

# The Exciting World of Bridge – Lesson 14

## Defensive Signals

### Introduction

Tonight we are going to continue with playing lots of hands while teaching a very important topic. Have you ever wanted to yell out “Partner I love your lead!”, or even “Partner, I hate your lead!”? Well, while that’s not exactly legal, tonight we’ll look at how you can do pretty much the same thing but in a legal way.

### Hand 1 – Giving Your Partner Attitude

	♠T873	
	♥AK6	
	♦QJT2	
	♣K9	
♠A6		♠42
♥T985		♥Q72
♦973		♦A64
♣T752		♣A8643
	♠KQJ95	
	♥J43	
	♦K85	
	♣QJ	

North is the dealer and with a 13 point balanced hand they open 1♦. East and West will pass throughout. South responds 1♠. North has spade support but a minimum opening hand so their rebid is 2♠. South can now place the contract by rebidding 4♠. West is on opening lead and decides to lead the ♥10, the top of a sequence.

Let’s put ourselves in Declarer’s shoes for a moment. After Dummy comes down, South starts by counting their losers. There is one loser in each suit, the aces in spades, diamonds and clubs and also a possible heart loser. Declarer’s PLAN should be to get rid of their possible heart loser on Dummy’s long diamond. Declarer needs to draw trump before doing this so that the defenders can’t ruff the fourth diamond trick.

Now back to the defense. Since East had the ♥Q “behind” the ♥AK in Dummy, they want to encourage their partner to continue playing hearts if they get on lead again. How can East do this? They can follow to the first trick with the ♥2 to say I like your lead. If they didn’t like the lead (say they had just 3 small hearts) then they would play the ♥7 on the first trick instead. The “poem” to remember is “Low I like, high I hate”. When West wins the ♠A, if they continue hearts, the defense will get four tricks and defeat the contract. If West instead continues any other suit, Declarer will get their ten tricks.

## Hand 2 – Getting a Ruff

	♠T5	
	♥AT42	
	♦T5	
	♣KJT92	
♠AK83		♠Q9642
♥7		♥KQ65
♦Q96		♦J72
♣AQ865		♣3
	♠J7	
	♥J983	
	♦AK843	
	♣74	

East is our Dealer and passes, as does South. West opens the bidding with 1♣. After North passes, East bids 1♠ (skipping their four card suit to show their 5 card suit). South passes again. Counting dummy points West has an 18 point hand so they raise 1♠ to 3♠. East accepts the invitation by bidding 4♠ which ends the auction. South leads the ♦A.

After Declarer calls for a low diamond from Dummy what should North play? North should play their ♦5 (low) to encourage their partner to continue diamonds. South can see the ♦Q in Dummy so they know that North isn't encouraging because they have the ♦Q, so why are they encouraging? Because they want a ruff! South should win the ♦K at trick two and then play a third round of diamonds which North will ruff. After the two diamond tricks and the ruff, North's ♥A will be the defense's fourth trick.

A small note on Declarer play....On the first trick East can try to confuse the issue by playing their ♦7 instead of the ♦2. Now South doesn't know where the ♦2 is and might think that North is actually trying to discourage them. As Declarer, you try to signal just like a Defender. You want to DISCOURAGE South from continuing diamonds so you play high to discourage.

### Hand 3 – Giving Suit Preference

	♠AJT72	
	♥Q986	
	♦T7	
	♣AK	
♠Q5		♠84
♥4		♥AKT2
♦KJ942		♦A853
♣J9632		♣T84
	♠K963	
	♥J753	
	♦Q6	
	♣Q75	

West is Dealer and passes and then North opens 1♠. East passes and with spade support and 8 points South bids 2♠. North is almost good enough to raise to try for game but decides to pass. East leads the ♥A which wins the trick and they continue with the ♥K which also holds. On this second trick East sees their partner discard the ♦2. What now?

East now knows that both Declarer and Dummy started with four hearts. East can now give their partner a ruff but they'd really love to give them a second ruff afterwards. If only there was a way to say "Hey partner, after I give you a ruff, if you lead back a low diamond I can win my ace and give you another ruff." Well guess what? There is a way!

When East plays the third round of hearts, they should play the ♥T. This is a suit preference signal suggesting that partner return a diamond. If East had instead wanted a club returned, they'd give their partner their first ruff by playing the ♥2. How can West know that it's diamonds and clubs that partner is signaling about? We don't count the trump suit here because obviously switching to trumps isn't going to help the defense get any ruffs in.

Defending in this manner sets the contract. The defense gets two heart tricks, two diamond tricks and two ruffs.

## Hand 4 – Taking Your Tricks

	♠KT753	
	♥J64	
	♦KQ9	
	♣A8	
♠J964		♠A
♥AK7		♥Q85
♦AJ8		♦542
♣642		♣KQJT75
	♠Q82	
	♥T932	
	♦T763	
	♣93	

North is Dealer opens 1♠. East has a full opening hand so they overcall 2♣. South should pass – bidding with just 2 points in this position can be extremely dangerous. West knows that East has opening points for their overcall at the two level so since they have 13 points West also knows that their side should bid game. West decides to hope that their spade holding is good enough to stop the defense from running too many spade tricks so they bid 3NT. North leads the ♠5 – fourth best.

What should South play on this first trick? They should play the ♠2 to encourage partner since they have a spade honour. If South had the ♠862 instead of the ♠Q82, they would play the ♠8 to discourage partner.

Let's have a quick look at Declarer's PLAN. They have one spade winner, three hearts and one diamond – that's five. Once we knock out the ♣A we have five club tricks – and that's the only way that Declarer has any chance of getting to nine tricks so Declarer switches to the ♣K at trick two.

When North wins the ♣A they know to continue with the ♠3 because of their partner's signal at trick one. Now North/South end up winning four spade tricks to go along with the club trick they have already won. If North plays a high club at trick three the Declarer gets to make their contract.

## Hand 5 – Maintaining Communication

	♠T75	
	♥AJT	
	♦64	
	♣KJ952	
♠9432		♠KJ6
♥65432		♥98
♦93		♦AK8752
♣A6		♣84
	♠AQ8	
	♥KQ7	
	♦QJT	
	♣QT73	

West deals and passes. After North passes, East opens 1♦ (East has 11 HCP's plus two length points so they have enough to open). South overcalls 1NT since they have 16 points and a diamond stopper. West passes again and North bids 3NT which buys the contract. West, being a good partner, leads their ♦9 (top of a doubleton in their partner's suit).

If East wins the first diamond trick and continues diamonds they've not only handed Declarer their contract but they've also allowed them to make an overtrick. When Declarer wins their diamond trick they will knock out the ♣A. West wins the club ace (the defense's third trick) but has no more diamonds to play. Declarer ends up winning four club tricks, one diamond trick, three hearts and two spades (they know the spade finesse will work due to East's opening bid).

Is there a better way? What East needs to recognize is that they will probably not get in again after they've cleared the diamond suit. South has pretty much promised a diamond stopper with their 1NT overcall so why not let them win their diamond trick early rather than late? After ducking the first diamond to Declarer, when West wins their ♣A they will be able to continue diamonds and the defense will end up winning six tricks (five diamonds and a club). That's a huge improvement over what happened the first time.

## Hand 6 – Partnership Cooperation

	♠643	
	♥94	
	♦K643	
	♣Q652	
♠T972		♠Q85
♥AJ76		♥KQT82
♦AQ52		♦JT
♣9		♣AT4
	♠AKJ	
	♥53	
	♦987	
	♣KJ873	

South is the dealer and opens 1♣. West has support for all of the unbid suits and 11 HCP's so they make a takeout double. North passes and East bids 4♥. This East hand is why you NEED to have support for all of the unbid suits (especially the majors) when you make a takeout double. The 4♥ bid ends the auction and South leads the ♠A.

Declarer can count two possible club losers but those can probably be ruffed in Dummy. Declarer also has a possible diamond loser (they will try the finesse) and they've got three possible spade losers. Declarer's PLAN will be to throw away a spade loser (or maybe two) on Dummy's diamonds.

What should North play on trick one? They should play the ♠6 to show that they don't like spades. North knows that their partner has the ♠K since they lead the ♠A but since North doesn't have the ♠Q and they don't have a doubleton spade, they want to discourage.

South, seeing their partner discourage should switch to another suit so they switch to the ♦9. Declarer might as well try the diamond finesse at this point so they call for a low diamond from Dummy. North wins the ♦K and should now play back a low spade (return your partner's lead – it makes them happy). South now gets to win both of their spades and the contract is defeated.