

Learning: The Attitude Signal

Part 1 of a 3-part series on basic defensive signals

The general idea of the attitude signal is simple. When partner leads and you follow suit, a high card says you like the suit and can stand a continuation. A low card is discouraging and suggests a shift..

Board 1 ♠ J 9 6 4
South Deals ♥ A 7
None Vul ♦ K Q J 8
 ♣ J 10 6

♠ 8 7
♥ Q 9 6 2
♦ 7 5 2
♣ A K 4 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♠
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
All pass			

Lead: ♣ A

Your ♣A (or the king, if that's your agreement) wins. How do you continue?

Why not get partner's input? If he signals encouragement with a high card, you probably ought to continue.

Board 1 - A ♠ J 9 6 4
South Deals ♥ A 7
None Vul ♦ K Q J 8
 ♣ J 10 6

♠ 8 7
♥ Q 9 6 2
♦ 7 5 2
♣ A K 4 3

♠ A
♥ 10 8 5 4 3
♦ 10 9 4 3
♣ Q 8 7

♠ K Q 10 5 3 2
♥ K J
♦ A 6
♣ 9 5 2

If this were the entire hand, partner would play the ♣8. You could tell this was high and would continue with the king and another for down 1. Any other lead lets Declarer pitch a losing club on a diamond.

But suppose this were the layout.

Board 1-B ♠ J 9 6 4
South Deals ♥ A 7
None Vul ♦ K Q J 8
 ♣ J 10 6

♠ 8 7
♥ Q 9 6 2
♦ 7 5 2
♣ A K 4 3

♠ 3
♥ K 10 8 4 3
♦ A 9 4
♣ 9 8 7 5

♠ A K Q 10 5 2
♥ J 5
♦ 10 6 3
♣ Q 2

Here partner would play the ♣5, which you can tell is the lowest. This does not tell you what you should lead. It just says partner doesn't like clubs. [Reread this paragraph after you study Suit Preference in part 3 of this lesson series. The ♣5 is NOT suit preference.]

Of course, it's pretty clear there is no hope in diamonds. If partner has the $\heartsuit A$, it isn't going anywhere. So your best hope is hearts.

This switch lets you collect your heart trick before Declarer can pitch his heart loser on either the $\clubsuit J$ or a diamond.

One other note. While this hand does not illustrate it, your first discard in a suit – no matter which side is leading – is usually an attitude signal toward the suit discarded. A high discard says you like the suit. Discarding a low card in a suit implies you don't like it. For example, if you discard a high club when hearts are lead, you have something worthwhile in clubs.

The source for all hands in this lesson is *Partnership Defense in Bridge*, by Kit Woolsey, pp 5-10. [This is a great book on defense but aimed at experienced players.]

Thanks to [Marty Nathan](#) for this 3-part lesson series. Contact Marty (mjnathan@comcast.net) or your bridge teacher with any questions.

Part 2: [The Count Signal](#)

Part 3: [The Suit Preference Signal](#)