

Attitude Signals

When playing a hand, declarer has the advantage of seeing both hands on their team. Furthermore, they can play the hands in perfect unison, leading a card from dummy that will suit declarer's closed hand and then returning a card from their own that will benefit dummy's holdings. Defenders face a much more challenging task in getting the two hands to work in unison – when we learn to play bridge we are forced to guess what is in our partner's hand. Later we learn to identify clues from the bidding (if our partner overcalls, we know she has a good five card suit, for example).

A more advanced technique we can employ is to send what are called **attitude signals** to our partner. The idea is that when we are following suit but don't need to try and win the trick, we have a choice of card we can play. The non-picture cards are all pretty much equivalent (they are all usually going to lose!), so we can encode meaning in whether we choose to play our lowest or our highest.

Attitude Signals – Reverse Attitude

There are many agreements we can adopt when choosing what signals to send our partner. The system we will learn first is to play *attitude* the first time our partner opens a new suit. We play what is known as **reverse** attitude. We play a high card to indicate that we don't have anything useful in this suit and we play a low card to indicate that we do have assets (typically honour cards) and that we think it is a good idea to continue the suit. An example will indicate how useful this can be. Imagine we are defending Four Hearts and our partner leads the Ace of Spades (probably showing the King of Spades). We see the following dummy.

Lead: Ace of Spades

Dummy

♠ Q65
♥ KQ98
♦ AQ72
♣ K3

Our Hand

♠ T3
♥ 52
♦ K765
♣ QJT98

On The lead of the Ace of Spades, it looks like our partner has got the King of Spades too. If she continues (by playing the King next round) and then plays a third round, we should be able to get a trick by ruffing the Queen of Spades. We should play the **three of spades** on the first trick.

What card should we play if we change our hand slightly?

Lead: Ace of Spades

Dummy

♠ Q65
♥ KQ98
♦ AQ72
♣ K3

Our Hand

♠ T73
♥ 52
♦ K6532
♣ JT6

When we hold this second hand, we can see that playing 3 rounds of Spades is likely to be a bad idea. Dummy will win the third round with the Queen. We don't want our partner to continue spades (we *hope* she will play a diamond!) We should play the **ten of spades** under our partner's Ace.

It can help to remember reverse attitude by recalling the phrase: "**Low-Like, High-Hate**" A low card means you like the opening lead. A high card means you think some other suit might be more profitable for the defence.

What does this look like from the other side of the table?

Focussing on just a single spade suit, suppose we are defending Three No Trumps and we choose to lead the King of Spades from the following holding and the dummy is as shown:

Our Hand

♠ KQT42

Dummy

♠ A5

Partner's card

Nine of Spades

If Dummy wins the first trick with the Ace and then we get in later, we *know* not to continue Spades! Declarer has the Jack (since our partner played a high-hate-it card, the Nine of Spades at trick one. We should not continue spades but rather try to get our partner in with a different suit, so *she* can play a spade for us. If our partner's card at trick one was the Three of Spades, we could instead play the Two of Spades to her Jack and then run all of our spade tricks.