

Trump Management

Basic Rules:

1. Draw all outstanding trump immediately [Hand 1]
2. Don't voluntarily ruff in hand with longer trump [Hand 2]

Exceptions (covered in lesson):

1. You need to ruff losers in hand with shorter trump (or, if equal trump, need more ruffs in ONE of the hands than would be available if you draw trump) [Hand 3]
 - *Exception to exception:* Ruffing in the short suit would risk the contract if you got over-ruffed (especially if there is a "red flag" from the bidding)
 - *Exception to exception:* You have a long suit that will provide discards so ruffing is unnecessary
2. You need the trump entries in the short hand to lead another suit [Hand 4] or to set up & run a long suit
3. You need to establish (or take) a sluff before losing the lead to a high trump [Hand 5]
4. You need to use your trump individually (cross-ruff) [Hand 6]
 - *REMEMBER:* Before you start a cross-ruff, take your outside winners
5. You would waste two of your trump to draw a single master trump [Hand 7]
 - *Exception to exception:* Leaving the master trump outstanding will allow the defense to ruff in at an inconvenient time (preventing you from running a suit) [Hand 8]
6. You can get more trump tricks ruffing in the long hand than you have trump in the short hand (dummy reversal) [Hand 9]
 - *Note:* This generally requires that the short trump be good ones
7. You need to keep a trump in the short hand to maintain control of a side suit (to prevent your long trump from being depleted) [Hand 10]
8. You need to duck a trump early to maintain control [Hand 11]

Some Other Exceptions & Techniques:

- You will lose control if you pull all of the trump (usually occurs when there is a bad split)

- Your trump and hand are BOTH weak so that if you don't take your small long trump individually, you won't get them at all
- You need to set up for a trump coup (requires reducing your trump length to the length of the opponent's trump)
- Discarding a loser (& sometimes a winner) instead of ruffing to maintain control or prevent an uppercut
- Ruffing high to prevent an over-ruff

Trump Management Hands

Acknowledgements: some hands are from Richard Pavlicek's website (www.rpbridge.net) and some from www.bakerbridge.coffeecup.com (and some were made up)

Note: I don't show bidding – just assume you got to the stated contract somehow (by South) and received the lead shown; I also don't show small cards unless they are relevant

Hand 1

Draw Trump Immediately

	S KQxx				Contract: 43	Opening Lead: 2x
	3 7xxx					
	2 xx					
	C Axx					
S Jx		S 10xxxx				
3 KQ9		3 A8				
2 Q9xxx	2 Jx					
C Kxx		C xxxx				
	S Ax					
	3 J10xx					
	2 AK10x					
	C QJ10					

Wrong: Trump are so bad, I'd better try using them to ruff.

- Win 2A
- Cash 2K
- Ruff low 2 ... over-ruffed with 38

Oops: You have just lost (at least) 4 trump tricks (AKQ and 8)

Right: I have 3 trump losers for sure. I'd better draw them before they can ruff one of my winners. (if they split 4-1 or the club finesse is off, I'm in trouble, so play for only successful case (3-2 trump & CK on-side)

- Win 2A
- Lose a trump trick
- Win return
- Lose a trump trick (they split – hurray)
- Win return
- No need to draw last trump, though it wouldn't hurt in this case (but see exception 5)...just take club finesse. When it works (phew), repeat it if necessary, cash winners, ruff losers... everything is good and defender can ruff in any time – he/she can't hurt you.

Success: You have lost just the 3 trump tricks (winning 3Ss, 22s, 3Cs + the 2 "leftover" 3s individually = 10 tricks)

Hand 2

Don't Ruff Voluntarily with Long Trump Hand

S AQJ109

3 xx

2 x

C QJ109x

Contract: 4S Opening Lead: 2K

S x

3 KJxx

2 KQxx

C xxxx

S xxxx

3 Axx

2 xxxx

C Ax

S K32

3 Q1032

2 AJ102

C Kx

Wrong: YUM! With that lead I can pitch a heart on a diamond and make an overtrick.

- Win 2A
- Lead 2J (covered by Q) and ruff in dummy with S9
- Draw 1 round of trump with S A (just in case 210 will be ruffed)
- Lead S10 to SK in hand

Oops: Trump doesn't split & you're now in deep trouble. You're going down in a cold contract. At this point, dummy has 2 trump left, declarer has 1 & East has 2. Your chances for making this contract are now 0%:

- You can't pull trump (or when East wins the CA the defense will cash a bunch of red cards)
- You can't play on clubs because when East wins the CA the defense will (after cashing heart(s)) force dummy to ruff.
 - Best case the defense will take at least 4 tricks (CA, 3A and depending on the exact play, either two more trump or a trump and at least one more red card).
- About the only thing you can do at this point is hope for a top on the next board.

Right: I'm cold for this contract as long as trump aren't 5-0 (fortunately they didn't find the heart lead, which would hurt if trump are 4-1). I can afford to lose 23s and 1C.

- Win 2A
- Draw trump in 4 rounds (you still have a trump in dummy).
- Lose a trump trick to CA (CAREFUL: if they rise CA on 1st club from dummy, you need to play your CK under it)
- Defense will cash 2 3s
- Ruff the next red card in dummy and claim (dummy has nothing but winning clubs left).

Success: You have lost just 3 tricks

Caveat: In a pair game, depending on how you feel your game is going, you might try the "wrong" approach above for an overtrick (~ 68% for 3-2 minus ~20% for 5-2 or worse diamonds). In a team game, you should never risk your contract for the overtrick.

Hand 3

Ruff Losers in Short Trump Hand

	S Q10x				Contract: 4S Opening Lead: CQ
	3 xx				
	2 Axxx				
	C xxxx				
S xxx		S x			
3 KJ9		3 Axxxx			
2 J9x		2 Q10xx			
C QJ10x		C Kxx			
	S AKJ9xx				
	3 Q10x				
	2 Kx				
	C Ax				

Wrong: If trump split 2-2, I can draw 2 rounds of trump and still have a trump in dummy to ruff a heart

- Win CA
- Cash S AK

Oops: They didn't split (not a big surprise – odds are 9% higher that they'll split 3-1). Now when you lose a heart, the defense can draw dummy's last trump and you'll be one trick short (6Ss +22s + 1C =9 tricks).

Note: Even drawing 1 round of trump is too many on this hand since you have to lose 23s, which will allow the defense to play trump twice, denuding dummy of trump.

Right: I need a heart ruff (see count above under "Oops") and can't risk the defense drawing dummy's trump before I can do so.

- Win CA
- Lose a 3
- Win return (Trump is their best option; nothing really matters. If they cash club 1st this may be delayed one trick)
- Lose a 3
- Win return in hand
- Ruff 3 in dummy
- Get to hand and draw last trump (assuming they drew 2 rounds earlier – otherwise draw whatever is left – and claim)

Success: You have lost just 3 tricks (23s & 1C)

Hand 4

Use Dummy's Entries to Lead Another Suit

	S KQx				Contract: 6S Opening Lead: CK
	3 xxx				
	2 xxx				
	C xxxx				
S x			S xxx		
3 Qxxxx		3 Jxx			
2 xxx		2 Kxxx			
C KQxx		C J10x			
	S AJ109xx				
	3 AK				
	2 AQJ				
	C Ax				

Wrong: Draw trump ending in dummy and take the diamond finesse

Oops: The finesse worked, but you can't get back to dummy to repeat the finesse and the 2K wasn't singleton or doubleton. Down 1 losing the 2K and a C.

Right: I need the diamond finesse to work and I need to lead diamonds twice from dummy to make sure I get all 3 of my diamonds.

- Win CA
- Play SA (no reason not to – just to protect against really strange distribution with short diamonds & short spades in West)
- Lead a S to dummy's K
- Play a 2 to the J (finesse worked – phew!)
- Lead a S to dummy's Q
- Play a 2 to the Q
- Claim

Success: You have lost just 1 trick (CK)

Hand 5

Establish Sluff Before Losing to High Trump

S KQx
3 Axx
2 Q10xx
C QJx

Contract: 5₂ **Opening Lead: C10**
(1st trick: 10-Q-K-A)

S Jxxx
3 10xx
2 Ax
C 1098x

S A109xx
3 Jxxx
2 x
C Kxx

S x
3 KQx
2 KJ9xxx
C Axx

Wrong: Draw trump immediately

- Win CA (trick 1)
- Lead a diamond, losing to 2A
- Win C9 return with CJ
- Finish trump

Oops: Eventually you will lose S A and the C8 (cashed when in with S A). Down 1 including 2A.

Right: I need to pitch my 3rd club before my 2nd club stopper can be knocked out while they have an entry to cash the 3rd one. I can set up a spade for a sluff.

- Win CA (trick 1)
- Play a spade to the SK, losing to the SA
- Win C9 return with CJ
- Sluff the 3rd club in hand on the SQ
- Lead a diamond, losing to 2A
- Claim

Success: You have lost just 2 tricks (SA & 2A)

Hand 6

Cross-Ruff – Need to Use Trump Individually

		Contract: 6³ Opening Lead: CK
	S AJxxx	
	3 AJ108	
	2 xxx	
	C x	
S K10		S Qxxxx
3 xx		3 xxx
2 Q10xx		2 Jxx
C KQ10xx		C xx
	S x	
	3 KQ97	
	2 AKx	
	C AJxxx	

Analysis: I have 4 tricks outside of trump (1S + 2²s + 1C) so I need 8 trump tricks to make the contract.
I have to use all of my trumps individually, so I can't draw any trump.

Wrong : Start cross-ruff immediately without cashing outside winners

- Win CA (trick 1)
- Cash SA
- Cross-ruff remaining black cards (4 in each suit)
- Try to cash 2AK

Oops: They have trump left (since you haven't drawn any) and can ruff your good diamonds (having discarded theirs on black cards)

Right: Cash side winners before starting cross-ruff

- Win CA (trick 1)
- Cash 2AK
- Win SA
- Cross-ruff remaining black cards (4 in each suit)

Success: You have lost 1 ² trick at the end

Hand 7

Leave Master Trump Outstanding (don't waste 2 of yours for 1 of theirs)

S xx
3 AKxx
2 Axxx
C Qxx

Contract: 62 Opening Lead: CJ

S Jx
3 Q10xx
2 Qxx
C J109x

S Q10xxx
3 Jxx
2 Jx
C xxx

S AKxx
3 xx
2 Kxxx
C AKx

Wrong: My only obvious loser is a trump so I'll draw all trump immediately (losing 3rd round)

- You will be left with 1 trump in each hand

Oops: This isn't enough to ruff all of your losers. You win 2S + 23s + 3Cs + 42s (2 winners drawing trump & 2 remaining used individually) = 11 tricks.

Right: I need 5 trump tricks to make my contract. After I draw 2 rounds of trump, I need to make 3 small trump tricks.

- Win CA (trick 1)
- Cash 2AK, leaving 2Q outstanding
- Cash CKQ, S AK, 3AK then start cross-ruffing spades & hearts
- Defender can ruff at any time with high trump, but that will be his/her only trick. You will have enough trump to handle the rest of your losers.

Success: You have lost only the 2Q.

Hand 8

Don't Leave Master Trump Outstanding If It Can Hurt You

S xxx
3 xx
2 Qxx
C KQJ10x

Contract: 43 **Opening Lead: 2J**
(1st trick won by defender & 2 continuation ruffed by declarer)

S KJx
3 xx
2 J10xxx
C 98x

S Q10xx
3 QJ10
2 AKxx
C xx

S Axx
3 AK9xxx
2 x
C Axx

Analysis: Good thing they didn't find a spade switch. I can pitch my spades on dummy's long clubs.

Wrong:

- Cash 3AK, leaving 3Q outstanding (Beth told me not to bother extracting the master trump)
- Start running clubs

Oops: East trumps the 3rd round of clubs and now I can't get back to dummy. I have to lose 2 spades because I have no place to put them. Down 1 (losing 2S + 13 + 12)

Right:

- Cash 3AK
- Play a small 3 losing it. (You have no outside entries to dummy and no need to save an extra trump)
- Start running clubs, happily pitching 2Ss from your hand.

Success: Making an overtrick (losing 13 + 12)

Hand 9

Dummy Reversal (use long trump to ruff & short trump to draw trump)

S Jxx
3 J987
2 Axxx
C xx

Contract: 63 Opening Lead: 2K

S K10xx
3 xxx
2 KQxx
C xx

S Q9x
3 x
2 Jxxx
C J10xxx

S Axx
3 AKQ10x
2 x
CAKQx

Analysis: I have 5 sure tricks outside of trump (1S +12+3 Cs) so I need 7 trump tricks to make my contract.

Inferior: I have 5 long trump so if I can sluff 1 spade on a high club I can ruff 1 spade & 1 club in dummy (the short trump hand)

- Win 2A (trick 1)
- Cash 3A
- Try cashing CAKQ

Oops: West ruffs. Down 1 (losing 2Ss). This was about a 62% chance (4-3 club split)

Superior: Dummy's trumps are really good and I have a short diamond in my hand. Maybe I can take 3 ruffs in my hand, which added to the 4 trump in dummy gives me 7 trump tricks. This will work whenever trump split anything but 4-0 (about 90%) and clubs are no worse than 5-2 (93%).

- Win 2A (trick 1)
- Ruff a 2 HIGH because you need small 3s for dummy entries
- Lead a small 3 to dummy
- Cash CAK (not necessary on this layout, but safer than waiting)
- Lead a small 3 to dummy
- Ruff a 2nd 2 HIGH
- Lead 310 to dummy's 3J
- Ruff your last 2 with remaining trump in hand (which is a high one)
- Ruff your SMALL C to dummy's
- Draw last trump using dummy's last 3
- Lead to SA in your hand, cash the CQ and give up the last trick (a S)

Success: You have lost only a spade.

Hand 10

Leave Trump in Short Hand to Maintain Control

S K10x
3 xxx
2 AKxx
C QJx

Contract: 4S Opening Lead: 3Q
(1st trick won by defender & 3 continuation ruffed by declarer)

S xxx
3 QJ10xx
2 xx
C A9x

S xx
3 Axxx
2 Qxx
C xxxx

S AQJ9x
3 K
2 J109x
C K10x

Wrong: I have a maximum of 12 loser, 13 loser and 1C loser so I can just draw trump and then lose my tricks.

- Ruff 3 (trick 2)
- Draw trump in 3 rounds
- Finesse 2J, losing to 2Q
- Ruff 3 return

Oops: You are now out of trump. When West gets in with the CA, he/she will run off 2 more 3s. Down 2 (losing 12, 1C & 33s)

Right: I have a maximum of 12 loser, 13 loser and 1C loser if I'm not forced to ruff so many 3s in my hand, that I run out of trump ("lose control")

- Ruff 3 (trick 2)
- Draw 2 rounds of trump, leaving 1 trump outstanding, but more importantly, leaving 1 trump in dummy
- Finesse 2J, losing to 2Q
- Ruff 3 return in hand (after this you still have a trump in each hand)
- Lose CA
- Ruff 3 return in either hand
- Go to other hand with a C
- Draw last outstanding trump with your last trump
- Claim (your clubs and diamonds are all good now)

Success: You have lost only the 3 tricks you knew about at the beginning.

Hand 11

Lose a Trump Early to Maintain Control

S xxxx
3 Kx
2 AKxx
C Axx

Contract: 4S Opening Lead: 3Q

S Qx
3 QJ10xx
2 xx
C xxxx

S KJx
3 xx
2 QJxxx
C QJx

S Axxx
3 Axxx
2 xx
C Kxx

Analysis: I can afford to lose 2 trump and a club. I have to draw trump first lest they score an extra trump trick, by ruffing in the defense's short trump hand.

Wrong:

- Win 3 (trick 1)
- Cash S A
- Lose a S
- Defense (always helpful) will now draw the 3rd trump for you.

Oops: You now have only 1 trump in each hand...not enough to ruff all of your losers. Your winners will be 2 3s, 2 2s, 2 Cs & 3 trump (A and 2 ruffs)

Right: I have to draw most of the trump, but need to leave a trump outstanding so that I have enough trump to ruff my losers

- Win 3 (trick 1)
- Lose a S
- Win their return
- Cash S A
- Cash remaining outside AKs
- Start cross ruffing diamonds & hearts
- They can ruff in any time they want and cash the winning club, but can't prevent you from getting your 6 outside AKs and 4 trump (A and 3 ruffs)

Success: You have lost only 3 tricks (2 trump & 1 club)