



## SIGNALS AND DISCARDS

Declarer has the advantage of being able to see dummy's cards as well as her own, planning the play as one unit. A defender can do none of this. All one has is inferences from the bidding and a view of the dummy after the opening lead. The defense also has the advantage of making the opening lead, which may or may not be a positive message. Intelligent defense needs a large amount of cooperation between partners. This can only work well if both partners have an agreed system of legal signaling.

There are three types of signals:

### 1. ATTITUDE SIGNAL

This tells partner if you like or dislike a suit. A high card encourages partner to continue the suit and a low card discourages (unless you and partner have agreed to play upside down signals). The signal can be used both when following to a suit and also when discarding. A like signal is made with a high card followed by a low one (called a "peter" or "echo") and the reverse for a dislike signal. This is because sometimes you will have cards which may be misinterpreted.

(a) S Q J 3 2    H A K 7 6    D 9 5 4    C 10 8

Partner leads the HA. You play the 4. Partner can see the 3 and 2 in dummy and knows that it is your lowest card. You are in effect saying "*Lay off – this suit will do us no good*"

(b) S Q 3 2    H A K 7 6    D 9 5    C J 10 8 5

Again the HA is led. You play the 9, encouraging partner to cash his K and continue so that you can ruff the Q.

(c) S A J 8    H K 9 6 2    D Q 5 3    C 10 7 4

Partner leads the 2 and declarer plays the A. You've got poor cards to signal with. Nevertheless you play the 5. If partner is alert she will notice your 3 on the play of the King and will know to continue the suit.

(d) S A 8 5      H **K** J 4 3 2      D 9 3 2      C J 4

Partner clearly has the Q and you would like her to continue. You "encourage" with the 4. Partner cannot be certain of your message (declarer could have the 3 and 2), so he switches to another suit. Next time this suit is played or if discarding on a different suit, you will play the 2, which completes the message.

(e) S **K** Q 5      H A K 9 3      D 9 5      Q 8 5 3

You are defending against 5D. Partner leads the SK, taken by declarer's SA. Declarer cashes three rounds of trumps and leads the SJ. On the third round of diamonds, you should play the H9, telling partner to shift to hearts.

(f) S 9 5 2      H A K 3 2      D Q 5 3      C Q 8 5 2

You are again defending 5D (almost the same as the previous hand). On the SK, you play the 2 (dislike spades). On the third round of diamonds, play the 2 of clubs (dislike clubs). You can't afford to play the 3 of hearts, as it will be misinterpreted and partner is likely to lead a club into declarer's AKJx combination.

Thus another way to use attitude signals is to show suits which you dislike so that partner can deduce which suits you like.

## 2. COUNT SIGNAL

The system of "high-low" and "low-high" can also be used to give a count of the number of cards that you hold in a suit.

**HIGH-LOW** shows an EVEN number of cards (two, four, etc..)

**LOW-HIGH** shows an ODD number of cards (three, five, etc....)

By looking at dummy and one's own cards (as well as taking into account the bidding) partner can usually tell how many cards you are holding.

Please note that you cannot use attitude and count simultaneously. You have to play one system of signals or another.

The count signal is particularly useful as it allows partner to count a particular suit and makes it possible to hold up the A or K in a suit long enough to "kill" the suit.

Thus:

S 5 4

H 8 6 3

D K Q 7 5 4

C 7 5 3

Lead: S2

S K 9 5 3

H Q 8 4

D A 9 2

C 10 8 4 3 2

Partner leads the 2 of spades against a 3NT contract (you deduce that she led from a 4-card suit). You put up your K which holds. You return the S9, covered by the 10 and J. Partner leads the 8, 5 from you and declarer wins with the SA. Declarer now leads the DJ, partner playing the 3 and you hold up. He continues with the 10 (partner playing the 6), and overtakes with the Q. Should you hold up again?

Partner's play of the 3 and 6, shows that he has an odd number of diamonds, (i.e. he has three.) Dummy and you hold a total of eight. Now,  $8+3 = 11$  and therefore declarer started with only two diamonds. You must take your Ace right now, otherwise you are giving declarer an unnecessary trick (which could well be his ninth!) and return another suit. The diamond suit is now "dead" - declarer cannot get to it.

### COUNT IN THE TRUMP SUIT

A special procedure is used to give count in the trump suit. The order of play is reversed. You suggest an odd number of trumps (nearly always three) by playing your middle trump, then your lowest. To show an even number, play your lowest trump first.

There are several reasons for reversing the signaling method. Firstly, with only two trumps, your highest one may be too valuable to waste (Qx, Jx, 10x, or even a 9x may promote a trump winner for your partner). Secondly, a high-low, showing three trumps, will suggest to partner that you may:

- a. be able to trump a suit (in which he knows or suspects a shortage) or
- b) it is **imperative** that you get the lead so that you can lead a third round of trumps -- taking "two for one" -- in order to thwart a cross-ruff game. Thirdly, a count in the trump suit may help partner to work out declarer's distribution.

### 3. SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNAL

This signal indicates interest in a suit other than the one being played.

**An unusually high card in the played suit, suggests strength in a high-ranking suit**

**A low card suggests interest in another low-ranking suit.**

There are three typical situations:

#### A. A SINGLETON IN DUMMY AND PARTNER HAS LED THE A OR K:

S AQ64

H Q1074

D 4

C KJ105

Lead D A

S 5

H A952

D Q863

C 8762

S KJ1093

H 8

D J972

C AQ7

The contract is 6S and partner leads the A of diamonds. You should "shock " partner by throwing the Q of diamonds. This should be interpreted as a suit preference signal telling her that of the remaining two suits (hearts and clubs), you want an immediate shift to the higher ranking suit (hearts). Note that if partner shifts to a club, declarer has time to draw trumps and discard his heart losers on dummy's fourth club.

If you had held the CA, you would have signaled with the 3 of diamonds. Even if partner does not lead A or a K and there is a singleton in dummy, you should still give a suit preference signal. Sometimes partner will hold the A or K of their trump suit and needs to know which suit to shift to, as soon as she gets the lead.

**B. YOU ARE ABOUT TO GIVE PARTNER A RUFF**

S Q105

H 763

D 8732

C KQ8

S AK962

S J3

H Q104

H J5

D 64

D J1095

C A92

C A92

S 874

H AK982

D AKQ

C J5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1S	PASS	PASS	DBLE
PASS	2D	P	2H
ALL PASS			

You lead SA and partner encourages with the J. You cash the K and have the 9, 6, and 2 for him to ruff. You should lead the 2. This is a SUIT PREFERENCE signal asking him to return a club, after he has taken his ruff. Sure enough, partner returns a club. You win your A and lead a fourth spade. Partner ruffs with the J forcing South to overruff. This promotes your trumps into two winners. Defense takes SA, SK, a spade ruff, CA and two trumps for one down.

	S KQJ	
	H QJ42	
	D 10832	
	C K4	
S 87542		S A3
H 65		H K7
D <u>5</u>		D AJ964
C QJ962		C 10873
	S 1096	
	H A10983	
	D KQ7	
	C A5	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1D	1H	PASS	4H
ALL PASS			

Partner leads the 5 of diamonds which you take with the A. You can't be sure, but you suspect that partner's lead was a singleton. Return the J of diamonds, asking for a spade return. Defense takes the DA, SA and two ruffs to defeat the contract.

S: Q98  
H: K96  
D: J85  
C: Q1052

LEAD D: 3

S: A4  
H: AQ104  
D: K9742  
C: 87

The contract is 4S and partner leads the 3 of diamonds, J from dummy, covered by your K diamonds and the A. Declarer leads the 2 of spades, 6,Q and your A. What should you return? You're not sure, but you suspect that partner's lead was a singleton. Return the 9 of diamonds. Partner obliges by ruffing with the 5 of spades. You now know that he had three trumps (he played the 6 and 5 - an echo). She knows to lead a heart (your 9 of diamonds was suit preference for the higher suit out of hearts and clubs). Declarer puts up the K losing to your A. You return the D7, confident that partner can ruff this and return another heart.

### **C. IF LENGTH IN A SUIT IS KNOWN**

In the situation where partner knows your exact suit length and you end up defending, you are able to use that suit for *suit preference* signals. If you play Law of Total Tricks raises where 1S-2S shows precisely 3 spades or Bergen raises where 1S-3S (also 3C and 3D) shows 4 spades, 1D-2D shows 4 diamonds and 1C-2C shows 5 clubs, there are many opportunities to use suit preference signals here.

S AQ32

H 965

D J1094

C QJ

S K7

H AK842

D K862

C 106

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1H	PASS	2H	PASS
PASS	DBLE	3H	3S
PASS	4S	ALL PASS	

You, West, lead the HA. Partner plays the H3. Declarer drops the HQ. How do you continue? Partner's H3 is not a very enlightening card. Is it count (showing three) or attitude (dislike)? Has declarer got another heart and is false carding? The H3 could be interpreted as asking for a shift to clubs. Perhaps she has the CA and we will take two hearts, the CA and a diamond. So much ambiguity and the slightest wrong guess could give away the contract.

The actual deal and auction, using Law-raises:

		S AQ32	
		H 965	
		D J1094	
		C QJ	
S K7			S 96
H <u>A</u> K842			H J1073
D K862			D A3
C 106			C 98543
		S J10854	
		H Q	
		D Q75	
		C AK72	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1H	PASS	2H	PASS
PASS	DBLE	3H	3S
PASS	4S	ALL PASS	

When you lead the HA, partner plays the HJ. First of all, you know that partner has four hearts and that a continuation is pointless. Secondly, since East's heart length is known, she can use her hearts for suit preference signals. The HJ asks for a shift to the higher suit (diamonds). Accordingly you shift to the D2, partner takes the DA, returns a diamond to your DK and you give her a ruff, which is the only way to set the contract.

S A4  
H Q9852  
D 863  
C Q84

S 632

H 74

D AKJ5

C KJ42

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1D	PASS	3D	DBLE
4D	4H	5D	5H
ALL PASS	4S	ALL PASS	

After a Law Raise auction (3D guarantees five diamonds), you lead the DA, partner contributing the D2. How do you continue?

S A4

H Q9852

D 863

C Q84

S 632

S K1087

H 74

H 6

D AKJ5

D 109762

C KJ42

C QT7

S QJ95

H AKJ103

D 3

C A95

Since partner is known to have five diamonds, her D2 asks for a shift to clubs. This is the only shift that beats 5H. A spade shift loses tempo. Declarer can cash the SA, draw trumps in two rounds and a low spade towards her S QJ9 allows her to discard two clubs from dummy.

#### **4. EQUAL HONOR SIGNAL**

The opportunity to use this signal is fairly rare and it consists of dropping your highest card from a 3 card sequence, when either following a suit or discarding.

Thus if you have a sequence like KQJxx, QJ10xx, AKQxx, J109xx, you would drop your highest card. The discard of an honor guarantees the card below.

There are three types of situations where the signal may be useful.

- a. Partner leads the A (from AKxx) and you have QJ10x and see the need for a shift. You drop the Q on his A. Partner knows that he can afford to underlead the King in order to put you on lead.

S AJ93

H 84

D 943

C AQJ10

S 65

H AK75

D AQ72

C 964

S 42

H QJ102

D 10863

C 853

S KQ1087

H 963

D KJ

C K72

The opposition is in 4S. You lead the HA and partner drops the Q. After examining dummy, you can see that it is imperative for partner to lead a diamond through declarer. So lead the 7 of hearts to partner's J. She can see that diamonds is dummy's weakest suit (as well as your suit preference signal - you did not lead the 5) and a diamond return allows your side to score two hearts and two diamonds. If you were to cash the HA and KK unthinkingly and lead a trump or a club (in the hope that partner has the K), it will be too late. Declarer can discard one of her losing diamonds on dummy's long clubs.

b. When declarer is running a long suit and you are being squeezed, an equal honor signal may help you or partner to discard correctly.

	S 854			
	H AQ10742			
	D A62			
	C J			
S Q93 <u>2</u>		S KJ106	NORTH	SOUTH
H 85		H KJ93	1H	3C
D J10973		D Q84	3H	4N
C 86		C 72	5H	6C
	S A7		7C	
	H 6			
	D K5			
	C AKQ109543			

Partner leads the 2 of spades and your K is taken by the A. Declarer leads a heart to the Ace and a small heart is ruffed with the CA. A club is led to the J and another heart is ruffed with the CK, West discarding the DJ. Declarer draws the remaining trumps with the Q and leads the C10. Partner throws the 3 of diamonds and you discard the SJ. Now all hopes for a squeeze by declarer are dashed! Partner knows that you have the S10 and will throw all her spades whilst you throw away all your diamonds (your Q is the equal of the J and 10). After 3 more rounds of clubs the position will be:

S —

H Q

D A6

C —

S —

S J10

H —

H K

D 1097

D —

C —

C —

S 7

H —

D K5

C —

Declarer must lose either a spade or a heart. Without the equal honor signal, there was a danger that you would both throw out all the spades.

c. When you know that partner will have a problem in finding the correct suit shift, an equal honor signal may be of help.

S  
K972

H 62

D 65

C  
J9754

LEAD S J

S 3

H QJ1087

D Q842

C 1062

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1S	DBLE	2S	3H
4S	DBLE	ALL PASS	5H

West leads the SJ against the doubled contract. Declarer wins the A and continues with the K. What do you discard? Partner has the strong hand and you have no idea which suit you would like her to lead when she gets in. Your only sensible discard is the HQ. By telling partner what you have, you leave her well placed to make an intelligent decision.

This is the full deal:

S K972

H 62

D 65

C J9754

S J10

S 3

H A95

H QJ1087

D KJ93

D Q842

C AK83

C 1062

S AQ8654

H K43

D A107

C Q

At trick 3, declarer will lead a low club towards his Q, taken by partner's K. After your discard of the Q of hearts, West has no problems. She knows that declarer has the HK. She cannot play the CA as this may be ruffed setting up the J for a discard, nor the HA. He has no option but to lead a diamond. Now passive defense allows the defenders to collect four tricks.

S AK109

H 652

D A

C AJ1083

S 8753

H A94

D J1062

C K6

S 62

H QJ10

D K9853

C Q72

S QJ4

H K873

D Q74

C 954

You lead the 2 of diamonds against a 3NT contract, partner encouraging with the 9. South enters hand with the SQ and leads the C9 which you cover with your K. Dummy's A wins and the CJ holds the next trick. Partner plays the Q on the next round. What should you discard?

A count of declarer's tricks should set you straight. She has four spade tricks, one diamond and the clubs are set up for another four tricks. Partner is likely to return a diamond thinking that you have the Q. Discarding the DJ will jolt her into realizing that your side needs five fast tricks. She will lead the HQ. If South covers, you win the Ace, return a diamond to the King and watch South suffer as partner cashes the J and 10 of hearts.

## **WHICH SIGNAL TO USE?**

Novices tend to use the ATTITUDE signal as much as possible in all contracts. Quite right! It is simple, easy to remember and is indeed useful for many situations.

Advanced defenders should be able to use all four signals (if appropriate) throughout the course of defending a hand. However this must be done with care and good partnership agreement.

The first thing to remember is that you cannot use both attitude and count simultaneously without ambiguity. You can, however, mix in suit preference and equal honor signals

with either of the two primary signaling methods. What you must do is decide which of attitude or count will be the primary signal.

Some partnerships will determine that in the majority of defenses the count signal is of more use. For these, this is particularly true when defending notrump contracts. Here declarer is trying to establish his longest combined suits and hold up plays as well as discovering your side's longest combined suits are of paramount importance to the defense. Count together with inferences from the bidding may help you to reconstruct the distribution of all four hands and that often leads to the right defense. However, traditional signaling as outlined by most North American bridge authors recommends that you give attitude when partner is on lead; count when declarer is playing on her suit and when discarding, suit preference. The choices you make should be clearly established by you and partner.

## **THINKING – KEY TO DEFENSE**

Good defense needs a high degree of concentration and clear thinking at all times.

The first mental exercise, even before dummy is seen, is to make assumptions about partner's probable strength.

If they are in game, always assume that the opposition holds 26 points.

### **Subtracting your points from 14 gives partner's probable points.**

Adjust for minor games or part scores. For slams, assume that they hold 32 points. Thus if you hold 8 points against a slam, you can bet that the defense will be entirely up to you and you won't get any help from partner. Similarly if you are defending against a game contract and hold 12 points, partner will have 2 points at most and again, the defense will be virtually in your hand. You will be surprised how often you will defeat contracts if you make estimating partner's probable points a habit. If your assumption is wrong, it doesn't matter, for the contract could not be defeated, and that is that.

Let us try a few:

S KJ107

H KQ3

D AK86

C 62

S 4

S A8532

NORTH

SOUTH

H 962

H 7

1D

1H

D QT53

D J974

1S

2H

C AQ975

C J103

3H

4H

S Q96

H AJ10854

D 2

C K84

Partner leads the 4 of spades and you win with the A, declarer playing the 9. How do you plan the defense?

You have 6 points and that should give partner about 8 points. He would not attack dummy's bid suit unless he has a singleton (declarer's 9 is an obvious false card). Should you give her a ruff immediately? You need four tricks to set the contract. Where are partner's honors? Declarer must surely have the HA. That leaves partner with perhaps CA and CK and a J, or AQ of clubs and a Queen. The second seems more likely, for with CA and CK she may have led the A to look at dummy. In any case, you can't go far wrong by leading the CJ. If it holds, you'll immediately shift back to spades and give partner her ruff. If the Jack is covered, partner will have to underlead her Ace to put you in.

The hands:

S KJ107

H KQ3

D AK86

C 62

S 4

LEAD S 4

S A8532

H 962

H 7

D QT53

D J974

C AQ975

C J103

S Q96

H AJ10854

D 2

C K84

If clubs weren't attacked immediately at trick 2, partner gets her ruff, but has no good return to make. Declarer can draw trumps and discard two clubs on spades and diamonds.

The point of the hand, is that attitude signals are not always necessary. An estimation of partner's points and sound reasoning will often be enough.

## COMBINING ALL SIGNALS

In many hands we can combine all four signals, provided that COUNT is the primary signal (with ATTITUDE on the lead of an honor) and we have the right spot cards for the other signals.

Study this defense against a 4H contract:

S QJ7

H J943

D 1098

C KJ6

S AK103

S 8652

H 82

H 75

D KJ62

D Q74

C 987

C 10542

S 94

H AKQ106

D A53

C AQ3

East and West had their signaling methods all mixed up.

West led the SA. East decided to play the 6, thinking that she could show count and suit preference (for diamonds) all at once. When the 4 showed from declarer, West became convinced that partner had the doubleton 62 and continued with the K and 10 hoping to give partner a ruff. But declarer discarded a diamond on the Queen and lost two spades and one diamond for 10 tricks!

East must get her priorities straight. On the first trick she should have played the 2, to show no interest in a spade continuation. She should show ATTITUDE first and foremost. West has to find her own shift and must use judgement. West has 11 points and subtracting from 14, gives only 2 to 3 points for East. East can't have AQ of clubs, but could have the DQ. A diamond shift defeats the contract, giving the defense two diamonds and two spades.

a)

S K853

H K4

D 863

C

AKJ10

LEAD H A

S 74

H J952

D AQ5

C 9863

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1H	DBLE	2H	PASS
3S	P	4S	ALL PASS

West leads the HA and the question is what should East play at trick one?

There is clearly no advantage in playing the H2 to discourage. West can see that herself. The club suit looks dangerous (If partner has the Queen, it will be finessed successfully). Clearly, the only signal that makes sense is a SUIT PREFERENCE signal. East should play the 9 (or J) of hearts telling partner to shift to diamonds.

b)

S K853

H K4

D 863

C

AKJ10

LEAD H A

S A4

H J952

D 952

C 9863

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1H	DBLE	2H	PASS
3S	P	4S	ALL PASS

Same bidding, same dummy and same lead. East has a problem. He should play the 5 of hearts. A middle card like that says, "*I have no desire for a particular shift*". Partner will have to make her own decision. She may stay passive and continue a heart or she may misinterpret and lead a club. This is unlikely to be too costly. Declarer can finesse clubs herself anyway. It may even be possible that partner has a singleton club. The only thing that you don't want is a diamond shift. You will lead a diamond as soon as you gain the lead with the Ace of trumps.

c)

S KQ2

H 1065

D 863

C 7642

S A97654

S J103

H 7

H 94

D KJ4

D A974

C QJ10

C 9853

S 8

H AKQJ832

D QT5

C AK

WEST

NORTH

EAST

SOUTH

1S

PASS

2S

4H

ALL  
PASS

West leads the SA (A from a long suit). We normally play high or low on the lead of an Ace, but it is quite clear that a continuation will give declarer useful discards and that the suit must not be continued. East should play the SJ. This is clearly SUIT PREFERENCE and partner should place you with the DA. A shift to the 2 of diamonds allows the defense to take three diamonds and the SA.

d)

S Q875

H A53

D K94

C KQ5

S AK106

S J942

H K985

H QJ72

D A85

D 10732

C 97

C 8

S 3

H 104

D QJ6

C

AJ106432

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1H	DBLE	2H	PASS
3C	P	3N	PASS
4C	PASS	5C	ALL PASS

West leads the SA to look at dummy. Play the 2 (dislike), so that West shifts to a heart. Otherwise partner is likely to continue with the King. You cannot afford a suit preference signal here, so PRIMARY ATTITUDE must be used. If the King is played, declarer will ruff and discard a losing heart on the established Queen.

S  
A1064

H 8

D K752

C K752

S J

S 3

H Q10643

H AKJ952

D 106

D AJ8

C J1098

C 643

S  
KQ8752

H 7

D 943

C AQ

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	PASS	1H	1S
4H	4S	ALL PASS	

West knows that the defense may only get one heart trick and so decides to begin with the Queen, hoping to hold the trick and judge from dummy's appearance what to do next. A good East will play the HJ to indicate a diamond shift. West can see that the defense needs three fast diamond tricks and must hope that East has AJx. She therefore leads the DQ so that East is not end played.

## SUMMARY OF SIGNALLING METHODS

**(1) If partner leads the A (from AKx..) or K (from KQx..) our first duty is to show ATTITUDE.**

This may be modified by what cards you see in dummy:

(a) Qxx

A.... Signal attitude only.

(b) xxx

A ...Signal attitude only. Now you must suit give straight attitude.

(c) x

A... With singleton in dummy, continuation is not constructive. So give preference, (or a middle card if you don't have a productive shift in mind.)

**(2) If partner leads A from long suit (doesn't have the King)**

(a) Kxx

A...

(b) xxx

A...

Sometimes you will find that your signals will not work out. You've taken the wrong view or wrong priority. Partner's cards are all low and it is difficult to interpret his signaling. You have two or three cards, which are high, and you simply cannot afford to give a correct signal as they may get promoted or may promote partner's cards. Don't give up. Signaling is not an exact science. But practice and alert thinking will eventually yield good results. Don't expect signals to work all the time. If they are working 70% to 80% of the time, you are doing well. This mixture of counting partner's probable points, shape and deciding which signal to use is quite difficult to master. But each defensive deal forms a puzzle, which must be solved. Clear logical thinking will often unravel the mystery.

	S AQ	
	H 8	
	D KQJ53	
	C KQJ95	
S 5		S J73
H <u>A</u> K952		H J1063
D 1087		D 9642
C 10874		62
	S K1098642	
	H Q74	
	D A	
	C A3	
NORTH	SOUTH	
1D	1S	
3C	3D	
4C	4s	
4N	5H	
6S		

You lead the HA and partner plays the J. What do you do now?

Hers is not a clear signal. Does she want a diamond shift? An analysis of the bidding and piecing together all the clues should tell you what to do. South showed two aces and she therefore has the DA. It follows that there are no quick tricks for the defense. Her Jack is an equal honor signal denying the HQ. With 7 points in your hand, partner has 1 or 2 points at most. So the question is, how many spades has declarer? She's got either 6 or 7 spades and with 3 between you and dummy that leaves partner with 3 or 4 trumps. If partner's spades are all low, there is no defense. But if she happens to have Jxx, a heart continuation will force dummy to ruff and partner will now take a trump trick (promoting declarer's HQ is of no value to declarer as all of dummy's cards are good).

Here is another case of deductive analysis based on signals and partnership cooperation.

		S J872	
		H AKQ8	
		D KJ5	
		C 109	
S AQ3			S 6
H <u>3</u> 2			H J1054
D 10987			D A432
C J653			C 8742
		S K1054	
		H 976	
		D Q6	
		C AKQ	
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1S	PASS	2S	4H
ALL PASS			

You are on lead and with two possible trump winners, decide to lead the 3 of hearts and try for a heart ruff. But how do you give partner the lead?

When dummy takes the trick, East should play the H5 (beginning a count signal). Declarer loses the deep finesse of the S9 to your SQ and you return the H2. East should be alert enough to spot your doubleton heart and see where your defense is leading to, and must think, "*which will be the most useful signal*". She should now "change horses in midstream" and play the HJ under the HK, showing preference for diamonds. When you take your SA, a diamond shift gets you the heart ruff.

		S AKJ87	
		H Q743	
		D 6	
		C AQ3	
S 9432			S VOID
H 82			H 52
D A1075			D QJ9843
C 10984			C KJ765
		S Q1065	
		H	
		AKJ1096	
		D K2	
		C 2	
NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1S	2N*	4H	PASS
4N	PASS	5D	PASS
6H	ALL PASS		

East's 2NT is the unusual NT showing at least 5-5 in the minors. West leads the DA and East plays the DQ. West knows that partner doesn't have the DK (equal honor signal). But partner would've also discouraged with the lowest diamond. So she must want a spade shift. East ruffs, defeating the slam.

Sometimes you need to start signaling very early.

		S J106	
		H 109	
		D KJ109	
		C KJ109	
S A			S 4
H J53 <u>2</u>			H AKQ8764
D 86432			D AQ
C 542			C 863
		S	
		KQ987532	
		H VOID	
		D 75	
		C AQ7	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	PASS	1H	4S
5H	5S		

West leads the H2 and East starts analyzing the defense. To jump to 4S, South must be very distributional and if partner has led fourth best, declarer must be void. East decides to play the HA(!) as a suit preference signal for diamonds. (Had she held AQ of clubs, she would signal with theHQ). After taking the SA, West shifts to a diamond, defeating the contract.

Suit preference signals can even be used against notrump contracts. Now the "pivot" suit is a long suit in dummy and we discard on a suit to indicate preference between the two remaining suits.

There are two typical situations.

a)

		S K9	
		H KJ4	
		D	
		AQJ1094	
		C 53	
S 1065 <u>3</u>			S AQJ
H A75			H Q63
D 3			D 652
C 7642			C J1098
		S 874	
		H 10982	
		D K87	
		C AKQ	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	1D	PASS	1H
PASS	2D	PASS	2N
PASS	3N	ALL PASS	

Lead: 3 of spades

East takes the SQ, cashes the SA (West plays the S2, confirming that she started with 5 spades) and when she cashes the SJ, she will have no idea which suit to return, to find West's entry. Clearly diamonds are no good. West should drop the S10 to indicate the higher of the remaining suits.

b)

S AJ  
H Q103  
D  
A109853  
C J10

S Q85	S K742
H A9762	H KJ
D 74	D K3
C 632	C 98754

S 10963  
H 854  
D QJ6  
C AKQ

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1C	PASS	1D	PASS
1N	PASS	3N	ALL PASS

Lead : 6 of hearts

East wins with the HJ and cashes the HK. West should realize that South's 1NT rebid showed a balanced hand and if she has 3 hearts, the suit is blocked and East will need a signal. She plays the H9, showing a possible spade entry (the diamond suit is clearly declarer's length suit). A clever East will lead the SK. Declarer takes the SA and returns to hand with a club to take the diamond finesse. East wins and returns a spade!

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