

# EGCC Bridge Lessons

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## Notes from Week 4

### Having a Trump Suit

A hand played with a trump suit differs from one played in No Trumps.

The only “rule” difference is that if at least one trump is played to a trick, then the highest trump played to the trick wins it. In other words a trump beats (or “trumps”) any non-trump.

You still have follow suit if you can though – you can only play a trump if you have none of the suit led.

Playing a trump on a trick to which a trump was not led is called “**Ruffing**”.

### Playing with a Trump Suit

With Trumps you may play the hands differently. The ways you take and develop tricks is mostly the same as in No Trumps (e.g. establishing long suits) but there are some extra things to consider.

You can win a trick by ruffing – but so can the opposition.

Defenders cannot run a long suit against you, as once you run out you can ruff to win the trick.

Similarly you must make sure defenders cannot ruff your long suits, but since you (usually!) have more trumps than them, you can play trumps first to remove trumps from their hands.

### Trumps or No Trumps?

So what determines whether a hand should be played in a trump suit or no-trumps?

As a general rule, if you have at least 8 cards (between the two hands) in a suit, then you are better off playing with that suit as trumps (because you will make more tricks). Otherwise No Trumps is better.

If you have more than one suit with 8 or more cards in them, chose the one with the most cards.

If equal length, pick the one that has more cards in the weakest hand.

### Things to bear in mind as Declarer

Draw trumps (play rounds of trumps to remove them from the defenders hands) as soon as you get the lead. This way, defenders cannot ruff your tricks but you will have some trumps left to ruff theirs.

Trumps can create entries (get the lead into) to a weak hand.

Ruffing in the “short” hand (the one with least trumps) will gain you extra tricks. Ruffing in the “long” hand will not.

## Things to bear in mind as Defender

You are rarely able to establish a long suit against a trump contract.

Fourth highest of your longest suit is still a good principle, as if it's your long suit it won't be declarer's and you're not helping declarer to establish a second suit.

**But:** Never underlead an Ace (play a lower card from a suit of which you have the Ace). In No Trumps an Ace will always make, in a suit contract it may not.

Try to find ways of ruffing a trick before declarer has drawn all your trumps. If you have a singleton (one card in a suit that isn't trumps), it's usually a good idea to lead it. If partner has the Ace, they will win it and lead one back to you for you to ruff.

## Keeping Track

In Bridge it's better if you can keep track of the cards that have gone. That way you know what's left and whether any of the cards you have are winners.

Keeping track is not easy, but there are a few techniques you can use.

In a trump contract, you need to keep track of the trump suit, but only until all the opposition's trumps are gone. Since this usually happens before anything else, you can keep track and then forget about them. You will know that all the trumps left in your hand are winners.

After that you will usually try to develop a long suit. Again, it's only one suit you have to remember.

Keep track of the number of tricks played rather than the actual cards played. It's much easier to remember "two rounds of diamond have been played, that's 8 cards" than trying to remember 8 individual cards. When you're developing a long suit, it rarely matters what cards are left in the suit, just how many.

## Winning a trick as defender

If you are playing to a trick and have a sequence (cards in order: e.g. **KQJT**) that you can win the trick with, play the lowest. Here's an example:

You hold **AKQJ** of spades. Partner leads a spade. If you play the **A**, partner knows only that you had the **A**.

If instead you play the **J**, it will still win the trick, but now partner knows you must have the **AKQ**. If declarer had any of them, they would have won the trick. Your partner knows they do not have them and can see that Dummy does not either, so you must have.

Notice that your partner gets this information, but declarer doesn't. Declarer already knows that **AKQ** are in the defenders' hands, but not which hand each card is in.

Jeremy

[jeremy.m.child@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.m.child@gmail.com)

07969 297 633