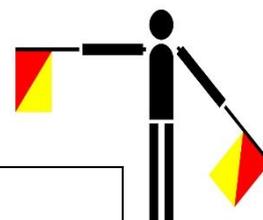


Defending No Trump Contracts – Signals



When Can you Signal?

When you lead a card	Top of a sequence, fourth highest, high from rubbish, low from an honour.
When your partner leads a card	Usually signal attitude. How much do you like partner's suit?
When declarer leads a card	Usually signal count. How many cards do you have in declarer's suit?
When you make your first discard (no matter who led to the trick)	Usually signal suit preference. Which suit do you want partner to lead?

Discarding Methods

It is essential that you and your partner agree on the method you are using!

Discard what you don't want	The simplest of methods can be quite effective. It does not tell partner the suit you do want but partner can often deduce the right suit by looking at dummy.
High encourages, Low discourages	A straightforward method. An advantage is that the discard of a high card tends to get noticed by partner. "Low discourages" is a vital part of the method.
Low encourages, High discourages	This is as simple as the high/low method and can avoid the need to discard an important high card. When partner discards a low card, you may not be sure if partner wants that suit or has forgotten to signal.
Odd Encourages, Even discourages	Another method that is used to avoid discarding high cards. Sometimes your hand does not have the odd or even card you need to make the right signal.
McKenney discards	A high card requests the higher of the other two suits. A low card requests the lower suit. At the cost of complexity, this method offers more flexibility than odds/evens. A down side is that all signals are encouraging. There is no discouraging option.
Odd encourages, Even McKenney	The most complex and most versatile of the methods is very popular at congresses. An odd card encourages the discard suit; a high even card encourages the higher of the other two suits; a low even card encourages the lower of the other two suits. To discard "in tempo" you will probably need to work out your first discard at the start of the play period.

To avoid issues with unauthorised information, it is very important that you play your discard in tempo i.e. at your normal speed of play. This can sometimes be difficult when you are using one of the more sophisticated signalling methods.

Signalling on Partner's Lead

There are three common methods.

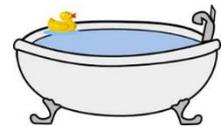
- High encourages
- Low encourages
- Count

The first two methods are called attitude signals. Even if your method is attitude, there will be occasions when count should be signalled instead.

When Partner Leads a King from a Long Suit

Partner will have KQJxx or KQTxx.

- Overtake if you have an ace doubleton
- Unblock if you have a jack or ten doubleton
- Encourage if you have three or more cards and an honour
- Discourage if you have no honour



The Bath Coup

	Dummy	
West	♠ 7 4 3	East
♠ K Q T 9 4	Declarer	♠ 8 6 5
	♠ A J 2	

West leads the ♠K, dummy plays low and declarer allows the king to win. When west continues with another spade, declarer makes two spade tricks.

This is known as the Bath Coup. If east-west signal accurately, they can spoil declarer's fun. At trick one, east should play a discouraging card. If their system is "high encouraging", that will be the five. West will see at once that it is east's lowest card and will not continue the suit. Later on, east can lead a spade and declarer will get only one spade trick.

When Partner Leads a Queen from a Long Suit

Partner will have AQJxx or QJTxx or QJ9xx.

- Overtake if you have an ace or king doubleton
- Unblock if you have a ten doubleton
- Encourage if you have three or more cards and an honour
- Discourage if you have no honour

When Partner Leads a Jack from a Long Suit

Your action depends on whether you are playing standard leads or journalist leads. If you play **standard** leads, partner will have AJTxx or KJTxx or JT9xx or JT8xx.

- Overtake if you have an ace, king or queen doubleton
- Unblock if you have a ten doubleton
- Encourage if you have three or more cards and the queen
- Use your judgement with three or more cards to the ace or king
- Discourage if you have no honour

If you play **journalist** leads, partner will have JT9xx or JT8xx. Declarer will have all the missing honours.

- Overtake if you have an ace, king or queen doubleton
- Unblock if you have a ten doubleton
- Encourage if you have three or more cards and the king or queen
- Use your judgement with three or more cards to the ace
- Discourage if you have no honour

A Win for Journalist Leads

	Dummy	
	♠ 5 2 ♥ 6 5 4 ♦ K J T 7 5 ♣ A Q 5	
West		East
♠ J T 9 8 ♥ K 9 3 2 ♦ 6 4 3 ♣ 6 2	Declarer	♠ A 6 3 ♥ J T 8 7 ♦ A 9 2 ♣ 9 4 3
	♠ K Q 7 4 ♥ A Q ♦ Q 8 ♣ K J T 8 7	

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♠J and dummy goes down. Playing standard leads, east does not know if west has ♠KJTxx or ♠JT9x.

If the former, east should take the ace and play back another spade. On this hand, that would be fatal. Declarer will win and drive out the ace of diamonds. Declarer still has a second spade stopper to regain the lead and make eleven tricks.

Playing journalist leads, east knows that declarer has the missing spade honours, the king and queen. Spades are clearly futile so east wins with the ace of spades and makes the obvious heart switch. Declarer's queen will fall to west's king and then the ace driven out. East's ♦A will be the entry for two more heart tricks – enough to beat the contract.

When Partner Leads a Low Card from a Long Suit

The Simple Way

Usually, third hand plays high but when dummy plays a card you can't beat:

- If you have an honour, encourage or unblock.
- If you have no honour, discourage.

The More Advanced Way

Usually, third hand plays high but when dummy plays a card you can't beat:

- If dummy wins with the ace or king and you have an honour, encourage or unblock.
- If dummy wins with the ace or king and you have no honour, discourage.
- If dummy wins with the queen or lower, **give a count signal**.

Using count signals: Play a high card to show an even number of cards in the suit. Play a low card to show an odd number of cards in the suit.

Summary of Actions in Third Seat Defending No Trump Contracts

1. Before the session, agree your attitude signals. Most likely they will be **either** high encourage/low discourage **or** low encourage/high discourage.
2. When partner leads an honour
 - a. With an honour doubleton, overtake or unblock
 - b. With 3+ cards and an honour, encourage as per 1.
 - c. With no honour, discourage as per 1.
3. When partner leads low and dummy plays the ace, proceed as per 2.
4. When partner leads low, dummy plays the king and you can't beat it, proceed as per 2.
5. When partner leads low, dummy plays queen or lower and you can't beat it, **give count**.

Deal 1

		North		
		♠ A K J ♥ Q T 3 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ K T 6 4		
West			East	
♠ 9 5 ♥ K 6 5 ♦ A 6 4 2 ♣ J 9 7 2			♠ Q T 7 4 2 ♥ A J 9 7 ♦ 7 ♣ 8 5 3	
		South		
		♠ 8 6 3 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ J T 9 8 3 ♣ A Q		

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East leads ♠4 which proves to be a bad move. Declarer starts work on the diamonds. On the second diamond, east discards and has an opportunity to signal.

Spades being no good, east would like partner to switch to a heart. An encouraging heart would do the job but that will give away a trick.

Instead, east should play a discouraging spade.

West will look at dummy and decide that hearts are the best option.

[Hi/Lo ♠2. Lo/Hi ♠7. O/E ♠2. McKenney ♠T. O/McKenney ♠T.]

Deal 2

		North		
		♠ 6 5 4 2 ♥ 6 5 4 3 ♦ A Q 9 7 ♣ 4		
West			East	
♠ K 7 3 ♥ T 8 ♦ T 8 5 4 ♣ Q J T 5			♠ A Q T ♥ A K Q ♦ J 3 ♣ K 9 8 7 3	
		South		
		♠ J 9 8 ♥ J 9 7 2 ♦ K 6 2 ♣ A 6 2		

West	North	East	South
		1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

South leads ♥2, fourth highest. Another inauspicious start.

Unable to beat the eight, north gives a count signal. The ♥6 promises an even number of hearts. South knows that is four. Otherwise, declarer would have five and would have opened 1♥ instead of 1♣.

Winning the ace of hearts, declarer starts playing clubs. On the second club, north discards. North would like a diamond switch but cannot spare a diamond. So, north discourages spades instead and south should have little difficulty finding the right suit to lead.

[Hi/Lo ♠2. Lo/Hi ♠6. O/E ♠2. McKenney ♠2. O/McKenney ♠2.]

Deal 3

	North	
	♠ 3 2 ♥ Q 4 ♦ A Q J 9 2 ♣ 7 6 4 3	
West		East
♠ K Q T 5 4 ♥ K J 6 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ 8 2		♠ 9 8 7 ♥ 8 7 5 3 ♦ K 4 ♣ Q J T 9
	South	
	♠ A J 6 ♥ A T 9 2 ♦ T 5 3 ♣ A K 6	

West North East South
 Pass 3NT All Pass 1NT

West leads the SK, top of a near sequence. East should play a discouraging card.

[Hi/Lo ♠7 or Lo/Hi ♠9]

Receiving the discouraging signal, west should try a different suit - probably clubs. Declarer will win and take the losing diamond finesse. Now east can lead spades.

Declarer will probably duck the first spade and win the second. Declarer will cash the diamond tricks but west will win the ♥K and cash spade winners to beat the contract. Theoretically, it is possible for the contract to make. (a) Win the second spade trick. (b) pay out diamonds. (c) Cash the ace of clubs. (d) Throw west in with a spade. By now, West is down to only one spade and two hearts. West can make a spade trick but then is forced lead away from the king of hearts. Declarer will score two hearts and make the contract.

Deal 4

	North	
	♠ A J 9 7 3 ♥ 6 4 2 ♦ K 5 3 ♣ T 2	
West		East
♠ K 6 ♥ A Q 9 ♦ A Q J 7 6 ♣ 8 7 4		♠ Q 5 ♥ T 7 3 ♦ T 9 4 ♣ A K 9 5 3
	South	
	♠ T 8 4 2 ♥ K J 8 5 ♦ 8 2 ♣ Q J 6	

West North East South
 1NT Pass 3NT All Pass

North leads fourth highest, the ♠7.

Declarer plays the ♠Q from dummy. Being unable to beat the queen, south gives a count signal. The ♠8, a high card shows an even number of spades.

Declarer will now lead a diamond from dummy and take the finesse. This loses to north's king and it is time for north to have a think.

West must have the king of spades because partner did not play it. Partner has shown an even number of spades with the high card at trick one. Has south two spades or four? If it were two spades, west would have four and that would be KT6x. If that were the case, declarer would surely have played low from dummy at trick one. So, partner has four spades and declarer two. North should bang down the ♠A and take four spade tricks.

