate to signal, especially with a strong defensive hand.
6. It is not mandatory to follow your partner's signals when it is deemed not suitable given the context of a hand.
7. It is generally profitable to signal as much as possible against less experienced players.
8. It is strongly recommended to always signal on the opening lead.

## Attitude Signal

The attitude signal indicates the level of interest toward the suit, in which the signal is given. Common practice include **positive** and **negative** attitude signals.

A relatively high card shows positive attitude toward the suit being led.

Or a relatively high card shows negative attitude toward the suit being led.

An echo is a positive attitude signal consisting in a high card followed as soon as possible with a lower card.

## **Coded Nines and Tens**

Coded Nines and Tens leads are used against No Trump contracts.

The lead of a Ten promises the Jack plus another non-consecutive higher-ranking honor or shows top of a sequence without a higher-ranking honor.

The lead of a Nine promises the Ten plus another non-consecutive higher-ranking honor or shows top of a sequence without a higher-ranking honor.

## **Count Signal**

The count signal is used to show the number of cards held in a suit being led.

A relatively high card shows an even number of cards in a suit being led.

A relatively low card shows an odd number of cards in a suit being led.

### **Count is given by playing:**

1. High-Low from two cards.
2. Low from three or five cards
3. Second-high followed with Third-high from four cards.

## **Journalist or Lead of an Honor Against No Trump**

Each lead of an honor has a special meaning:

- A. The lead of a Jack denies a higher-ranking honor.
- B. The lead of a Ten promises the Ace, the King or the Queen.
- C. The lead of a Nine promises the Ten or no higher-ranking honor or a doubleton. For example: lead the Eight from 987.
- D. The lead of an Ace shows AKJxx or AKQ10x or AK109x.
- E. The lead of a King shows Ace-King or King-Queen.
- F. The lead of a Queen shows QJ10 or KQ109 and requests unblocking the Jack when held.

### **Advantages:**

Journalist leads eliminate the ambiguity of leading from the top of inner sequences. For example: lead of the Jack from KJ109.

## **Lavinthal Discards**

1. A relatively low card shows a preference for the suit ranking immediately below the suit being discarded. For example: Clubs ask for Spades.
2. A relatively high card shows a preference for the suit ranking immediately above the suit being discarded. For example: Spades ask for Clubs.

### **Advantages:**

Allows suggesting a shift to a given suit from two other suits.

Avoids wasting a high card in a suit you wish your partner to shift.

Reduces the possibility of false carding by declarer.

## **MUD Leads**

MUD means Middle-Up-Down when leading from xxx. MUD leads do not apply to suits declared by your partner during the auction.

## **Reverse Signals or UDCA**

1. A relatively low card encourages the continuation of a suit being led.
2. A relatively high card discourages the continuation of a suit being led.

### **Advantages:**

Avoids wasting a high card to signal positive attitude in a suit.

Reduces the possibility of false carding by declarer.

## **Roman Discards - Odd / Even**

1. An odd discard encourages continuation of a suit being led.
2. An even discard discourages continuation of a suit being led.
3. A relatively high even-card suggests a shift to the higher-ranking suit other than the trump suit.
4. A relatively low even-card suggests a shift to the lower-ranking suit other than the trump suit.

### **Advantages:**

When wishing the continuation of a suit, but lacking an odd card to encourage, the attempt to give a preference signal would appear inconsistent.

## Rusinow Leads or Journalist Leads

Lead the second higher-ranking honor from a sequence of two or more honors. Applies only against suit contracts in suits not declared by your partner during the auction. Leads other than the opening lead are standard.

### Advantages:

Reduces the ambiguity of leads from Ace-King or King-Queen.

## Scanian Signals

Definition contributed by **Mr. Stephen Tu**. A defense signal mechanism devised by **Mr. Anders Wirgren**, and which uses standard or upside-down attitude signals depending on the situation, in an attempt to retain the advantages of each while not taking on the disadvantages. Standard signals fail when a clear signal might waste a critical spot card. Upside-down signals fail when a clear signal might block a suit. The basic principle of Scanian signals is to use upside-down signals when the dummy contains a card which can be finessed, or when it is presumed that the signaling player is long in the suit and declarer short, or when discarding. Standard signals are used otherwise. Several examples are illustrated below.

♥ J742  
♥ AK105      ♥ Q83  
♥ 96

The object is to use normal signals unless the dummy contains a card, which can be finessed. Once the Ace or King is lead, East signals "upside-down" with the ♥3. West will then lead the ♥10.

♥ AJ  
♥ 873      ♥ KQ104  
♥ 9652

Lead is the ♥8, or top of nothing, and the dummy plays ♥A. To signal encouragingly in third seat, the play of the ♥4 is necessary.

♥ 6  
♥ KQ954      ♥ A102  
♥ J873

The contract is No Trump and the lead is ♥K. The Scanian signals in this example are standard and the ♥10 is played, which simultaneously encourages and unblocks. If the upside-down carding were used, then either the suit would be blocked or the ♥10 may be interpreted as discouraging.

## Smith Echo Signal

A card signal, showing attitude, at the first opportunity by the partner of the opening leader against a No Trump contract indicating the attitude for the opening leader's suit. This signaling feature is attributed to **Mr. T.R.H. Lyons** of England, although **Mr. I.G. Smith** of England suggested the same principle in the British Bridge World magazine in 1963.

## Preference Signal

The preference signal is used to show a preference for one of the two suits outside the trump suit and the suit being led.

A relatively **high card** shows a preference for the higher-ranking suit outside the trump suit and the suit being led.

A relatively **low card** shows a preference for the lower-ranking suit outside the trump suit and the suit being led.

## Precedence When Signaling

1. When following to a suit led by your partner:

A. Signal attitude with the first card.

B. Signal preference with the second card.

2. When following to a suit led by the declarer:

A. Signal count with the first card.

B. Signal preference with the second card.

3. When discarding in an suit not yet led:

A. Signal attitude with the first card.

B. Signal present count with the second card.

4. When discarding in a suit already led:

A. Signal present count.

If you wish to include any of these features, or any other feature, of the game of bridge in your partnership agreement, then please make certain that the concept is understood by both partners. Be aware whether or not the feature is alertable or not and whether an announcement should or must be made. Check with the governing body and/or the bridge district and/or the bridge unit prior to the game to establish the guidelines applied. Please include the particular feature on your convention card in order that your opponents are also aware of this feature during the bidding process, since this information must be made known to them according to the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge. We do not always include the procedure regarding Alerts and/or Announcements, since these regulations are changed and revised during time by the governing body. It is our intention only to present the information as concisely and as accurately as possible.