



# Signals & Discards

An aid to better defence





# Topics for today

- ♣ Signalling basics
- ♣ Standard attitude signals
- ♣ Standard count signals
- ♣ Suit Preference signals
- ♣ Discard signals





# Signalling Basics

- ◆ A signal is a *defensive* card, played when not trying to win a trick
- ◆ You can signal on partner's lead, on declarer's lead, or when discarding
- ◆ It is played to give partner information
- ◆ It is not a command, it's an aid to help partner
- ◆ When you have a choice, different cards can have different meanings



# Signalling Basics

You can use a signal to :

- ♥ Tell partner whether or not you like the suit led - an attitude signal
- ♥ Tell partner whether you have an even or an odd number of cards in the suit played – a count signal
- ♥ Tell partner which suit you would like to be played next – a suit preference signal



# Attitude Signal

An attitude signal :

- ♠ Is the most common signal given
- ♠ Is given on partner's first lead of a suit
- ♠ Is given when partner has led an honour
- ♠ Is used to tell partner whether you think he should continue the suit (encourage), or switch (discourage)



# Attitude Signal

How do you give an 'attitude' signal?



Play a high spot card to suggest that you would welcome a continuation



*Throw High Means 'Aye'*

*Throw Low Means 'No'*



Play a low spot card to tell partner that you have no help in the suit played



# Attitude Signal

- ♣ High to encourage, low to discourage, (HELD), is the *standard* method
- ♣ *Reverse* or '*upside down*' uses the opposite method, low to encourage, and high to discourage



# Attitude Signal

When should you give an encouraging 'attitude' signal?



- ◆ Partner leads an Ace, and you can win the third round by ruffing
- ◆ Partner leads an honour, and you hold an *equal honour*
- ◆ ... but you must look at the whole hand to decide whether to encourage or not

<i>Lead</i>	<i>Equal</i>
	<i>Honour</i>
<i>Ace</i>	<i>Queen</i>
<i>King</i>	<i>Ace, Jack</i>
<i>Queen</i>	<i>King, Ten</i>

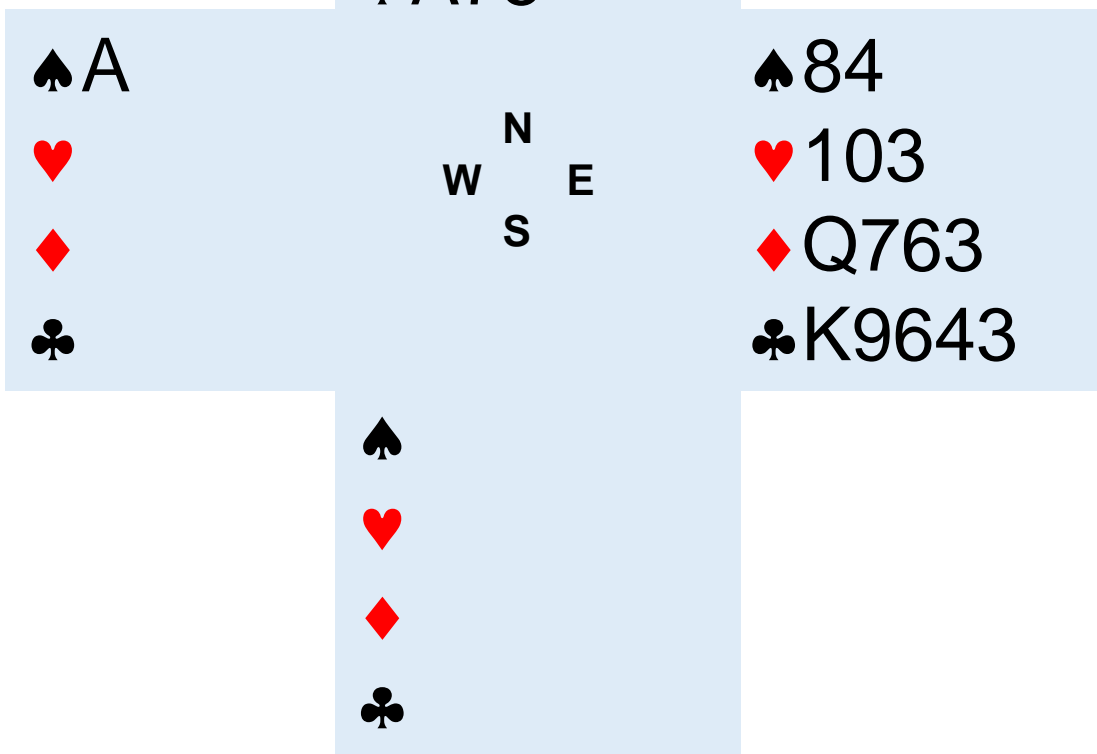




# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All pass

♠ 1096  
♥ Q642  
♦ J105  
♣ A75



Partner leads the ♠A

You have a doubleton spade

Play the ♠8 to encourage a continuation



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All pass

♠ 1096  
♥ Q642  
♦ J105  
♣ A75

♠ AK752  
♥ 9  
♦ K942  
♣ 1082

W N E  
S

♠ 84  
♥ 103  
♦ Q763  
♣ K9643

♠ QJ3  
♥ AKJ875  
♦ A8  
♣ QJ

Partner played the Ace, King, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> spade

You ruff the 3<sup>rd</sup> spade

The contract can no longer be made

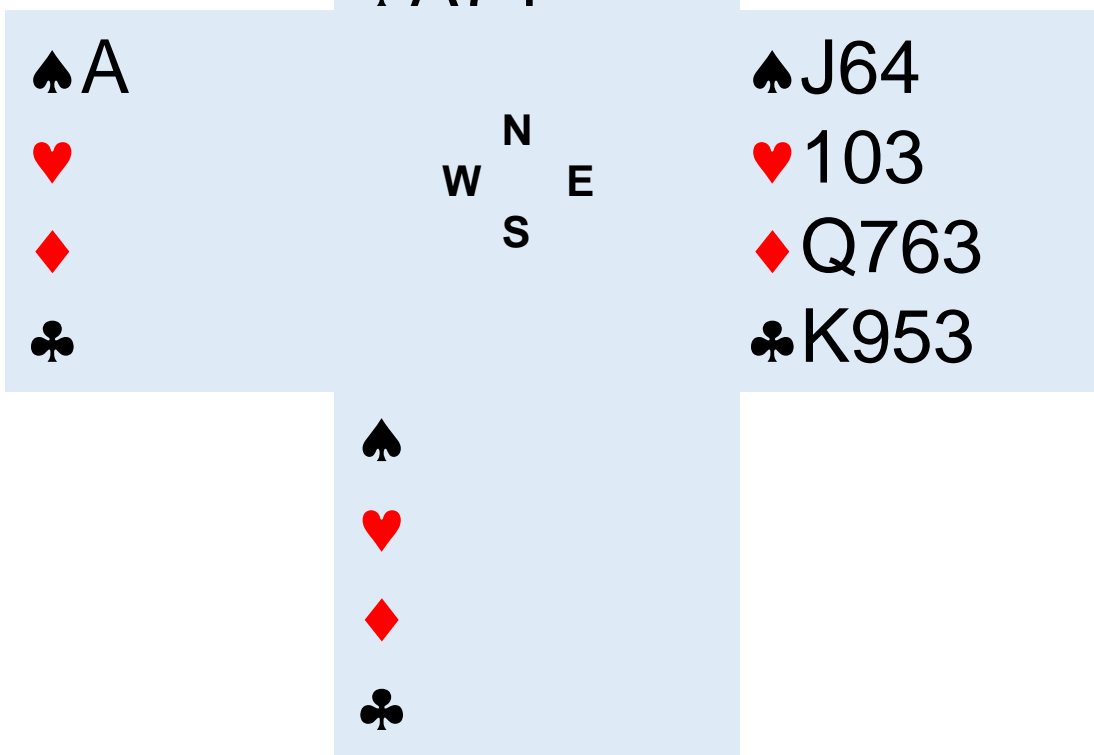
Without the ruff, the contract can be made



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All pass

♠ 982  
♥ Q642  
♦ J105  
♣ A74



♠ J64  
♥ 103  
♦ Q763  
♣ K953

Partner leads the ♠A

You have three spades to the Jack

You play the ♠4 to discourage a continuation

Partner switches to a different suit



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All pass

♠ 982  
♥ Q642  
♦ J105  
♣ A74

♠ AK105  
♥ 9  
♦ K9842  
♣ 1062

W<sup>N</sup>  
S<sup>E</sup>

♠ J64  
♥ 103  
♦ Q763  
♣ K953

♠ Q73  
♥ AKJ875  
♦ A  
♣ QJ8

You played the ♠4 when partner led the ♠A

Partner switches to another suit

When you gain the lead with the ♣K, you return a spade to defeat the contract

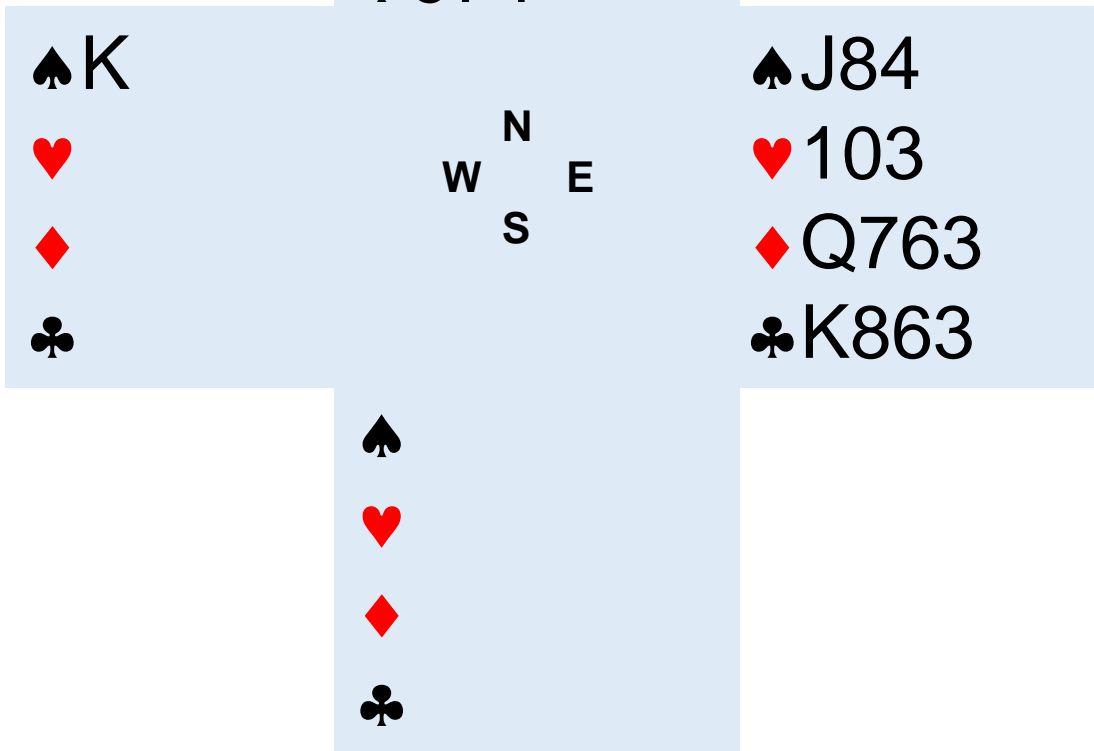
Contract would make if partner had played ♠K



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All pass

♠A72  
♥Q642  
♦J105  
♣974



Partner leads the ♠K

You have three spades to the Jack

Do you encourage a continuation?



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All pass

♠ A72  
♥ Q642  
♦ J105  
♣ 974

♠ KQ93  
♥ 9  
♦ K982  
♣ Q1052

W<sup>N</sup> E  
S

♠ J84  
♥ 103  
♦ Q763  
♣ K863

♠ 1065  
♥ AKJ875  
♦ A4  
♣ AJ

You know that partner has the ♠Q, and you hold an equal honour, the ♠J.

You encourage with the ♠8.

Partner knows to continue spades.

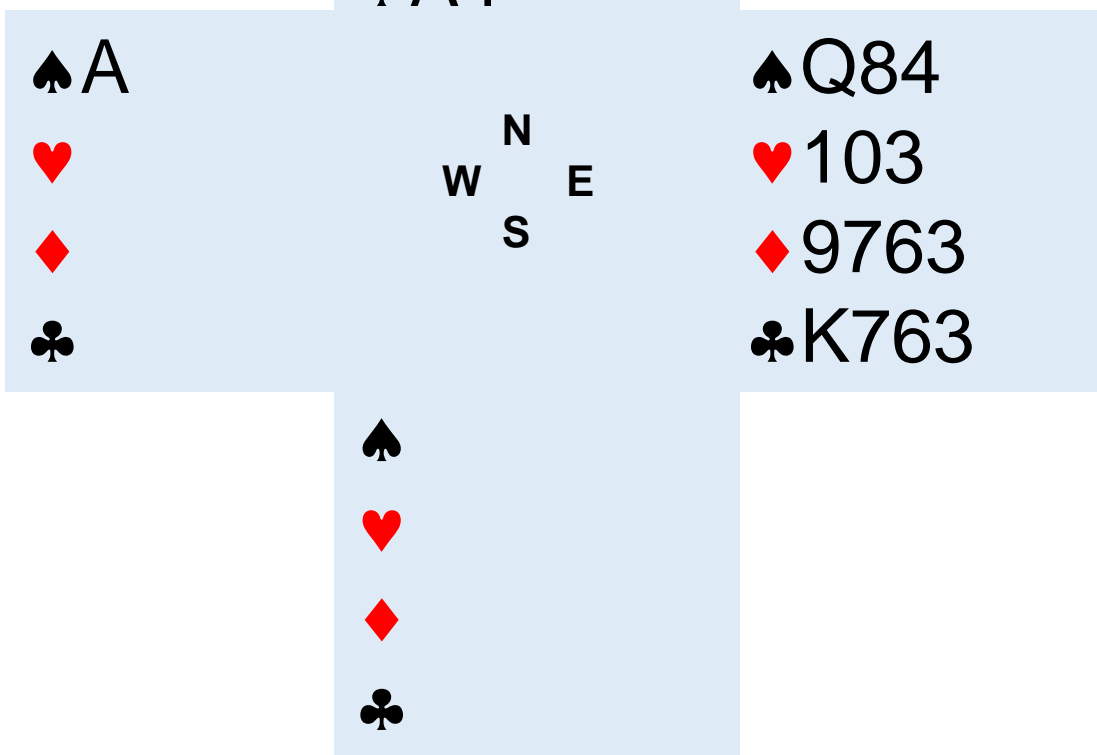
If you play low, partner will switch, expecting declarer to have the ♠J



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	Pass	4♥	All pass

♠ J1072  
 ♥ Q642  
 ♦ J105  
 ♣ A4



Partner leads the ♠A

You have three spades to the Queen

Do you encourage a continuation?



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	Pass	4♥	All pass

♠ J1072  
♥ Q642  
♦ J105  
♣ A4

♠ AK953  
♥ 9  
♦ KQ82  
♣ 1082

W N  
S E

♠ Q84  
♥ 103  
♦ 9763  
♣ K763

♠ 6  
♥ AKJ875  
♦ A4  
♣ QJ95

You know that declarer has at most a singleton spade.

If partner continues with the ♠K, declarer will ruff, and later set up the ♠J

You should play the ♠4 to discourage a continuation.

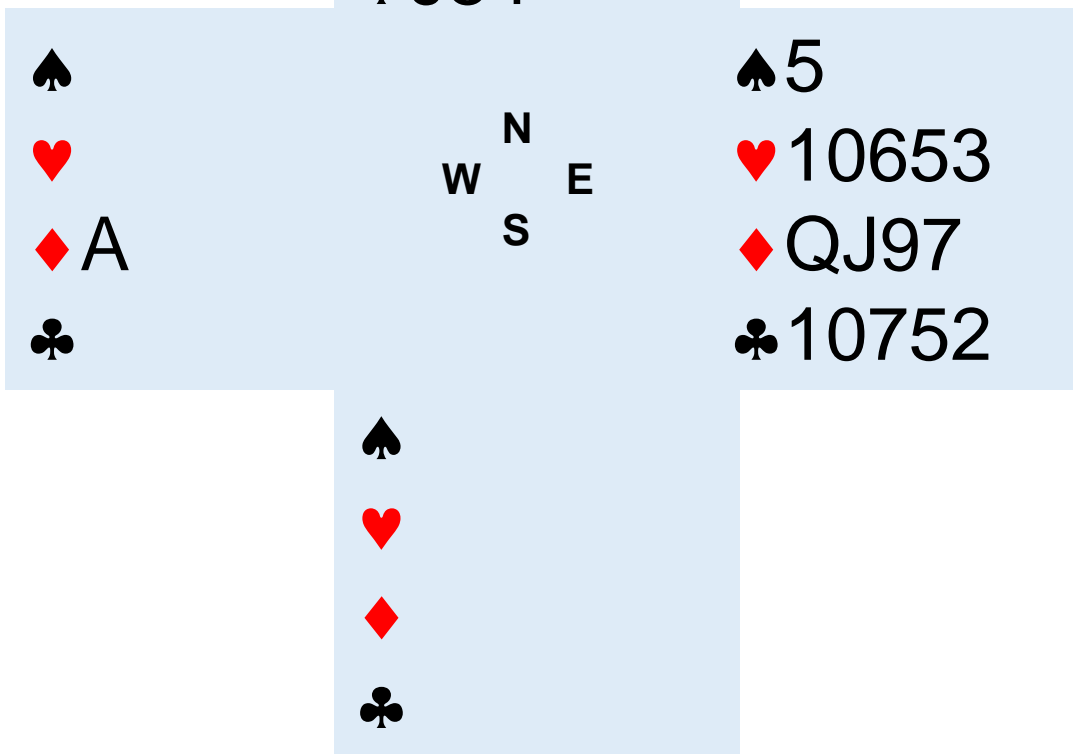




# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
1NT	Pass	4♠	All pass

♠ K1086  
 ♥ AKJ4  
 ♦ 106  
 ♣ J84



Partner leads the ♦ A

Do you encourage?

Yes, but play the ♦ Q to tell partner you have the ♦ J

You would not play the ♦ Q from ♦ Qx

Partner knows he can now lead a low diamond



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
1NT	Pass	4♠	All pass

♠ K1086  
♥ AKJ4  
♦ 106  
♣ J84

♠ 93  
♥ 872  
♦ AK52  
♣ AQ63

W N  
S E

♠ 5  
♥ 10653  
♦ QJ97  
♣ 10752

♠ AQJ742  
♥ Q9  
♦ 843  
♣ K9

Partner led the ♦ A and you played the ♦ Q

Partner knows he can put you on lead by playing a low diamond

You can then defeat the contract by leading a club



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
			1♣
1NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All pass		

♠AQ6  
♥KQ10  
♦QJ43  
♣Q102

♠J2  
♥432  
♦K5  
♣AKJ864

N  
W E  
S

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣9

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣5

T1 ♣A, 2, 9, 5

How many clubs do you think declarer has?

Do you continue with the ♣K?

Yes, partner has played an encouraging signal

T2 ♣K, 10, 3, 7

Do you play a 3<sup>rd</sup> club?



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
			1♣
1NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All pass		

♠AQ6  
♥KQ10  
♦QJ43  
♣Q102

♠J2  
♥432  
♦K5  
♣AKJ864

W N  
S E

♠K109843  
♥76  
♦872  
♣93

♠75  
♥AJ985  
♦A1096  
♣75

You know declarer will over ruff partner.....

.... but you must play a 3<sup>rd</sup> club to prevent declarer winning a trick with the ♣Q



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
			1♣
1NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All pass		

♠AQ5  
 ♥KQ10  
 ♦QJ43  
 ♣Q102

♠J2  
 ♥432  
 ♦K5  
 ♣AKJ864

N  
 W     E  
       S

♠  
 ♥  
 ♦  
 ♣3

♠  
 ♥  
 ♦  
 ♣5

T1 ♣A, 2, 3, 5

Do you continue with the ♣K?

Partner either has a singleton, or has 3 clubs

If 3, then declarer will ruff your ♣K and set up the ♣Q for a spade discard



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
			1♣
1NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All pass		

♠AQ5  
♥KQ10  
♦QJ43  
♣Q102

♠J2  
♥432  
♦K5  
♣AKJ864

W N E  
S

♠K10843  
♥76  
♦872  
♣973

♠976  
♥AJ985  
♦A1096  
♣5

T1 ♣A, 2, 3, 5

Do you continue with the ♣K?

Partner either has a singleton, or has 3 clubs

If 3, then declarer will ruff your ♣K and set up the ♣Q for a spade discard



# Attitude Signal

What is 'high' and what is 'low'?



A ♠2, ♠3 or ♠4 you would expect to be low, and a ♠9, ♠8 or ♠7 high, but.....

♠ 4 2

From this holding, the ♠4 is high...

♠ 9 8 7

... whereas, from this holding, the ♠7 is low

It depends on the cards you hold



# Attitude Signal

Sometimes, you must look carefully at the cards on view to decide, 'high' or 'low'?

You
♠ A K 5 2
Lead ♠ A

Dummy
♠ 9 6 4

Declarer
♠ 3

Partner
♠ 7

When declarer plays the ♠3, you can see the ♠7 is the lowest spade remaining...

So the ♠7 is low





# Attitude Signal

Sometimes, you must look carefully at the cards on view to decide, 'high' or 'low?'

You
♠ A K 5 2
Lead ♠ A

Dummy
♠ 9 6 4

Partner
♠ 7

Declarer
♠ 8

When declarer plays the ♠8, the ♠3 is missing, so the ♠7 is high.....

Unless,



# Attitude Signal

Sometimes, you must look carefully at the cards on view to decide, 'high' or 'low?'

You
♠ A K 5 2
Lead ♠ A

Dummy
♠ 9 6 4

Declarer
♠ Q 8 3

Partner
♠ J 10 7

Declarer may have played the ♠8 from ♠Q83

Such a play is called a 'falsecard'



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
			1♣
1NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All pass		

♠AQ5  
♥KQ10  
♦QJ43  
♣Q102

♠J2  
♥432  
♦K5  
♣AKJ864

N  
W E  
S

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣5

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣9

T1 ♣A, 2, 5, 9

Is the ♣5 high or low?

The ♣5 must be high (or a singleton)

If partner has 3 clubs, then he would play the ♣3



# Attitude Signal

N	E	S	W
			1♣
1NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All pass		

♠AQ5  
♥KQ10  
♦QJ43  
♣Q102

♠J2  
♥432  
♦K5  
♣AKJ864

W N E  
S

♠K10843  
♥76  
♦8762  
♣53

♠976  
♥AJ985  
♦A109  
♣97

Declarer may have played the ♣9 from ♣97



## Count Signal

- ♥ When declarer leads, it is usual to give a count signal
- ♥ Also, give a count signal when partner leads low, and you can't beat dummy's card
- ♥ A high spot card indicates an even number
- ♥ A low spot card indicates an odd number
- ♥ High = Even, Low = Odd, 'HELO'



# Count Signal

- ♠ Giving count tells partner whether you have an odd or even number of cards in the suit led
- ♠ Partner can use this information to work out how many cards declarer has in the suit led



# Count Signal

Declarer leads the ♠A, partner and dummy play low

Dummy

♠ 10 8 2

Partner

♠ 4

Lead

♠ A

You

(i) ♠ 9 3

(ii) ♠ 9 6 3

(iii) ♠ 9 7 6 3

(iv) ♠ Q 3

- (i) From a doubleton, play the ♠9
- (ii) With 3 spades, play the ♠3
- (iii) With 4, play the ♠7, and then the ♠6
- (iv) Don't signal with an honour. Play the ♠3



# Count Signal

Partner leads ♣4, and dummy plays ♣J

Partner
♣4

Dummy
♣ J 7 2

East (you)
(i) ♣ 9 6 3
(ii) ♣ 8 6
(iii) ♣ 9 8 5 3
(iiii) ♣ Q 9 2

- (i) From 3 cards, play the ♣3
- (ii) With a doubleton, play the ♣8
- (iii) With 4, play the ♣8, and then the ♣5
- (iv) You must play the ♣Q, third hand high





E to play at trick 2

West plays

(i) ♦ 9

(ii) ♦ 3

(iii) ♦ 6

# Count Signal

North

♠	Q 8 2
♥	J 7
♦	K Q J 10 7
♣	8 4

South leads

♦ 8

East

♠	A 7 6
♥	Q 10 2
♦	A 4 2
♣	10 9 5

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All pass		

How many diamonds does partner have, if not 1?

(i) 2 (ii) 3 (iii) 2 (with 3, he must have the ♦ 3 or ♦ 5)



# Count Signal

♠ Q82  
 ♥ J73  
 ♦ KQJ107  
 ♣ 84

♠ J953  
 ♥ 96  
 ♦ 963  
 ♣ 7632

W N  
 S E

♠ A76  
 ♥ Q1052  
 ♦ A42  
 ♣ 1095

♠ K104  
 ♥ AK84  
 ♦ 85  
 ♣ AKQJ

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All pass		



# Count Signal

♠ Q82  
 ♥ J73  
 ♦ KQJ107  
 ♣ 84

♠ J953  
 ♥ 964  
 ♦ 63  
 ♣ 7632

W N  
 S E

♠ A76  
 ♥ Q1052  
 ♦ A42  
 ♣ 1095

♠ K104  
 ♥ AK8  
 ♦ 985  
 ♣ AKQJ

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All pass		



# Count Signal

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	All pass	4♠	All pass

T1: ♥K, A, 6, 5 (Dummy wins)

Declarer begins drawing trump:

T2: ♠4, 8, A, 3 (South wins)

T3: ♠K, 5, 6, ♣2 (South wins)

T4 ♣9, ?

Should you play the ♣A and then the ♥Q?

♠64  
♥AJ32  
♦98  
♣KQJ85

♠Q1053  
♥KQ94  
♦542  
♣A3

	N	
W		E
	S	



# Count Signal

♠ 64  
♥ AJ32  
♦ 98  
♣ KQJ85

♠ Q1053  
♥ KQ94  
♦ 542  
♣ A3

W N  
S E

♠ 8  
♥ 1086  
♦ J1073  
♣ 107642

♠ AKJ972  
♥ 75  
♦ AKQ6  
♣ 9

If you fail to win the ♣A,  
declarer will discard the ♥7 on  
the ♣Q



# Count Signal

Your  $\spadesuit 6$  lead is won by dummy's  $\spadesuit J$

West (you)
$\spadesuit A Q 8 6 2$

Dummy
$\spadesuit J 10 5$

Partner
(i) $\spadesuit 9$
(ii) $\spadesuit 3$

N	E	S	W
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
3NT	All pass		

(i) Partner cannot have 3 diamonds.  
(ii) Partner has 1 or 3 diamonds. If 3, then king is now bare..



## Suit Preference Signal

- ♣ Also called McKenney or Lavinthal signal
- ♣ Usually used when leading a suit for partner to ruff
- ♣ Can also be used to suggest a switch, when a continuation seems inappropriate
- ♣ Suggests which suit you would like partner to lead



## Suit Preference Signal

- ◆ You don't want the suit played, or the trump suit.
- ◆ A *high* spot card asks for the *higher* of the remaining suits
- ◆ A *low* spot card asks for the *lower* of the remaining suits





# Suit Preference Signal

Holding ♥AK83 against a *spade* contract

Dummy

♠ Q106  
♥ Q962  
♦ K642  
♣ 96

Partner plays ♥7 then ♥4

Play the ♥8 to ask for a diamond  
Play the ♥3 to ask for a club

Dummy

♠ 1083  
♥ K1032  
♦ 10562  
♣ KQ3

Partner plays ♠6 then ♠2

Holding ♠AK954 against a *diamond* contract

Play the ♠9 to ask for a heart  
Play the ♠4 to ask for a club



# Suit Preference Signal

Lead **♦**A against a  
*heart* contract

Dummy

♠ Q106  
♥ K1032  
♦ 5  
♣ K9643

♦ 8 suggests a spade switch  
♦ 3 suggests a club switch

Lead **♠**A against a  
*club* contract

Dummy

♠ 4  
♥ K1032  
♦ Q105  
♣ K9643

♠ 7 suggests a heart switch  
♠ 2 suggests a diamond switch



# Suit Preference Signal

N	E	S	W
		1♥	Pass
2♥	2♠	4♥	All Pass

♠K9  
♥J862  
♦K86  
♣K1054

♠A10532  
♥Q54  
♦1054  
♣98

W N E  
S

♠8  
♥  
♦  
♣

♠6  
♥  
♦  
♣

West leads the ♠A

♠K is in dummy

East plays the ♠8



# Suit Preference Signal

N	E	S	W
		1♥	Pass
2♥	2♠	4♥	All Pass

♠ K9  
♥ J862  
♦ K86  
♣ K1054

♠ A10532  
♥ Q54  
♦ 1054  
♣ 98

W N E  
S

♠ QJ874  
♥ 9  
♦ AQ732  
♣ 63

♠ 6  
♥ AK1073  
♦ J9  
♣ AQJ72

East can see there is no future in spades

East plays the ♠8 to request a diamond switch

Holding the AQ of clubs, would play the ♠4



## Suit Preference Signal

Contract 3♠

♠ 1084  
♥ K843  
♦ Q75  
♣ K62

♠ 65  
♥ A5  
♦ AK83  
♣ J9874

W<sup>N</sup>  
E  
S

♠ J3  
♥ QJ962  
♦ 92  
♣ Q1053

♠ AKQ972  
♥ 107  
♦ J1064  
♣ A

T1 ♦ A,5,9,4 (west wins)

T2 ♦ K,7,2,6 (west wins)

West knows partner will ruff next trick

West leads ♦ 8 to ask for a heart

If he had ♣ A instead of ♥ A, he would play the ♦ 3



## Discards

- ♥ There are several discard systems available
- ♥ Natural discards are similar to attitude signals
- ♥ A *high* spot card suggests you have a high card in the suit discarded (encouraging)
- ♥ A *low* spot card suggests you have no help in the suit discarded (discouraging)
- ♥ HELD (high=encouraging, low=discouraging)



## Discards

If the following cards were your first discard, what would they suggest?



♠ 9

♠ 9 suggests a high card in spades

♠ K962

♥ 2

♥ 2 suggests no help in hearts

♥ 9862

♦ 8

♦ 8 suggests a high card in diamonds

♦ A843

♣ 3

♣ 3 would be a mistake. Discard the ♣ 9

♣ K93



Contract 4 ♠

## Discards

♠ K104		
♥ KQ873		
♦ 972		
♣ KQ		
♠ 32		♠ 98
♥ 102	W <sup>N</sup>	♥ 964
♦ AKQ63	S <sup>E</sup>	♦ 104
♣ J974		♣ A108653
♠ AQJ765		
♥ AJ5		
♦ J85		
♣ 2		

T1 ♦ A,2,10,5 (West wins)

T2 ♦ K,7,4,8 (West wins)

West knows partner has  
doubleton, so Queen will cash

T3 ♦ Q,9,?

East discards ♣ 10





## Discards

Sometimes, you cannot afford to discard a high card in the suit you want led

♠ KJ98

♥ J93

♦ 972

♣ AK10

W    N  
      E  
      S

♠ AQ10

♥ 102

♦ 843

♣ J9874

Here, the ♠ 10 may be a trick

Discarding the ♦ 3 on a heart, or the ♥ 2 on a diamond, can give the same message



Contract 3NT  
by South

♠ KJ72  
♥ 987  
♦ A874  
♣ QJ

♠ 106  
♥ KJ32  
♦ J63  
♣ K974

W<sup>N</sup>  
S<sup>E</sup>

♠ AQ93  
♥ 1064  
♦ 92  
♣ 8762

♠ 854  
♥ AQ5  
♦ KQ105  
♣ A103

## Discards

T1 ♥ 2, 7, 10, Q (South wins)  
T2 ♦ K, 3, 4, 9 (South wins)  
T3 ♦ Q, 6, 7, 2 (South wins)  
T4 ♦ 5, J, A ?

Can't afford to discard the ♠ 9, as it may promote a trick for dummy's 4th spade

Discard ♣ 2



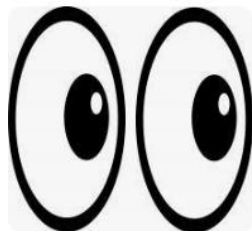
## Summary

- ♣ Attitude signal – high means aye, low means no
- ♦ Count signal – high/low means even, low/high means odd
- ♥ Suit preference signal – high means higher suit, low means lower suit
- ♠ Discard signal – same as attitude, high means aye, low means no



... and finally

However, the clearest signal does no good if partner doesn't see it.....



..so keep your eyes open, and watch partner's cards!

