

DEFENSIVE SIGNALS

On defense, we're at a disadvantage in the race to promote our tricks before the opps make their contract. *DEFENSIVE SIGNALS*, playing certain cards in certain situations, are the only means of communication we can use. The leads we make send certain messages as do the cards we play on each trick. On the convention card this is in the section under carding and there are 3 categories:

ATTITUDE How you feel about partners suit. Do you want to encourage him in that suit or be discouraging.

COUNT Tells partner how many cards you have in the suit led which helps them know how many cards declarer is holding in that suit.

SUIT PREFERENCE Telling partner which of 2 suits you would prefer they led or which cards to hold onto.

ATTITUDE the most common signal used when your partner leads. High card (6 or 7+) encourages; low card (5 or 6-) discourages. You may be encouraging because you hold good cards in that suit or because you can ruff.

Also used when discarding to tell partner which suit you prefer.

COUNT the signal given by playing high-low to show an even number of cards in a suit and playing low-high to show an uneven number. You cannot give an exact number but usually partner can tell how many you have by clues from the bidding and the cards they can see. Why do this? It is especially useful when partner needs to make a hold-up play trying to block an opps suit while not giving them an unnecessary trick. But declarer can also use this information.

How do you know when to use these 2 signals? Attitude signals are the priority, and count signals are used when attitude doesn't apply. According to Eddy Kantar:

"The attitude signal is used when 1 defender leads an honor card and the other defender signals encouragement or discouragement. The count signal is given mainly when: 1) either declarer or dummy initiate a new suit; 2) partner leads a suit and it is clear from dummy's holding and declarer's play from dummy that you cannot possibly hold an honor in the suit."

"When declarer or dummy initiates a suit you can't give attitude, just count."

SUIT-PREFERENCE When partner needs to know what to lead back, a high card shows preference for a higher-ranking suit and a low card shows preference for the lower ranking suit. There are only 2 suits possible, because it can't be the trump suit or the 1 that's being played. Usually when partner is giving you a ruff, they will lead the card that shows you which

suit to lead back so your partner can give you another ruff. Or which suit to lead so an opps (especially dummy's) honor card(s) can be trapped.

Standard carding is the method discussed here. But there are other types such as odd/even or different meanings for high/low. You may be asked what your system is or you may ask your opponents.

Partnerships always discuss bidding systems but they should also be discussing carding signals and agree what certain cards mean. This is a valuable tool if understood by both players. The other important part of this to pay attention to the cards your partner plays. Spot cards can easily be overlooked. It can be difficult to remember what has been played. As well as having to remember which card to play.

Small steps are ok though. First make sure you're always showing attitude; then work on suit preference; finally try giving your partner count.

The most difficult part is to keep your concentration at the table. We can memorize everything but if we are easily distracted and lose our focus it doesn't do us any good. Some tips to help keep our focus or how to avoid distractions:

1. Agree to discuss the hands later. If you do this you will have time after you're finished at that table.
2. Forget the last board and move on. You need to clear your mind for the next hand.
3. We like to socialize at the table but this should also be saved until the end of the round.
4. Don't spend too much time on easy hands. Save the thinking time for the more difficult hands.
5. Relax when you're the dummy.
6. If you find yourself fading, reenergize yourself with whatever works for you: stand up, get a drink, have some sugar.
7. Have fun. Mistakes are part of the game, learn to laugh at what goes wrong and enjoy all the good cards, fun people and challenges.