The background of the entire page is a collage of playing cards. The top half is a dark blue gradient with cards like the Ace of Diamonds, Ace of Clubs, and Ten of Hearts. The middle section is a solid yellow gradient. The bottom half is a dark blue gradient with cards like the Ten of Spades, Ten of Diamonds, and Eight of Clubs. The text is centered in each section.

Marshall Miles

Defensive Signals

AN HONORS eBook FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

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Introduction

Regardless of your experience and skill, this book will help you defend better. It explains several ways to describe your holding which are commonly used by experts but not generally known. It compares new methods with old. It tells you how to draw deductions, not only from partner's signals, but also from what he fails to do. Even if you are an expert and think there is nothing about defensive signals you don't already know, you will probably see a few situations you haven't thought about and discover how other experts handle them.

Some of the recommendations are my own. Some are from others (like Eddie Kantar and Kit Woolsey). Most of the recommended methods are what a majority of experts play today— not what they played ten years ago or what they say in their books.

Let me give you a preview of typical problems discussed in this book. Dummy is always North. As West you lead a low spade against 3NT from ♠A10xxx. Partner plays the jack and declarer wins the king. The next defensive trick is won by you. Should you lead a low spade, playing partner for an original holding of ♠QJx or lead another suit, hoping partner can win and return a spade through declarer's guarded queen? Is there any way you can tell for sure? Would the situation be any different if you had led low from ♠A9xxx and partner had played the ten, losing to declarer's king? (The answer is *YES!* You would know *immediately* that partner didn't hold ♠QJ10!)

You have cashed two tricks against four spades and are on lead (as West) with ♥Axx. Dummy has ♥Kx. Your only chance to set the contract is to lead a low heart and find declarer with the jack and partner with the queen, plus a misguess by declarer. But if declarer has the queen, leading low will allow declarer to make an overtrick. And if partner has the ♥QJ, declarer will have no alternative to playing the king and will again make an overtrick. At *matchpoints* could it ever be right to underlead the ace? If so, under what conditions?

You lead a high heart from ♥AK10x against 3NT. Dummy has two small hearts and partner holds ♥J9xxx. Should he encourage or discourage a continuation? How would you know not to lead low and let declarer win his doubleton queen?

When you and partner can each guard two suits, how do you avoid both guarding the same suit and unguarding the other? What are the pros and cons of upside down signals, Roman discards and Foster echo? Of third and fifth best leads? Of leading the ace from ace-king?

Declarer play is easier than defense. To avoid working at cross purposes, the defenders have to signal each other.

But sometimes your partner can do no wrong. Other times he should be able figure out what you have without help from you. A whole chapter is devoted to when NOT to signal. Or when, by changing your usual priorities, you can give partner enough information to make the crucial play, without helping declarer.

Once I have recommended a defensive convention or treatment, it will be used throughout the rest of the book. Since most of what I recommend is what a majority of top experts now play, you should see how it works and how one recommended convention complements another before rejecting out of hand anything you haven't been doing for the past twenty years. All I ask is that you keep an open mind.

What you ought to do is buy this book for your partner. A scientific poll shows that 95% of all bridge players are much better than their regular partners. While you can learn a lot from this book, your partner needs it even more. He is probably too cheap to buy the book for himself, and if you loan him yours, you may never get it back. Give it to him as a present and, for the investment of a couple of card fees, you and he will start winning much more frequently.

Chapter I

Better Spot Card Leads

General Objectives

When you hold an honor sequence, like KQJ(xx), you can make an attacking lead with relative safety. The rest of the time, based on the bidding, you must choose between attacking and trying to give nothing away.

You must also choose between informing partner and concealing your holding from declarer. Some players make attitude leads at notrump to disguise the length of their long suit, lead small from length, whether headed by an honor or not, and refuse to make descriptive honor leads. Occasionally they score a victory because declarer misguesses. Frequently their partners “make a mistake” because they can’t tell what to do. Since their partners “make the mistake,” they remember their good results and attribute their bad results to partner’s stupidity. I recommend descriptive OPENING leads, saving concealment and deception until later.

Some players have abandoned fourth-best leads altogether. But there are several good reasons why fourth-best leads were adopted originally.

- (1) A fourth-best lead will seldom cost a trick in the suit itself. If you hold KJ962 against 3NT, it is hard to construct a hand where leading the six rather than the deuce would hurt. Leading the king or the jack might smother partner’s honor or block the suit. Leading the nine (from this holding or KJ92) could cost a trick when partner has the doubleton or tripleton queen and declarer holds A108x.
- (2) Partner can easily distinguish between fourth-best and top of nothing, or even next-to-top of nothing.
- (3) When partner leads the lowest missing spot, you can tell immediately that he has no more than four.

	♠Q4 ♥Q96 ♦AJ10842 ♣86				
Partner	N	You	South	North	
♠A983		♠K1062	1NT	3NT	
♥J843		♥10752			
♦76		♦K5			
♣KJ3		♣1094			
	♠J75 ♥AK ♦Q93 ♣AQ752				

Partner leads the three of spades and dummy plays low. Declarer must have the jack, since with ♠Axx or ♠xxx he would not play small from dummy, so you win with the king. Since partner cannot hold more than four spades, you should shift to the ten of clubs, the best chance to set the contract. With “attitude” leads, the winning defense would be harder to find.

- (4) A fourth-best lead will occasionally allow partner to do something very good by applying the “Rule of Eleven.”

	♠AQ74 ♥Q94 ♦QJ85 ♣Q10				
Partner	N	You	South	West	North
♠96		♠J1032	1♣	1♥	Dbl
♥J8763		♥K102	1NT	Pass	3NT
♦AK109		♦64	Pass	Pass	
♣K8		♣7643			
	♠K85 ♥A5 ♦732 ♣AJ952				

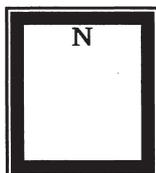
Partner leads the six of hearts and dummy plays the four. You should play the deuce!

The Rule of Eleven works this way: When you subtract the value of partner’s spot card from eleven, the difference is the number of cards in

the other three hands which are higher than partner's card. The Rule of Eleven tells you that North, East and South together hold five cards higher than the six. You can see four of them in your hand and dummy, and declarer apparently has a doubleton. Would declarer bid 1NT with two small hearts after his partner has made a negative double? Of course not! So South's only higher heart must be the ace.

Since playing the ten or king would give declarer a double stopper, you should play the deuce. If you play the ten, declarer might misguess next round, but why depend upon declarer to misguess when you have a sure thing? If you were playing "attitude" leads rather than fourth best, you could not afford to play the deuce.

North
 ♠KQ98
 ♥Q103
 ♦95
 ♣AKJ3



	You	South	West	North	East
	♠1042	1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
	♥AJ9	1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
	♦J106	Pass	Pass		
	♣9652				

Partner leads the seven of hearts and dummy plays the ten. What should you play?

If you apply the Rule of Eleven to discover how many cards South has to beat the seven, the answer is minus one! Consequently, the lead cannot be fourth best. Partner has either led third best from ♥K87 (one unlikely specific holding) or top of nothing. So you hop up with the ace and return the ♦J. Fortunately, this play works since partner's hand is ♠753 ♥7654 ♦AQ83 ♣107. If partner were leading third best from even, you wouldn't know what to do. Partner might hold ♥K87x.

	♠J ♥K108 ♦AQ7 ♣K97654					
Partner	N	You	South	West	North	East
♠A9643 ♥Q84 ♦1072 ♣Q10		♠K1072 ♥9653 ♦J63 ♣J2	2NT Pass	Pass Pass	1♣ 3NT	Pass Pass
	♠Q85 ♥AJ2 ♦K954 ♣A83					

Partner leads the ♠4 and you win with the king. There is no reason to shift, and your conventional lead is the ♠2. But the Rule of Eleven provides a warning. You know declarer still has two spades higher than the four. If partner has to use his high cards to top declarer's cards, the suit may become blocked.

Declarer's failure to respond one spade probably denies four spades. Since partner can draw the same conclusion, you don't need to return the deuce to show four. You should return the ten of spades. If you return the deuce and declarer plays the queen, there will be no problem, but if declarer visualizes the blocking possibility, he may play the eight instead. If so, your side will be limited to four spade tricks.

- (5) Leading your lowest card, rather than fourth best, when the bidding indicates that you have a long suit, will immediately catch partner's attention, telling him you want him to do something unusual—like give you a ruff. This is called an "alarm clock" lead.

BETTER SIGNALING NOW!

Regarded as one of the best ever written on the topic of signaling, this book will help you defend better regardless of your experience or skill level. It explains several ways to describe your holding which are commonly used by experts but not generally known. It compares new methods with old, including the pros and cons of upside-down versus standard signaling. It explains how to draw inferences, not only from partner's signals, but also from what he fails to do. Even if you are an expert and think there is nothing about defensive signals you don't already know, you will probably see a few situations you haven't thought about and discover how other experts handle them.

Originally published in 1995, this book has been unavailable for more than 20 years.



MARSHALL MILES (1926-2013) was a member of the Bridge Hall of Fame, won seven North American titles, most in partnership with Eddie Kantar, and played on the winning US Senior team at the 2004 World Bridge Games. He was the author of more than a dozen books on the game, including the classic *How to Win at Duplicate Bridge*.

