

Defensive Signals I: Attitude

How does a defender communicate their attitude about a suit that Partner is leading? In other words, how does a defender who is following to Partner's suit "encourage" or "discourage" the continuation of the suit?

Attitude Signals

There are three kinds of defensive signals: *Attitude*, *Count*, and *Suit Preference*. This lesson is focused on *Attitude* signals, which are only given in two specific situations:

When
1. Partner <u>initially</u> leads a suit
2. Your <u>first discard</u> ; either Partner or Declarer leads

How
1. Play a <u>low</u> card to <u>encourage</u>
2. Play a <u>high</u> card to <u>discourage</u>

This style ("How") of signaling is termed "Upside-Down" (UDCA) versus "Standard." To memorize, use the phrase "Low Like; High Hate." Why adopt this style? Primarily because high cards are valuable and should be reserved for taking tricks. Example A: Partner leads the ♥K and you have ♥AT3. Using "Standard" signals where "high" encourages, you would have to give up the Ten, a possible trick. Example B: Partner is leading a suit where you are now void; you have ♠AQ73, how do you signal for a switch to Spades using Standard signals? You might have to signal discouragement in another suit leaving Partner guessing which suit you want led.

Signal Guidelines
Signals give information about your hand to Partner; an exchange of information and a suggestion rather than a command
Once you have signaled, later play does not override the original signal.
Make your signal as clear as possible, e.g., Ten from T987 to discourage.
Winning a trick or covering an honor takes priority over signals.
Don't signal with defensive tricks, e.g., signaling with a card which would have defeated the contract.
Cards above an 8, unless top of a sequence, are typically not used to signal.
Don't negative signal that guides a finesse by Declarer.
Don't signal if it only helps Declarer.
If no signal is relevant, choose a card that is ambiguous, e.g. 7.

There is no change in your leads when using Upside-Down signals. For example, with a doubleton, you still lead the higher card.

Specific Attitude Situations

- When discarding, encourage only for suits holding an Ace or a King.
- Partner leads Ace from AK and you hold QJ(x): Indicate you can take the second trick by following with the Q.
- Partner leads the K and you hold the Jxx(x); play your lowest card, indicating the J.