



Lesson 46 Teacher's Notes

Defence: Out for the Count

Aims

- To emphasise the importance of counting – points, playing tricks, winners, losers and distribution
- To point out that defenders need to count also – we must acquire **the Counting Habit** by constant practice

Content

1) As declarer we have to do a lot of counting: in NT contracts we count Sure Tricks, in suit contracts we count losers: in both we count the tricks we can establish from our Work Suit. We also ***count the distribution*** of our trump suit and our Work Suit. By noticing when somebody ***shows out*** we can tell when trump are drawn and when our **length tricks** are winners.

2) To defend well, we have to do a lot of counting also. Good defence is based on a combination of counting and logical inference. The habit of counting has to be cultivated. It is an acquired skill, not an ability we are born with. It is hard work - but it brings rewards in the satisfaction of working out what is going on.

3) These are the things we need to count as a defender.

When dummy goes down – count its points.

Add those to the number you can see in your hand, and the number declarer has shown by his bidding. That will tell you how many partner has, more or less accurately (depending on how revealing the bidding has been.)

Of course, opponents' bidding is not always reliable as yours, but some things are sure:

- a) If declarer has bid no-trump he usually has the range of HCP his bid has shown (12-14 for 1NT, 15-17 for a 1NT rebid etc)
- b) If declarer has opened with a pre-emptive bid he is not strong enough for a 1-opener.
- c) If an opponent has passed instead of opening the bidding he has fewer than 13HCP.
- d) If responder has passed partner's opening bid he has fewer than 6 HCP.

During play - count the distribution of the cards.

Notice when someone shows out. Make a mental note of how many cards the other players have.

Count Declarer's Tricks

Just as declarer counts his tricks when dummy goes down, so defenders should try to count theirs.

You need 5 tricks to defeat 3NT, 4 for a major suit game, 3 for a minor suit game, 2 for a slam.

Sometimes you can count declarer's tricks.

If he has enough to make his contract you may need to assume partner has a specific card to beat him



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- 4) Introduce the **Count Signal**
(We have already looked at the Attitude Signal, where *a low card encourages, and a high card discourages*. We use it when partner has led a high card, an ace, king or queen, or when we discard)
When declarer (or dummy) leads a suit there is no point in showing attitude – you do not want partner to play declarer's Work Suit!
Instead we help partner count the distribution by giving a *count signal*, telling him how many cards we hold in the suit led
We play a *high card* to show that we hold an *even* number of cards in the suit led
a *low card* to show an *odd* number of cards in the suit led
This information tells partner how many cards *declarer* has in the suit: he counts the cards in his hand and dummy, adds the number you have shown, then subtracts from 13.
You may think it will be difficult to know whether partner has 1, 3 or 5 cards in a suit: or 2, 4 or 6
In practice you can usually tell: there are clues from the bidding
The count signal helps partner to count the distribution of a suit – so it is also known as a **distributional signal**.
A high card shows an even number, a low card an odd number
It is best to signal blatantly: with an odd number always play your *lowest* card
 with an even number play the *highest card you can afford*