

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

There are three main types of signal

ATTITUDE (or REVERSE ATTITUDE)

COUNT (or REVERSE COUNT)

SUIT PREFERENCE

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

THE ATTITUDE SIGNAL

What is an attitude signal.

An attitude signal tells partner whether I like or dislike the suit that (s)he has led.

Therefore if I like partners suit I would throw a relatively high card and if I dislike partners suit I would throw a low card.

THE REVERSE ATTITUDE SIGNAL

However a more efficient signal is the reverse attitude signal, why do I want to throw a high card which may be vital, to tell partner that I like his suit. Much better to throw a low card.

I therefore would recommend using a reverse attitude signal.

When partner leads a suit a low card says I like this suit partner please continue it.

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

A couple of examples you are sitting West

Hand 1

♠ K842

♥ J987

♦ 6543

♣ A10

Hand 2

♠ 102

♥ AKJ98

♦ 9876

♣ 54

Auction

North
1NT

South
3NT

Partner leads the ♠Q and dummy goes down with:-

♠ 65

♥ Q102

♦ KQJ10

♣ KQ98

Hand 1. What is our thought process? – it looks like partner has led from QJxx(x) we probably have to hope it is a five card suit to beat 3NT. We will hope to get in with A♣ and be able to cash partner's spades. We therefore want to encourage spades so we would play 8♠ (playing normal attitude) and 2♠ (playing reverse attitude).

Hand 2. What is our thought process? – it looks like partner has led from QJxx(x) and we need to hope partner has one of the minor suit aces, but we need her to switch to a heart when she gets in therefore we should discourage spades 2♠ (playing normal attitude) and 10♠ (playing reverse attitude).

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

THE COUNT SIGNAL

What is a count signal.

A count signal tells partner how many cards I have in a suit, this is especially useful if partners needs to know whether her second top honour is cashing.

The normal way of doing this is that if I have an even number of cards I play High/Low and if I have a **odd** number of cards I play Low/High. The way to remember it is that if I had a doubleton I would always lead the top card.

THE REVERSE COUNT SIGNAL

Some people reverse the meaning of the above, I think is just a case of personal preference here and I wouldn't have any strong feelings one way or the other.

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

A couple of examples you are sitting West

Hand 1

♠ 8632

♥ 987

♦ 6543

♣ A10

Hand 2

♠ 842

♥ 82

♦ 987654

♣ A4

Auction

North
1H

South
4H

Partner leads the ♠K what card do I Play?

Hand 1 we have an even number of cards so we should play ♠6 (it is normal to play the second highest from a 4 card holding).

Hand 2 we have an odd number of cards so we should play ♠2.

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

So when should we use each type of signal?

Again this is a question for each individual partnership – Some partnerships prefer attitude always and some prefer count always. **I will explain my personal preferences on the next page.**

The general accepted preference nowadays is to play attitude signals in the first instance on the opening lead **unless** your attitude is already known , I will show you an example, then you should revert to Count signals.

Auction	North 1NT	South 3NT
Hand 1	Hand 2	Partner leads the ♠7 and dummy goes down with:-
♠ 8632	♠ 842	♠ Q103
♥ 987	♥ 82	♥ 65
♦ 6543	♦ 987654	♦ KQJ10
♣ A10	♣ A4	♣ KQ98

Declarer decides to play ♠10, now we cannot beat the ♠10 so our attitude to this suit is already known we should therefore play the ♠6 on hand 1 and the ♠2 on Hand 2 to show our count in the suit.

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

David's Personal Preference

This is my personal preference I am not saying it is the best or the easiest to understand but it is what works for me. You will all have your personal favourites and I would not want to dissuade you from what works for you.

Against Suit Contracts

1. Partner leads an Ace – he will have a number of reasons to do this:-
 - a) I have AK and need to know whether it might be right to continue this suit.
 - b) I am stuck for a lead please help me.
 - c) I think you might be ruffing.

I play reverse attitude on an Ace lead.

2. Partner leads anything else – I play Normal Count this includes leading the King from AK when it is likely to be useful to know how many cards declarer has in this suit.

Against No Trumps

1. Partner leads an Ace, Queen or Jack.

I play reverse attitude.

2. Partner leads a King.

This calls for a count signal or an unblock – for example I lead K from KQ10xx – if my partner has the Jack he is expected to unblock it, so that if declarer ducks I know it is safe to continue the suit.

3. Anything else – you are likely playing your highest card so this is de facto an attitude signal.

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

THE SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNAL

This is the third type of signal and should be only used in specific circumstances.

You should general use a suit preference signal in the following circumstances.

1. When you are giving partner a ruff
2. When dummy goes down with a singleton or void or declarer is known to hold a singleton.
3. When dummy goes down with a strong holding in the suit partner has led and it is not obvious from dummy which suit partner should switch to.

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

THE SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNAL

Example 1

You hold as West

Hand 1

♠A1043

♥8

♦A842

♣10943

Hand 2

♠10943

♥8

♦A842

♣A1043

Auction

North

1♥

3♦

South

2♦

4♥

Partner leads the 5♦ - Dummy shows

♠J2

♥KQ104

♦KQ102

♣Q109

Plan the defence?

How many diamonds has partner got?

So we should win the Ace of diamonds and return a diamond – but which one? This is where the Suit Preference signal comes in. We know we can get back in again to give partner another ruff so we need to tell him which suit our entry is in. On hand 1 we have the Ace of Spades – the **Higher** ranking suit so we should return our **highest** possible diamond. On hand 2 we have the Ace of Clubs – the **Lower** ranking suit so we should return our **lowest** possible diamond.

So hand 1 we play back the ♦8 on Hand 2 we play back ♦2

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

THE SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNAL

Example 2

You hold as West

Hand 1

♠1063

♥8

♦AQ4

♣A96432

Auction

North	South
1♥	2♦
3♦	4♥

Partner leads the A♠ - Dummy shows

♠2

♥KQ104

♦KJ102

♣QJ109

Plan the defence?

It looks like partner has led the Ace of spades probably from a reasonably long suit as he fears it may run away and he wants to have a look at dummy to see what he should do at trick 2?

Dummy has turned up with a singleton ♠ so an attitude signal is pointless, what do we think to a count signal here?

Equally useless it is not helping partner – so this is one scenario where we should play suit preference. On this hand we desperately want partner to switch to a diamond (**the higher ranking suit**) so we should play the ♠10. If for example the minor suits in dummy and our hand were reversed we would want partner to play a club (**the lower ranking suit**) so we would play ♠3. Sometimes we will have no preference and should therefore drop an indistinct card in this case ♠6.

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

THE SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNAL

Example 3

You hold as West

Hand 1

♠1063

♥8

♦AQ4

♣A96432

Auction

North	Partner	South	You
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
4♥	All Pass		

Partner leads the A♠ - Dummy shows

♠6542

♥KQ104

♦K10

♣1087

Plan the defence?

How many spades has declarer got?

Declarer has a singleton ♠ at best so an attitude signal is pointless, what do we think to a count signal here?

Well we have raised partner so he knows we have at least three spades – so he should be able to count that a second spade is getting ruffed – therefore again we should play suit preference here. On this hand we desperately want partner to switch to a diamond (**the higher ranking suit**) so we should play the ♠10. If for example the minor suits in dummy and our hand were reversed we would want partner to play a club (**the lower ranking suit**) so we would play ♠3. Sometimes we will have no preference and should therefore drop an indistinct card in this case ♠6.

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THE SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNAL

Example 4 – this will not often happen

Auction

You hold as West

Hand 1

♠963
♥8
♦AQJ32
♣9642

North	Partner	South	You
1♥	2♠ (weak)	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Partner leads the A♠ - Dummy shows
♠KQ10
♥32
♦K10
♣K108753

Plan the defence?

What is our thought process ?

Declarer has probably led A♠ to have a look at dummy which he knows is going to have a strong spade holding and he probably has no outside entries. He now wants help from us to tell him which minor suit to switch to?

He probably should looking at dummy; switch to a diamond anyway, but we can help him out by playing the 9♠ as he knows we cannot like spades and this should be a suit preference signal for the **higher ranking suit** – Diamonds.

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

DISCARDS

There are a myriad of discard systems which people play. Here are a few of the more common ones you will come up against.

1. Attitude or Reverse Attitude – Exactly the same as the signal I discard a high card in a suit it says I like it and partner if you get in it might be advantageous to play this suit.
2. Count or Reverse Count or Distributional – Exactly the same as the signal a highish card says I have an even number of cards in this suit and a low card says I have an odd number of cards in this suit. This gives partner a chance to build up a picture of the distribution around the table and defend accordingly.
3. McKenney, Lavinthal or Suit Preference. I discard a suit, depending on the size of my card this tells partner ignoring the suit I discarded on and the suit I discarded, my values; if any, lie in a) the higher ranking suit if I threw a high card and b) the lower ranking suit if I threw a low card.

(N.B WORD OF WARNING – People can become slaves to the suit preference signal and assume that every card from partner means something. You need to look at the whole hand in terms of dummy and the bidding to determine whether partner is giving a suit preference signal or just throwing JUNK.

4. Dodds/Italian – An even card says I like this suit and odd card has suit preference overtones. Whenever I am asked to play this I never have the right cards – so I am not a great fan.
5. Revolving – Declarer is playing hearts and I am discarding a spade – A high spade says I like the next suit up (you use a wrap around so this means clubs) and a low spade would mean the next suit down which would be diamonds. Again conceptually can be quite difficult to grasp so again not a great fan.