

You can count on me !



Giving count

How, Where, When and Why



There are 3 kinds of bridge players:

1. those who can count and
2. those who can't !

There are three types of defensive signals a partnership can use:

1. Attitude (attitude, Reverse attitude, Odds & Evens etc)
2. Count
3. Suit-preference

Count usually is the second-highest in priority. It indicates the number of cards Defender holds in a given suit.

There are two types of count:

1. Standard Count – High-low indicates an even number of cards in that suit
2. Reverse Count (sometimes called Upside Down Count) - High-low indicates an uneven number of cards in that suit

I recommend Reverse count, because playing a higher card when you have an odd number in that suit is less likely to be costly. For the purpose of this lesson, I will use Reverse Count.

Most partnerships should use the attitude signal by default on **partner's opening lead** and count when Declarer leads a suit. There are times, however, when your partner, on lead, may prefer count to attitude.

To do this, they can request count if they at least hold AK or KQ in a suit. In this situation, leading a King asks for Count ("King for Count"). If leading an Ace then this is for an attitude ("Ace for Attitude"). NB: Leading a Queen is also for attitude, so if partner holds KQxx and does not want count, they should lead the Queen. This is not common and could confuse partner, thinking you do not have the King, so take care on this lead !

Although you can gain information on the distribution from the bidding, opening lead, the play and what you see in Dummy, there are still some "unseen" cards and using count may assist your partnership fine tune your understanding of the distribution in some or all suits held by Declarer and your partner.

When and how to give Count:

This is used only when defending.

The following are 3 common times to use Count -

1. When partner wants to know how many you have got in the lead suit

Partner may consider knowing the number of cards in a suit is more important than been given attitude, so they choose to lead the King instead of an Ace. This especially useful when defending a NT contract.

NB: Partner may not be asking for count and is leading the top of a sequence, however you must give count every time a King is lead.

2. When following suit played by Declarer

Try to give count at all times when a suit is played by Declarer. This may build up an understanding of the whole hand as time progresses.

3. When your partner leads and you cannot cover a high card in Dummy

This option can be added later or not at all, but may also be useful. Clearly it is not attitude as you could not take the card played by Dummy.

Why give Count ?

- It may inform partner how many cards you hold in that suit
- It may help partner know when to hold up play in NT
- It may help knowing more about the other suits partner may hold.
- It may help partner know if you will get a ruff in a suit contract
- It may prevent you or your partner from being bluffed by false carding !

Points to remember:

1. When partner leads a King, give count
2. When following suit played by Declarer, give count
3. If you are Dummy and you know the opponents are giving count, try and work out their hands and learn from others.
4. Become familiar with the odds, especially the common ones (see chart)

5. Practice, practice, practice

Learn to count now – use it later

When first using count, you may find it a little overwhelming because there is so much to remember.

I suggest you practice giving count first. Then when you are ready, start to work out the hands and the possible distribution.

Just like a nice mature cheese, all good things take time



Quiz

	Partner	
	♣ <u>8</u>	
Dummy	Declarer	The bidding
♣ K J 10 6 <u>4</u>	♣ <u>Q</u>	1♠ - 2♣
	You	2♦ - 2♥
	♣ A 9 3	3NT

When in Dummy, Declarer plays the ♣4, your partner plays ♣8 and Declarer the ♣Q. Questions 1 to 3 relate to this hand

1. How many clubs does your partner hold ?
2. How many does Declarer have ?
3. Should you duck and if so, how many times ?
4. You hold ♠JT2 and partner leads the ♠K, which card do you play ?
5. The Contract is 4♠. Your partner leads the K♥ and you hold A2, what do you play ?
6. If there are 5 cards outstanding in a suit, what are the odds of a 3-2 break ?

Quiz Answers

1. 3 (it can't be 5 and unlikely to be 1 because EW did not agree on a club fit during the bidding)
2. 2
3. Yes you should duck once. After this, Declarer has no clubs to get to Dummy and may not have an entry to make the rest of the clubs
4. 10. This is high enough to indicate you have an odd number. It is unlikely to be costly
5. Overtake with the Ace and return the heart. You know partner has the ♥Q and you are now likely to be showing 2 or 3 hearts. Hopefully partner can work this out. If they do not hold the ♥J, they should now give you a ruff !
6. 68% therefore when trying to decide the break when 5 of a suit are unaccounted for, go for the 3-2 break unless you know better. This is highest of all the Odds. See the table provided.