

Defensive Signals

I. Attitude Signals

- A. Attitude signals are the most common signals and the easiest to understand.
- B. If partner plays a high spot on the card you have led he wants you to continue the suit. If partner plays a low spot card he wants you to switch to another suit.
- C. You must watch the spots carefully to be sure that partner is signaling encouragement or discouragement. Sometimes his smallest spot may be an 8 or 9. Sometimes his highest spot may be the 3 or 4.
- D. Against no trump most experienced players play a small spot card in the suit that they don't want on the first discard.

II. Count signals

- A. Partner plays high low to show an even number of cards in a suit and plays up the line to show shortness in a suit.
- B. There are two instances in which count should be given rather than attitude.
 - 1. You wish to ruff and you play high low to let partner know you can ruff the third round of a suit.
 - 2. Declarer has a long suit on the board missing the ace and you want to tell partner how many times to duck.

III. Suit preference

- A. In suit preference a high card says play the higher ranking of the suits other than trumps. A low card says play the lower ranking of the suits other than trumps.
- B. Suit preference should be used in two instances.
 - 1. When leading a suit for partner to ruff, lead a high card to ask him to return the higher ranking suit; lead a low card to ask him to lead the lower ranking suit.
 - 2. When you lead a suit and it is obvious that partner cannot want the suit led again (dummy has a singleton for example) then his card should be suit preference.

Example 1 (contract: 4 spades)

		Dummy
	S	KQ109
	H	864
	D	KJ87
	C	Q10
	You	
S	75	
H	KQ95	
D	A98	
C	J765	

You lead the king of hearts and partner follows with the 7. There is no reason to interpret this as anything but encouraging you to continue the suit so play another heart.

Example 2 (contract: 4 spades)

		Dummy	
	S		K109
	H		5
	D		KJ87
	C		AQ1098
		You	
	S		75
	H		AKQ10
	D		765
	C		10964

You lead the king of hearts and partner plays the 9. It is virtually impossible that partner wants you to continue hearts so this must be a request that you switch to the higher ranking suit other than trumps.

Example 3 (contract: 4 hearts)

		Dummy	
	S		QJ9
	H		KJ9
	D		AJ87
	C		J108
		You	
	S		AK542
	H		86
	D		976
	C		864

You lead the king of spades and partner plays the 8. Since partner cannot possibly have an honor in spades, assume that the 8 is the beginning of a high low and partner and continue with the ace and a third spade to give him a ruff.

Example 4 (contract: 5 clubs)

		Dummy	
	S		KQJ1087
	H		876
	D		643
	C		J9
		You	
	S		96
	H		K10954
	D		KQ87
	C		87

You lead the king of diamonds, declarer wins and pulls trumps. She then leads a low spade. It is important for partner to know when to take the ace of spades so you start a high low signal to tell him how many you have,

Pumping Declarer

I. When you have four or more trumps

- A. When you have four or more trumps it is usually good play to try to force declarer to ruff rather than ruffing yourself.
- B. Even when your trumps are small you may be able to take control of the hand if you can force declarer to ruff often enough.
- C. It is seldom good to play for a ruff when you have long trumps (four or more).
- D. When you have long trumps, it is seldom good play to over ruff declarer with a card that would turn a trick anyway.

II. When you believe that partner has four or more trumps.

- A. Several clues may lead you to the conclusion that partner has long trumps.
 - 1. RHO opens one no trump, his partner bids Stayman and they end up playing in a major. If you have a singleton or void in the major, the odds are that partner has four or more cards in the major.
 - 2. RHO opens one of a minor, LHO responds one heart, RHO bids one spade and LHO raises spades. If you have a singleton or void spade there is a good chance that partner has long trumps.
 - 3. RHO bids one of a major, LHO bids one no trump, RHO bids two of a minor and LHO reluctantly takes her back to the major. If you have a singleton or void in the suit, there is a good chance that partner has four or more.
- B. Whenever the bidding indicates that partner has length in the trump suit you should use the same strategy as when you have length in trumps – try to make declarer ruff.

Example 1

You hold

S AK98

H 8

D QJ1098

C 987

The bidding goes

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
			1s
Pass	2s	pass	3s
Pass	4s		

Lead the queen of diamonds. You hope to set up your diamond suit and force declarer to ruff. If declarer is forced to ruff twice, you can pull trumps and run your diamond suit. Don't lead your singleton heart. **With length in trumps, don't play for a ruff, play to force declarer to ruff.**

Example 2

You hold

S 9876

H KQ987

D A87

C 9

The auction has been the same as on Example 1.

Lead the king of hearts. Even when your trumps are weak forcing declarer to ruff is probably better strategy than trying to ruff yourself.

Example 3

	Dummy
S	743
H	K87
D	AK987
C	76

You
S K1098
H **Q9**
D **6543**
C 98

The bidding goes

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
			1s
Pass	2d	2h	pass
Pass	2s	pass	3s
Pass	pass	pass	

You lead the queen of hearts declarer plays low from dummy and partner gives you an encouraging card, declarer plays low. You continue hearts, declarer plays low from dummy and partner plays the Ace which wins. Partner continues hearts and declarer ruffs with the king.

Don't over ruff with the king! If you pitch a loser you assure yourself of three trump tricks, but if you over ruff you will only get two.

Example 4

You hold:

S
H **KQ1098**
D **QJ1064**
C A108

The bidding has gone

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
			1nt
	Pass		
2h	double*	Pass	2s
3d	4s	Pass	Pass
Pass			

***negative double**

Lead a heart every time you get in. From the bidding it is likely that partner has long trumps. You hope that you can force declarer to ruff and set up long trumps in partner's hand

Example 5

You hold

S J

H AJ1095

D 87956

C 87

The bidding has gone:

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
			1c
Pass	1d	Pass	1s
Pass	2s	Pass	3s
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Lead a heart. Although this may cost a trick, it is important to get your suit started. Partner probably has four trumps and you want to start declarer ruffing.