



## Intermediate- Lesson 27

### Play in defence Part 3 - Discards

When a suit is led, and we have no cards left in that suit, clearly following suit isn't possible, so we are free to play any of the cards in our hand. Such a card is called a **discard**.

Most inexperienced players will simply choose a small card to throw away, without giving it too much thought. But as we will see, there are two good reasons to take care when discarding.

1. Signalling: your discard, especially the first one, can give a signal to partner. This can tell her which suit you would like her to lead back to you if she gains the lead, or which suit you would not like her to lead.
2. Retaining important cards: if you throw away the wrong card, you can often present declarer with an extra trick, and perhaps make a contract that was otherwise doomed.

#### Signalling

Last time, in Lesson 26, we looked at how to signal in defence, and saw how vital it is to have a system agreed with your partner. On many tricks in the play of a hand, your choice of card can provide information to partner – even when it's an otherwise insignificant spot card (a 2 to a 9). That information can be the difference between a successful defence, and declarer romping home with ease.

We saw that on a trick where you or partner are leading to a trick, the priority is to show **attitude**, ie whether you like the suit or not, and that when declarer or dummy are leading to a trick, the priority is to show **count**, ie how many cards you hold in that suit. We saw in Lesson 26 how to do that.

Hopefully we all recognised how important it is to

- Play your spot cards in the right order
- Pay attention to the cards partner plays. Statement of the obvious: signalling won't work if you and partner don't notice the spot cards each other plays!!

We also saw some examples where the choice of card could have no significance in terms of attitude or count, and therefore should be interpreted as indicating **suit preference**.

Perhaps the most obvious opportunity to give **suit preference** is when discarding – when you are out of the suit which is led. Since you are not following suit, the card you play cannot be showing attitude or count in the suit led. It must be suit preference.

#### When **DISCARDING**

- A **low** spot card of the suit you play indicates you **don't like** that suit
- A **high** spot card of the suit you play indicates you **do like** that suit – you'd like partner to lead it – you have something useful

So, our system gives you a choice, either a negative "I don't like THIS suit" or a positive "I DO like THIS suit". You are more likely to be able to convey correct information than if you use an artificial system.

Note that the first discard you make in a suit conveys signalling information about your suit preference, and any subsequent discard in the same suit is less relevant.

But beware

- Don't give up your guard in a suit- say dummy has a 4-card suit, and you also have 4 of the same suit- unless your cards are ALL smaller than dummy's. If you discard that suit, you might well be presenting declarer with an extra trick.
- Don't use a potential trick winning card to give a signal.
- When partner discards and you read their suit preference signal, it is merely information, not a command to lead that suit immediately you are next on lead. You might well have something better to do first.

Here is an example of discarding giving the right information to partner

3NT by South	North (dummy)	
	♠8 7 5 3	
	♥J 8 4	
	♦A J 10	
	♣K 6 5	East (you)
West (partner)		♠void
♠A 9 6 4 2		♥A K Q 10
♥7 3		♦9 6 5 3 2
♦8 7 4		♣8 4 3 2
♣10 9 7		
	South (dealer)	
	♠K Q J 10	
	♥9 6 5 2	
	♦K Q	
	♣A Q J	

West leads 4th highest, the ♠4. You discard ♣2, showing no interest in Clubs. Declarer wins and leads a second spade. This time partner wins her ♠A, looking for another signal from you. You discard ♦2, showing you don't hold anything worthwhile in diamonds, and by inference, implying partner should try the remaining suit, hearts.

Partner leads a heart, and you can cash 4 heart tricks for 1 down.

Note if you'd tried to give a positive signal for hearts by discarding ♥10, you'd give up a winning heart, and declarer would make her contract.

### Retaining Important cards

There's more to discarding than giving a signal to partner. Often, in defence, declarer will be leading off a long suit, and you have to find discards. This can be very uncomfortable, as you might well have to choose between cards that you'd rather hold on to.

One important principle is to keep length with dummy: if dummy has 4 cards in a suit, and dummy's lowest card isn't higher than all of yours, then if you discard from that suit, you might well be presenting declarer with a free extra trick. The suit might be splitting 4-4-3-2, so if you have 4, you need to keep them all, unless declarer discards one from dummy.

Another key thought is always to try to work out what shape declarer started with. The bidding will help you, as will what you can see in dummy, and what partner plays (eg giving you the count) during the play of the hand. Often, declarer will lead a winner to the 12<sup>th</sup> trick, and you have two cards left, one of which you have to discard. You need to have a good idea what suit declarer's 13<sup>th</sup> card is, so you can keep the right card. How many times have you failed to work it out, throw away the wrong card, and allow declarer to make their contract on the 13<sup>th</sup> trick, by tabling a small card in a suit that you threw away?

In summary, when you're discarding, don't just woodenly throw away any low card. If you want to signal, think carefully what information you want to give your partner. Give your partner the best chance of getting it right and reduce the need for her to have to make a guess. But don't discard a potential winner just to make a signal. And where you are not signalling, but just trying to retain the right cards, try to work out what declarer has left in her hand.

