

Finch Discard Signal System

(EBU registered 1981)

When you are unable to follow suit, you exclude the suit led and the suit you are using to signal with, which leaves just two suits. An odd card shows preference for the lower of the two remaining suits, and an even card shows preference for the higher of the two remaining suits, which are ranked alphabetically CDHS, as in bidding, ♠♥♦♣.

An easy way to remember this method is, EVEN=HIGH(er) of the other two suits both have 4 letters and ODD=LOW(er) both have 3 letters.

For instance when a ♣ is led and you want ♥s, discard either an odd ♦ OR an even ♠, for ♦s play either an odd ♥ OR an odd ♠, and for ♠s use an even OR an even ♥.

The advantages are that you can mostly use low, medium and unimportant cards to signal with, and you can, express your desire for the lead of a suit in which you are VOID, choose to signal from either of two suits, and get to keep a precious card, a potential trick-winner, in the suit that you want led back to you.

More experienced partners are able to signal a suit preference on partner's opening lead of an honour (AKQJ10). Although you are following suit, an EVEN card still requests the HIGHER of the other two suits (this time discounting the suit led and the trump suit), and an ODD card requests the LOWER of the other two suits (ignoring the suit led and the trump suit). For example, if ♥s are trumps and your partner leads the ♦ Ace, an odd ♦ shows a wish for a ♣, and an ♦ even means please lead me a ♠.

However if you hold a doubleton, you Peter (High-Low, play your higher, then your lower card) hoping for a ruff, as your partner will now know you had a doubleton, and will realise your first card played was in fact, not a preference signal after all.

A further enhancement can be utilised. When your partner eventually leads your requested suit, they can also indicate their own suit preference. Taking the above example with ♥s as trumps, your partner leads the ♦ Ace, your odd ♦ asked for a ♣. Then, if they lead an even ♣, they want ♠s, whereas an odd ♣, says another ♦ please.

Yet another refinement can be the signal given when leading into a situation, where partner is going to ruff (typically after a doubleton). For example when holding ♠AK72 opposite partner's ♠85, the 3rd lead of the EVEN ♠2, indicates a preference for a ♦ return, HIGHER of other 2 suits (with ♥ trumps) - the ODD ♠7 asks for ♣s.

Suit preferences can additionally be signalled by which trump is used to ruff. For instance on (partner's) ♦ lead, when holding trumps ♥965 and no ♦s, the EVEN ♥6 calls for a ♠ return (the HIGHER of other 2 suits), and similarly either the ODD ♥9 or the ODD ♥5 invites ♣s.

The final sophistication available, is on your (opening) lead to show your real desired suit, for example, when opposition are in say ♦s and you've NO ♥s, the lead of an ODD or EVEN ♠ requests ♥s, whereas an EVEN ♠ is for ♠s, and ODD for ♣s.

This may very well be highly advantageous when leading to partner's indicated suit.

In the event of a lead of a signalled suit being trumped by the 2nd player, one might be able to signal another suit preference, with their remaining cards in the trumped suit.

Of course this system, as with any system, needs you to have the appropriate cards, which unfortunately is not always the case. Often you may find yourself with only even cards, but bear in mind that a Jack is an odd card (and a Queen is an even card).