

Switch in Time Lesson One, with the Granovetters

Switch or Continue?

SAMPLE First 7 pages of 15 pages

In 1994 we wrote a book called "A Switch in Time – How to take ALL your tricks on defense." The first printing sold out practically immediately, and today many players around the world use the principles described in the book (each pair with its own adjustments).

However, the book is fairly complicated, because we dealt with every possible situation we could think of, and that created quite a bit of memory work. For those who don't play bridge professionally or addictively, all that work is too much. We decided to create a simplified system, which we present to you in this course. There are fewer rules, so once in a while you will face a situation that isn't covered in this course, but against that, you don't have to remember much, which is a considerable benefit.

One of the reasons we wrote the book was this: The modern fad of light bidding is successful because bad contracts often make, for the simple reason that most players don't defend very well. Our theory had been that it was possible to defeat bad contracts by sheer bridge logic, without signalling (signals, after all, give information to the declarer as well as to partner). However, sweating out every single hand using only bridge logic turned out to be too tiring. We decided we were better off using a signalling system. Although the signals might give declarer useful information, the information made it easy for us to set their contract and only rarely allowed declarer to make a hand he would otherwise misguess. In addition, the signals allowed us to defend properly with very little effort. We were able to preserve our stamina for the area of bridge where there's nobody to help (declarer play).

We will demonstrate in this course, through real-life example hands, that even the most famous players in the world sometimes have trouble defending hands that could be defeated with no problem using switch in time methods. Wouldn't it be satisfying to be able to defeat a hand that THEY can't beat? :-)

Time to begin.

Shift in Time signals are used after the opening lead is made. The opening leader's partner gives him attitude as follows:

1. A high card means, "Either I like the suit you led, or I don't particularly like it but I can't stand for you to shift to the "obvious" suit.

2. A low card means, "If you would like to shift to the "obvious" suit, go right ahead!

3. An unusual card (an unsupported honor, for example) means, "Please make an unusual shift."

What is the obvious shift suit? The definition is different for suits vs. notrump (we will elaborate in the next two lessons), but the general principle is that the obvious shift suit is dummy's weakness. For example, suppose the contract is 4S, the opening leader leads a high heart, and dummy hits with:

T973
2
9732
AKQJ

If the opening leader is going to shift to a side suit, clearly it would be diamonds. That's "obvious" because there's no future in the club suit.

Let's look at some full-hand diagrams, with this dummy remaining constant.

	North	
	T973	
	2	
	9732	
	AKQJ	
West		East
4		AK2
AKJ7		T853
K865		JT4
8762		T93

South
 QJ865
 Q964
 AQ
 54

North-South have reached an aggressive 4S contract. West leads a high heart. Without obvious shift signals, he will shrug his shoulders and shift to a diamond at trick two because there seems to be no source of tricks anywhere else. South will win the queen and start pulling trump. East can play three rounds of trump, but South needs only one heart ruff (two of his hearts go on the clubs).

Playing obvious shift signals, East follows to trick one with the EIGHT of hearts. This means: "I cannot stand for you to shift to dummy's weak suit, diamonds. Do what you like, but I have no help for you in diamonds." Notice that this signal does not promise the QUEEN OF HEARTS (i.e., "normal" attitude for hearts). The message concerns shifting, not continuing.

West does not shrug his shoulders and play a diamond, because East has warned him against it. Instead he tries a trump shift. East plays three rounds of trump, and declarer is suddenly at the mercy of the diamond finesse. He can ruff one heart, pitch two on the clubs, but he still has the ace-queen of diamonds to deal with. West wins the king for a one-trick set.

Let's change the cards around. Again, South declares 4S:

North	
T973	
2	
9732	
AKQJ	
West	East
4	652
AKJ7	T853
KJ6	A54
87642	T93

South
AKQJ8
Q964
QT8
5

This time East plays the THREE of hearts at trick one. His message is: "Partner, if you would like to shift to dummy's weak suit, it's OK by me!" West duly shifts to a low diamond, and the defense takes three diamonds tricks for down one.

Let's change the cards around yet again:

North	
T973	
2	
9732	
AKQJ	
West	East
4	652
AKJ7	QT9853
K865	QJT4
8762	—
South	
AKQJ8	
64	
A	
T9543	

This time South is in SIX SPADES. West leads a high heart, and East follows with the QUEEN. This is a most unusual card! West, therefore, makes a most unusual shift and plays a club. Just as declarer was about to claim, East ruffs.

Oh, what joy for the defense on all three hands!

Here's an example from real life. This hand occurred in the semi-finals of the Venice Cup (Bermuda, January, 2000):

East dealer

N-S vul

North (dummy)

5

K T 8 3

8 5 3 2

A J 5 3

West

4 3

A 6 4 2

K 7 6 4

Q 7 2

East

9 8 7 6 2

Q J 9 5

A T

9 8

South

A K Q J T

7

Q J 9

K T 6 4

West	North	East	South
—	—	pass	1S*
pass	1NT	pass	3C
pass	4C	pass	4S
pass	5C	(all pass)	

* limited to 16 HCP because they play a strong club system

Opening lead: HA

At three tables, North-South bid and made 3NT by guessing the clubs (when declarer plays out the spades, she finds that West has only two vs. East's five, which makes it more likely that West has length in clubs and thus the queen). At one table, however, North-South played in 5C. This, we can see, should go down two tricks because the Dutch defenders could

take two diamonds and a diamond ruff, plus the ace of hearts. 5C, however, was allowed to make, and the (mis)-defenders went on to win the Venice Cup!

How could this be?

North (dummy)	
5	
K T 8 3	
8 5 3 2	
A J 5 3	
West	East
4 3	9 8 7 6 2
A 6 4 2	Q J 9 5
K 7 6 4	A T
Q 7 2	9 8
South	
A K Q J T	
7	
Q J 9	
K T 6 4	

We do not know what carding system the Dutch ladies use, but we do know that using Switch in Time signals, we defeat this hand in our sleep. West led the HA. East follows with the FIVE, which West can see is the lowest outstanding spot card. What does the five mean? It means: "Partner, if you would like to shift to dummy's weak suit, it's OK by me!" In other words, the five of HEARTS means that East has a high honor in DIAMONDS, and it's OK for West to lead away from a diamond honor. Even if East had three diamonds and does not get a ruff, cashing the two diamonds is good enough to pick up a nice game swing.

Now it's time for you to play. Here are five hands. In all five cases, the contract is FOUR HEARTS. You lead the ACE OF CLUBS and dummy comes down. Your job is to identify the "obvious shift" suit.

You led a high club, hearts is trumps, so the choice is between spades and diamonds.

Exercise One

#1

Dummy

A 3

T 9 5 4 2

A K T 9

3 2

#2

Dummy

6 5 2

A K 9 3

A Q 9

8 4 3

#3

Dummy

A K Q

Q J T 2

J T 9 4

8 4 3

#4

Dummy

A T 2

A 5 4 3 2

Q 9 7

4 3

#5

Dummy

Q J T 2

Q 9 3

A K Q

8 4 3