

## Lavinthal (aka McKenney/Hamilton)

## - Signals in Defence

When you are defending and cannot follow suit, then you have to discard something. It is often best to convey some sort of information to your partner with this discard and there are various schemes. One of the best and most commonly used is Lavinthal, also known as McKenney or Hamilton. The most important point is that you DO NOT discard in a suit that you like, but discard from one of the other suits. There are two remaining suits and the size of your discard indicates which of these remaining two suits you like, a high/middle card indicates the higher ranking and a low card the lower ranking.

For example, you are discarding on ♥'s and would like partner to lead a ♦. Discard either a low ♣ (so asks for the lowest ranking of ♠'s and ♦'s) or discard a high ♠ (so asks for the highest ranking of ♣'s and ♦'s). Note that you always have a choice of two suits to discard from and can usually make the signal clear.

Just to check that it always works: -

Suit led	Suit you want partner to lead	Discard	
♠	♥	high	♦ or high ♣
♠	♦	high	♥ or low ♣
♠	♣	low	♥ or low ♦
♥	♠	high	♦ or high ♣
♥	♦	high	♠ or low ♣
♥	♣	low	♠ or low ♦
♦	♠	high	♥ or high ♣
♦	♥	high	♠ or low ♣
♦	♣	low	♠ or low ♥
♣	♠	high	♥ or high ♦
♣	♥	high	♠ or low ♦
♣	♦	low	♠ or low ♥

DUMMY ♠ J93  
 → ♥ Q874  
 ♦ K74  
 ♣ K74

YOU ↓

♠ AK102	N
♥ 103	W E
♦ A63	S
♣ 8632	

Now Lavinthal does not only apply to discards. Suppose that you are West, defending a ♥ contract. You lead the ♠A and get an encouraging attitude signal from partner. So you continue with the ♠K and partner indicates a doubleton.

Obviously you lead another ♠ for him to get his ruff, but you also want him to return a ♦ rather than a ♣.

So Lavinthal also applies in situations like this. You lead the ♠10 (a high ♠ - to indicate that partner should return the highest of the two remaining suits). If you held the ♣A instead of the ♦A then you would lead the ♠2.