

DISCARDING

Before starting with discarding, here are some things that are worth discussing.

1. When partner leads a suit and you have touching honors, ALWAYS play the lowest of the touching honors. This is opposite from when you lead a suit: lead the top of touching honors (except for the AKxxx exception). Everyone in this class may already know this, but you would not believe the number of people who don't or who do it wrong.
2. When partner leads a suit against a notrump contract and you win the opening lead, you should lead back what your remaining count in the suit is, i.e., if pard leads a heart and you have A842, you win the Ace and lead back the two to show you have three left. If you have A82, you lead back the 8 after winning the Ace to show you have two cards left in the suit.

Now onto discarding.....

There are two real types of discarding situations. The first is where you are trying to tell partner which suit you want him to lead when he gets in. The second is when declarer is running a long suit and you have to make a lot of discards and figure out what suit you can afford to throw and which suit you have to hold onto and they are in some ways intertwined with one another.

Many types of discarding systems or conventions can be used to signal partner which suits you want led or which suits you have winning cards in. The one I like the absolute best is odd-even discards. I have been playing them for ten years and I feel they are the most flexible and most informative system of discards and since I bees the teach, I am teaching that. But whichever discarding and signaling system you ultimately decide to play, **what's most important is that you and your partner understand what is in each other's hands.**

LAVINTHAL ODD-EVEN REVOLVING DISCARDS

These are played both against suit and notrump contracts. They are used the first time either defender discards. They are very straightforward.

1. An odd card on the first discard is encouraging for the suit discarded.
2. An even card on the first discard is discouraging for the suit discarded and is a suit-preference signal for the remaining suits.

So, the discard of a 2 or 4 says, "I don't like the suit discarded and I like the lower of the remaining suits."

The discard of a 6 is the most ambiguous discard possible and most of the time it says, "partner, don't hurt yourself trying to find me because I am not here."

The discard of an 8 or 10 indicates that you like the higher of the remaining suits.

Now you may be asking yourself, "self, can I use odd-even discards in conjunction with Smith Echo and, if I can, how would that work?"

By now you have answered your own question with, "Mark would never teach us systems that we could not use together, so of course we can use Smith and odd-even together, but how?"

Well, we already know about using Smith to find out whether the opening leader likes the lead she made against the notrump contract, so we have three situations we have to ponder:

1. Opening leader likes the lead: The odd-even discard says, "this is where my other card is located that you can get to me with in case you have no more of the suit I led or maybe I need the lead in the suit I signaled so I don't get endplayed."
2. Opening leader does not like the lead: If opener says she does not like her lead, her odd-even discard suggests another suit to try.
3. Opening leader does not like her lead (by Smith) and signaled for her suit anyway: This says, "I didn't like my suit lead and I don't like anything else, so you figure out what to do."

What about an odd-even discard by the partner of the notrump leader? He has also been able to make a Smith Echo and has told partner how he feels about the opening lead. There are a couple of situations to consider in this case.

1. The partner of the opening leader "echoed" that he liked the suit led. In this case, the odd-even discard should say, "this is where my cards or entries are in case you need to get to me to lead your suit through declarer" or "I did not play low from a touching honor when you led the suit, so feel free to lead this other suit to me." If this was low from a touching honor, you should odd-even partner to lead her original suit.
2. The partner of the opening leader "echoed" that he did not like the suit partner led: The odd-even discard should indicate honors in a suit that partner can get an entry to in order to get her suit lead through declarer (this is especially true if partner "echoed" that she liked her lead).

NOW FOR THE IMPORTANT AND CONFUSING EXCEPTION TO ALL I HAVE BEEN TEACHING YOU ABOUT GIVING COUNT

When you start switching suits to go along with partner's discard is when you really stop giving count and lead attitude about the suit to him. You would at this point start leading low from an honor saying you liked his signal, or top of nothing saying "I am only leading the suit because you asked me to." You just have to tell partner immediately whether this suit, in your opinion, has a future so he can decide whether to continue that suit or lead the suit you started or continue the suit you led due to the odd-even discard.

HOW TO TELL PARTNER WHAT TO KEEP WHEN DECLARER IS RUNNING LONG SUITS

1. Give count in suits.
2. Use your odd-even discard to tell partner what suit you are keeping so he knows that he can throw it.
3. Keep parity with the dummy as much as possible. That means keep the same number of cards in long suits as are in dummy and keep the same distribution as dummy, if possible.
4. Keep your winners and throw your losers. May seem obvious, but again you would not believe the number of people who get this wrong.
5. Try to give count to pard in the suit he led against notrump. He will count on you to keep at least one of his suit.
6. If you have a long sequence of high cards in a suit, discard the top of a sequence, that promises the cards below.
7. Don't discard from suits you want partner to lead against a notrump contract. Always try to give him the even discard from a suit you don't want lead.

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