

# Trump Management

## Basic Rules:

1. Draw all outstanding trump immediately [Hand 1]
  - You don't want your opponent's to ruff your outside tricks
  - This really should read "as soon as you can afford to" or "unless you have a good reason not to"
2. Don't voluntarily ruff in hand with longer trump
  - Your long trump are tricks anyway – generally don't gain anything and can lose control
3. When analyzing a hand to decide whether to violate rules above, pick one hand to be the master hand (the hand you want to set up) and focus on that.
  - This will usually be the hand with longer trump
    - Our natural instinct is to set up declarer's hand, so we most often go wrong when the long trump are in dummy (e.g. transfer auctions).
  - If trump are equal, pick whichever hand looks easier to set up (usually fewer losers outside of trump)...do not voluntarily ruff in both hands unless your plan is to cross-ruff the entire hand.
  - On most hands, focus on losers and how to make them disappear, if possible
    - This often involves judicious use of trump
  - On some hands, it is easier to count outside winners to figure out how many trump tricks you need to make your contract

## Reasons to Delay Drawing Trump:

1. You have a better use for the trump in the short (or non-master) hand
  - You need to ruff losers from long hand with trump from short hand **that won't be available if you draw trump** [Hand 2]
    - Make sure this is necessary. Consider setting up a long suit for discards instead.
    - If you're doing this for overtricks, make sure you're not risking your contract if you get over-ruffed.
    - If you can afford to ruff high to prevent an over-ruff, do so
  - You need the trump in the short hand as entries to:
    - Lead another suit (e.g. for a finesse) [Hand 3]
    - Run a long suit after setting it up [Hand 4]
  - You need to leave a trump in the short hand to protect yourself from having to ruff in the long hand [Hand 5]
    - Think about this when you have to lose a number of tricks to set up your winners
  - You want to draw trump with the short hand after ruffing a LOT of cards in the long trump hand (dummy reversal) [Hand 6]

- You will be using so many trump in the long hand that in the end position, the “long” hand now has fewer trump left than the short hand
  - This requires that the short trump be good ones
2. You have trump losers and need to set something up before opponents can knock out your stoppers in a side suit (e.g. sluff a loser) [Hand 7]

### **Reasons to Not Draw Trump or Not Draw Trump Completely**

1. You need to use your trump individually (cross-ruff) [Hand 8]
  - REMEMBER: Before you start a cross-ruff, take your outside winners
2. There is only one trump outstanding (you’ve drawn a round or two) and it is high. You would waste two of your trump to draw a single master trump [Hand 9] unless:
  - Leaving the master trump outstanding will allow the defense to ruff in at an inconvenient time (preventing you from running a suit) [Hand 11]
    - This usually occurs when you lack outside entries to the long suit
  - You have the same number of tricks whether you pull the last trump or not (you have no need for the extra trump)
3. You discover a bad trump split and pulling all of the trump will cause you to lose control (usually because this also results in pulling all (or too many) of your trump as well)
4. 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

### **Some Techniques:**

- Ducking a trump early to maintain control [Hand 10]
- Discarding a loser (& sometimes a winner) instead of ruffing to maintain control or prevent an uppercut [Hand 12]
- Ruffing high to prevent an over-ruff
  - Sometimes it’s even right to ruff high on an earlier trick and lower on a later trick to prevent the opponents from over-ruffing too early and returning a trump, fatally depleting your trump when you still have losers to ruff.
  - Setting up for a trump coup by reducing your trump length to the length of the opponent’s trump (advanced play not covered in this lesson)

# Trump Management Hands

**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*

	♠ xxxx				<b>Contract: 4♠</b>	<b>Opening Lead: ♦x</b>
	♥ KQxx					
	♦ xx					
	♣ AKx					
♠ KQ9			♠ AJ			
♥ Jx			♥ 109xxx			
♦ Q9xxx			♦ J10			
♣ xxx			♣ xxxx			
	♠ 10xxx					
	♥ Ax					
	♦ AKxx					
	♣ QJx					

**Analysis:** If trump split 3-2, I'm making this contract (3♣s, 2♦s, 3♥s, 2♠s). If not, I'm going down.

**Pitfall:** Trump are horrible, so try to use them to ruff instead of drawing trump.

- ▶ You will likely get over-ruffed and go down in a cold contract.

**Correct Play:** Win opening lead, play trump; win return, play trump; win return, play trump (losing 3<sup>rd</sup> trump trick) & claim.

## Hand 2

### *Need to Ruff Losers in Short Trump Hand*

	♠ Q10x				<b>Contract: 4♠ Opening Lead: ♣Q</b>
	♥ xx				
	♦ Axxx				
	♣ xxxx				
♠ xxx		♠ x			
♥ KJ9		♥ Axxxx			
♦ J9x		♦ Q10xx			
♣ QJ10x		♣ Kxx			
	♠ AKJ9xx				
	♥ Q10x				
	♦ Kx				
	♣ Ax				

**Analysis:** With South as master hand, I have 4 losers: 3♥s and 1♣. There is no long suit in dummy on which to pitch a loser, so I have to ruff a heart in dummy.

**Pitfall:** With 9 trump, draw 2 rounds and if they split, I can ruff my 3<sup>rd</sup> heart with no problem.

- ▶ When trump split 3-1 (the odds favor that), when the opponents get in with a heart, they will draw dummy's last trump and you can no longer ruff your losing heart.

**Correct Play:** Note that you can't even draw 1 round of trump since you have to lose the lead twice in hearts to ruff the heart loser and the opponents can lead trump each time they're in with a heart trick. So...

- Win ♣A
- Lose a heart - playing from hand! (presumably they'll cash a club at this point)
- Win trump return (best play by opponents)
- Lose a heart
- Win whatever they return in hand and ruff the losing heart
- Get to hand (with a diamond if K is still there, else ruff a club)
- Pull trump & claim

### Hand 3

#### *Need Dummy's Trump Entries to Lead Another Suit*

	♠ KQx		<b>Contract: 6♠</b>	<b>Opening Lead: ♣K</b>
	♥ xxx			
	♦ xxx			
	♣ xxxx			
♠ x		♠ xxx		
♥ Qxxxx		♥ Jxx		
♦ xxx		♦ Kxxx		
♣ KQxx		♣ J10x		
	♠ AJ109xx			
	♥ AK			
	♦ AQJ			
	♣ Ax			

**Analysis:** With South as master hand, I have 2 losers: 1♣ and 1♦. If the ♦K is onside, I can make this hand with 2 finesses; if it's offside, I'm going down.

**Pitfall:** Draw 2 rounds of trump, win last one in dummy and finesse.

- ▶ Even if it wins, you're going down (unless there is a miracle doubleton 2K) because you won't be able to repeat the finesse.

#### **Correct Play:**

- Win ♣A
- Draw 1 round of trump with the ♠A because you only need 2 trump entries to dummy and you might as well protect against a singleton diamond in West's hand
- Low trump to K
- Diamond finesse (winning, you hope)
- Low trump to Q,
- Diamond finesse (still winning, you hope)
- Heart to hand
- Play all of your trump just in case they discard incorrectly and you can make 7 – in any case you have made at least 6.

## Hand 4

### *Need Dummy's Trump Entries to Set Up and Run a Long Suit*

	♠ J9x		<b>Contract: 4♠ Opening Lead: ♣K</b>
	♥ AKxxx		
	♦ xxx		
	♣ xx		
♠ x		♠ xxx	
♥ J10xx		♥ Q9	
♦ Jxx		♦ KQxx	
♣ KQxxx		♣ AJxx	
	♠ AKQ10xx		
	♥ xx		
	♦ Axx		
	♣ xx		

**Analysis:** By the time you get in, you will have lost 2 clubs and they have switched to a diamond. The only way to avoid 2 diamond losers is to discard at least one on dummy's hearts, so the hearts have to be set up. You must have entries to ruff 2 hearts (worst case you can handle) to set them up and another entry to run them. The ♥A is one entry, but since you have to cash the ♥K before ruffing, that is not an additional entry. You need an entry to ruff the 4<sup>th</sup> heart and another to cash the 5<sup>th</sup> heart, sluffing a diamond loser. Note that if hearts are worse than 4-2 or trump are 4-0, the hand cannot be made.

**Pitfall:** Draw 2 rounds of trump then play hearts.

- ▶ If hearts split 4-2 (odds favor this), you won't have the entries to ruff the 4th heart and get back to dummy to run them.

#### **Correct Play:**

- Win ♦A
- Draw 1 round of trump with the ♠A because you only need 2 trump entries to dummy and you might as well protect against going down an extra trick if hearts are 5-1 since it doesn't cost you anything
- Cash the ♥AK and ruff a heart high
  - If hearts haven't split 3-3, lead a low trump to dummy's ♠9, ruff another heart high, lead a trump to the ♠J and cash your last heart, sluffing a diamond loser. Making 4.
  - If hearts have split 3-3, draw trump ending in dummy, pitch 2 diamonds on the long hearts and claim. Making 5.

## Hand 5

### *Leave Trump in Short Hand to Maintain Control*

♠ AQ9  
♥ AQx  
♦ xxx  
♣ Axxx

**Contract: 4♠ Opening Lead: ♦K**  
(1<sup>st</sup> trick won by defender & ♦ continuation ruffed by declarer)

♠ xx  
♥ xxx  
♦ KQ10xx  
♣ QJx

♠ xxx  
♥ xxxx  
♦ Axxx  
♣ K10

♠ KJ108x  
♥ KJx  
♦ J  
♣ xxxx

**Analysis:** Assume clubs split 3-2 (necessary to make this hand (5♠s, 3♥s, 1♣ off top, so need 2<sup>nd</sup> club). There are only 3 obvious losers (1♦ lost at trick 1, 2♣)...but your 2<sup>nd</sup> club winner is “slow”. You have to lose 2 tricks to set it up. After you ruff a diamond at trick 2, you’re down to 4 trump in your hand. With 2 more losers (2 more entries for opponents to lead diamonds), you can’t afford to come down to only 1 trump.

**Pitfall:** Pull all of the trump (3 rounds).

- ▶ This will leave you with only 1 trump. The opponents will have 2 more entries to play diamonds. You can ruff the first of those, but then you will be out of trump and will be unable to ruff the last diamonds – so you will have additional diamond losers.

**Correct Play:** Pull 2 rounds of trump, leaving 2 trump in your hand and 1 in dummy. Play on clubs. After the first club winner for the defense, ruff the diamond return in hand. Now dummy has no more diamonds and there is 1 trump in each hand. After your next club loser, when they return a diamond, you can ruff in either hand, cross to the other to pull the last trump and claim.

With 5 cards left (drew 2 rounds of trump):  
(no losers left)

♠ Q  
♥ AQx  
♦  
♣ x

With 4 cards left (drew 3 rounds):  
(will lose 2D)

♠  
♥ AQx  
♦  
♣ x

♠  
♥ xxx  
♦ Q10  
♣

♠ x  
♥ xxx  
♦ x  
♣

♠  
♥ xx  
♦ Q10  
♣

♠  
♥ xxx  
♦ x  
♣

♠ J  
♥ KJx  
♦  
♣ x

♠  
♥ KJx  
♦  
♣ x

## Hand 6

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

♠ J987  
♥ Jxx  
♦ Axxx  
♣ xx

Contract: 6♠ Opening Lead: ♦K

♠ xxx  
♥ K10xx  
♦ KQxx  
♣ xx

♠ x  
♥ Q9x  
♦ Jxxx  
♣ J10xxx

♠ AKQ10x  
♥ Axx  
♦ x  
♣ AKQx

**Analysis:** There are 5 sure tricks outside of trump (1♥, 1♦, 3♣s) so need 7 trump tricks to make the contract. Since dummy's short trump are really good, there are 2 choices: 5 trump in hand plus 2 in dummy or 4 trump in dummy + 3 in hand (effectively making short trump hand the master hand!).

**Inferior:** Try to sluff 1 heart on a high club & ruff 1 heart & 1 club in dummy (the short trump hand)

- Win ♦A (trick 1), immediately duck a heart (you have to lose at least 1 before you can ruff one) and win the return (whatever it is)
- Cash ♠AK (if they split, no more problems as you only need 2 ruffs – they don't)
- Try cashing ♣AKQ
  - ▶ West ruffs. Down 1 (losing 1♥ & ruff). This was about a 62% chance (4-3 club split)

**Superior:** Ruff dummy's diamonds This will work whenever trump split anything but 4-0 (about 90%) and clubs are no worse than 5-2 (93%). There are enough entries to declarer's hand to play winning cards after going to dummy to draw the last trump.

- Win ♦A (trick 1)
- Ruff a ♦ HIGH because you need small ♠s for dummy entries
- Cash ♣AK (not necessary on this layout, but safer than waiting)
- Lead the small ♠ to dummy's ♠7 then ruff a 2<sup>nd</sup> ♦ HIGH
- Lead ♠10 to dummy's ♠J
- Ruff your last ♦ with remaining trump in hand (which is a high one)
- Ruff your SMALL ♣ to dummy
- Draw last trump using dummy's last ♠
- Lead to ♥A in your hand, cash the ♣Q and give up the last trick (a ♥)

**Note:** If they had led a heart and put in the 9 (forcing your A prematurely), you have no choice but to try the inferior line of play as you lose a critical entry to collect your ♣Q.



## Hand 7

### *Establish Sluff Before Losing to High Trump*

♠ KQx  
♥ Axx  
♦ Q10xx  
♣ QJx

**Contract: 5♦ Opening Lead: ♣10**  
(1<sup>st</sup> trick: 10-Q-K-A)

♠ Jxxx  
♥ 10xx  
♦ Ax  
♣ 1098x

♠ A109xx  
♥ Jxxx  
♦ x  
♣ Kxx

♠ x  
♥ KQx  
♦ KJ9xxx  
♣ Axx

**Analysis:** There are 3 losers (1♠, 1♦, 1♣). I can pitch a club on the ♠K, but I have to lose a spade first. If I draw trump, I will lose the ♦A and win the club return with the J, but now when I lose the ♠A, they can cash a club...so I have to establish the spade trick before my 2<sup>nd</sup> club stopper is gone.

**Pitfall:** Draw trump immediately. See analysis above.

**Correct Play:** Win ♣A and immediately lead a spade. Now you can win the club return with the J and play the ♠K, discarding the losing club.

## Hand 8

### Cross-Ruff – Need to Use Trump Individually

	♠ AJ108				Contract: 6♠ Opening Lead: ♣K
	♥ AJxxx				
	♦ xxx				
	♣ x				
♠ xx		♠ xxx			
♥ K10		♥ Qxxxx			
♦ Q10xx		♦ Jxx			
♣ KQ10xx		♣ xx			
	♠ KQ97				
	♥ x				
	♦ AKx				
	♣ AJxxx				

**Analysis:** I have 4 tricks outside of trump (1♥, 2♦s, 1♣) 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.

**Pitfall :** Start cross-ruff immediately without cashing outside winners

- Win ♣A (trick 1)
- Cash ♥A
- Cross-ruff remaining black cards (4 in each suit)
- Try to cash ♦AK
  - ▶ They have trump left (since you haven't drawn any) and can ruff your good diamonds (having discarded theirs on black cards)

**Correct Play:** Cash side winners before starting cross-ruff

- Win ♣A (trick 1)
- Cash ♦AK and ♥A
- Cross-ruff remaining clubs & hearts (4 in each suit)  
You will lose 1 diamond trick at the end

## Hand 9

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

	♠ Axxx				Contract: 6♠	Opening Lead: ♣J
	♥ AKxx					
	♦ xx					
	♣ Qxx					
♠ Q109		♠ J8				
♥ Jxx		♥ Q10xx				
♦ Q10xxx		♦ Jx				
♣ J109		♣ xxxx				
	♠ Kxxx					
	♥ xx					
	♦ AKxx					
	♣ AKx					

**Analysis:** Assume trump are 3-2 (else there's no hope).

- With declarer as master hand, there are 2 diamond losers & 1 trump loser. I need to ruff 2 diamonds in dummy.
- With dummy as master hand, there are 2 heart losers & 1 trump loser. I need to ruff 2 hearts in my hand.

**Pitfall 1:** Ruff losers before pulling trump.

- ▶ If you guess to ruff the wrong suit (diamonds in this case), you will be over-ruffed by the doubleton trump and lose 2 trump tricks.

**Pitfall 2:** Pull all of the trump (AK then lose a trump).

- ▶ You will have only 1 trump left in each hand and will not be able to ruff 2 red suit losers in either hand, so you will lose a red card as well as trump.

**Correct Play:** Pull 2 rounds of trump, cash all your winners, and then start ruffing losers. The defense can ruff in any time that they want, but you will then have the rest of the tricks (make sure you cash winners first – this is a cross-ruff situation, even though it's in the middle of the hand).

## Hand 10

### *Lose a Trump Early to Maintain Control*

	♠ xxxx				<b>Contract: 4♠</b>	<b>Opening Lead: ♥Q</b>
	♥ Kx					
	♦ AKxx					
	♣ Axx					
♠ K109			♠ QJ			
♥ QJ10xx			♥ xx			
♦ xx			♦ QJxxx			
♣ xxx			♣ QJxx			
	♠ Axxx					
	♥ Axxx					
	♦ xx					
	♣ Kxx					

**Analysis:** 5 losers assuming spades split 3-2 (2♠s, 2♥s, 1♣). I can ruff my losing hearts in dummy to make the contract. I have to draw trump first lest they score an extra trump trick, by over-ruffing a heart in the defense's short trump hand.

**Pitfall:** After winning trick 1, play ♠ A and another spade.

- ▶ Defense (always helpful) will now draw the 3rd trump for you and you will no longer have 2 trump in dummy for the losing hearts.

**Correct Play:** This is the same situation as leaving the master trump outstanding, but since you only have one trump control, you have to be careful. You have to both draw 2 rounds of trump and make sure the defense cannot draw the 3<sup>rd</sup> round.

- Win ♥ (trick 1)
- **Lose** a ♠
- Win their return
- Cash ♠ A
- Cash remaining 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, 4<sup>th</sup> trump and 2 ruffs)

## Hand 11

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

♠ xx  
♥ xxx  
♦ Qxx  
♣ KQJ10x

**Contract: 4♠ Opening Lead: ♦J**  
(1<sup>st</sup> trick won by defender & ♦ continuation ruffed by declarer)

♠ xx  
♥ KJx  
♦ J10xxx  
♣ xxx

♠ QJ10  
♥ Q10xx  
♦ AKxx  
♣ xx

♠ AK9xxx  
♥ Axx  
♦ x  
♣ Axx

**Analysis:** Good thing they didn't find a heart switch. I can pitch my 2 losing hearts on dummy's long clubs (losing only 1♦ & 1♠).

**Pitfall:** Draw 2 rounds of trump, leaving the master trump outstanding (Beth told me not to bother extracting the master trump) and start running clubs.

- ▶ East will trump the 3rd round of clubs and there is no re-entry to dummy – so you have to lose 2 hearts.

**Correct Play:** Draw 3 rounds of trump (cash ♠ AK and lose the 3<sup>rd</sup> round). There is no extra trump trick available by not drawing the master trump and there are no side entries to dummy so you can't risk having a club ruffed when there are no more clubs in your hand. Win the return and start running clubs.

## Hand 12

### *Pitch a Loser Instead of Ruffing to Maintain Control*

♠ AJx  
♥ Kxx  
♦ AK10xx  
♣ Qx

**Contract: 4♠**   **Opening Lead: ♥Q**  
(1<sup>st</sup> trick won by defender & ♥ continuation ruffed by declarer)

♠ 98xx  
♥ QJ10x  
♦ xx  
♣ K10x

♠ x  
♥ A9xxx  
♦ Qxx  
♣ Jxxx

♠ KQ10xx  
♥ x  
♦ J94  
♣ Axxx

**Analysis:** 5 losers (1♥, 1♦ possible, 3♣s): I should be able to pitch 2 club losers on diamonds to make the contract (leaving a club loser in addition to the heart & possible diamond). If trump split 3-2 or the ♦Q is onside, there should be no problem.

**Start of Play:** Draw 2 rounds of trump (with the ♠A then ♠K), getting the bad news.

**Pitfall 1:** Continue drawing trump and rely on the diamond finesse working (cash ♦A before finishing trump and taking the finesse)

- ▶ It doesn't - down 2 (but see note below)

**Pitfall 2:** Finesse a diamond losing to the Q. Ruff the heart return.

- ▶ West has more trump than you do and there is no way to make the hand.

**Correct Play:** Finesse a diamond losing to the Q. Pitch a losing club on the heart return (you had a losing club anyway – see analysis). Now dummy is out of hearts and you can ruff the next heart in dummy, preserving the trump length in your hand. Next play to the ♣A, draw trump and claim (running your diamonds). You will have lost 2♥s & 1♦, making the contract.

**Note:** On a different hand, if you don't have a card to pitch safely (i.e. one that wouldn't cost the contract – it's okay if it might cost a overtrick), "pitfall 1" is the correct play as you're now doomed unless the diamond finesse works or the ♦Q is singleton.