Defensive Signals

Why signal? Defense is hard; you need to help partner as much as possible

What can you signal?
- *Attitude*: I want a suit continued or not
- *Count:* I have an odd or even number of cards in the suit
- *Suit Preference:* I want this suit led

When can you signal?

Almost every card you play when not winning a trick or pushing out an opponent's high card can be a signal

General Notes:
- The specific method isn't as important as knowing what information is being conveyed
- Don't signal with a potential trick
  - Don't show attitude with anything above a 9… and be careful with the 9
- Always signal on partner's opening lead
- Don't signal when you are SURE it will only help declarer (i.e. can't help partner)
- Signals provide information – they are not demands
- Watch all of the spots that you can see: a 7 isn't always high; a 4 isn't always low
- Murphy's law applies to signals – you sometimes simply don't have the right cards
  - If partner leads the K and you hold Axx:
    - If you play that high encourages, your xx will be the 3 2
    - If you play that low encourages, your xx will be the 9 8
  - When possible & it won't cost a trick, wait for partner to complete echo

What do you signal when?
- ***Partner leads an honor or partner leads and dummy is winning the trick***
  - Attitude (you want the suit continued or not)
    - Note: sometimes it's not "like" – it's just that a switch would be worse
    - Generally:
      - Partner leads A from AK: with Qxx or xx "continue"; with xxx "switch"
      - Partner leads K from KQ: with xx "switch" - don't suggest continue without J (or A)

  - Exceptions:
    - Partner will hold trick and there is a singleton in dummy: Suit Preference
      - This is also true if it is clear partner shouldn't continue suit
      - If no preference, play a middle card and hope partner can "read" it
      - Contract Spades; partner leads ♥A; Dummy has KJx in both minors; If you have ♣AQ, play your smallest heart if you have ♦AQ, play largest heart; if you have no preference, play a middle heart and hope partner can "read" it and do whatever looks right from his hand
    - Based on auction & dummy, partner knows you have nothing: Count
      - These are usually NT auctions
    - You have an honor sequence lower than partner's lead: play top honor – this promises honor below & denies honor above
      - Beware: Don't waste a trick doing this
      - Partner beware: It could be a singleton

- ♦ Example: Partner has made a takeout double of 1S and they end up in 4S
  Partner leads ♥A:
    - ♠ Kxxx
    - ♥ xx
    - ♦ xx
    - ♣ AQJxx

    - ♠ xx
    - ♥ QJxx
    - ♦ xxxx
    - ♣ xxx

  Play ♥Q so partner can underlead to your J for you to switch to diamonds (looks like only hope to set the contract is that partner has diamond tricks (AQ would be nice!)
- ♦ Example: Partner leads ♥A (hearts have not been bid or implied):
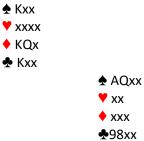   - ♥ 10987

    - ♥ QJxx

  You can't afford to play ♥Q, so just encourage.

- **Partner leads a non-honor and you can't cover dummy's spot card:** Count
  o Partner leads a 3, dummy has 109x, you have 852: show count

- **Declarer leads from either hand or dummy**
  o Count (assuming you're not splitting honors or winning trick)
    - ♦ Example: Contract is 3NT; Bidding: 1♦ - 1♠; 2N-3N
      - ♠ xxxx
      - ♥ xx
      - ♦ xx
      - ♣ KQJ108

        - ♣ Axx

      Need partner to show count so you know when to take A. Assume declarer has at least 2 clubs on bidding. If partner shows even, take 3rd club; if partner shows odd, take 2nd club (if partner has only 1, it doesn't matter what you do)
  o Exceptions:
    - Declarer is clearly running a suit (NT contract or trump are gone): Suit Preference
      - ♦ Example: Contract is n♥s, trump was drawn & declarer is playing spades from dummy which has ♠AKQJ. Play a high spade to indicate that you have values in diamonds (& intend to hold on to diamonds), a low one to show clubs.
    - Declarer is clearly leading a singleton (based on auction): Suit Preference
- **First discard in a suit:** Attitude towards suit discarded
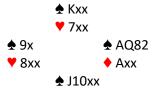 o Example: Contract is n♥s:
    - ♠ Kxx
    - ♥ xxxx
    - ♦ KQx
    - ♣ Kxx

      - ♠ AQxx
      - ♥ xx
      - ♦ xxx
      - ♣98xx

    On 3rd round of hearts, show that you want a spade led

- **Subsequent discards in same suit:**
  - If first discard was an ambiguous card, complete echo
  - Advanced:; Otherwise, show present count (# of cards currently held in suit) if you can afford it

- **You lead for partner to ruff** – your lead is suit preference (what you want returned)
  - If no preference, play a middle card and hope partner can "read" it
  - Example: Contract is n♥s, partner leads ♠ 9:

      ♠ Kxx
      ♥ 7xx

  ♠ 9x   ♠ AQ82
  ♥ 8xx   ♦ Axx

      ♠ J10xx

After cashing ♠Q and ♠A, lead ♠8 to suggest diamond return for a 2nd ruff. If you'd had ♣A instead, you'd return the 2.
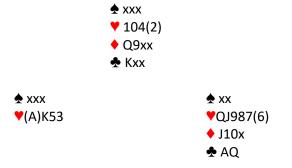
- **You are clearing a long suit at NT** – your lead is suit preference (how to get back to you)
  - Example: Contract is NT and you lead ♥4 :

      ♥Jxx
  ♥K9842   ♥A3
      ♥Qxx

  Partner wins ♥A and returns to your ♥K. When playing a 3rd heart: If your entry is in:
  - Spades: lead ♥9
  - Diamonds: lead ♥8
  - Clubs: lead ♥2

  No, you don't always have 3 cards to choose from…if only 2 are available, read the lower as "not the highest suit" and the higher as "not the lower suit". With any luck a good guess can be made by looking at dummy's cards and considering the auction.

- **You lead a non-honor in a new suit in the middle of a hand** – your lead is attitude
  - Regardless of other methods, low wants the suit continued; high does not want it continued
  - Example: In middle of hand, if leading from K72, lead the 2, if from 972, lead the 9

- **Count and attitude are known** (e.g. declarer has shown out) – discards in that suit are suit preference
  - Example: Contract is n ♠s, partner leads ♥A which declarer ruffs (trick 1 in parentheses):

      ♠ xxx
      ♥ 104(2)
      ♦ Q9xx
      ♣ Kxx

  ♠ xxx   ♠ xx
  ♥(A)K53   ♥QJ987(6)
                           ♦ J10x
                           ♣ AQ

When declarer plays the 3rd spade, play your lowest heart (the 7) to request a club lead. Note that you can't afford to discard either a diamond or a club. Note: the 7 is LOW…partner better be paying attention to the spots!

Note on plays from touching honors:
- Play the lowest of touching honors:
  - When winning a trick (you are not on lead)
  - When splitting honors to force a higher honor from declarer or dummy
- Play the highest of touching honors:
  - When leading the suit
  - When partner leads an honor *
  - When a spot card is led and dummy is clearly winning trick*
  - When discarding*
  - * Make sure you only do this when it cannot cost a trick

What methods are available?

- Note: All of these can be clarified by an "echo" of the 2nd card in that suit:
  - Clarify that a card is high by playing a lower one next
  - Clarify that a card is low by playing a higher one next
  - Similar clarifications exist for other methods

- *Count:*
  - Standard: High card: Even; Low card: Odd
  - Upside Down: Low card: Even; High card: Odd

- *Attitude:*
  - Standard: High card: Continue; Low card: Switch
  - Upside Down: Low card: Continue; High card: Switch

- *Discards* (for attitude in suit discarded – sometimes combined with suit preference):
  - Standard: High card: Lead the suit discarded; Low card: Don't lead this suit
  - Upside Down: Low card: Lead the suit discarded; High card: Don't lead this suit
  - Allowed on 1st discard only (ACBL rules):
    - Roman (aka Odd-Even): Odd card: Lead the suit discarded; Even card: Don't lead this suit
      - ♦ Even card may additionally show suit preference (high for higher outside suit, etc.)
      - ♦ Some people reverse this (Odd: don't lead, Even: lead)
    - Lavinthal: Don't lead the suit discarded.
      - ♦ High card: lead high outside suit; Low card: lead low outside suit
    - Revolving: Similar to Lavinthal, but high/low cards have different meanings

- *Against NT contracts*
  - Smith Echo (or Reverse Smith Echo): Allows you and partner show attitude towards opening lead
    - When declarer or dummy is first on lead and leads a new suit: High (low if reverse) card by either defender indicates that the opening lead should be continued (it supersedes normal rule that you show count when declarer/dummy leads)
    - It is OFF, when:
      - ♦ Attitude towards opening lead is already obvious
      - ♦ Count is clearly critical (usually when dummy has a nearly running suit & lacks entries)
      - ♦ When splitting honors or winning the trick
  - Foster Echo: shows count & unblocks simultaneously
    - Play 2nd highest card in suit led on opening lead if you can't beat card led or card played from dummy
    - This is included for completeness – it is rarely used nowadays

- ***When trump is led:***
  - Standard: Play high followed by low to show an odd number of trump and a desire to ruff something
  - Trump suit preference: A high trump wants a lead of the high outside suit (or not the low outside suit); a low one the low outside suit (or not the high outside suit) and a medium one, if available, the medium outside suit. Remember not to waste a potential trump trick to signal!

- ***On partner's lead of your KNOWN 5+ card suit (when partner or dummy is winning trick):***
  - High card: switch to high outside suit
  - Low card: switch to low outside suit
  - Medium card: continue the suit
  - Note: You can change which card means what if it's easier to remember

Never waste a potential trick to signal!!!

Situation	Attitude	Count	Suit Preference	Top Honor
Partner leads honor or partner leads & dummy is winning	x			
Exceptions:				
Partner leads winning honor & dummy has singleton			x	
Partner knows you have nothing (from auction)		x		
Partner leads honor & you have lower honor sequence				x
Partner leads non-honor& you can't cover dummy's spot card		x		
Declarer (or dummy) leads		x		
Exceptions:				
Declarer (or dummy) is running a suit			x	
Declarer (or dummy) leads known singleton			x	
First discard in a suit	x			
Subsequent discards in a suit (if not completing echo)		x (present)		
You lead for partner to ruff			x	
You are clearing a suit at NT			x	
Your side leads non-honor in new suit in middle of hand	x			
Count & attitude are known (declarer has shown out)			x	