

Simple Signaling (August 2026)

Important points regarding any signalling:

- 1 Accurate signaling makes a huge difference when defending contracts. They are the major reason the “better” players get better results!
- 2 Signaling ONLY works by Partner agreement. Discuss and agree BEFORE you play. Don’t expect Partner to know your undiscussed signals.
- 3 Signals ONLY work if both Partners watch (and interpret) every signal. You must be watching for Partners first Discard and what they play on your opening lead and interpret what they are calling for.
- 4 Signals are preference indicators, NOT instructions.
- 5 For Signaling purposes:
 - 2,3,4,5 are considered “Low cards”
 - 7,8,9,T are considered “High cards”
 - 6 is neutral

SIGNAL ON OPENING LEAD

Partners should decide whether to play “High Encourage” or “Low Encourage” on the Opening lead. High Encourage is the accepted standard, but either is good, so long as you have an agreement!

When playing High Encourage *and there is no obvious reason* to switch suits:

Playing a HIGH card simply tells Partner: “I have strength or length in this suit, please play it again”

Playing a LOW card tells Partner: “I do not like this suit, please switch to another suit.

EXAMPLE 1:

S AQT6
 H 74
 D AJ93
 C K96

S 52
 H K93
 D 87542
 C A74

S 97
 H AJ865
 D KT
 C T853

S KJ843
 H QT2
 D Q6
 C QJ2

East/West were bidding Hearts, but South has won the Contract and is playing in 4S.

Wests Opening lead is K♥.

Once Dummy comes down all can see there are 2♥'s in Dummy and East holds the Ace so plays the 8♥ encouraging Partner to play another ♥ so they quickly make the Ace!

However, when there *is an obvious reason* to switch, we adopt McKenney signals. Eg:

When both Defenders can see (looking at Dummy) that a switch is needed, the card played swaps to a “McKenny” signal.

HIGH card calls P to lead the higher of the other 2 suits.

Play of a LOW card calls P to lead the lower of the other 2 suits.

EXAMPLE 2:

S AQT6
 H J
 D KT93
 C K964

S 52
 H K943
 D 87542
 C A7

S 97
 H A8765
 D AQ
 C T853

S KJ843
 H QT2
 D J6
 C QJ2

Again East/West were bidding Hearts, but South has won the Contract and is playing in 4S.

Wests Opening lead is still K♥.

But once Dummy comes down all can see there is a singleton J♥.

So no point playing another ♥!

East is holding AQ Diamond's and can see the K in Dummy. East would LOVE Partner to switch to Diamonds.

East plays HIGH, 9 ♥, on Partners A♥, which says "Lead me the highest of the 2 remaining Suits" ie Diamonds.

Had they wanted a Club, East would have played the 3 ♥. Saying, (Lead me the lowest of the 2 other Suits!)

To add another level of sophistication, W holds the A of Clubs and would love this led back to them.

So when they lead the Diamond (as called for) they choose the LOWEST of their 2 Diamonds which says "When you finish with the Diamonds, lead me the Lowest suit, Clubs, as I have something here!"

SIGNAL ON FIRST DISCARD Odds and Even McKenney

We are taught to discard a suit we want on our first discard. (eg on the 3rd round of Trump collecting ,when we are out.)

But what if we can't afford one of that Suit? (We might hold just an AK or AQ and not have a card to signal.)

What do we do when defending a NT Contract and we don't wish to use one of our long Suit to signal?

Solution: Odds and Even McKenney

Any Odd card says: "I like this Suit". Lead me this Suit.

Any Even card says "I don't like this Suit"

But if your "Even" card only said "I don't like this Suit" it leaves 3 other Suits for your Partner to choose between. (2 in a Suit Contract, eliminating the Trump Suit)

Now we can get very precise.

A Low card is the 2,3,4,5 and High is the 7,8,9,10. (The 6 is neutral!! for when you don't really have a preference!!)

A HIGH Even Card says "I like the highest of the remaining Suits."

A LOW Even Card says "I like the lowest of the remaining Suits."

Deal 1: Spades are Trumps. The K of Clubs is sitting in Dummy.

My hand:

S	6
H	8542
D	K984
C	AQ74

I would LOVE P to lead me a Club!! On the 2nd round of Spades, I will discard the 4 of D's. This is an EVEN Card and so tells P I do NOT like the suit I have discarded. It is also a LOW card which tells P "Lead me the LOWEST of the 2 remaining Suits". Ignoring the Trump Suit.

The 2 remaining Suits are Diamonds and Clubs, so I want you to lead me a Club.

If I had wanted P to lead me a Diamond, I would have used the **D9 or C4**. Even saying I don't like the Suit I am discarding (**Clubs**) and the **4 being "Low"** tells P lead me the **lowest** of the 2 other Suits, which is Diamonds.

When you and your P agree to signal using "Odds and Even McKenney" you often have several discard options that will signal the Suit you want them to lead.

Looking again at our hand above, when the 2nd round of Spades is led and I want to signal for a Club lead, I could select the C7 (Odd, I like) or the 4D (EVEN, I don't like and low, lead lowest).

If I wanted a H led, I would discard the 8D. Even says NOT D's, 8 is High, so it says the highest of the 2 other suits, ie Hearts!

IF I wanted a Diamond led I have 3 options to accurately signal:

The 7D	(Odd I want this Suit)
The 8H	(High Even saying the highest of the 2 remaining, ie D's)
The 2C	(Low Even, saying the Lowest of the 2 remaining, ie D's)

Summary:

Any ODD card says: I want you to lead me this Suit

Any EVEN Card say: DON'T lead me this Suit.

If my card is LOW, lead me the Lowest of the other Suits.

If my card is HIGH, lead me the Highest of the other Suits.

Doubles

Key Facts

These Key facts are designed to teach you the bare bones of “Doubles” in order you can recognize and use them in general play. I call it the EITHER/OR Double.

Takeout Double

Where you “X” in the “Overcall” seat. (Partner has not had an opportunity to Bid)

1C X P ?

The X promises:

EITHER

- # Opening Points
- with # Support (4) or at least tolerance (3) for each of other 3 suits
- # Shortage (2 or less) in the suit DOUBLED

This shape is CRITICAL to DOUBLING. If you DOUBLE with 12-15 points, you must be prepared to play in ANY suit your P now bids. Remember you made P bid!

Responding

Partner MUST now Bid. **Even with zero points!** Simply Bid your longest Suit. (NOT the opposition Suit)

EXCEPTIONS

- A There has been an intervening bid.
- B You believe you can put the Contract down. ie, you are very strong
in their suit. VERY rare at the 1 or 2 Level of bidding)

Partner with: With 0-8 Points Bid at the lowest level
With 9+ : Jump a level.

When Partner bids at the lowest level, you MUST PASS. (They may have 0 Points)

OR

16+HCP. Shape now not important.

Partner will know the hand is the “OR” hand when you (the doubler) bid a new Suit.

Negative Double

Where 2 Bids have been made, ie, Partner has had an opportunity to Bid.

1C 1H P X (Double promises the other 2 Suits: D and S)
Or 1C P 1D X (Double promises the other 2 Suits: H and S)

The X promises:

- Less than opening values (may have more but no promise)
- Preferably 4 in each of the unbid Suits

It asks Partner to bid the best of the 2 unbid Suits, preferring the Major. Again, the X is FORCING unless you really believe you can put the Opposition down.

Double of any “Pre-empt bid” is also asking Partner to Bid.