

Defensive Signals

The three major types of defensive signals are attitude, count, and suit preference in priority order. However, which kind of signal you are giving depends on the situation.

Attitude Signals

The basic attitude signal is discarding a higher card if you want partner to continue the suit (positive signal) and a lower card if you don't want partner to continue the suit or to tell partner that you don't have anything in the suit (negative signal).

When partner leads an honor, give a positive signal if you have a card that fills in the sequence (above or below). Give a negative signal if you don't have a filler card.

Example: when partner leads the KH and dummy has 3 small hearts. (Playing A from AK)

With J83 in the suit you would play the 8 to show that you have the J and it is safe to continue the suit. With 983 in hearts you would play the 3 to indicate that you don't have anything and it might not be safe to continue the suit.

Partner leads the Q against NT. With K 8 4 (3) play the 8, with 8 4 3 play the 3, with K 8 play the K (unblock).

The second type of attitude signal is a discard of another suit. A high card generally indicates you want the suit led, a low card, you have nothing in the suit.

However, don't signal with a card that might take a trick. It is better to make 2 negative signals if a positive signal might give up a trick.

Example:	S 8 7 5 3	
	H J 8 4	
S A 9 6 4 2	D A J 10	S --
H 7 3	C K 6 5	H A K Q 10
D 8 7 4		D 9 6 5 3 2
C 10 9 7		C 8 4 3 2

3NT by S	S K Q J 10	Partner leads 4S to declarer's 10. Declarer returns the KS to the A. East discards the 2C and 2D on the first 2 spades to indicate a heart lead. Don't discard the 10H.
	H 9 6 5 2	
	D K Q	
	C A Q J	

Count Signals

A count signal is given by playing:

1. High-Low from 2 cards
2. Low from 3 or 5 cards
3. Second high followed by third high from 4 cards.

Example:

	S 7 6 3	
	H 7 2	
S Q 9 4 2	D K Q J 10 4	S J 10 8
H J 9	C 9 4 3	H Q 10 8 7 6
D 8 3 2		D A 9 5
C J 8 6 5		C 10 9
	S A K 5	
3NT by South	H A K 5 4	West leads the S2 to South's K. South
	D 7 6	leads a diamond to the 10 and continues
	C A K Q 2	with the J. When should East take the A?

West plays the 2D on the first trick showing 3 diamonds. East takes the second diamond. Change the hand slightly giving West the CQ and South the D2. West would play the D8 on the first round of diamonds showing an even number and East would know to hold up until the 3rd round of the suit.

Suit Preference Signal

Suit Preference signals are:

1. used primarily against suit contracts
2. the preference is against 2 suits – not the suit led and not trumps
3. prefer the higher ranking suit with a high card and the lower ranking suit with a low card.
4. can be given by the person leading or by partner of the person leading.

Example 1: Suit Preference by leader. Opponents are in 4H.

	North (Dummy)	
	S A Q J 10	
	H A Q 4 3	You
	D 7 5	S K 9 8 7 3
	C 7 5 4	H 6 2
		D J 9 8
4H by South		C A J 10

West opens the S2, South plays the 10 and you take the K. You return the S3 to indicate a club return after partner trumps. Partner returns a club to your A and a second spade ruff beats the contract.

Example 2: Suit preference by partner: Partner opens 1H, you raise to 2H and opponents get to 3S

	S A 10 8 5 2	
	H 8 4	You
S 3	D K J 10	S 6 4
H A K J 9 6 3	C Q 8 4	H 10 5 2
D 9 5 4		D A Q 2
C K 10 9		C J 7 6 5 2
	S K Q J 9 7	
	H Q 7	
	D 8 7 6 3	
	C A 3	

West cashes the AK of hearts. You play the 2 on the first heart and the 10 on the second to indicate a diamond lead. Otherwise West might lead a club and give South the contract.

General Signaling Rules:

1. Don't signal when it might help declarer more than partner.
2. Don't signal with a card that might take a trick
3. Do signal on the opening lead
4. Signals are guidelines, it is not mandatory to follow partner's signal.

Other Defensive Signals

1. Play the top of a sequence when leading a suit. Play the bottom of a sequence in third hand.

Example: Dummy
9 6 2

You
Q 8 5 4

You lead the 4 against 3NT. Partner plays the J and declarer takes the A.
Who has the K? Who has the 10?

Instead partner plays the 10 and declarer takes the A
Who has the K? Who has the J?

2. The play of the Q under partner's A or K shows either a singleton or the J and indicates that partner can under lead his honor safely. Don't play the Q from Qx.

Example:

S A K 9 6 3	S 7 4	
H 3	H A Q 7 5	
D 6 5 4	D A K Q J 10	S Q J 5 2
C A Q 8	C 3 2	H 5 2
		D 9 8 7
		C J 10 9 7 6
	S 10 8	
	H K J 10 9 8 4	
	D 3 2	
	C K 5 4	

West leads the SA (or K) against 4H. East plays the Q showing the J. West leads the 3S to the J and the club return beats the contract.

Other Defensive Conventions:

These conventions are played by some members of the club. It is good to know what they are:

Lavinthal

The **first discard** shows no interest in the suit discarded. A high card shows interest in the higher of the other two suits. A low card shows interest in the lower of the other two suits.

Odd/Even

An odd card on the **first discard** shows interest in the suit. An even card shows no interest in the suit. A high even card shows interest in the higher of the other suits, a low even card shows interest in the lower of the other 2 suits.

Foster Echo

When 3rd hand can't beat the card played from dummy, he plays the 2nd highest card in the suit.

Upside Down Count and/or Attitude

The count and attitude signals are reversed. A low card indicated that you like the suit; a high card you don't. Also low high would show an even number, high low and odd number of cards in a suit.