

§3. Mixed No-trumps and trumps.

In this final section we look at deals where declarer has a choice of whether to play in a trump suit or in No-trumps. What would sway declarer's choice of *strain*?

Let's have a look at a typical deal, but only the North-South cards.

<p>♠ Q 7 5 ♥ A K 4 ♦ 8 7 6 2 ♣ A 3 2</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>Dummy</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>Declarer</td></tr> </table>	Dummy	W E	Declarer	<p>♠ A K J 8 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ A 9 3 ♣ 9 6 4</p>
Dummy					
W E					
Declarer					

If you were South (declarer) what strain would you nominate? Spades? Hearts? Diamonds? Clubs? No-trumps? And *why*?

The answer is: declarer should nominate **No-trumps**. Firstly, note, that North-South have no eight-card (or longer) *fit* in any trump suit – that argues against making any suit trumps. Secondly, note that the North-South hands are *balanced*. This is a common term used in Minibridge (and bridge) and it denotes a hand without a long suit and without any singletons or any voids. If you would like to be technical here then it is usually applied to hands with a *suit pattern* of 4·3·3·3 or 4·4·3·2. Here, both North and South have 4·3·3·3 shapes. Balanced hands usually play better in No-trumps than with a trump suit. Finally, note that North-South have *stoppers* in all suits. This means that the opponents cannot lead a suit and run off tricks there. Essentially, North-South control all four suits.

If you can count your tricks in advance maybe you can see that South can make nine tricks on this deal; he has four Spade tricks, three Heart tricks and two Aces.

Now, by contrast, have a look at this hand:

<p>♠ 5 ♥ K 8 7 2 ♦ A Q 9 5 ♣ 8 7 5 3</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>Dummy</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>Declarer</td></tr> </table>	Dummy	W E	Declarer	<p>♠ 10 6 4 2 ♥ A Q J 10 3 ♦ K J ♣ J 4</p>
Dummy					
W E					
Declarer					

Here, South should nominate Hearts as trumps. Why? Well, neither North nor South is *balanced* (if we are being technical, South has a 5·4·2·2 shape and North has a 4·4·4·1 shape), North-South do have a nine-card *fit* in a suit (Hearts) and North-South do not have *stoppers* in either Clubs or Spades (meaning that East-West could take an unknown number of Club and Spade tricks before South gets a look in).

Here, a trump suit *controls the hand*. If East-West decide to lead Spades then North (dummy) can trump the second round, allowing East-West only one trick in Spades. If East-West lead Clubs South can trump the third round, allowing the opponents only two tricks in Clubs.

The eight hands that follow are mixed. Declarer has to decide whether to nominate a trump suit or No-trumps.

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