

## Defensive Carding

You are on defense twice as often as you play a hand (defense 50% of the time, declarer 25%, dummy 25%). When on defense, you can give signals to partner by the choice of which card you play. This is an important aspect of defense, learning to play as a team rather than two individuals.

**A signal tells partner about your hand. It is not a command. Partner will use judgement to decide how best to continue.**

**How to Signal** (you and partner choose one of the two below):

**Standard Carding:** a high spot card encourages.

- **High spot card (6, 7, 8 or 9) encourages.**
- **Low spot card (2, 3, 4, or 5) discourages.**
- **Caveat:** Watch for partner's 2nd card. The 5 might be partner's highest spot card. If partner first plays the 5, then the 3, partner did play the high (higher) card first.

**Upside Down Carding:** Low Likes, High Hates.

- **Low spot card (2, 3, 4, 5) encourages.**
- **High spot card (6, 7, 8, or 9) discourages.**
- **Caveat:** Watch for partner's 2nd card, same as above, 4 followed by 2 discourages.
- **Recommended:** Upside down attitude & discard, standard suit preference & count. (Why? Don't waste a high card like the 9 to encourage. It might be needed to take a trick.)
- More in line with opening leads: **Bottom of Something, Top of Nothing.**

### **What to Signal:**

**Attitude Signal:** When partner leads an honor in a suit:

- **Encourage when you hold a touching honor.** Example: partner leads a K (promising the Q); encourage if you hold the A or the J.

**Discard Signal:** When you can no longer follow suit and must make a discard.

- **Encourage in a suit where you have something.**
- **Discourage in a suit where you have nothing.**

**Suit Preference Signal:** When leading a card for partner to ruff.

- **High card asks partner to return a high suit** (eg. hearts, not clubs)
- **Low card asks partner to return a low suit** (eg. clubs, not diamonds)

**Count Signal:** When declarer leads a suit.

- **Tell partner how many cards you have in that suit.** Let's partner know how many times to hold up an ace. Also let's partner know if he can give you a ruff in that suit.
- Most useful when there is a threatening suit in dummy, missing the A, no outside entry.
- **Play low from and odd number of cards in the suit,** low from 3 or 5 cards.
- **Play high from an even number of cards in the suit,** high from 2 or 4 cards.

## Attitude Signal

### **You give an attitude signal when partner leads a face card.**

- You do this when partner makes the opening lead.
- You also do this later in the play when partner leads a face card.
- (If partner leads a low card, you play to win the trick, not to give a signal.)

### **When partner leads the Ace** (promising the King):

- Encourage with a touching honor (the Queen, not the Jack).
- Encourage with a doubleton at a suit contract. (Partner can play A, K, and give you a ruff.)
- Do not encourage otherwise.

### **When partner leads the King** (promising the Queen):

- Overtake with doubleton Ax and lead the suit back to partner.
- Encourage with a touching honor (the Ace or the Jack or both).
- **Do not encourage with a doubleton.** Declarer has Ace and Jack. Declarer will duck the King, capture the Queen with the Ace, pull your trump and score an un-merited Jack.

### **When partner leads the Queen** (promising the Jack):

- Overtake with the Ace and lead the suit back to partner.
- Overtake with doubleton Kx and lead the suit back to partner.
- Encourage with a touching honor (the King or the Ten).
- **Doubleton??** Declarer has the Ace and King. You are unlikely to have any trump left by the time both of these are gone.

### **If dummy has a singleton or your attitude is obvious to partner after seeing dummy:**

- Show suit preference instead of attitude.
- Don't waste the opportunity to tell partner something about your hand.
- In a suit contract, there are 2 remaining suits (not the suit led, not trump)
- Play a high spot card to show preference for the higher suit.
- Play a low spot card to show preference for the lower suit.
- In a NT contract, there are 3 remaining suits. The signal might be ambiguous to partner, but some signal is better than none. You might try a low card for the low suit, a middle card for the middle suit and a high card for the high suit.

## Discard Signal

**You give a discard signal when you can no longer follow suit:**

- **Encourage in a suit where you have something** (a face card), especially if your high card sits over dummy's high card..
- **Discourage in a suit where you have nothing** (no face card).
- Ace, King or Queen are much more “something” than the Jack.
- **When you have Ace of trump:** Hold up to see partner's discard.

**Using Upside Down signals: Declarer is pulling trump; you have no more:**

- Discard 4C: Says that you have something in clubs.
- Discard 8S: Says that you have nothing in spades.

**What to do when you don't have the right spot card:**

- You want to encourage in clubs but have only discouraging spot cards in clubs: Discourage in another suit.
- You want to discourage spades but have only encouraging spot cards in spades: encourage in another suit.
- Not 100% clear, but some information is better than none. Sometimes clarity comes from multiple signals. E.g. Spades are trump. You discouraged partner's heart lead. Now you discourage diamonds. If you have anything at all, it should be in clubs.
- Think ahead. Don't play your lowest spot card on the Ace if you will want a low spot card to encourage this suit later.
- When you have nothing at all: discourage in one of the suits where you have nothing.

**How is this useful?**

- Declarer leads a low club towards the Jack in dummy. You play next and have the Ace. Partner's first discard showed something in clubs. Partner must have the King or Queen. You play low and allow partner's honor card to capture the Jack, keeping your Ace to capture declarer's honor card.
- Partner's discard indicated something in hearts. Declarer is running winners and you are being squeezed. Discard your hearts knowing that partner has that suit covered.

## Suit Preference Signal

**You give a suit preference signal when you lead a card for partner to ruff.**

- **Example: Spades are trump. You are leading a heart for partner to ruff.**
- **Lead a high heart (6 thru 9 or higher) to ask partner to return a diamond** (the higher of the other 2 suits, diamonds and clubs).
- **Lead a low heart (2 thru 5) to ask partner to return a club** (the lower of the other 2 suits, diamonds and clubs).

## Count Signal

**You give a count signal when declarer leads a non-trump suit.**

- Used to prevent declarer from making extra tricks in NT.
- Used so that partner will know when you will be able to ruff a suit.
- Don't give count in the trump suit. This helps declarer more than your partner.

**You give the signal the first two times you follow suit to a given suit:**

- From an odd number of cards: play a low card in the suit, then a high card in the suit.
- From an even number of cards: play a high card in the suit, then a low card in the suit.
- Play hi-low of your 2 cards from 2 cards.
- Play hi-low of the top 2 cards or the middle 2 cards from 4 cards. This helps identify whether you have 4 or 2. (See below.) Don't play an honor card as a discard.
- Watch for partner's second card. The 4 appears low at first. But if partner's second card is the 2, partner has given a hi-low signal.
- On the flip side, if partner's first card is the 2 (or partner's first card is the 3 and you can see the 2), you know this is partner's lowest card.

**If you play high-low with:**

- **7 then 2:** Certainly a doubleton, since the 2 can't be the low card of top or middle pair.
- **5 then 3 (2 is in dummy):** Certainly a doubleton, since the 3 must be your lowest card.
- **5 then 3 (partner has the 2):** Partner knows you have a doubleton. Declarer is not sure.
- **8 then 5:** Not certain, but more likely to be 4 cards than a doubleton.

**Prevent declarer from making extra tricks at NT:**

- **Situation:** Dummy has a threatening suit with no outside entry:

**Dummy: KQJT9**

**You: Axx**

**Partner: ???**

**Declarer: ???**

- **If partner has 3 cards (declarer 2):**
  - If you win 1st trick, declarer makes 4 tricks in the suit.
  - If you win 2nd trick, declarer makes only 1 trick in the suit.
  - If you win 3rd trick, declarer makes 2 tricks in the suit.
- **If partner has 2 cards (declarer 3):**
  - If you win 1st trick, declarer makes 4 tricks in the suit.
  - If you win 2nd trick, declarer makes 4 trick in the suit.
  - If you win 3rd trick, declarer makes only 2 tricks in the suit.
- **You cannot know when to take your Ace unless partner gives you count.**