

play bridge

A section designed with the newer player in mind.

Taking care of the children

One of the first things we learn when picking up the game is how to count trumps and how to draw them. “Get the children off the street” is a mantra by which many players live. There are times, however, when you *need* to have some trumps in the dummy. Before reading on, think of a few reasons why you might not want to draw trumps right away.

Taking care of losers

When playing in a trump contract, we count losers — usually by looking at our own hand. But be careful. If you count ♥ A 5 3 opposite a singleton as no losers, you may draw trumps prematurely and suddenly find yourself with two losers in that suit.

You must count losers in your hand and then look at dummy to see where you can get some help. Without looking at dummy for help, you are likely to have more losers than you can afford. Now focus on dummy and how it might help you. If you are planning to ruff losers in the dummy, you need to ask yourself if you can afford to draw trumps immediately.

♠ K 10 7
♥ A 8 6
♦ 5 3
♣ A 8 6 4 3

♠ A Q J 5 4
♥ K Q 3
♦ J 8 4 2
♣ 5

The contract is 4♠ and West leads the ♣K.

Win the opening club lead and lead a diamond. Even if the opponents shift to a trump, you will be able to

ruff a diamond loser in the dummy, losing at most three diamonds. If, you draw trumps, you will probably have four diamond losers and no place to discard them.

Using trumps as entries

Sometimes you need to get to the dummy, either to take tricks in a long side suit or to take finesses toward your hand. If you draw trumps first, you may have limited your entries to the dummy.

♠ K 10 9
♥ 8 7 6
♦ 9 4
♣ Q J 9 8 7

♠ A Q J 8 6 3
♥ A Q 10 9
♦ A 2
♣ 4

The contract is 4♠ and West leads the ♦K.

With a club and a diamond loser, you can only afford one heart loser. To maximize your tricks, you need to lead hearts from the dummy — possibly three times. The only entries are trumps. If you draw trumps, even if they divide 2–2, you will only have two dummy entries and will be unable to repeat the heart finesses. You should lead a trump to the ♠9 and play a heart to the 9. If it loses, win the return, lead a trump to the 10, and lead a heart to the 10. You can return to dummy with the ♠K to finesse again in hearts. As long as either the ♥K or ♥J is inside, you can make your game. If you draw trumps first, you won’t be able to repeat the finesse enough times if East has a holding such as ♥K 5 4 3 or ♥J 5 4 3.



Val Covalciuc
ACBL Accredited Teacher
valerierick@comcast.net

Using trumps as buffers

On occasion, you may need to give up the lead to establish winners in a side suit. If you draw trumps first, the defenders may be able to force you to lose control of the deal.

♠ J 10 7
♥ 7 6
♦ Q 5
♣ A 9 8 7 6 2

♠ A K Q 9 8
♥ 9
♦ J 10 9 8 7
♣ K 4

Having overbid again, you are in 4♠. West leads a heart. After ruffing the second heart, you must lead diamonds. If you draw trumps first, even if they divide 3–2, you will not have time to establish diamond winners before running out of trumps. If you lead diamonds at trick three, you can ruff in dummy if the opponents persist in hearts.

Here is your new mantra: “Do I need those trumps in dummy for any reason?” If not, get the children off the street. But if so, take care of business before drawing trumps. □

Notes from ACBL Accredited Teachers