

DEFENSIVE SIGNALS AGAINST A SUIT CONTRACT

There are 3 types of signals to give partner on any hand. They are count, attitude, and suit-preference signals. One must be able to differentiate among them in order to figure out what is going on in any hand.

Giving count:

It is important to give partner count playing against suit contracts when he is leading a long suit and needs to know whether you or the declarer or both will be following to the next rounds of his suit lead. It is also important to give partner count when declarer is trying to set up a long suit in dummy and partner needs to know whether to, or how long to, hold up on his honors. It's also important to give count to partner during a hand to let him know what declarer's distribution is in any suit so, at the end of the hand, partner will figure out which suit he has to hold onto.

- a) We play high-low to give count with a doubleton.
- b) We play up the line to give count with 3-, 5-, 7-card suits.
- c) We play second highest and third highest to give count from a 4-card suit.

I have never had a strong opinion on whether to lead the ace from A-K third or fourth....or the K from A-K, third or fourth.... against suit contracts, so what I like to do is lead the K to ask for count from partner (I am probably leading a long suit with A-K) and lead the A to ask for attitude from partner (probably leading a short or medium length suit).** This may be too much to ask for, so stick to your old way if you like, but you may want to try this out.

There are times when you don't give count to partner:

1. When you have Q doubleton of a suit and partner leads the A or K, you don't play the Q. You play small. The reason is that partner will think you have the J.

2. When you have J doubleton and it looks like you will set up a trick for declarer if you play it.
3. When partner leads an A or K against a suit contract, if you throw an honor, you should have a sequence in that suit and the card you play should be the top card in the sequence, i.e., partner leads the A against a suit contract and you have QJT73. You would play the Q to show partner that you have a sequence and that she should feel free to underlead her other honor to get to your hand.

Attitude signals:

We play high when we like something and low when we don't like something.

1. We give attitude against suit contracts when partner leads a suit and it is won in dummy. If we have honors in the suit, we encourage; when we don't have honors in the suit, we discourage.
2. When partner leads an honor that is not an A and we are looking at an equal honor, we encourage, i.e., partner leads an A from some holding and we have the K, we don't give count, partner is obviously looking for whether or not we wish him to continue.
3. When we are going to duck partner's lead of a suit when we have the ace so we can give him a ruff on the second round, we play a high spot-card to encourage.

Trump signaling:

1. All you do to signal with trumps is play middle-low from 3 if you want to trump something. If you don't want to trump anything, you just follow suit. One of the more complex ways to play is that if partner knows from the auction that you only have a doubleton trump, you can play low-high if

you have cards in the lower ranking suit and high-low if you have cards in the higher-ranking suit. This leads us to:

Suit-preference signals:

These are used in two specific instances beside the above mentioned one:

1. when it couldn't be right for partner to continue the suit he led that held the trick, i.e., when there is a singleton in dummy or K doubleton and partner led the A and it held, you have to tell partner which suit to switch to. If you play a high spot-card, it asks for the higher of the remaining suits and if you play a low spot-card it asks for the lower of the remaining suits. If you play an honor in the suit, it asks for a continuance, (i.e., if you want to force ruffs in dummy).
2. when partner is going to trump a trick and needs to know how to get back to you so he can trump another trick, the height of the card that is led for you to trump indicates which suit partner wants returned.

SIGNALLING AGAINST NOTRUMP CONTRACTS

Basically, since NT is a race to set up your long suits before the opps set up theirs, you need to figure out which suit is the right suit to attack.

1. When partner starts leading honors such as A and Q, you need to unblock your honors and get out of her way.
2. When partner leads the king, you are to play your second highest card. If she continues with a high honor, you need to throw your highest card in the suit.
3. We decided to play journalist leads—lead of a J denies anything higher in the suit and lead of a nine or ten says we either have nothing higher OR we have the next touching higher honor and some honor above that.
4. We give attitude when partner leads a suit and declarer wins it in dummy.

Smith Echo:

A lot of times you can't tell when declarer wins a trick in his hand whether the lead was good, bad, or awful. Declarer will false card you and the Rule of 11 doesn't always work, so we use the Smith Echo so both defenders can show what they thought of the opening lead. The way you do this is when declarer wins the trick and leads another suit, if you liked the opening lead, you play a high spot-card in the suit declarer leads; if you didn't like the lead, you play a low spot-card in the suit declarer leads. This can be done by the opening leader and the partner of the opening leader. This does not overrule giving partner count in a suit that declarer is trying to set up and partner needs to know how long to duck the A. The person holding the A can give a Smith Echo, but the one without has to give count.

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