



## In Defence, Every Card Tells a Story

### Suit Preference Discards

When defending there usually comes a point when you cannot follow suit. You have a free choice of your remaining cards.

You use the discard to signal your suit preference to partner. You inform partner which suit you would like led to you, should they get the chance.

### Choosing a discard system

There are many discard systems, and they evolve over time.

Some players will play one discard system against trump contracts and a different system against no trumps.

With any bridge method, it is a balance, and a personal choice between

- something simple and easy to remember and spot that may not cover all cases, or
- something more sophisticated that works better in theory, but you may not remember in play.

However, you are much better off with a discard system than with none.



## The McKenney Method

This is not one of the simplest discard systems. However, it has a feature that make it especially useful against No Trump contracts.

McKenney avoids using a card from the preferred suit. In No Trumps contracts you may want to protect a long suit.

Making and understanding the signal:

- You do not want the suit led – you are void.
- You do not discard the suit you want – you protect your holding in it.
- You choose a card from the remaining two suits.
- Partner knows you do not want the suit led and not the suit you discard.
- There are two remaining candidates. One of them outranks the other.
- IF you prefer the higher-ranking suit, choose a discard with a high “pip” count.
- A discard with a low “pip” count shows preference for the lower-ranking suit.

A “low” pip count is 2-5; a “high” pip count is 7 upwards.



For example:

In a No Trumps contract, declarer wins the first trick in clubs and then plays hearts twice winning each time.

Declarer leads a third heart. You hold:

♠ A 10 4 3  
♥ - -  
♦ 10 9 8 2  
♣ J 3 -

Your preferred suit is spades.

If you discard the 10♦, your partner conducts a process of elimination:

1. The preferred suit will not be the suit led, so it is not hearts; and
2. It will not be the suit discarded, so it is not diamonds;
3. The "pip" value, 10, is high;
4. The two remaining suits are Spades and Clubs. Spades outrank clubs; so
5. in this case you want a spade returned.



## Notes

Generally, a “low” pip count is 2-5, and a “high” pip count is 7 upwards.

A pip count of 6 is ambiguous. Sometimes partner consider the cards known not to be in partner’s hand and make a judgement of the position of the 6 in partner’s holding.

It can be useful to agree that the discard of a 6 shows no preference.

It is the first discard in a hand that contains the signal. Later choices won’t be as wide because fewer cards are left and the protection of important cards is likely to take precedence.

## Don’t use important cards

Keep important cards that may win tricks later, and guards to protect them.

## You may not have the right card to signal

All discard systems rely on the player having suitable cards to use, and sometimes they just don’t! Remember that when partner signals something that just doesn’t make sense it may be because there is no suitable card in the hand to signal the right message.



## Disclosure

When you are declarer, you may be wondering which of the defence hands holds an important honour.

The defence may discard, and you would like to know if there is any clue for you in that discard.

You are entitled to know what discard system the defence are using, and what any individual card means.

At your turn to play, you can ask the partner of the discarder what he/she understands by the card.

Note that although the defence must inform you of their agreement, they are not legally obliged to follow it. "False" carding is a legal tactic and they may use it to hide where that important card is!

## The "Revolving" discard system

Again, the suit discarded is not wanted.

This time the "pip" value of the discarded card is used to indicate whether the required card is "above" or "below" the rank of the discard.

A discard of the 2♣ would indicate the rank of the required suit is "lower" than Clubs. The "revolving" part is that since there is no lower ranking suit, the choice returns to the top of the list and the required suit is Spades.