

WASHINGTON BRIDGE LEAGUE

We offer our thanks to Washington Bridge league as we present a copy from their 2016 May - June bulletin on Defense-Signalling by I/N Columnist, Vince Wilmot, vwilmot@comcast.net. Read original - [Here](#)

Defense : signalling

By far, the most difficult aspect of the game to master is defense. Declarer has a complete view of all of his side's assets. Defenders on the other hand, only see their own hand, and the dummy. Their challenge is to piece together partner's hand and declarer's hand to figure out how best to defend.

The defenders have tools to help them. In a previous article, we discussed opening leads, and the rule of 11. This allows defenders to understand honor holdings in their partner's hand. In addition to the advantage of opening leads, there are three basic signaling tools to help guide the defense.

Attitude signals: When partner leads a card, as third hand, when I am not trying to win the trick, I give my partner an attitude signal. In standard signaling, playing a high card would show strength in the suit led. A low card would show lack of interest in the suit led.

In the deal on below, West leads the HK against a 4S contract. East should play the H10 to encourage partner to continue with hearts. If West plays another heart, the defense can take three hearts and the SA to defeat the contract. If West switches to any other suit, declarer will take all of the remaining tricks.

<u>North</u>			
♠ 654			
♥ 985			
♦ AK974			
♣ K3			
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>	
♠ A3		♠ 76	
♥ KQ63		♥ A104	
♦ 1052		♦ J65	
♣ 10842		♣ QJ976	
<u>South</u>			
♠ KQJ1098			
♥ J72			
♦ Q3			
♣ A5			
<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>
P	1♠	P	1NT
P	2♠	P	4♠

None Vulnerable; Lead: ♥K			
Let's change the deal slightly.			
<u>North</u>			
♠ 654			
♥ 985			
♦ AK974			
♣ K3			
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>	
♠ A3		♠ 76	
♥ KQ63		♥ 1042	
♦ 1052		♦ J65	
♣ 10842		♣ AQJ97	
<u>South</u>			
♠ KQJ1098			
♥ AJ7			
♦ Q3			
♣ 65			

Now, when West leads the HK, East wants partner to play a club. Therefore they should play their lowest heart to discourage hearts.

Count

In the deal here, South is declaring 3NT and None Vulnerable; Lead: D7

When West leads a diamond, declarer ducks, and partner wins the DK and returns a diamond. Declarer then leads the HK, and continues with the HQ. West has to decide when to take the HA. West can see that there is no further entry to the dummy. They therefore need to hold up the HA for the correct number of rounds. If South has two hearts, West should win the second heart. If South has a third heart, West should hold up twice.

<u>North</u>			
♠ 843			
♥ KQJ109			
♦ A2			
♣ 654			
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>	
♠ 75		♠ J1092	
♥ A65		♥ 82	
♦ J9876		♦ K53	
♣ 872		♣ QJ109	
<u>South</u>			
♠ AKQ6			
♥ 743			
♦ Q104			
♣ AK3			
<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>
P	1NT	P	2♦*
P	2♥	P	3NT
P	P	P	

* Transfer to hearts

How does West know? The answer is that East needs to give a count signal. In standard signaling, a high card followed by a low card shows an even number of cards. Playing cards from low to high in a suit shows an odd number. In the diagrammed deal, East will play the H8 followed by the H2. West will know to hold their HA until the third round.

Let's change the deal slightly now, when hearts are led, East will follow with the H2 followed by the H3. West will therefore know to win the second round of hearts. If West ducks two rounds of hearts, declarer will have nine tricks - three spades, two hearts, two diamonds and two clubs . If West takes the second heart and plays either black suit, 3NT will go down.

<u>North</u>	
♠ 843	
♥ KQJ109	
♦ A2	
♣ 654	
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
♠ 75	♠ J1092
♥ A65	♥ 832
♦ J9876	♦ K5
♣ 872	♣ QJ109
<u>South</u>	
♠ AKQ6	
♥ 74	
♦ Q1043	
♣ AK3	

Suit Preference:

This is by far the rarest signal given by defenders. On this deal, West has shows ten cards in the minor suits. When West leads a heart, it is fairly obviously a singleton. East knows to win the HA and return a heart for partner to ruff. If East can get partner to lead a diamond back, East can give a second ruff to defeat the contract. How do you tell partner what to lead?

<u>North</u>			
♠ AKB			
♥ QJ104			
♦ 765			
♣ 765			
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>		
♠ 94	♠ 3		
♥ 10	♥ A9632		
♦ QJ1098	♦ A43		
♣ QJ1098	♣ 432		
<u>South</u>			
♠ QJ107652			
♥ 75			
♦ K2			
♣ AK			
<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>
---	1♠	2NT*	3♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			
* Minor suits			

None Vulnerable; Lead ♥10

The answer is a suit preference signal. If East plays their highest heart, they wish West to return the higher remaining suit -- diamonds.

Similarly, if they lead their lowest heart, they are asking for the lower remaining suit -- clubs. In our example deal, East should return the H9 to get a diamond return, and ensure setting the contract.