

Mini-Lesson: Play Signals

More information: <https://bridge.careytutor.com>

Objective for Mini-Lesson

- Main objectives:
 - Interpret partner's lead in a suit
 - Learn about attitude signals: on partner's lead and when able to discard
- Secondary objectives:
 - When/when not to use signals

What Does Partner's Lead Tell You?

- A high card:
 - Ace led by partner → partner has the king
 - King led by partner → partner has the queen
 - Queen led by partner → partner has the jack
 - Jack led by partner → partner has the ten
- A middle card (e.g., 7, 8, or 9)
 - Probably leading from “top of nothing” (usually a 3-card suit or a doubleton)
- A low card
 - Often 4th highest in a long suit (4+ cards) or in a 3-card suit (including a high card)

What Is Signaling?

- Signaling provides information to partner after partner leads.
- **Encourage** partner if you have **strength** in their suit.
- **Discourage** partner if you are **weak** in their suit.

How to Signal

- Play a higher card to **encourage**
 - Play the highest card you can without giving up a trick
 - After partner's lead of the A of hearts, play the 8 to encourage:

♠A32 ♥Q83 ♦A63 ♣8742

- Play your lowest card available to **discourage**
 - After partner's lead of the K of spades, play the 5 to discourage:

♠975 ♥Q83 ♦A63 ♣A742

When to Signal

- When you have strength (“encourage”) or weakness (“discourage”)
- When the signal helps your team, not declarer
- On the first lead of any given suit
- When partner leads a high card
- When partner leads a lower card, but the following hand plays a higher card than you have

When Not to Signal

- When playing “third hand high”
 - A lead of a low card asks you to play as high as needed
- When winning the trick (instead of signaling) is to your advantage
- When you have no convenient card to use for signaling

Signaling When Discarding

- If a suit is led where you are void, you may discard in another suit to show encouragement/discouragement.
 - Play a high card in another suit to encourage leads in that suit.
 - Play a low card in another suit to discourage leads in that suit.
- Example: in a 4S contract, partner leads a spade, and declarer takes three rounds.

♠52 ♥JT74 ♦AK**6**♣874

- Play the 6 of diamonds to encourage a diamond lead (next time partner leads)

Cautions

- Remember: your signaling is a guideline, not a demand.
 - Your partner will use your info and make the best possible decision.
- Remember: declarer can see your signaling too.
 - If you want to conceal your strength, play a low card (discouraging).
- Don't encourage if leading that suit will set up declarer's tricks.
- Don't go to sleep and ignore partner's signals.

Cautions Example

4S contract - South

♠K843 ♥KJ8 ♦QJ98 ♣83



West leads

♦A

**North
plays ♦8**

South

**East
plays ♦2**

♠ 72
♥ QT2
♦ T432
♣ J952

Summary

- High card encourages
- Low card discourages
- Signal on first lead of any suit
 - 3rd hand high and winning the trick have higher priority
- Signal on first discard