

Smith Echo

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Date - : 6/11/2012 Level: Advanced

[Smith Echo](#) is a defensive signaling method (usually used only against notrump) and quite popular amongst experts.

Playing hi-lo in the first suit declarer plays says nothing about that suit. It sends a message about the suit the defense has led at trick one. Hi-lo means "I like the opening lead suit." Lo-hi means "I don't like it." This signal is used by both defenders and requires lots of judgment and inference. If count is important (for example, a long entryless suit is in dummy), then that overrides the Smith signal.

Example 1:

The opening leader has ♠KJ976 and ♦82.

He leads a low spade and dummy has ♠xxx. Third hand plays the ♠Q (yeah!) and declarer wins the ace.

Declarer plays diamonds. The opening leader plays the ♦8 to say: "I like spades."

Example 2: The opening leader has ♠108762, ♦82 and ♥AQ10x. He leads a low spade and dummy has ♠Jxx and ♥xxx. Third hand plays the ♠K and declarer wins the ace. Declarer plays diamonds. The opening leader plays the ♦2 to say: "I don't like spades; try something else." (Usually, partner can figure out from the context what that "else" means.)

Example 3: Third hand has ♠QJ102. His partner leads a low spade and dummy plays low with ♠xx. The ten forces the ace. Declarer now plays diamonds. With such a great spade holding, 3rd hand plays hi-lo in diamonds to tell partner to persist with spades when he gets in.

Example 4: Third hand has ♠10 singleton. His partner leads a low spade and dummy plays low with ♠xxx. The ten forces the ace. Declarer now plays diamonds. With a desire to have partner play something other than spades, 3rd hand follows with a low diamond to say: "I don't like spades."

Note: Smith-Echo is used by both defenders one time only. It is used on the first suit declarer plays.

Note: Sometimes, count has to take precedence over [Smith Echo](#). If dummy has, say ♦KQJ10x with no side entry, and declarer plays a low diamond at trick 2, it is crucial to give count. (If declarer leads the ♦A, then count isn't important and a Smith signal is given).

Note: Some pairs play "reverse [Smith Echo](#)" -- the opposite of what is described.

Note: Sometimes it is obvious that a player (usually the 3rd-hand player) can't possibly like the suit led (maybe his 3rd hand "high" play was a little one). In that case, hi-lo in declarer's first-played suit is usually suit-preference amongst the remaining 2 suits.

Note: There are many subtle inferences, exceptions, subtleties--experienced partnerships need to work on the details.

Note: Tempo is important. Try to think at trick one about your future signals. Don't take a long time for your Smith signal as this give partner unauthorized information.