



Quick summary



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Bridge Venue

Signals & discards, Overview

Listening to your partner signalling to you

I suppose it's obvious, but in case it isn't: Signalling to your partner takes second priority to winning the trick! If the third player can win the trick, he will play as high as he can (*unless* there's a very good reason not to).

That said, good defenders should usually send signals to each other 4 or 5 times in **every single** bridge contract.

If they don't, then they're not playing as a team, and they'll fail to get the enemy opponents down as often as they could. ('bridge' ?...)

Typically, in *every* contract, good defenders will send approximately

- 3 'count' signals (whenever the **declarer/dummy** leads a new suit)
- 1 or 2 'attitude' signals (whenever **their partner** leads a new suit)
- a description of their suit (whenever they lead a new suit themselves)
- the occasional 'suit preference' signal, either
 - when they can't follow suit, or
 - very occasionally, on partner's lead, or
 - when they're making a lead that they know their partner will ruff

Best of all, the defender with a terribly weak hand, e.g. 0-2 points, who therefore sometimes tends to get bored and go to sleep Bill, is often the MOST important player. He's the one who needs to signal to his partner, who of course **cannot** see the distribution of his boring hand, but will often need to know it - if the team is to get the opponents down.

There are various other rarer signals too.

It takes time and effort to get started (you need brain-time to receive the signals, as well as send them), but if you always do it, it will eventually become a powerful and magical automatic habit.

So let's concentrate on the ones that come up most of all. And top of the list is the signal you should send to each other **whenever** declarer leads a new suit. And that's going to happen a lot.

1. [After Declarer \(or dummy\)'s lead. Always describe your shape: give count](#)
2. [After Partner's lead. Show attitude \(like the suit, or not\)](#)
3. [Leading to a ruff. Always give suit preference](#)
4. [You can't follow suit. Always protect your winners, but give suit preference if possible.](#)
5. [You lead a new suit. Always describe it.](#)

Now try the quiz

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Signals & discards. After declarer-dummy lead

Always describe your shape: give count

Imagine that Declarer leads a new suit, say with the King. Does it matter which of your terrible weak 13 cards you now play ?

Yes, very much, if you want to be one those irritating partnerships that often win.

Why ? Because your partner will then be able to work out exactly how many cards the enemy **declarer** is holding in his (carefully hidden) hand in this suit. This can be jolly useful, for example:

- when deciding how many tricks partner should "hold up" before playing his winner over declarer's last entry to dummy;
- later on, for ruffing;
- later on, for the [end-game](#);
- to keep up with long suits in declarer's hidden hand, by choosing the correct discards;
- etc

Yes, you inform your dear partner how many cards you've got in the new suit: by playing the correct 'little' card to follow declarer's King lead:

- play 'high then low' to tell your partner you've got an even number of cards
- play lowest in your hand then 'higher' to tell your partner you've got an odd number of cards

Very, very simple.

And a bit like the old 'high-low' for a doubleton, one of the even numbers.

Your partner can then do his arithmetic: if this is an important suit for him, he's already worked out how many you and declarer have between you (from his own hand and dummy).

Let's say that's 5 cards. If you say you have an even number, 2 or 4, then declarer MUST have 3 or 1, (not 2 or 4 cards). Result: partner can tighten up his plan.

Here are some 'giving count' examples

1201. 'Count' signal, after declarer lead of new suit, to reveal distribution				
	your cards	EVEN or ODD no. of cards	first play	2nd play
1	9 7 4	ODD	4	7
2	Q 9 4	ODD	4	9
3	9 7 4 3	EVEN	7	3
4	Q 7 4 3	EVEN	7	3
5	4 3	EVEN	4	3
6	9 4	EVEN	9	4
7	9	ODD	9	
8	2	ODD	2	
9	4 3 2	ODD	2	4

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Some notes from the table above

- Hand 3. Avoid the 'natural' beginners-bridge play - i.e. playing the 3 first of all. Because then your next play in the suit will inevitably be higher, and will therefore mislead your highly observant adult partner into believing that you have an odd number of cards. (You could also play 9 first, to make it even clearer, though it's a bit less sensible because the 9 might prove to be useful later).
- Hand 7. When you only have the highest 'little' card (the 9) your partner will often place you with 2 cards, but hopefully might work out that a singleton is likely, both from the cards visible in dummy and his hand, and from the bidding.
- Hand 9. If you've got the tiny 2, the smallest card, then of course play the 2 if you have an odd number of cards, because then your partner will know immediately that your holding is odd (there's nothing lower than the 2). He won't have to remember and await confirmation of count at the next time that suit is played.

As well as letting your partner know about your suit shape, you can also do the same yourself and watch for your partner's card count signals - if you're brain's big enough and quick enough. To help you to remember it more easily, use the information from partner immediately, by working out how many cards the declarer must have in the suit.

Ah, there's so much to remember. Maybe start by focussing only on the obviously important 1 (or maybe 2) suits.

Should you send the same 'shape' signal when partner leads a suit ?

Now try the quiz

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Signals & discards. After partner's lead

Show attitude ("I like the suit", or "I don't")

So it's different from when the declarer leads a new suit.

But a 'partner new-suit lead' happens much less often. Whenever a suit is led for the first time, it's most often by declarer, assuming declarer wins the 9 tricks in his typical contract.

However, there's always at least once per contract when defender always does have to lead a new suit: on the blind opening lead.

When it *does* happen that partner leads a new suit for the first time, it's best to tell partner about your *Attitude*, not about your *shape* / *Count*

- if you like the suit, (and you want your partner to keep leading it), send a 'like' signal
- if you don't like the suit, (and you don't want partner to keep leading it), send a 'no-likey' signal!

Consider this example: partner leads Ace♥, thereby promising you the K♥ too. You can encourage him to lead them again, or to avoid Hearts, by playing little cards as follows:

1202. 'Attitude' after an Ace opening lead from partner				
ref	your cards	like or not	using 'HELD'	using 'LLHH'
1	Q 10 4	like	10	4
2	J 4	like	J	4
3	J 8 3	don't like	3	8

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With holding number 1, after leading his Ace, partner will notice your encouraging signal and then, after leading his King, will lead a third Heart so that you can hopefully win the third trick with the Queen.

Similarly, in the second example, after leading his Ace, partner will notice your encouragement and then, after leading his King, will lead another Heart so that you can win the third trick by ruffing.

In the third case, being observant of the no-likey signal that you chose to send after his first lead, your partner will not rely on you to win the third heart trick, and will probably switch to another suit for his second trick, holding back the King for killing enemy Queens in declarer's hand. Then, when you eventually get the lead, you have 2 cards left and you might for example lead your J

Note: In table 1202 above, there are two different 'attitude' languages for revealing your attitude, one called HELD (High Encourage, Low Discourage), the other LLHH (Low Like, High Hate).

The exceptions after partner's lead

For more advanced players

For those who are newcomers to using signals, don't read this section! You've got enough to think about.

More advanced players don't always tell their partner whether or not they like the suit that's been led. The main reason is your attitude is clear:

1. If partner leads into a clearly strong and winning dummy suit (e.g. AKQ), there's no point telling him whether you like the suit or not, 'cos it's obvious you don't like them. In that case he'll expect you to give 'Count', telling him about your shape, to help him work out possible ruffs and long suits.
2. If partner leads a low card into a weak-ish dummy, and you can't win it, then it's again clear you don't like the suit. At this point give 'Count' to help your partner work out how many cards the declarer must have in the suit. See [deal 126254](#) for example.
3. Partner leads a suit which has a singleton in dummy. Obviously, all future leads of that suit will tend to get ruffed, so no point telling him if you like them or not. Assuming he's played a winner, he'll expect you to tell him which of the other two non-trump suits you'd like to be led to you: a 'high' little card (7, 8 or 9) for the higher ranking suit. ('[suit preference](#)'). See [deal 126253](#) for example.
4. Similar: Partner leads a winner (let's say a K) in the suit you'd bid, and your team has three top tricks in the suit. If you play an unnecessarily high card (an honour), your partner will **not** take it has 'attitude' or 'count' but instead will take it as a **clear** 'suit preference' signal, requesting the suit he should attack on his next lead. Especially true if there is a likely shortage with declarer/dummy in the suit that was led. See [deal 126262](#) for example.
5. Similar: Partner leads an Ace to a singleton in hidden declarer's hand (the bidding will tell you it's a singleton). Again, all future leads of that suit will tend to get ruffed, so no point telling him if you like them or not. He'll expect you to tell him which of the other two non-trump suits you'd like to be led to you: a 'high' little card (7, 8 or 9) for the higher ranking suit. ('[suit preference](#)') See [deal 126257](#) for example.
6. Similar: Partner leads a winner in the suit you'd bid, and you're team has three top tricks in the suit. If you play an unnecessarily high card (an honour), your partner will take it as a suit preference, especially if there is a likely shortage with declarer/dummy.
7. "King led, so **Kount**". This exception doesn't crop up too much, though some more advanced players do use it:
When your partner leads a King, it's either because he has touching honours, the KQx... OR because he has just 2 cards (the AK only).
In either case he's not very interested in whether you like the suit or not.

1. If he's got the Ace-King doubleton, then he can't ever lead it again! No interest in your 'attitude'.
2. But this reversing of the King/Queen order is very useful, since you will now know that he's got a void, which might enable ruffing.
So when the opening lead of King was led - although you could have given attitude as usual, but when it held the trick and was followed by the Ace lead, some people would have preferred to have given '[suit preference](#)', telling partner what to lead next.
Thus a 'Count' or 'suit preference' signal might be more useful than 'like/dislike', just so long as you AGREE what to give after an opening lead of a King.
3. If it was a lead from a KQx... suit, and so the enemy have the Ace, they'll win the trick, and - just maybe - partner will eventually get a chance to make the Queen, depending on Declarer/Dummy's length. At that point, in the rare event of a perfectly flat 4333 suit distribution with nobody ruffing, you might want to give attitude ('like' if you have the Jack to win the third trick in the suit), or perhaps you'll be leading the suit to him, so that his Queen can kill the enemy Jack.... Again, maybe shape from 'count' is more useful for larger brains/ more advanced players.

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Bridge Venue

Signals & discards. Leading to a ruff

Try to give suit preference

Let's say the contract is 4 Spades, and your partner, on opening lead, played the 6 of Hearts. It happened that you had the A 8 7 4 in Hearts, so being third player you dutifully played high as you can, won the trick, and equally dutifully (and hoping for a ruff, judging by the length in both your holding and in dummy's) led the same suit back to partner, playing a 4 of Hearts.

Partner's 6 had indeed been a singleton (a very sensible opening lead), so partner ruffed your 4 of Hearts. Now he hopes you can win another trick immediately, and then lead back another Heart to let him ruff again and deeply annoy the enemy. Did you give him any guidance with that 4 of Hearts?

Well, yes, you did.

By choosing a 'low' little Heart ('low' = 2, 3 or 4) you told him that you'd like a lead back in the **lower** ranking of the two remaining suits, namely Clubs.

(2 remaining suits? - exclude both trumps *and* the suit that he ruffed - so exclude Hearts & Spades). And since you have an Ace in Clubs, you can win the trick and immediately lead another Heart to be ruffed again.

So with only 2 Aces, your team has won the first 4 tricks. And there's nothing the brilliant declarer can do, even with 32 HCP on his team.

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Bridge Venue

Discards, save the right suit

Signalling to your partner is less important

Keeping the right card for later on is usually much more important than sending messages to partner about what to lead. So you need to think very hard about which cards to keep.

1. Keeping the right card is more important than signalling
2. Keep 4 cards for any 4-card suits in either enemy hand
3. Focus your memory efforts on your key suits only
4. Plan things out at the beginning, and make early signals if needed
5. Don't reveal weaknesses to the enemy

Keeping the right card is more important than signalling

It is of course important to tell your partner what to lead next, provided you don't use a card that you need in order to **send the signal**.

Keep 4 cards for any 4-card suits in (either) enemy hand

If you can see a 4-card suit in dummy, and you have 4-cards in that suit too, then don't discard from this suit. If you do, then the enemy will be able to play the 4th card from this suit and win an extra trick.

Sometimes you can work out from the bidding that declarer holds a 4-card suit. For example after Stayman, or when an enemy player changes suit for his second bid. The same notion applies.

Sometimes you'll have to make some sacrifices in other suits, in order to match dummy's 4-card holding.

Focus your memory efforts on your key suits only

When the dummy goes down at the start of play, decide which are your 2 key suits (ones with honour cards, or long suits), and decide if there could be winners there eventually. Do two important things

1. watch for any discards, so you know exactly how many cards have been played in that suit;
2. think about the shape of everyone's hands, based on the bidding, plus your partner's 'count' signals

Plan early, and signal if necessary

If you have to abandon a suit, decide as early as possible, to avoid piecemeal discarding.

And if you still want to send a suit preference signal

This link explains how you **send the signal**.





Quick summary



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Bridge Venue

You can't follow suit, you'll have to discard

Always preserve your winners, though give suit preference if possible, unambiguously.

Why bother?

Discard signals can only happen when one of the defenders can't follow suit. And they'll only be useful if the situation arises at a sufficiently early stage in the play.

So discard signals happen nothing like as often as the signals sent after new suit leads, which will happen 4 times - for sure.

And yet, in spite of their relative rarity, people spend time and energy studying clever discard communication systems (McKenney, Lavinthal, Dodds, Revolving, HELD etc) to tell their partner which suit they'd like led back to them, if the chance ever arises.

The complexity and choice of these system has two consequences for many people:

1. They get confused about which communication system this particular partner uses
2. They fail to protect their winners, especially their apparently weak 4-card suits

Our advice is

1. Only ever send a discard 'suit preference' signal as a second priority
 - (a). Make absolutely certain beforehand that your partner is very comfortable with the system you select and agree
 - (b). Make sure you are very comfortable with it too
2. If you have a 4-card suit, hang on to it, unless your cards are the very weakest, the 5,4,3,2. (The 6,4,3,2 suit is a suit to keep...), then you can think about the second priority ...
3. - 'suit preference' signalling

Let's look in turn at the difficulties of **discarding** while defending

1. [Keeping the right cards](#)
2. [Why you should hang on to your 4-card suits](#)
3. [Concentrating on all 52 cards in all 4 suits](#)
4. [Multiple discards](#)
5. [Not carelessly giving the game away](#)
6. [Taking your time](#)
7. [Suit preference discarding can be useful, but is not usually the most important signalling system](#)

1* Keeping the right cards

This should be your top priority when you discard. Far more important than sending signals.

Hang on to your cards that might win, and all the 'guards' they need (normally a minimum of one for the King, 2 for the Queen, etc)

2* Why you should hang on to your 4-card suits

After a Spade lead, you have a hand with these cards 10 remaining

Hand 1
♠
♥ Q J 8
♦ Q J 8
♣ 8 4 3 2

..what will you throw away? Usually?

Could it be the 2 of clubs, to say that you want Hearts ('revolving'), or could it be the 8 of clubs, to say that you want Hearts ('McKenney'), or could it be the 2 of clubs to say that you don't want clubs led to you ('HELD'), or was it the 3 of clubs to say you want diamonds ('McKenney')?

And yet, if you know that either dummy or the declarer is likely or certain to have a 4-card club suit, (a not infrequent occurrence) you'll usually be wiser to try to protect that precious 8 of clubs so that when the declarer leads clubs for the 4th time from hand (with the miserable 6), you've still got the killing 8.

(All those 'count' signals that you and partner have been sending to each other in the previous tricks might even have allowed you to work out how many clubs declarer's got in his hand).

In this situation your wisest move is to forget signals, hold on to the clubs, and chuck away any of the red suit cards.

3* Concentrating on all 52 cards in all 4 suits

Apparently some people can remember all 52 cards, even a couple of weeks later.

I have to concentrate hard to remember how many trumps remain in the current deal, and find it depressing difficulty to remember if the outstanding trump is larger or smaller than my last remaining one, the 6 of trumps.

It's best not to try to remember everything. Instead, when the dummy goes down, spend a few moments deciding which 1 or 2 suits you are going to focus on, and maybe create a mental model from the bidding and from dummy and from the opening lead of who's probably got what in this one or maybe two suits.

As the play goes on you can adjust this micro-model as your partner sends you 'count' signals, and as people play various cards.

4* Multiple discards

We've all had the experience as defenders, after trumps are pulled (or in No Trumps), of when Dummy starts running all his established winners in a very long suit in dummy. 3 or 4 discards are going to be needed! Our good cards are going to get squashed and squeezed....

Don't start discarding all your little cards!

Make a plan of which are the important suits and cards you need to retain or protect. If that means for example that you cannot hang on to your 4-card suit, then make a different choice and stick with it. Perhaps you can immediately abandon almost all of this weak 4-card suit!

5* Not carelessly giving the game away

You might think that your 8 6 and 4 of Hearts have no chance against the A J 9 to your right, in dummy. So when you have to find a discard on a Spade lead, this is the suit to choose. So you decide to throw away one of them.

Pity.

Because in the declarer's hand he had the K 10 5 2, but from the bidding declarer had no idea which way to play the Queen finesse. He's on a 50:50 chance. But your discard has told him that that your partner has the Queen, so he'll lead from hand to the dummy Jack/Ace, and your team now has a 0% chance of winning with the Queen, instead of 50%.

When you discard, try not to give the game away!

6* Taking your time

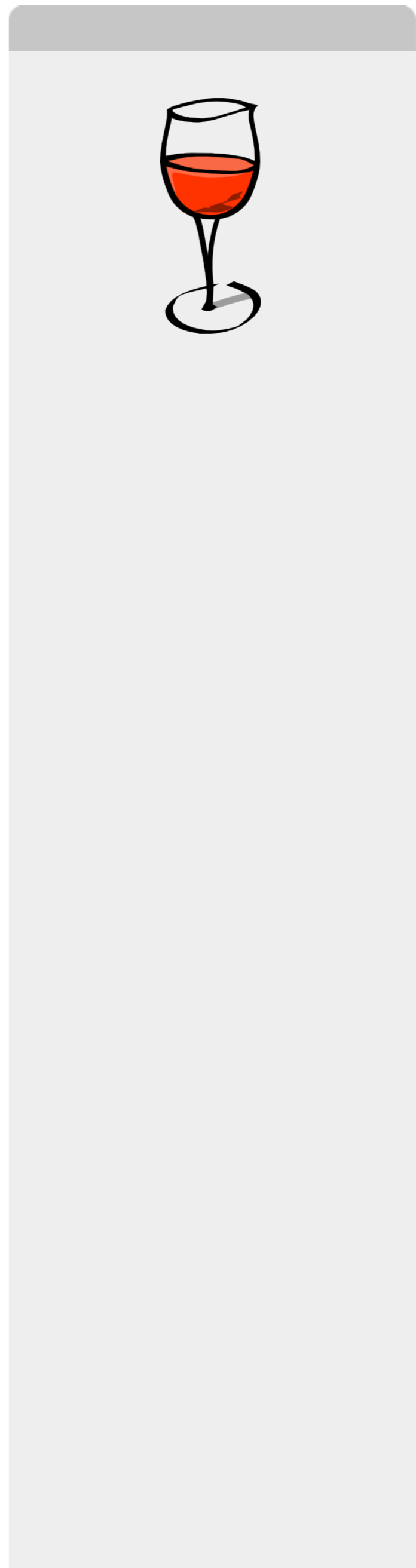
If your agreed discard system is a bit hard to remember and work out, you won't give anything away by taking your time. After all, the enemy will soon find out for sure that you're void in the suit that's been led.

7* Suit preference discarding is not usually the most important signalling system

The most important ones to learn are signals after a new suit lead. Discarding signals are less common than the others, and often can't be given for other reasons. Get those practised and regular first of all.

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Bridge Venue

Signals & discards. You lead a new suit

'Lead signal' – here's what my suit is like

The first time a new suit is played it's best if you can give your partner a description of your suit, and what you expect from partner. Provided you have suitable cards, here's how:

1206. The meaning of my new suit lead		bidandmade.com
	The cards you lead	What it means, the 1st time the suit is led
1	A	Ace and King, plus at least one other card in the suit
2	K then A	if the card led in the next trick is the Ace, it means AK doubleton
3	A royal	top of an honour sequence (& denies the one above)
4	10	I've got an adjacent card (J/9) & one other non-touching honour
5	9	almost always a singleton
6	'high' - a 7 or 8	"my suit is rubbish" (second highest of rubbish, e.g. 9753)
7	MUD sequence	3 weak cards (MUD=Middle, Up, Down)
8	'low' - a 2, 3, 4	command! "Lead it back through their strength, I've got one or two non-touching powerful cards"
9	'higher' then 'lower'	doubleton, e.g. 4 then 2

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See [page 1100](#) and 1101 for more detail on how to choose the lead suit, and then the card, when you are the blind 'opening leader'.

Some traps for the unwary

- when using MUD, be careful not to play a card in 2nd place that could have been a winner later: e.g. with K62, play 2 then 6, not 6 then K; and with Q62 it's often best to choose a different suit;
- leading a 'low' card in a new suit is an especially helpful command signal – e.g. lead x if you have KJx and you suspect the Q10 are with your RHO: your partner's resulting lead through your RHO plays into your strength;
- similarly, your partner's bid suit might sometimes better be led by your RHO, not by you. That's because if you lead you might in effect be finessing your partner's honours into a losing position, if the RHO could possess the hidden power;
- caution: beware making overcalls that cause your partner to lead to you when you don't have solid stoppers.
- when you return partner's opening lead, maybe send a [suit preference signal](#) to your partner





Quick summary



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Bridge Venue

Signals & discards. The high & low cards

Sometimes your job is not to win the trick, but to preserve your good cards. Second player very often plays low, and the other players will play low when the Ace has already been played.

This is the moment use your 'little' cards, the 2 to 9, to send signals to your partner.

Signals are a bit like 'Morse code', which uses a binary pulse. With bridge, the binary states are the so-called 'high' and 'low', but just using the 'little' cards:

- 'high' = 7, 8, or 9 (and sometime the 6);
- 'low' = 2, 3, or 4 (and sometimes the 5)

(If you send a 10,J,Q or higher (when you can't win the trick), even a sleeping and isolated partner might spot it as high).

Here's how these binary states are used to send various signals:-

'Attitude' ('likey / no-likely')

The **Attitude** signal can usually be sent with a single card. But first you will **have to have agreed** previously with your partner (not during the trick, Barbara) whether a high card means Likey or No-likey.

Each system has its advantages.

'Count', to describe your shape

A High card, followed by a lower card in the next trick, means 'even number'.

Again, a single card from one trick is often sufficient to tell your partner how many cards you've got in the suit, depending on what partner can see in the dummy/hand.

If your only two cards are the 3 and the 2, then it's going to take two tricks to convince your partner you've got an even number, as your partner is likely to interpret the 3 that you play initially as a low card.

Don't have a 2, 3 or 4?

If you don't actually have a 2, 3 or a 4 then you'll have to either

1. use one of the 'middle' cards - a 5 or a 6 - to stand in for it; or
2. send a different signal, which hopefully is not misleading: or
3. hope that your parter is highly alert and intelligent and can read you mind

(Hopefully with a bit of practice, when playing a 5 or a 6, your partner will deduce that you'd had to use a stand-in card and work out if it was really meant as a 'High' or a 'Low', by looking at his cards, and from the cards on display in the dummy).

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Discards. McKenney, revolving, Dodds, HELD, reverse HELD

OK, you've preserved all your good suits, protected all your good cards, retained all your 4-card suits.

And now you're going to your second discard priority: give your partner a discard signal to tell him which suit you'd like him to lead to you. A suit preference signal.

There are 6 different ways of doing this, so make sure you use the same one as your partner this evening, or you might be discarded.

Two are very simple (a very very good reason for using them, since your brain has a lot to cope with, and they don't happen as often as count or attitude signals). But for advanced players, they lack some precision.

The other three are a little more complicated, but they allow you to say exactly which one of the three other suits you want, and they give you more than one way of saying it.

The two simple ones are effectively the same as the 'Attitude' languages (i.e. 'HELD' and 'LLHH').

Another problem with each of these simple languages is that you sometimes have to waste the very suit that you actually prefer, assuming you wish to send a precise signal, and in the case of 'HELD' you unfortunately have to use up a 'high' one, which could be painful if you don't have any spare 7/8/9s!

Anyway, here they all are:

- 1. HELD
2. Reverse HELD
3. McKenney
4. Revolving discards
5. Dodds discards
6. The most superior discard system of all

1* HELD

You just play either

- 1. a 'high' card (7,8,9) from the suit you want your partner to lead to you, or
2. a 'low' card (2,3,4) from a suit you DON'T want your partner to lead to you.

Dead simple.

If you're worried about using a precious high card, of if your only high card is something like a Queen, then send a 'low' DON'T want signal from another suit - and hope your partner will be able to guess which suit you might actually want. (In a suit contract, there's usually only one other suit. But in No Trumps there would be three suits altogether).

2* Reverse HELD

You play

- 1. a 'low' card (2,3,4) from a suit you want your partner to lead to you, or
2. a 'high' card (7,8,9) from the suit you DON'T want your partner to lead to you.

The advantage of reverse HELD is that you never have to play your higher cards from your preferred suit. The disadvantage of reverse HELD is that it seems counter-intuitive.

But whichever you choose, make sure your partner uses the same one as you, or else it's disadvantage all round.

3* McKenney

Here you tell your partner which suit you prefer, by using up a card from a suit that you're not interested in. How sensible! The signal simply points to which of the remaining two suits you want: 'high' for the higher ranking suit, 'low' for the lower ranking one. That means you can

- 1. be precise, and
2. send the signal by using either of the two suits you don't care about.

If, for example, you are discarding to a Spade lead, and you want to request Diamonds, then use either

- 1. a low spade (2,3,4) or
2. a (conspicuously) high heart (9,8,7 or preferably higher if you can afford it).

But if you want to request Hearts, then use either

- 1. a high spade (9,8,7 or higher) or
2. a high diamond (9,8,7 or higher).

And if you want to request Clubs, then use either

- 1. a low heart (2,3,4) or
2. a low diamond (2,3,4)

In addition to giving a preference, you can also tell your partner that you have no preference, by playing a middle card, a 5 of a 6.

Both 'McKenney' and 'Revolving' have another advantage over HELD.

HELD: you can't afford to throw away 'conspicuously high' cards because they are your trick winners in your preferred suit. So you need to use the middle cards for 'reader interpretation'. This can lead to misunderstanding if your partner reads it the wrong way.

With both McKenney and Revolving however, you can use these two middle cards to avoid a misunderstanding. With McKenney and Revolving, when the 5 and 6 is discarded, from any suit, it deliberately sends a neutral message.

The problem with McKenney

A problem arises when you want to ask for the highest-ranking suit, Spades. Although you may have a choice of two ways to ask for it, both ways involve discarding a 'high' (spot) card. That could be very annoying.

The solution to the McKenney problem is to use 'Revolving discards', where there is no such thing as a highest ranked suit(!), and you can point to Spades with a low club.

4* Revolving discards

With Revolving discards, there's always a suit available that's higher ranked, even higher ranked than Spades.



This means you can always use a low card from that higher ranked suit to point down to Spades. You point down from clubs. Why is clubs higher? This is similar to when your RHO has bid Spades in the auction and you can overcall them by bidding clubs.

Again, like McKenney, you send your signal by using a suit that you're NOT interested in, and it has the same advantages as McKenney, plus you can ask for Spades with a low card.

You tell your partner which suit you want like this:

- 1. A 'low' card says: "go Down one suit rank, relative to the one I'm using to send the signal";
2. A (conspicuously) 'high' card says: "go Up a suit from the one I'm using to send the signal".

The suit rank order is the same as in the bid ranking.

Examples: If you are discarding after a spade lead, then

- 1. a 7,8,9 or J asks for Diamonds (and so does a 3,4 or 5 heart);
2. a 3 asks for a Heart (and so does a 9 diamond).

Another problem-ette

There's another weakness with both McKenney and Revolving: you can't ask for a card from the suit that you're actually discarding. Because it always points to one of the other two suits. And yet sometimes that might be the only suit you can use to ask for it.

But there's a kind-of way round this problem. Again, use a middle card, 5 or 6. Here's an example:

Let's say you're using 'Revolving'. You have a long club suit, e.g. K-Q-10-9-6-2, and let's say (after a Spade lead), that using a club discard will be the safest. Perhaps because you don't have a spare and low enough diamond or a high enough Heart. And with such a powerful club suit, you will of course want to ask for a club.

But with either McKenney or Revolving, there's no way of asking directly ask for clubs. The only 'solution' available: you could discard a 'neutral 6' of clubs.

Hopefully partner should remember from the bidding and the dummy that you have a string of clubs. So from your partner's point of view, you ought to have both a low-enough club to ask for a Heart, and a high-enough club to ask for a Diamond. And hopefully, if you don't play such a card, your partner is likely to think that you don't want either of those suits, but that you do want a club.

5* Dodds discards

Here's another system that has abilities to overcome the McKenney / Revolving limitations.

With Dodds:

- 1. any even card encourages the suit played, and
2. any odd card discourages the suit and at the same time suggests a preference for the other suit of the same colour.

Dodds discards gives you lots of cards that are neutral. For example, if clubs are trumps, all odd spades are 'neutral' because they're trumps.

But again, you might not hold the cards that you need to signal correctly.

6* The most superior discard system of all

Without question, by miles and miles, the best system is the one that you and partner both understand and are happy with, and have pre-agreed.

Now try the quiz

Can you put all this into action ? Try the quiz for this subject by clicking on the link at the top left of the page, just below the main menu. (You can try quizzes for any other subjects too while you're there. Look out for the thin red line).





Quick summary



Print cribsheet

Bridge Venue

Signals chart, for downloading and sharing

download printable Signal chart

1209. When and what to signal			bidandmade.com		
	When	What to show	Methods	Frequency per contract	
1	on enemy new suit lead	shape	Count	3	
2	on partner's new suit lead	like / don't	HELD, LLHH	1 or 2	
3	your own new suit lead	picture of suit	Many, see p1103	1 or 2	
4	can't follow suit	suit preference (only if possible)	HELD, reverse HELD, Revolving, McKenney, Dodds	0.5	
Some rare exceptions					
2a	on partner's new suit lead	if dummy is e.g. AKQ	shape	Count	0.1
2b	on partner's new suit lead	if dummy singleton	suit preference	Revolving, McKenney, Dodds	0.1
3a	your own lead	in partner's empty suit	suit preference	McKenney	0.1

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