



## Making a Plan

1. You are declarer in a Suit Contract
2. The lead is turned over
3. Dummy is exposed on the table
4. NOW STOP AND THINK.

### Look at your trump holding

- ♣ How many trumps? How many do opponents have? What is the likely split?
- ♣ Are there missing honours in the trump suit? How should the cards be played?
- ♣ How many winners are there in trumps?
- ♣ Are there any reasons to delay clearing trumps? (The answer is usually "no")



Look at each side suit

- ♣ How many winners in each? And Losers?
- ♣ Missing honours? How to play the suit?
- ♣ Can short suits be cleared so you can trump?

Look at the lead

- ♣ An honour promises the next e.g. King promises the Queen
- ♣ A low value card invites return, suggesting an honour
- ♣ Middle ranking card may be a singleton, or top of a doubleton, looks for strength in partner's hand
- ♣ A trump suggests reluctance to lead from any side suit, may be nothing there, may be some unsupported honours



## Anticipating the Trump Split

### Key Points:

When the number of missing trumps is an odd number, e.g. 3,5, 7,

they are most likely to divide in an equitable way between the defenders' hands

e.g. five missing trumps are most likely to split 3 in one hand and 2 in the other (but they won't always)

When the number of missing trumps is an even number, e.g. 2,4,6

they are most likely to divide in an unequal way

e. g. six missing trumps are most likely to split 4 in one hand and 2 in the other (but they won't always)

<u>Opponents have:</u>	<u>Distribution</u>	<u>% Odds</u>
7	4-3	62
	5-2	30
	6-1	7
	7-0	1
6	3-3	35
	4-2	48
	5-1	15
	6-0	2
5	3-2	68
	4-1	28
	5-0	4
4	2-2	41
	3-1	50
	4-0	9
3	2-1	78
	3-0	22
2	1-1	52
	2-0	48



## Planning the Play

In most trump contracts you will play enough rounds in trumps to take away all the opponents trumps at the earliest opportunity.

Dummy

A 10 9 8

Declarer

K Q 7 6 5 4

- ♣ 10 trumps, including A, K, Q;
- ♣ Opponents have 3; Likely split 1:2 clear in 2 rounds leaving 6 for you
- ♣ Worst case the split is 0:3, clear 3 rounds, the J has to drop, leaving 4 for you
- ♣ (If Ace missing, play the same.  
Don't delay clearing because you have to lose a trick or two)



## When honours are missing

### 9 Trumps, Queen Missing

Dummy

A 10 9 8

Declarer

K 6 5 4 3

- ♣ 9 trumps, including Ace and King
- ♣ Opponents have 4 trumps, including Queen
- ♣ 41% chance the split is 2:2, and the Queen will fall
- ♣ 50% chance the split is 3:1 but 1 in 4 times the Queen is a singleton: 12%. So the chance is  $41\% + 12\% = 53\%$  that the Queen will fall if you play two winning trump tricks.
- ♣ "Playing for the drop" has a slightly better chance of success than taking a finesse (50%) (if it's available!)
- ♣ Clear 2 trump rounds using Ace and King looking for Queen
- ♣ If 3 trumps fall but no Queen, the Queen is now going to win a trick whatever you do. Play a long side suit, preferably with winners.
- ♣ If the Q is used to trump, you still have 2 trumps



## 8 Trumps, Queen Missing, Finesse Available

### Declarer

K 5 4 3

### Dummy

A J 8 7

- ♣ 8 trumps, including Ace and King; Opponents have 5 trumps, including Queen
- ♣ Your holding makes a finesse possible
- ♣ The likely split is 3:2, the possibility the Queen will fall is less than 50%, the possibility of finesse succeeding is 50% exactly, so try the finesse.
- ♣ Sometimes you may have a choice which way to try it, think about any hints in the auction or opening lead.
- ♣ Whichever way you decide to go, play the King honour first to increase the chances of a drop.
- ♣ Clear 1 round using King.
- ♣ Play low card toward the remaining “gap”, make sure you spot the Queen. If Queen played, cover with Ace; if not play lower honour and cross fingers.



8 Trumps, Queen Missing, Finesse NOT Available

Declarer

K 6 5 4

Dummy

A 8 7 2

- ♣ 8 trumps, with Ace and King; Opponents have 5 trumps, including Queen.
- ♣ NO is finesse possible. The likely split is 3:2.
- ♣ Clear 2 rounds using Ace & King.

One trump is still out, and it's bigger than any of yours.

It's going to win a trick whatever you do.

Now run a long side suit, trying to get defence to use their trump as a trump.

You then have four small ones to use individually as trumps.

If you (or they) play another round of trumps, it will take two of your trumps to force out an inevitable winner.



## Reasons to Delay Trump Clearance

### Chance to ruff in the short suit

#### Dummy

♠ A 7

♥ 6

#### Declarer

♠ K Q J 10 5 4

♥ A 4 3

- ♣ In theory, in any suit, but especially a trump suit, you can only win as many tricks as you have in the longest suit out of declarer and dummy.
- ♣ Occasionally you get a chance to beat this rule!
- ♣ In this hand Spades are trumps. In Declarer, you have the “long” suit of 6 Spades giving you the chance to win 6 tricks in Spades. If these tricks are taken first, the trumps in dummy are played to make the six tricks.
- ♣ However, if you play a Heart trick first, winning with the Ace, and then play a small Heart, you can trump it with the 7 of spades. You can still take six trump tricks. You have now got seven winners out of the Spades!

Note that you only get extra tricks by trumping in the short suit, trumping in the long suit doesn't get you anything extra. If you do it before clearing trumps, you risk losing control of the trumps.



Chance to get rid of a loserDummy

♠ Q 7 5 4

♥ A K Q

♦ A 7 6 5 3

Declarer

♠ K 10 9 8

♥ 3 2

♦ 4 2

- ♣ In this hand Spades are trumps. You hold 8 including the King and Queen. When you clear trumps you will lose the lead to the Ace.
- ♣ Once the spades are cleared, there may be a loser in Diamonds.
- ♣ However, we have five hearts altogether, including the top three. Opponents have 8 hearts and a four-four or five-three distribution is highly likely (Probability of 80%).
- ♣ Before clearing trumps play the A♥ and K♥, then Q♥ discarding a Diamond from Declarer's Hand. There are now no losers in Diamonds.
- ♣ Now clear trumps

You have a low number of high value trumpsDummy

♠ A J 10 7

♥ 6

♦ A 7 6 5 3

Declarer

♠ K Q 9 8

♥ A 4 3 2

♦ 4

- ♣ In this hand Spades are trumps. If you play your trumps against each other you will make four tricks.
- ♣ However, play a Heart trick first, winning with the Ace, and then play a Diamond trick, winning with the Ace. You can now lead a red card from one hand and trump in the other making seven tricks from your trumps. You won't get overtrumped because you have the biggest trumps.



## Bad Trump Splits

### Dummy

♠ A 7 5 4

♥ AKQJ

♦ A 7 6 5 3

### Declarer

♠ K Q 9 8

♥ 3 2

♦ 4 3

- ♣ In this hand Spades are trumps.
- ♣ On clearing 2 rounds of trumps you discover a 4:1 split
- ♣ However we have six hearts altogether, including the top three. Opponents have 7 hearts and a four-three distribution is likely.
- ♣ Before clearing further trumps play the AH and KH, then QH discarding a Diamond from Declarer's Hand. Then JH discarding any other losers.
- ♣ If the defence trump in, you may be able to overtrump, if you can't, they only have one trump more to clear two of yours. This should leave you with at least the last trump, possibly the last two, and some control.
- ♣ Now play trumps



## When NOT to Delay Trump Clearance

In General, if you don't have a good reason!

Having a long side suit to run

Dummy

♠ A 10 9 8

♥ A K J 8 7 6

Declarer

♠ K Q 7 6 5 4

♥ Q

- ♣ Spades are trumps. Declarer plans to get six tricks out of the heart suit.
- ♣ Declarer doesn't risk a poor split of the hearts. Trumps should be cleared first.
- ♣ Make sure the final round of trumps lets you take the Queen of Hearts and then return to dummy to enjoy the rest.
- ♣ Don't let the defence spoil the plan by trumping any hearts.

Having plenty of trumps but high ones missing

Dummy

Q J 10 9 8

Declarer

7 6 5 4 3 2

Get those big ones out – with a little luck it's only one trick lost. If you let the defence use them to ruff, you may lose two!