

## Signal Carding (Defense)

**A signal is the play of a card by a defender which carries a message to partner.** When a partnership uses standard leads, every time the defense leads a suit, a signal is being made. The card that is led carries a message to the partner of the player that led. It is not always easy to know the type of signal that your partner is using when they play a particular spot card, but it is important for partnerships to understand each other's signals. One of the basic premises of signaling is that cards that are not relevant in terms of winning tricks should be put to some use - the use of sending a message to your partner! In deciding what kind of message a signal should carry in a given situation, the most important question to ask is, **what does your partner need to know?** Always signal with the loudest card you can afford!

Attitude signals encourage or discourage the suit of the signal. Count signals show an even or an odd number of cards in the suit of the signal. Suit preference signals are different - they are signals in one suit that carry a message about some other suit.

## Types of Signals

1. **Attitude signals** are used to tell your partner either the presence of, or the absence of, a critical honor card in a specific suit. For example, a defender can use an attitude signal to give his partner a message like, "I have the ♠A" or "I don't have the ♥A". The first discard that a player makes in a suit is an attitude signal.. Attitude signals are used when following suit to partner's lead, or when making the first discard.

*A high card encourages a suit.....a low card discourages*

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2. **Count signals** are used to tell your partner you have an even (2, 4, 6, 8) or odd (1, 3, 5, 7) number of cards in a specific suit. A count signal indicates the number of cards that a defender holds in a given suit. For example, a defender can use a count signal to give his partner a message like, "I have an odd number of diamonds" or "I have an even number of clubs".

Standard count is to play:

...lowest card from 3 or 5 cards;

...your second-highest from 4 cards followed by the lowest (unless you think it is too valuable-in which case you play your 3rd-highest);

...your top card from a doubleton (unless you feel it is too valuable often a 10 or higher doubleton is not played first round)

*Playing high-low in a suit indicates an even number of cards.....playing low-high indicates an odd.*

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3. **Suit preference signals** are used to tell your partner you would like them to play a specific suit if they should gain lead. For example, a defender can use a suit preference signal to give partner a message like, "I would like you to play a spade if you gain the lead". Remember, when giving your partner a ruff, the spot card you lead back is suit preference.

*Playing a low card asks for the lower-ranking of the remaining side suits..... Playing a high card asks for higher-ranking of the remaining side suits..... play of a middle card says you have no preference which of the remaining side suits is lead.*

*A high-low in the trump suit suggests an odd number of trumps..... playing low-high in the trump suit suggests an even number of trumps*

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-When splitting from 2 or more equal cards as the second hand to play to a trick, *always* play the lowest card of the group of equals.

-When following suit as third hand to play, *always* play the lowest card from a group of equals.

-When winning a trick as the fourth hand to play, *always* play the lowest card from a group of equals.

On many deals, the ability to draw these kinds of inferences from the cards your partner plays will help you to place critical honor cards in the unseen hands. This will often help you to make winning decisions as a defender.

## Suggested Partnership Agreement Statements

1. The first discard that a player makes in a suit is an attitude signal.
2. Only signal if you think that the message that is carried by your signal will be more important to your partner than it will be to the declarer! Defense is hard, and partner needs to be able to trust your signals. So I suggest you always signal correctly and not worry too much about helping declarer. Helping partner is much more important **Howard Schutzman**

## Good Opening Leads

If you have not supported partner...*Lead low from three or more cards*

If you have supported partner (at least 3-card support)...*Low if you have one honor, or High if you have no honors*

Whether you have or haven't supported the partner...*Top of touching cards....Top of a doubleton (whether or not you have an honor)...High from an honor sequence of 2 or more adjacent honors—(10 is considered an honor.)*

If you choose to lead partner's suit when holding an Ace...*lead the Ace.*

**Howard Schutzman**