



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(307) Upside-Down Count and Attitude – Remainder Count

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Level: 5

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General

When partnerships adopt *Upside-Down Count* as their carding agreement, they often improve their communication, but they also open the door to confusion and misunderstanding. One of the places where partnerships must work hard to have good communication is not just on the first discard but on the subsequently played cards as well. One important agreement to have with partner is how we give count in a suit after having discarded in that suit previously (called *Remainder Count*). Let's look at our options for agreements and how we use these to communicate with partner.

Remainder Count

When the opponents lead a suit, we tend to give count (unless we need to win the trick or giving count might cost a trick). Playing upside-down count, that means playing high from an odd number of cards (1, 3, 5...) and low from an even number of cards (2, 4, 6...). This is our agreement when a suit has not yet been played or we have not discarded from a suit. If we are giving count from a suit where we have previously played a card, then this is a slightly different situation where we have different agreements about giving count when the opponents lead a suit – called *Remainder Count*. Some situations where we give remainder count are:

- We have previously discarded from a suit.
- Partner has previously led a suit.
- We have previously led a suit.
- Opponents have previously led a suit and we had to play a card to try to win the trick.



Standard Remainder Count

Most partnerships that play Upside-Down Count and Attitude for their “normal” count situations use standard remainder count. This is, if they are giving count in a suit after they have previously played a card in that suit they do so in a standard fashion (high from an even number of cards, low from an odd number of cards).

Example 1

AT9732

If we discard from this suit, playing the 2 (upside-down, saying that we like the suit), then if the suit is led and we later need to give count we play the 3 (low showing standard remainder count from AT973).

Note: Some partnerships do choose to play upside-down remainder count, but this approach is far less common than the standard remainder count approach. Be sure to discuss situation agreement with your partner.

Original Count vs. Remainder Count

Some partnerships try not to play remainder count and just try to signal the count of their original holding. Players can get into trouble by thinking that this concept of remainder count is the same as signaling original count. We sometimes hear players say “aren’t I just telling you my original count – upside down? Before I played low from a 6-card suit, now I’m playing low to show I started with 6-card suits.” This is dangerous! Standard remainder count and upside-down original count do have us signaling similarly in the example above (low from the original even number of cards vs. low from an odd number of remaining cards), and while this is true when we have made one discard, it is not true if we have made two discards

Example 2

AT9732

If we discard the 2 and later discard the 3 from this suit, then we give standard remainder count by playing the Ten. If we played upside-down original account, we play the 7. These carding methods are not equivalent, be sure to discuss these with partner – playing standard remainder count!

Conclusion

Giving count in a suit after you have already played a suit can lead to complexities. Most partnerships that use UDCA give standard remainder count. One of the niceties is that you do not have to remember how many cards you started with in a suit. This is a situation that you should spend some time discussing with partner. Be sure that the two of you are doing things the same way and that you are interpreting each other’s signals correctly. You would be amazed how many partnerships play together for a long time before they realize (often because of an extremely costly mixup) that they are doing things differently than partner.