

EASTLAKE BRIDGE CLUB

DEFENSIVE SIGNALS

One of the best ways to convey information about your hand to partner is through signals - legal ones. There are certain standard defensive signals used the world over. Without them, bridge is little more than a guessing game. If you happen to be playing with a better player, by signalling correctly, he will have a chance to make good decisions and your partnership can succeed on his ability!

There are 3 types of defensive signals:

1) Attitude

- high card encourages
- low card discourages

2) Count

- High - low shows and even number
- Low - high shows an odd number

3) Suit Preference

- High card asks for the higher ranking suit
- Low card asks for the lower ranking suit

ATTITUDE SIGNALS:

Why do we need attitude signals? Let's look at an example:

	♠ 53	
WEST		EAST
♠ KQ942		♠ T87
	♠ AJ6	
	DECLARER	

You lead the K and East plays the 7, and Declarer plays the 6!

If you don't know that partner's play is discouraging (lowest card) then you are likely to continue with the queen. Declarer rises with the Ace and now the Jack is good. Declarer takes 2 tricks in the suit.

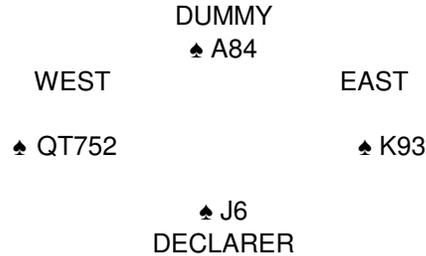
If West reads partner's 7 as discouraging, then he will wait for partner to get in and lead the spade through declarer - if declarer plays the jack, it loses to the queen and he only gets one trick. If declarer plays his ace, then later west can play the queen and declarer's jack never takes a trick.

This hold up by declarer is called the bath coup, named after the city of Bath in England. Don't be fooled by it! Watch partner's signal!

ATTITUDE SIGNALS APPLY WHEN PARTNER LEADS THE SUIT

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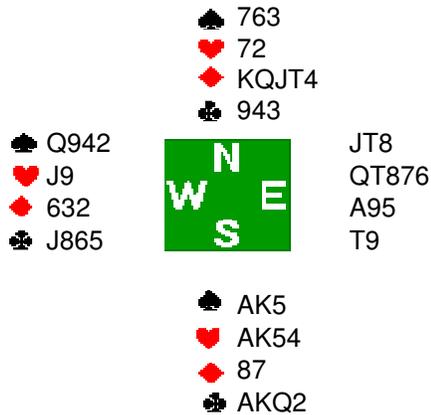
Partner leads the 5 (4th best) and declarer plays dummy's ace. Do you like the suit? Show partner you have something good in it! Play the 9!

If Dummy played a small card instead of the ace, can you give partner a signal? **NO** - you have to play the king.

You can only give partner a signal when you have a choice of cards to play, not when you are forced to play a specific card.

COUNT SIGNAL:

To understand the importance of the count signal lets look at 2 deals played in 3NT:



West leads the 2 of spades, you play the T and declarer takes the King. Declarer has 7 tricks outside the diamond suit (which is his best suit in the combined hands). Declarer leads up to the King and if you take the Ace, declarer still has another diamond to get back and cash 4 diamonds to make his contract easily. What if you take the 2nd diamond? Declarer has no way to get back to his good diamonds and goes down! What if he takes the 3rd diamond? Contract makes!

Clearly it is right for East to take precisely the 2nd diamond trick because South has only 2 diamonds. If South had 3 diamonds, it is right to take the 3rd one. How is east to know?

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Before answering let's look at one more deal:

<p>♠ J98 ♥ QJT6 ♦ 82 ♣ J876</p>	<p>♠ 7632 ♥ 72 ♦ KQJT ♣ 943</p> 	<p>QT54 985 A954 QT</p>
	<p>♠ AK ♥ AK54 ♦ 763 ♣ AK52</p>	

West leads the hQ and declarer has 6 tricks outside the diamond suit. He needs 3 tricks in diamonds. He leads up to the dK. If East takes the ace, declarer makes his contract. In this case East must take the 3rd diamond and hold declarer to only 2 diamond tricks. So how does east know to take the second diamond on the first deal, and the third diamond on the 2nd deal? Simple: West has told East which diamond to take - not with words but with a count signal.

It is important to understand that when declarer is setting up a long suit with no entries in dummy, the defender with the ace, must win the trick at the same time that declarer is playing his last card in dummy's long suit.

When using count signals, (whenever declarer is setting up dummy's long suit) the defender with 3 cards plays his lowest. With 2 cards, he plays his highest.

On deal 1, west must play his deuce - to show east his original holding of 3. East can know that declarer only has 2 and confidently take the 2nd diamond.

On deal 2, west must play his 8, East can figure that declarer has 3, and take the 3rd diamond.

The count signal applies when following to a suit that was led by declarer.