

§2. Playing with a trump suit.

§1 was about playing hands without a trump suit. This section is about playing with a trump suit.

Let's look at an example hand to see the process in action. North is the dealer and the cards are dealt as follows:

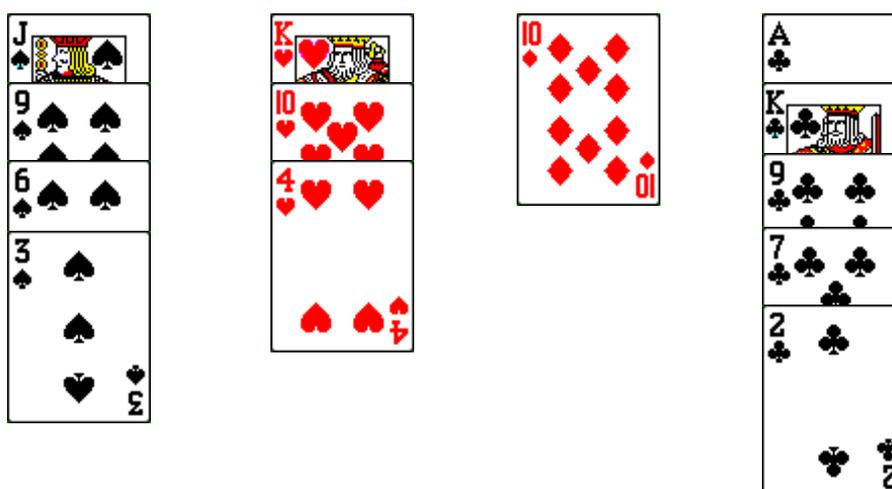
Dealer	♠ A 10 4 ♥ J 5 3 2 ♦ K Q J 7 ♣ J 3										
♠ J 9 6 3 ♥ K 10 4 ♦ 10 ♣ A K 9 7 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 7 ♥ A Q ♦ 9 5 4 2 ♣ Q 8 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 8 5 2 ♥ 9 8 7 6 ♦ A 8 6 3 ♣ 10 4										

North (the dealer) starts off in the usual way by announcing his hand, "I have 12 points" and then each player in turn (going clockwise) announces his hand in a similar way. You should see that the points in this deal are distributed like this:

West	North	East	South
11	12	13	4

Here, on this particular deal East-West have more points than North-South (24 points to 16). So, East-West is the partnership that plays the hand and can *nominate the trump suit*. As East has more points than West it is East who becomes **declarer** and West who becomes the **dummy**.

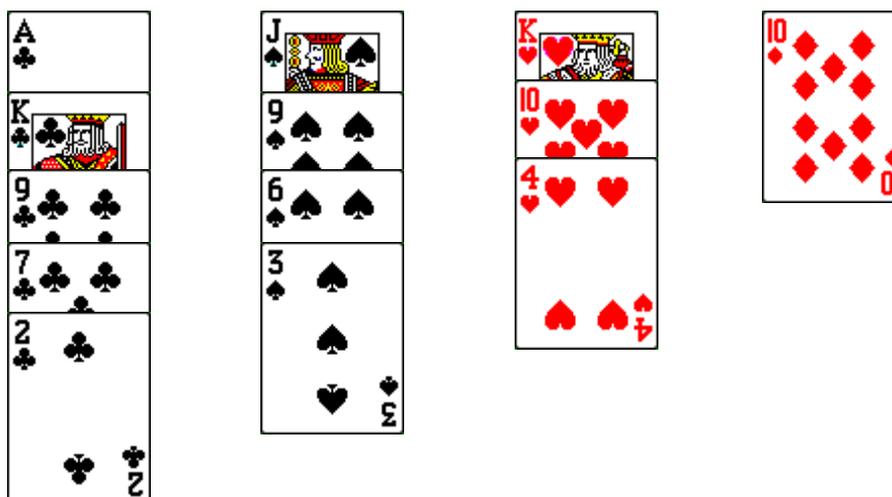
Dummy, as in the play in No-trumps, must arrange his hand neatly, face upwards on the table. In this case West arranges his hand in columns to look a little like this:



Again, as in §1, there is no statutory order in which the suits must be displayed. Here West has chosen to order his cards Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs when he exposes them but there is no rule that says he has to do it in precisely this way.

Declarer (East, remember), after looking at both his own hand and dummy, *nominates trumps*. In the deal above declarer wants Clubs to be the trump suit as the East-West hands have nine Clubs between them. East does this by saying “I nominate Clubs” or “Clubs are trumps”. Note that No-trumps is a poor place to play as North-South might be able to take a lot of Diamonds with East powerless to stop them.

Once trumps have been nominated the dummy (West) places the entire trump suit (in this case, Clubs) to his right – declarer’s left – so that dummy now looks something like this (see top of next page):



South, the player to declarer’s left, now chooses a card to lead and play commences.

On this deal you should note that North-South could only take one trick in Diamonds – if they were to lead a second round of the suit dummy would trump (or *ruff*) it. A trump suit is useful on those hands where declarer and dummy have a lot of trumps between them and there are *singletons* and *voids* about.

In general, a trump suit is chosen when a partnership has at least eight cards between them of a suit as this gives the opponents only five cards in the trump suit. If a partnership has only seven trumps between the two hands then the opponents have six trumps and the play of the cards can become very tricky.

The “rule” therefore is to choose long suits as your trump suit, with *length* triumphing over *strength*. As an example of this have a look at this deal, with only the North-South cards shown:

♠ 7 3 2										
♥ J 10 9										
♦ 10 8 6 4										
♣ K Q J										
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S	
	N									
W		E								
	S									
♠ 10 8										
♥ A K Q										
♦ J 9 7 5 3										
♣ A 4 2										

Here, North-South have 21 points to their opponents' 19 and South is declarer. What suit would you like to be trumps? Firstly, note that playing the hand in No-trumps is very dodgy. East-West could take a number of tricks in Spades (how many tricks we can't tell) and at least two tricks in Diamonds.

So South should choose a trump suit. You might think Hearts (or even Clubs) is best but in point of fact that is an illusion. Without doubt the right trump suit is Diamonds where North-South have nine cards.

On some layouts North-South might only lose two Diamond tricks (can you see how that might happen?) although they may well lose all of the \diamond A K Q. They will also lose the \spadesuit A K but no more tricks in Spades. That makes five losers in all (and eight tricks gathered in). Now, if Hearts or Clubs were trumps then the opponents would have more trumps than the declaring side and East-West will, for sure, score at least one trick with their extra trump.

So, to repeat, the rule is *length before strength*.

The eight hands that follow are all played in a trump suit. Declarer just has to choose the best trump suit on each deal