

DEFENSIVE TRUMP TRICKS

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HAVING FUN WITH DECLARER'S TRUMP SUIT!

GETTING A RUFF

As we have seen, one way to get a ruff is to play a doubleton high-low to signal your partner that you are void after the second trick in a suit. Another way to get a ruff is to make an unexpected play that gets your partner's attention:

In this example, your partner leads the $\spadesuit K$, top of connecting honors, against the $4\spadesuit$ contract:

EXAMPLE 1 • GETTING A RUFF

| \spadesuit \heartsuit \diamondsuit 2 \clubsuit | $\diamondsuit K$ PARTNER DECLARER DUMMY YOU \spadesuit 6 5 2 \heartsuit T 8 6 5 3 \diamondsuit A 7 5 3 \clubsuit A | \spadesuit A J T 8 \heartsuit K Q 7 \diamondsuit 9 8 \clubsuit Q J 8 6 | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 12.5%;">South</th> <th style="width: 12.5%;">West</th> <th style="width: 12.5%;">North</th> <th style="width: 12.5%;">East</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>1 \spadesuit</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>4 \spadesuit</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | South | West | North | East | Pass | 1 \spadesuit | Pass | 2NT | Pass | 4 \spadesuit | Pass | Pass | Pass | | | |
|---|--|---|--|-------|------|-------|------|------|----------------|------|-----|------|----------------|------|------|------|--|--|--|
| South | West | North | East | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | 1 \spadesuit | Pass | 2NT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | 4 \spadesuit | Pass | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

You might be tempted to play the $\diamondsuit 7$ to encourage partner to continue diamonds. But you look at dummy's diamond doubleton and realize your partnership will only take two diamond tricks no matter what you do. If you overtake the $\diamondsuit K$ with the $\diamondsuit A$, cash the singleton $\clubsuit A$, and return a diamond to partner's Queen, your partnership still gets the two diamond tricks:

Trick 1: N \rightarrow $\spadesuit K$ E \rightarrow $\diamondsuit 8$ S \rightarrow $\diamondsuit A$ W \rightarrow $\diamondsuit 2$ *You overtake partner*

Trick 2: S \rightarrow $\clubsuit A$ W \rightarrow $\clubsuit 7$ N \rightarrow $\clubsuit 2$ E \rightarrow $\clubsuit 6$ *You void your clubs*

Trick 3: S \rightarrow $\diamondsuit 3$ W \rightarrow $\diamondsuit 6$ N \rightarrow $\diamondsuit T$ E \rightarrow $\diamondsuit 9$ *You return a diamond to partner*

Because of your unusual play, partner should realize you want a club lead and return a club to give you a ruff that sets the contract:

Trick 4: N \rightarrow $\clubsuit 9$ E \rightarrow $\clubsuit 8$ S \rightarrow $\spadesuit 2$ W \rightarrow $\clubsuit T$ *You ruff partner's club lead*

GIVING PARTNER A RUFF

In this example, you lead the ♠A, top of connecting honors and a sure trick. Your partner plays the ♠T, a high card to encourage you to continue to lead spades. You lead the ♠K and partner plays the ♠5, a lower card to complete a high-low doubleton echo:

Trick 1: S→♠A W→♠3 N→♠T E→♠2 *Partner signals encourage*

Trick 2: S→♠K W→♠6 N→♠5 E→♠8 *Partner completes high-low*

| EXAMPLE 2 • GIVING PARTNER A RUFF | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|----|------|----|------|------|------|--|--|---|
| | <p>♠ T 5</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">PARTNER</p> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">DUMMY DECLARER</p> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">YOU</p> </div> | <p>♠ 2 8</p> <p>♥</p> <p>♦</p> <p>♣</p> | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px;">West</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">North</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">East</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">South</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">1♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">2♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px;"></td> </tr> </table> | West | North | East | South | 1♥ | Pass | 2♥ | Pass | Pass | Pass | | | <p>♠ J 6 3</p> <p>♥ 8 6 5 2</p> <p>♦ T 6 4</p> <p>♣ A K 7</p> |
| West | North | East | South | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1♥ | Pass | 2♥ | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <p>♠ A K 7 4</p> <p>♥ 9 7</p> <p>♦ A 9 7 3</p> <p>♣ 8 6 5</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Now you know partner only had two spades and is void in spades. Eight spades have been played, you see two in hand and one in the dummy which accounts for eleven spades. That means declarer must have two more spades and can not overruff your partner:

Trick 3: S→♠4 W→♠J N→♥4 E→♠9 *Partner ruff's*

A good partner will lead a diamond through declarer's strength toward dummy weakness in the hopes that you have a diamond honor:

Trick 4: N→♦Q E→♦K S→♦A W→♦4 *Partner leads diamond*

Now you can lead your last spade and hope partner can overruff the heart played by the dummy:

Trick 5: S→♠7 W→♥8 N→♥J E→♠Q *Partner overruffs dummy*

Trick 6: N→♦J E→♦8 S→♦3 W→♦6 *Partner takes setting trick*

LEADING A TRUMP

A trump is the last choice for an opening lead because a trump opening lead is effective only when the bidding suggests declarer needs ruffing power in the dummy. The bidding is usually not that informative. But after seeing the opening lead and the cards in the dummy, it may be wise to lead trump.

Consider the following example. You lead the $\clubsuit K$, top of connecting honors against the $2\heartsuit$ contract and your partner signals encouragement:

Trick 1: $S \rightarrow \clubsuit K$ $W \rightarrow \clubsuit 3$ $N \rightarrow \clubsuit 7$ $E \rightarrow \clubsuit 5$ *Partner signals encourage*

EXAMPLE 3 • LEADING A TRUMP

| | PARTNER | |
|---|--|---|
| \spadesuit J T 8 4 2 \heartsuit Q 9 \diamondsuit Q J 5 2 \clubsuit J 3 | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;"> <div style="text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;">\clubsuit 7</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small; margin-bottom: 5px;">DUMMY DECLARER</div> <div style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;">YOU</div> </div> \spadesuit K 9 5 \heartsuit 7 6 2 \diamondsuit A T 9 \clubsuit K Q T 4 | \spadesuit \heartsuit \diamondsuit \clubsuit 5 |

| West | North | East | South |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Pass | Pass | 1 \heartsuit | Pass |
| 1 \spadesuit | Pass | 2 \heartsuit | Pass |
| Pass | Pass | | |

Because there is only one remaining club in the dummy, your partnership will only get one more club trick unless the dummy is out of trump. You should switch to a heart lead to reduce declarer's ruffing power:

Trick 2: $S \rightarrow \heartsuit 2$ $W \rightarrow \heartsuit 9$ $N \rightarrow \heartsuit 3$ $E \rightarrow \heartsuit T$ *You lead trump*

Declarer needs a club ruff to make the contract so declarer leads a low club. Because declarer did not play the $\clubsuit A$, you know partner has the Ace and because partner did not play the Ace on the first trick to unblock the suit you know partner also has a spot club. But partner may be void in hearts so you cash the $\clubsuit Q$ to ensure another heart lead:

Trick 3: $E \rightarrow \clubsuit 6$ $S \rightarrow \clubsuit Q$ $W \rightarrow \clubsuit J$ $N \rightarrow \clubsuit 8$

Trick 4: $S \rightarrow \heartsuit 6$ $W \rightarrow \heartsuit Q$ $N \rightarrow \heartsuit 5$ $E \rightarrow \heartsuit K$ *You lead trump*

When you gain the lead with either the $\spadesuit K$ or the $\diamondsuit A$ you can now take a third club trick.

PROMOTING TRUMP

FORCING DEFENSE

Sometimes you can force declarer to ruff your long suit in order to shorten declarer's trump to promote one or more of your partnerships trump.

In the following example, your partner leads the ♣A against a 4♠ contract. Your partner continues with the ♣Q which is ruffed by declarer:

Trick 1: N→♣A E→♣3 S→♣5 W→♣7

Trick 2: N→♣Q E→♣4 S→♣T W→♠9 *Declarer ruffs*

EXAMPLE 4 • PROMOTING TRUMP

| | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>♣ A Q</p> <p>PARTNER</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>↘</p> </div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center;">DECLARER DUMMY</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>↙</p> </div> | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px;">East</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">South</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">West</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">North</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">1♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">2♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">4♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | East | South | West | North | Pass | Pass | 1♠ | Pass | 2♠ | Pass | 4♠ | Pass | Pass | Pass | | |
|---|---|---|-------|-------|------|-------|------|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|------|------|--|--|
| East | South | West | North | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | Pass | 1♠ | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2♠ | Pass | 4♠ | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>♠ 9</p> <p>♥</p> <p>♦</p> <p>♣ 7</p> | <p>♠ 8 5 3</p> <p>♥ A K 6</p> <p>♦ 9 6 5</p> <p>♣ 8 6 4 3</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <p>♠ 4</p> <p>♥ J 8 5 2</p> <p>♦ A 7 4 2</p> <p>♣ J T 5 2</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

You know declarer had at least five spades to open 1♠, you see three in the dummy and one in your hand for a total of nine. Declarer might have started with six spades but it is more likely that your partner has the four missing spades. Since declarer already ruffed a club, partner now has as many spades as declarer.

Declarer starts to draw trump but runs into a snag when you discard a low diamond (to hide your ♦A from declarer) on the second round of trump:

Trick 3: W→♠A N→♠6 E→♠3 S→♠4 *Partner signals even count*

Trick 4: W→♠K N→♠7 E→♠5 S→♦2 *You discourage to hide Ace*

Declarer decides to promote diamonds. If you cash your ♦A you can promote one of partner's spades into a winner by forcing declarer to ruff another club:

Trick 5: W→♦K N→♦8 E→♦5 S→♦A *Declarer promotes diamonds*

Trick 6: S→♣2 W→♠J N→♣9 E→♣6 *You force declarer to ruff*

TRUMP UPPERCUT

When declarer leads a trump from the weak side toward the strong side, you might be able to play second hand high to "knockout" a higher trump on the strong side. This "trump uppercut" might promote a trump in your partner's hand into a winner.

In this example, your partner leads the ♣A, top of connecting honors, against the 4♥ contract and you play a low club to discourage partner from thinking you have a doubleton:

Trick 1: N→♣A E→♣6 S→♣4 W→♣2 *You signal discourage*

Your partner continues with the ♣Q and the ♣K:

Trick 2: N→♣Q E→♣7 S→♣9 W→♣5 *Partner continues clubs*

Trick 3: N→♣K E→♣8 S→♣J W→♣T *Partner continues clubs*

| EXAMPLE 5 • TRUMP UPPERCUT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|-------|------|-------|------|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|------|------|------|--|
| ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ T 5 2 | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>♣ A K Q</p> <p>PARTNER</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>DECLARER</p> <p>DUMMY</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>♠ J 9 6 3</p> <p>♥ Q</p> <p>♦ T 8 7 6 3</p> <p>♣ J 9 4</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>♠ A 5</p> <p>♥ 8 5 3 2</p> <p>♦ A K Q 5</p> <p>♣ 8 7 6</p> </div> </div> | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">North</th> <th style="width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="width: 25%;">South</th> <th style="width: 25%;">West</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | North | East | South | West | Pass | 1♦ | Pass | 1♥ | Pass | 2♥ | Pass | 4♥ | Pass | Pass | Pass | Pass | |
| North | East | South | West | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | 1♦ | Pass | 1♥ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | 2♥ | Pass | 4♥ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Partner looks at the dummy and rather than lead trump or lead toward an Ace, partner decides to lead the last club to give you a chance to show your attitude about another suit. You know that your ♥Q will be overruffed but it has no value and it can force declarer to play the ♥A or ♥K which might promote a heart in partner's hand:

Trick 4: N→♣3 E→♥8 S→♥Q W→♥K *You uppercut declarer*

Declarer draws trump but your partner has the ♥J which your uppercut has promoted into a winner:

Trick 5: W→♥A N→♥7 E→♥2 S→♦3

Trick 6: W→♥4 N→♥J E→♥3 S→♦4 *Partner takes setting trick*

OVERRUFFING

When declarer tries to ruff a loser in the dummy you might be able to overruff with a higher trump and take the trick.

In the following example, your partner leads the ♣A, top of connecting honors, against the 4♠ contract. You play the ♣6 to encourage partner and start a high-low doubleton echo. Partner continues with the ♣Q and you complete the doubleton echo.

Trick 1: N→♣A E→♣2 S→♣6 W→♣4 *You encourage partner*

Trick 2: N→♣Q E→♣5 S→♣3 W→♣T *You complete doubleton echo*

EXAMPLE 6 • OVERRUFFING

| ♠ | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 0 auto;"> <div style="text-align: center;">♣ A Q</div> <div style="text-align: center;">PARTNER</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; padding: 5px 0;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 45%;">DECLARER</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 45%;">DUMMY</div> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">YOU</div> </div> | ↷ | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px;">West</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">North</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">East</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1♠</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♣</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♠</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4♠</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | West | North | East | South | 1♠ | 2♣ | 2♠ | Pass | 4♠ | Pass | Pass | Pass |
|-------|---|------|--|------|-------|------|-------|----|----|----|------|----|------|------|------|
| West | North | East | South | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1♠ | 2♣ | 2♠ | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4♠ | Pass | Pass | Pass | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♥ | | | ♠ 8 6 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♦ | | | ♥ 9 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♣ T 4 | | | ♦ A K 6 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | ♣ 9 8 5 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ↶ | ♠ T 7 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♥ J 6 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♦ 9 8 7 4 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♣ 6 3 | ↵ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Partner continues with the ♣J. You look at the dummy and see the doubleton heart. If you discard a heart, you will be void in hearts at the same time dummy is void in hearts and can overruff dummy on the third heart trick:

Trick 3: N→♣J E→♣8 S→♥4 W→♠4 *You discourage hearts*

Declarer draws two rounds of trump.

Trick 4: W→♠A N→♠2 E→♠5 S→♠3 *Declarer draws trump*

Trick 5: W→♠K N→♠9 E→♠6 S→♠7 *Declarer draws trump*

Declarer delays drawing the last trump because declarer wants to ruff a losing heart using the third trump in the dummy:

Trick 6: W→♥A N→♥2 E→♥5 S→♥6

Trick 7: W→♥K N→♥3 E→♥9 S→♥J

Trick 8: W→♥8 N→♥T E→♠8 S→♠T *You overruff dummy*