

LESSON 5

Defensive Signals



General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



GENERAL CONCEPTS

Defense

Defensive Signals

- Attitude
 - High cards encourage
 - Low cards discourage
- Count
 - High-low shows an even number of cards
 - Low-high shows an odd number of cards
- Suit preference
 - High card asks for the higher-ranking suit
 - Low card asks for the lower-ranking suit

Bidding

Review of rebids by responder

- When opener shows a minimum hand
- When opener shows a medium hand
- When opener shows a maximum hand

Play of the Hand

Review of ways to eliminate losers in a suit contract

- Trumping losers
- Discarding losers

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This is a comfortable lesson to follow the first half of the course. Most students must put in a lot of effort to understand the concepts behind second-hand play and third-hand play. This lesson should be much less taxing for them. It is well-placed, just after the halfway point, and gives the students an opportunity to catch their breath (if they need to) before trying to put everything together.

“The defenders need to work as a team to try to defeat declarer’s contract. They work together to get over their main disadvantage — they can’t see each other’s cards. The defenders try to describe their hands to each other through the specific card played to each trick. We’ve already seen how this can work when the opening lead is made. For example, if you lead the queen against a notrump contract, you tell your partner you have the next lower card, the jack, but not the next higher card, the king, since you led the top of your touching cards. The one card you lead gives partner information about the location of two other cards!

“The type of information defenders want to give each other through the cards they play falls into basic categories. You might want to tell partner your attitude toward a specific suit — whether you want partner to continue to play that suit. You might want to tell partner about your distribution — how many cards you have in a suit. Or, you might want to tell partner which suit you would prefer to have played, when partner next gets the opportunity to lead.

“Giving each other such information will help you plan the defense, overcoming the difficulty of being unable to actually look into partner’s hand. The more you know about partner’s hand, the more you can deduce about declarer’s hand. If you know what declarer holds, you will know which suits to lead and which suits to avoid; which suits to keep and which to discard.

“Let’s see how you go about signaling such information to each other without whispering it across the table.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE ONE: Giving an Attitude Signal

Introduction

“We’ll start off by looking at how you can tell partner whether or not you like a particular suit. Lay out the following cards in the heart suit:

	DUMMY	
	♥ A 8 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ Q 10 7 5 2		♥ K 9 3
	DECLARER	
	♥ J 6	

“Suppose partner leads the ♥5, fourth best, and declarer decides to play dummy’s ♥A. It looks like a good idea to hold on to your ♥K, since that card is now a winner. Does it matter which of your remaining low hearts you choose to play on this trick? If you are of the opinion that one low card is the same as the next, then you are probably not defeating as many of declarer’s contracts as you could.

“The low cards represent the defenders’ conveyance for sending messages back and forth. When partner leads a suit and you have a choice of cards to play, you can give an attitude signal. If you like the suit (want it continued), play as high a card as you can afford; if you don’t like the suit, play your lowest card. High cards are encouraging, low cards are discouraging.

“In our example, do you like the suit partner has led? (Yes, you have the king.) So which card would you choose to play? (The ♥9.) If partner regains the lead before you do, partner knows that the heart suit looks like a good suit to lead again. What if declarer had played a low card from the dummy on the first trick? Could you give partner a signal? (No, you have to play the ♥K, third hand high.) You can give a signal only when you have a choice of cards to play, not when you are forced to play a specific card.

“Let’s give declarer the ♥K:

	DUMMY	
	♥ A 8 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ Q 10 7 5 2		♥ 9 3
	DECLARER	
	♥ K J 6	

“If partner makes the same lead, the ♥5, and declarer again chooses to play dummy’s ♥A, which card do you play? (The ♥3.) You want to give partner a discouraging signal. That does not necessarily stop partner from leading the suit again, if partner thinks that is best. It merely passes the message that you do not have any help in the suit. Now, exchange your ♥3 for dummy’s ♥8:

	DUMMY	
	♥ A 4 3	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ Q 10 7 5 2		♥ 9 8
	DECLARER	
	♥ K J 6	

“Which card are you going to discourage with? (The ♥8.) You don’t always have a very low card to play when you want to discourage, or a high card when you want to encourage. You have to do the best you can with the cards you have available. Partner would generally think that a little card, such as a 2, 3 or 4, is discouraging, whereas a 7, 8 or 9 is encouraging. But how might partner be able to tell that you are trying to make a discouraging signal when you play the ♥8? (Partner can see the ♥2, the ♥3, the ♥4, the ♥5, the ♥6 and the ♥7 from the other hands, assuming declarer plays the ♥6 on the first trick.) Partner has to interpret your signal based on the cards that can be seen.

“Sometimes you will have to take some time to think before deciding whether or not you like a suit. Let’s change the layout:

	DUMMY	
	♥ A 6 4	
PARTNER	■	YOU
♥ Q J 9 2		♥ 10 7 3
	DECLARER	
	♥ K 8 5	

“Partner leads the ♥Q, top of a broken sequence, and a low heart is played from the dummy. You can see the ♥A and know that partner doesn’t have the ♥K — partner wouldn’t lead the ♥Q from a suit headed by the ♥K. On the other hand, your ♥10 is a useful card. Unless you can clearly see something better to do, you probably want to encourage partner to lead the suit again, so you play your ♥7. Once declarer’s ♥A and ♥K are driven out, your side will have developed some winners.

“An attitude signal tells partner whether or not you like a particular suit. If partner knows you like a suit, partner can lead the suit again when given the opportunity. If partner knows you don’t like a suit, a different suit can be lead when partner gets the opportunity.”

Instructions

“In each of the layouts in Exercise One, you are defending against a notrump contract and your partner leads the king. The 3 is played from dummy. Decide whether you want to encourage or discourage. Which card do you play?”

1) DUMMY
 7 3
PARTNER ■ YOU
 K A 8 2

4) DUMMY
 3
PARTNER ■ YOU
 K A 4 2

2) DUMMY
 9 8 3
PARTNER ■ YOU
 K 6 4 2

5) DUMMY
 4 3
PARTNER ■ YOU
 K 8 7

3) DUMMY
 9 3
PARTNER ■ YOU
 K J 7 4

6) DUMMY
 6 3
PARTNER ■ YOU
 K A 7

1) 8 (encourage)

4) 4 (encourage)

2) 2 (discourage)

5) 7 (discourage)

3) 7 (encourage)

6) Ace (unblock)

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. The discussion might include the following:

“On the first layout, you want to encourage since you hold the ace, so play the 8.

“On the second layout, you have no help for partner, so you would discourage with the 2.

“On the third layout, it looks as though partner is leading the top of a broken sequence headed by the king, the queen and the 10. The jack is a useful card for you to hold, so encourage with the 7.

“On the fourth layout, you want to encourage, so play the 4, the highest card you can afford. Hopefully partner will notice that the 2 is missing and interpret your 4 as an encouraging card.

“On the fifth layout, the opposite situation arises. You want to give a discouraging signal, so you play your lowest card, the 7. You would prefer a clearer signal, but those are the cards you were dealt.

“The sixth layout is a bit of a trap. In the lesson on third hand high, the importance of unblocking was discussed. With a doubleton, you need to overtake partner’s king with the ace, so that you will have a low card left to lead back. This is not a signaling situation, since you do not really have a choice about which card to play.”

Conclusion

“Even if you can’t contribute a card that will win the trick or promote winners for your side, every card you play is important. Partner may not know whether you like the suit led. Your attitude signal can give the help partner needs. If you automatically play your lowest card when you can’t win the trick, partner has to guess whether you like the suit. Naturally, partner would go wrong about half of the time. Help your partner by signaling your attitude when you have a choice of cards to play.”

EXERCISE TWO: When Partner Signals

Introduction

“You do not give attitude signals only when following suit. You also can give an attitude signal when discarding another suit. It works the same way. You can show you like a suit by discarding a high card in the suit. If you discard a low card in a suit, that tends to be a discouraging signal. Let’s construct the following hand on the table:

♠ A Q 8 6 2
 ♥ 7 5 3 2
 ♦ 6
 ♣ 9 8 7

“Suppose declarer is taking diamond tricks while you hold this hand. On the second round of diamonds, you have to discard. How could you tell partner you like spades? (Discard the ♠8.) What would you discard to say you did not like hearts? (The ♥2.) Suppose you wanted to tell partner you did not like clubs. Which card would you discard in clubs? (The ♣7.) This might look like a high club to partner, so how could you clarify that you do not like clubs if you have the opportunity to discard a second club? (Play the ♣8 or the ♣9.) By playing a low card and then a higher card, you can confirm that you are sending a discouraging signal. Similarly, by playing a high card and then a low card, you are making a clearly encouraging signal. This is sometimes called an echo.

“On this hand, you could discard the ♠8, followed by the ♠2, to show that you like spades. But suppose you want to hold on to all of your spades. Is there any way you could tell partner that you like spades without throwing one away if you have the opportunity to discard three cards? (Yes. Discard the ♥2, the ♣7, and the ♣8.) If you make discouraging signals in a couple of suits, partner can draw the inference that you must like something else — unless you do not like any suit!

“Both partners must cooperate if the messages sent out are to be effective. One partner must give the appropriate signal — that’s step one — but partner must be watching for it — that’s step two. If you never look at the lower cards your partner plays, then the messages are wasted. So, instead of sending the message, let’s put you on the receiving end.”

Instructions

“You are defending a notrump contract with the hand shown in Exercise Two and lead the \spadesuit Q:

	DUMMY
	\spadesuit J 3 2
	\heartsuit K 7 4
	\diamondsuit A 2
	\clubsuit K Q 9 7 4
YOU	
\spadesuit K 5 4	
\heartsuit 8 6 3	
\diamondsuit Q J 10 5	
\clubsuit 8 5 3	

“What can you deduce about partner’s hand under each of the following circumstances:

- 1) Declarer wins the first trick in dummy and partner plays the \diamondsuit 3.
- 2) Declarer wins the first trick in dummy and partner plays the \diamondsuit 8.
- 3) After winning the first trick, declarer starts taking club tricks and partner discards the \spadesuit 6 on the third round.
- 4) After winning the first trick, declarer starts taking club tricks and partner discards the \heartsuit 9 on the third round.”

1) Dislikes \diamondsuit 's 2) Likes \diamondsuit 's 3) Dislikes \spadesuit 's 4) Likes \heartsuit 's

Follow-up

Work with the class as a whole to discuss the exercise. The exercise should not take too long. The points should be something like this:

“The \diamondsuit 3 from partner would be a discouraging signal, indicating that partner probably does not have the \diamondsuit K. On the other hand, the \diamondsuit 8 from partner would be encouraging, showing that partner probably has the \diamondsuit K or prefers diamonds to anything else. If partner discards the \spadesuit 6, that is a discouraging signal in spades. The \spadesuit 6 is partner’s lowest spade. You have the \spadesuit 4 and \spadesuit 5 and can see the \spadesuit 2 and \spadesuit 3 in the dummy. If partner discards the \heartsuit 9, this is an encouraging signal in hearts.”

Conclusion

“In order for the defenders to be successful, the message sent also has to be received. When you make a lead, be sure to notice the card your partner plays. Consider not only the message partner is sending but how you are going to act on it.”

EXERCISE THREE: Giving A Count Signal

Introduction

“It is not always necessary to give an attitude signal. Your partner may already know whether or not you like a particular suit. For example, if declarer is trying to establish a suit, you don’t have to tell partner that you are not interested in that suit. If partner can see that declarer holds a lot of high cards in a suit, partner also will know that you are not likely to want to give an encouraging signal. Similarly, if your side has bid and raised a suit, there is not much need to say that you like the suit.

“If there is no point in giving an attitude signal in a suit, another important message you can give partner is the number of cards you hold in a suit. This is a useful piece of information. Once partner knows how many cards you have in a suit, it’s possible to figure out how many cards declarer holds in the suit. Partner can see the number of cards in the hand and the dummy. Knowing how many cards declarer holds will help partner defend accurately, to know how many tricks might come from the suit, whether it’s safe to discard cards in that suit and so on.

“Telling partner how many cards you have in a suit is called a *count signal*. The mechanics of giving a count signal are that a high card followed by a low card, a high-low, shows an even number of cards. A low card followed by a higher card, shows an odd number of cards. You can’t tell partner exactly how many cards you have, but if you show an even number, partner can usually figure out whether it is two, four, six or eight, based on the cards partner can see, the way the bidding has gone and the other cards that have been played. Let’s see how a count signal works. Put out the following cards in the club suit:

	DUMMY	
	♣ K Q 10 7 5	
YOU	■	PARTNER
♣ 9 2		♣ A 6 3
	DECLARER	
	♣ J 8 4	

“Suppose you are defending a notrump contract and declarer leads the ♣J, planning to establish the suit by driving out your partner’s ♣A. This is the type of situation where an attitude signal does not make much sense. It is obvious to both you and partner that you don’t like the suit. Instead, you can give partner a count signal. With an even number of cards, you start by playing the ♣9, a high card. If declarer leads the suit again, you will play the ♣2, completing your high-low (or echo). Partner will know you started with an even number of cards and can tell you started with exactly two cards, since there are eight cards between partner’s hand and the dummy. If you had four cards, that would leave declarer with a singleton.

“Note that you don’t always have to complete your high-low. As soon as you play the ♣9, partner expects that you are showing an even number. The ♣2 later confirms it.

“Of what use is your count signal? Once partner knows you have two cards in the suit, partner knows declarer has three since the other eight clubs can be seen. If there is no outside entry to dummy, partner would know to hold up the ♣A until the third round to strand declarer’s club winners in the dummy.

“Put declarer’s ♣4 in your hand:

	DUMMY	
	♣ K Q 10 7 5	
YOU	■	PARTNER
♣ 9 4 2		♣ A 6 3
	DECLARER	
	♣ J 8	

“When declarer leads the ♣J, which card do you play? (The ♣2.) By playing your clubs low-high, you show an odd number. Partner can figure out that you must have three, leaving declarer with only two. This time partner can win the second round of clubs, knowing declarer’s clubs in the dummy will be stranded.

“As with attitude signals, you don’t give count signals only when you are following suit. If partner already knows your attitude toward a suit, you can give a count signal when discarding the suit. Let’s look at an example of giving count signals.”

Instructions

“You are defending a contract of 6NT holding the hand in Exercise Three:

♠ 9 7 6 5 2
 ♥ 8 7 5 3
 ♦ 10 6 4
 ♣ J

“Declarer starts taking tricks in the club suit and you have to discard after the first round. With no information to give partner other than the number of cards you have in each suit, which two cards would you discard to give partner one of the following signals:

- 1) The number of cards you hold in the spade suit.
- 2) The number of cards you hold in the heart suit.
- 3) The number of cards you hold in the diamond suit.”

1) ♠ 2 then ♠ 5
 (low-high)

2) ♥ 8 then ♥ 3
 (high-low)

3) ♦ 4 then ♦ 6
 (low-high)

Follow-up

Discuss the exercise. The answers should be obvious, if the students have followed the discussion so far.

Conclusion

“If an attitude signal is not relevant, the next priority is to give partner a count signal, to convey how many cards you have in the suit. A high-low signal shows an even number of cards. A low-high signal shows an odd number of cards.”

EXERCISE FOUR: Interpreting a Count Signal**Introduction**

“As with attitude signals, there is no point in using count signals unless both partners are paying attention. One partner has to give the signal, the other partner has to receive it. The next exercise gives you the opportunity to interpret partner’s count signal and put it to use.”

Instructions

“You lead the ♠4 against a contract of 3NT after an opening bid of 1NT on your right and see the dummy shown in Exercise Four:

	DUMMY
	♠ A
	♥ 9 7 4
	♦ K Q J 10 9
	♣ J 7 6 3
	
YOU	
♠ Q 8 5 4 2	
♥ 8 6	
♦ A 8 3	
♣ 8 4 2	

“After winning dummy’s ♠A, declarer starts leading dummy’s diamonds to drive out your ♦A. On which round should you take your ♦A if:

- 1) Partner plays the ♦7 and then the ♦4.
- 2) Partner plays the ♦2 and then the ♦6.
- 3) Partner plays the ♦5 and then discards the ♥2.”

1) Third 2) Second 3) Does not matter

Follow-up

Involve the whole class in this discussion to keep it on track. You might say something like this:

“In the first case, what does partner’s high-low in diamonds show? (An even number of diamonds.) How many must partner have? (Two. Holding four, declarer would have a singleton.) How many does that leave declarer? (Three.) How long should you hold up your ♦ A? (Until the third round.)

“In the second case, how many diamonds is partner showing? (Three.) How many does declarer have? (Two.) When should you win the ♦ A? (Second round.)

“In the last case, how many diamonds does partner have? (One.) How many does that leave declarer with? (Four.) When should you play your ace? (It doesn’t matter, since you can’t strand the suit. Declarer will always have an entry to the dummy’s established diamonds.)”

Conclusion

“When the defenders are trying to hold up and strand declarer’s long suit, both partners must cooperate. One partner needs to give a count signal and the other partner must be paying attention in order to know how long to hold up.”

EXERCISE FIVE: Giving Suit Preference**Introduction**

“Sometimes, the situation does not call for either an attitude signal or a count signal. Instead of giving partner information about the suit that is being played, you may want to tell partner which of the other suits you prefer. You may be able to give a *suit preference signal*. A suit preference signal tells partner which of two suits you prefer. This assumes that there will be only two obvious suits for partner to choose from. That will often be the case. The suit you are giving the signal in doesn’t count, and one of the other suits, perhaps declarer’s trump suit, usually can be discounted. The suit preference signal works in quite a straightforward manner. A high card says you prefer the higher-ranking suit, a low card says you prefer the lower-ranking suit. The trick is to know when the signal applies. Let’s construct a hand to get the general idea. Put the following hand dummy style on the table:

♠ A K 7 3
 ♥ 4 2
 ♦ 10 6 3
 ♣ 8 6 5 2

“Suppose you are defending a contract with hearts as the trump suit, partner leads the ♦ A and dummy comes down with a singleton diamond. Since dummy has a singleton diamond, it does not look as though partner will be too interested in knowing whether or not you like diamonds. Even if you do, declarer will be able to ruff diamonds in the dummy. Likewise, partner will not be too interested in how many you have. Instead, partner is more likely to want to know which suit to lead next. Here is an opportunity to use a suit preference signal in the diamond suit. Since hearts is declarer’s trump suit, partner will want to know which of the two remaining suits you prefer, spades or clubs.

“Which diamond could you play to tell partner that you prefer spades to clubs? (The ♦ 10.) You play a high diamond to say that you prefer the higher-ranking suit. What if we exchange the clubs and spades?

♠ 8 6 5 2
 ♥ 4 2
 ♦ 10 6 3
 ♣ A K 7 3

“Which diamond would say that you prefer clubs? (The ♦ 3.) Your lowest diamond shows preference for the lower-ranking of the ‘obvious’ suits. Suppose you don’t have a particular preference, which diamond would you play? (The ♦ 6.) A medium-sized diamond says you do not care which suit partner leads next. Partner will decide based on partner’s holdings in the other suits and the cards seen in dummy.

“One useful time to give a suit preference signal is when you are about to give partner a ruff. Perhaps partner has led a singleton, or you may be leading a long suit and partner has shown out. After ruffing the next trick, partner will want to know what to lead next. Partner will want to find an entry to your hand to get another ruff. Since partner won’t be interested in either the suit partner is ruffing or the trump suit itself, partner will want to choose from the other two suits. You can designate which suit you prefer by the size of the card you lead for partner to ruff. A high card says you prefer the higher-ranking suit and a low card says you prefer the lower-ranking suit. This may be easier to see with the aid of an exercise.”

Instructions

“Partner leads what looks like a singleton club against declarer’s contract of 4♥. After winning your ♣A, which club do you lead back for partner to ruff from each of the hands in Exercise Five?”

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1) ♠ A 9 6 4 | 2) ♠ 7 6 5 | 3) ♠ 9 6 4 |
| ♥ 10 4 | ♥ 10 4 | ♥ 10 4 3 |
| ♦ 7 6 5 | ♦ A 9 6 4 | ♦ 7 6 5 |
| ♣ A 10 6 2 | ♣ A 10 6 2 | ♣ A 10 6 2 |
| 1) <u>♣ 10</u> | 2) <u>♣ 2</u> | 3) <u>♣ 6</u> |

Follow-up

Work with the class as a whole to complete the exercise. If the concept has been understood, there should be no difficulty. The ♣10 on the first hand shows preference for spades. The ♣2 on the second hand shows preference for diamonds. The ♣6 on the last hand shows no preference for either suit.

Conclusion

“When you think the situation is right for a suit preference signal, play a high card to tell partner you prefer a higher-ranking suit and a low card to tell partner you are interested in a lower-ranking suit.”

EXERCISE SIX: Putting It All Together

Introduction

“In the next exercise, we’ll look at the use of all three types of signals: attitude, count and suit preference.”

Instructions

“You hold this hand in Exercise Six:

♠ K 9 2
♥ 8 4 2
♦ K 7 6 3
♣ 9 5 4

“During the play, you get an opportunity to give partner a signal.

- 1) Which card would you play to tell partner that you would like a spade led?
- 2) Which card would you play to tell partner that you do not like clubs?
- 3) Which card would you play to start to give a count signal in hearts?
- 4) Which card would you play to start to give a count signal in diamonds?
- 5) Which club could you play to tell partner that you prefer spades to hearts?”

1) ♠ 9 2) ♣ 4 3) ♥ 2 4) ♦ 7 5) ♣ 9

Follow-up

Let the students discuss the questions in groups and then as a whole. The question likely to cause difficulty is the last one. Suit preference is not easy to understand. You can comfort the students with the fact that suit preference signals are not as common as attitude and count signals.

Conclusion

“The defenders use their lower cards in a suit to send messages to each other when they have a choice of cards to play. The first priority is to show partner your attitude toward a suit. A high card is encouraging and a low card is discouraging. If it is clear that partner does not need to know your attitude toward the suit, then you can give a count signal. High-low shows an even number of cards in the suit and low-high shows an odd number. If attitude and count don’t apply, then the situation may call for a suit preference signal. A high card says you prefer the higher ranking of the two most obvious suits and a low card says you prefer the lower-ranking suit.”

EXERCISE SEVEN: Review of Rebids by Responder**Introduction**

Try to keep the review short. If you do not have much time, refer the students to the summary review in the textbook or the more detailed explanations in the *Bidding in the 21st Century* text. Give a general explanation which could be as simple as this:

“By the time responder is in a position to be rebidding, opener has made two bids. Responder has an idea of both the strength and distribution of opener’s hand. Responder puts this information together with what can be seen in responder’s own hand to decide on the level and strain for the contract. If responder still needs information from opener, making a forcing bid, usually in a new suit, will bring forth more information. Let’s look at the examples together to see how responder makes these decisions.”

Instructions

“Your partner opens the bidding 1♦, you respond 1♠ and partner rebids 1NT. What do you rebid with each of the hands in Exercise Seven?”

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1) ♠ K 10 8 6
♥ J 9 3
♦ 7 4
♣ Q 10 8 2 | 2) ♠ Q 9 8 3
♥ 2
♦ J 10 7 5 3
♣ K 8 5 | 3) ♠ J 9 8 6 5 4
♥ K 7
♦ 6 3
♣ J 7 5 |
| 1) <u>Pass</u> | 2) <u>2♦</u> | 3) <u>2♠</u> |
| 4) ♠ 10 9 7 3
♥ K Q 5
♦ J 9
♣ A J 8 2 | 5) ♠ K Q 10 7 6 3
♥ 10
♦ A 9 7
♣ 9 5 3 | 6) ♠ A Q 8 3
♥ 9 3
♦ K J 8 5 2
♣ 7 5 |
| 4) <u>2NT</u> | 5) <u>3♠</u> | 6) <u>3♦</u> |
| 7) ♠ Q 10 9 3
♥ A 9 8
♦ K 8 3
♣ K J 7 | 8) ♠ K J 9 7 5 2
♥ K 6
♦ A 8 4
♣ 6 5 | 9) ♠ A J 9 7 4
♥ K Q 6 4 2
♦ 3
♣ J 6 |
| 7) <u>3NT</u> | 8) <u>4♠</u> | 9) <u>3♥</u> |

Follow-up

Lead the students to the answers by making statements which quickly review the bidding for them. You might say something like this:

“Opener has shown a minimum balanced hand of 13 or 14 points, too weak to open 1NT. With a minimum hand of 6 to 9 points, responder wants to stop in the best partscore. On the first hand, with 6 HCP, the best partscore looks like it would be in notrump. What would you bid? (Pass.) On the second hand, what looks like the best partscore? (2♦.) On the third hand, the appropriate level is also partscore. You know there are at least eight spades in the combined hands, since partner’s balanced hand guarantees at least two spades. What is your rebid? (2♠.)

“With 10 or 11 points, there may be enough for game, if partner is at the top of the range (13 to 15 points). In this situation opener has rebid 1NT to show a minimum hand. With 11 points, you want to move toward game by making an invitational rebid. What would you do with the fourth hand? (Bid 2NT.) With the next hand, you don’t want to rebid 2♠, an old suit at the two level, since that would be a sign-off bid showing 6 to 9 points. What would you do? (Bid 3♠, invitational.) Similarly, on the next hand, a rebid of an old suit at the two level, 2♦, would show only 6 to 9 points. How can you invite opener to game? (Bid 3♦.)

“With 12 or more points, you want to be sure the partnership gets to game. What would you rebid with hand number seven, knowing there is no eight-card major-suit fit? (3NT.) On the next hand, you know there is an eight-card spade fit. What would you do? (Bid 4♠.) On the last hand, there is enough strength for game, but you can’t be sure what the best strain is. How can you get more information from partner? (Bid a new suit.) After a rebid of 1NT by opener, many partnerships play that when you bid a new suit at the two level that is lower-ranking than responder’s first bid suit, it is not forcing. What can you bid to ensure that opener knows you are making a forcing bid? (3♥.)”

The last example may be a little difficult, and, since some partnerships play 2♥ as forcing in this situation, you might accept that answer. The point is discussed briefly in the *Bidding in the 21st Century* text, but most students will be happy to treat any new suit by responder as forcing, a satisfactory approach at this level.

Conclusion

“When responder knows that opener’s hand is minimum, responder puts the hand into one of three categories and bids accordingly. With a minimum hand, 6 to 9, responder either passes a 1NT rebid or bids an old suit — a suit already bid by the partnership — at the two level. With a medium hand, of 11 points, responder invites to game by rebidding 2NT or an old suit at the three level. With a medium hand of 10 points, responder can follow the guidelines for minimum range hands. This is only applicable when opener shows a minimum hand with a rebid of 1NT. With 12 or more points, responder bids game or makes a forcing bid (new suit) to get more information from opener.”

EXERCISE EIGHT: Developing Tricks in a Suit Contract

Introduction

“When declarer is in a trump contract, one of the key decisions is how to handle the trump suit. Usually it is a good idea to draw the defenders’ trumps as soon as possible, so that the defenders can’t get tricks by ruffing declarer’s winners. There are times, however, when there are other priorities. If declarer has too many losers, it may mean delaying drawing trumps.

“One way for declarer to eliminate extra losers is to ruff them in the dummy. Declarer has to make sure that there are enough trumps left in dummy for this task. Another way to eliminate losers is by discarding them on extra winners in the dummy. If declarer has to lose the lead to the opponents while drawing trumps, declarer will have to delay drawing trumps if there are too many quick losers. A quick loser is a trick that declarer will have to lose as soon as the opponents gain the lead. Declarer often will have to eliminate them before giving up the lead to the defenders.

“Let’s take a look at some of the considerations declarer has in a trump contract.”

Instructions

“How would you plan to make your contract of 4♠ on the hand in Exercise Eight after the opening lead of the ♣Q? Can you draw trumps immediately?”

	DUMMY
	♠ Q J 9 3
	♥ A K 8 3
	♦ 6
	♣ 9 5 4 2
LEAD	■
♣ Q	
	DECLARER
	♠ 10 8 6 5 2
	♥ Q 2
	♦ A K 5
	♣ A 7 3

Follow-up

Go through the hand with the students along the following line:

“Declarer can afford only three losers in a 4♠ contract. There are two spade losers, one diamond loser and two club losers. The diamond loser can be ruffed in dummy and one of the club losers can be discarded on the extra heart winner in dummy. The spade and club losers are all quick. Since the lead will have to be lost to the defenders in order to draw trumps, drawing trumps will have to be delayed until a club loser is discarded.”

Conclusion

“Before declarer can decide whether or not to draw trumps right away, it’s necessary to consult declarer’s PLAN. Trumps may be needed to ruff losers in dummy, or declarer may need to discard losers on extra winners in the dummy before drawing trumps.”

SAMPLE DEALS

EXERCISE NINE: Giving Attitude

Introduction

“When you tell your partner how you feel about the suit led, it helps partner decide whether or not it is worth leading that suit again. Let’s look at an example in the first pre-dealt deal.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the first pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #5, Deal 1)

Dealer: North	♠ 10 8 7 3				
	♥ A K 6				
	♦ Q J 10 2				
	♣ K 9				
♠ A 6	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 4 2
N					
W E					
S					
♥ 10 9 8 5		♥ Q 7 2			
♦ 9 7 3		♦ A 6 4			
♣ 10 7 5 2		♣ A 8 6 4 3			
	♠ K Q J 9 5				
	♥ J 4 3				
	♦ K 8 5				
	♣ Q J				

The Bidding

“What would North open the bidding? (1♦.) East and West pass throughout. What would South respond? (1♠.) How does North show both the strength of this hand and support for responder’s suit? (Bid 2♠.) Does South know the level at which the partnership belongs? (Yes, game.) Does South know the strain in which the partnership belongs? (Yes, spades.) What does South rebid (4♠.) How does the auction proceed from there? (Pass, pass, pass.) Who is the declarer? (South.)”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (West.) What would the opening lead be? (♥10, top of a sequence.) Which card would East play on the first trick if dummy wins the trick? (♥7.) Why? (East wants to encourage partner to continue leading hearts if given the opportunity.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer has one loser in each suit. Declarer plans to discard the heart loser on dummy’s extra diamond winner after driving out the \spadesuit A. There is also the possibility that the \heartsuit Q will drop when dummy’s \heartsuit A and \heartsuit K are played. Declarer will have to draw trumps first, however. Otherwise, the opponents will be able to ruff the extra diamond winner once it is established.)”

Declarer might consider ducking the opening heart lead in dummy — in case West is leading from an interior sequence. Winning the first heart is slightly superior. The defender with the \spadesuit A may hold the \heartsuit Q, making it difficult to drive out declarer’s second heart stopper. The \heartsuit Q might be doubleton, or the defenders might switch to another suit. Since the students are unlikely to consider ducking the first heart, you should skip over this consideration, if no one raises the point.

Conclusion

“When you have a choice of cards to play, a high card tells your partner that you like the suit led, a low card discourages partner from leading the suit again. Signals require that one partner give them and the other partner receive them.”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (South.) What would the opening lead be? (♦ A, top of touching high cards.) Which card would North play? (♦ 10.) Why? (With a doubleton, North wants South to continue leading the suit in order to ruff declarer’s winner.) What will South do next? (Play the ♦ K and another diamond, based on partner’s encouraging signal.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer plans to trump the heart losers in dummy after driving out the ♥ A. After the ♦ A is led, declarer appears to have only two diamond losers. If the opponents don’t lead another diamond, declarer will be able to drive out the ♦ K after drawing trumps.)”

Conclusion

“By signaling with a high card, you suggest that partner lead the suit again. You may want to do this in a suit contract when you are hoping to ruff one of declarer’s winners.”

EXERCISE ELEVEN: Giving Count

Introduction

“Although giving an attitude signal is your first priority, there are times when you need to give a count signal. You want to tell partner whether you have an even or an odd number of cards in the suit. You often give count when declarer is leading a suit, since you are unlikely to want to show attitude in declarer’s suit. It is important to realize how important this may be to your partner. Looking at two or three seemingly useless cards, you may think there is nothing you can do to influence the outcome of the deal. On the contrary, the information you give may make the difference between declarer making the contract or being defeated.”

Instructions

“Turn up the cards on the third pre-dealt deal. Put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player.”

(E-Z Deal Cards #5, Deal 3)

Dealer: South	♠ K Q J 9 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A 7 6 ♣ J 10 6 5				
♠ 7 6 3 ♥ A K 5 ♦ Q 8 4 ♣ A K Q 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 10 5 ♥ 10 7 2 ♦ K J 10 5 2 ♣ 8 4
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 8 4 2 ♥ Q J 8 6 4 ♦ 9 3 ♣ 9 7 2				

The Bidding

“South passes. What is West’s opening bid? (1♣.) North passes. What does East respond? (1♦.) South passes. What does West rebid? (2NT.) How does the bidding proceed from there? (East rebids 3NT which is followed by three passes.) What is the contract? (3NT.) Who is the declarer? (West.)”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (North.) What would the opening lead be? (♠K, top of touching honors.) Which card does South play on the first trick? (♠2.) Why? (South wants to give a discouraging signal with no help in spades.) When declarer leads diamonds, which card should South play? (♦9.) Why? (South gives a count signal to show an even number of diamonds.) Should North win the first diamond trick? (No, North wants to hold up.) If not, on which round should North win? (Third.) Why? (If South has two diamonds, declarer must have three.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer has one spade trick, two heart tricks and three club tricks. Declarer needs to promote diamond winners by driving out the ♦A to get enough tricks to make the contract. Declarer should hold up the ♠A until the third round to try to strand the opponents’ spade winners. With no outside entry left in the dummy, declarer will have to hope the opponents win the ♦A on the first or second round.)”

Conclusion

“The key to defeating this contract was the use of a count signal. The more information you and partner exchange, the easier the defense becomes.”

The Defense

“Who makes the opening lead? (East.) What would the opening lead be? (♥A, top of touching honors.) Which card does East play to the second trick? (♥K, since West’s ♥9 looks encouraging.) Which card does East play to the third trick? (♥10.) Why? (A suit preference signal for diamonds, rather than clubs.) Which suit does West lead to the fourth trick? (Diamonds.) Why? (East has shown a preference for diamonds.)”

The Play

“Review the steps in declarer’s PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer plans to draw trumps by playing the ♠A and the ♠K, hoping the ♠Q will drop – *eight ever, nine never*. After the lead of the ♥A, declarer hopes to lose only two heart tricks if the suit is divided 3–2 and the opponents do not get a ruff. If declarer is given a chance, declarer plans to discard one of the diamond losers on the extra club winner in dummy.)”

Conclusion

“A suit preference signal can be useful when partner is looking for an entry to your hand. The only difficulty comes in recognizing when attitude and count signals do not apply.”

