



## *Don't be too Quick on the Draw*

When we learn bridge, we are taught that for trump contracts, the first step is to draw trumps. Once that has been done, we can develop extra tricks in the side suits. The good news is that this is right for maybe half the hands we play. The bad news is that it is wrong for all the other hands.



The most basic reason for not drawing trumps immediately is that you need to be in dummy to take a finesse in the trump suit. It is easy to get to dummy when there is a convenient ace in a side suit. When dummy does not have an obvious entry, you may have to do some work to create one. As we will see, that can sometimes cause other problems.

I am sure everyone counts their tricks when dummy goes down. 😊

Sometimes you do this and find yourself a trick or two short. Has your partner been over-bidding? Again? Often, you can make up the shortfall by getting dummy to ruff losers from your hand. This must be done before trumps are drawn because otherwise dummy has no trumps to ruff with.

On the following pages, I'll have a look at some examples of both of these.

There are many other situations where trumps should not be drawn. If all goes well this week, I'll cover some of them next time.

## A Simple Case

I am east and my long-suffering partner (LSP) is west. We are up against Norman and Sandra.

<p>LSP</p> <table border="1" style="background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <tr><td>♠ J 6 5 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ Q 5 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ A 4 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ 7 6 5</td></tr> </table>	♠ J 6 5 2	♥ Q 5 2	♦ A 4 2	♣ 7 6 5	<p>Me:        1♥          LSP:       2♥          Me:        4♥          South leads A♠</p>	<p>Me</p> <table border="1" style="background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <tr><td>♠ 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ A J T 7 4 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ K Q 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ A 9 2</td></tr> </table>	♠ 3	♥ A J T 7 4 3	♦ K Q 3	♣ A 9 2
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♦ K Q 3										
♣ A 9 2										

I am playing in 4♥ after some fairly optimistic bidding. Sandra starts with the spade ace and follows up with the king. I gleefully ruff in my hand. (On-line bridge is great! You can give your emotions free rein. I spend a lot of my time chuckling away with just the occasional growl when things go wrong.)

Before I go any further I do a quick reconnaissance. I have three diamond tricks and one club trick. I need six more from my trump suit to get me to ten. I can only see one hope. North has to have the trump king so that I can take a successful finesse.

*In my early days of bridge, one of the things I was taught was this. If the only way to make your contract is for the opposition cards to be situated in a certain fashion, play the cards as if it is so.*

OK. My arch rival, Norman is in the north seat. Assume he has the king. Instead of playing trumps from my hand, I will play the ♦3 and win with dummy's ace. I play the ♥2, Norman plays the six and I confidently play Jack. It wins! Whoopee! I follow up with the ace of trumps. Sandra discards a diamond and Norman plays the ♥9. Hey! That's no good! Norman still has the king and now, I will only make five trump tricks. LSP is glaring at me. We are on-line and I can't see him but I just **know** he is glaring.

What was my mistake? I overlooked the possibility that Norman may have two other trumps with his king and I need to finesse not once but twice. Let's try that again.

After winning the ♦A, it is imperative I lead the ♥Q and not a low heart from dummy. If Norman plays low, I play low from my hand. When the queen holds the trick, I can play a low heart to repeat the finesse. This time my ♥J will win the trick. Now I lay down my ace and grin smugly at Norman (we are still on-line) when he is forced to play his king.

	Norman	
	♠ Q 9 8 4 ♥ K 9 6 ♦ J T 7 ♣ K J 4	
LSP		Me
♠ J 6 5 2 ♥ Q 5 2 ♦ A 4 2 ♣ 7 6 5	Sandra	♠ 3 ♥ A J T 7 4 3 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ A 9 2
	♠ A K T 7 ♥ 8 ♦ 9 8 6 5 ♣ Q T 8 3	

Well, that wasn't too bad, LSP. I only made one small mistake.

It's time for something a little more involved.

## Not So Simple

Again I bid 4♥ but this time my hand is a little better.

<p>LSP</p> <table border="1" style="background-color: #e0f0e0; width: 100%; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td>♠ J 6 5 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ Q 9 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ A 4 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ 7 6 5</td></tr> </table>	♠ J 6 5 2	♥ Q 9 2	♦ A 4 2	♣ 7 6 5	<p>Me:            1♥</p> <p>LSP:           2♥</p> <p>Me:            4♥</p> <p>Sandra leads A♠</p>	<p>Me</p> <table border="1" style="background-color: #e0f0e0; width: 100%; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td>♠ 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ A J T 7 4 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ K Q 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ A Q 2</td></tr> </table>	♠ 3	♥ A J T 7 4 3	♦ K Q 3	♣ A Q 2
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♠ 3										
♥ A J T 7 4 3										
♦ K Q 3										
♣ A Q 2										

Once again, Sandra starts with the spade ace and follows up with the king. This time, I punch the air with my fist as I play the ♥3.

I take stock of the situation. I have 3 diamond tricks, 5 or 6 heart tricks depending on the heart finesse and 1 or 2 club tricks depending on the club finesse. All I need is for one of the two finesses to work. Great! The odds are in my favour. I'll cross to the ♦A and lead a heart towards my jack. If that fails, I'll cross to the ..... Oh! I seem to be missing an entry.

It looks like I can only finesse one suit. Which one should it be? Clubs or hearts? I am going to look pretty silly if I pick the wrong one. Hold on! I've got an idea. I can plonk down the ♥A first. Maybe the king will drop. If not, I can take the club finesse. That will improve the odds. But how often do you get singleton kings when you need them?

Wait! I've got it! I am so stupid! (I know LSP is nodding.) I'll go across to the ♦A and play the ♥Q. I'll let that run round to south. If south wins, the ♥9 will be my entry into dummy for the club finesse. If south doesn't win, I'll finesse hearts again. Then, I'll make my six trumps and it won't matter about clubs.

OK. Let's go. And guess what, my ♥Q held the trick. So, now I can play ♥9 to catch Norman's king..... Just hang on a minute! That Sandra in the south seat is a tricky defender. Maybe she is bluffing and has the king waiting to pounce. If I play the nine and she wins with the king, I won't be able to get back into dummy for the club finesse.

Right. I'd better play the ♥2 and not the nine. I can play the ten from my hand. Now, it won't matter if Sandra has the king because the nine is my entry back into dummy for the club finesse. If Norman had the king all along, I won't have any heart losers and I won't need the club finesse.

	Norman									
	♠ Q 9 8 4 ♥ 6 ♦ J T 8 7 ♣ K J 9 4	Phew.								
<p>LSP</p> <table border="1" style="background-color: #e0f0e0; width: 100%; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td>♠ J 6 5 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ Q 9 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ A 4 2</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ 7 6 5</td></tr> </table>	♠ J 6 5 2	♥ Q 9 2	♦ A 4 2	♣ 7 6 5	Sandra	<p>Me</p> <table border="1" style="background-color: #e0f0e0; width: 100%; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td>♠ 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ A J T 7 4 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ K Q 3</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ A Q 2</td></tr> </table>	♠ 3	♥ A J T 7 4 3	♦ K Q 3	♣ A Q 2
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♠ 3										
♥ A J T 7 4 3										
♦ K Q 3										
♣ A Q 2										
	♠ A K T 7 ♥ K 8 5 ♦ 9 6 5 ♣ T 8 3									

## Beware!

There was some spirited bidding this time.

<p>LSP</p> <p>♠ Q 6 2 ♥ K 9 7 6 ♦ K Q ♣ 8 7 6 5</p>	<p>Me: 1♠ Sandra: 2♠ LSP: 3♠ Norman: 4♥ Me: 4♠</p> <p>Sandra leads 2♣</p>	<p>Me</p> <p>♠ A J T 9 7 ♥ 2 ♦ 5 4 ♣ A K Q J 4</p>
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Sandra alerted her 2♠ bid and explained it as a Michael's Cue Bid showing five hearts and five of a minor.

Well, I've been on this marvellous course about postponing the drawing of trumps. I need to get to dummy to take the spade finesse. I have no aces there but I can use the ♦K to force out the ace and then cross to the ♦Q to take my trump finesse.

No worries! I win trick one with the ♣A and then play the ♦4 and the ♦K from dummy. Norman wins with the ♦A and leads another club. I play my king and ... oh no! Sneaky Sandra has trumped my winner. Now Sandra plays the ♥Q, I cover with the king and Norman wins with his ace. This isn't looking good. Norman leads another club, I play my queen but Sandra trumps again and sends me a sweet smiley. Huh! Four tricks gone. Down!!

Where did it all go wrong? Firstly, I didn't count. I have five club tricks, four or five spade tricks depending on the finesse and a diamond trick once I have forced out the ace. So, even without the finesse, I have ten tricks. Secondly, I didn't pay attention to the bidding and the opening lead. Sandra has shown ten cards in hearts and a minor – and we all know which minor that is, don't we. So Sandra has only three cards left over for hearts and clubs. It is almost certain the ♣2 is a singleton.

Let's wind back the clock and do it again. I win the first trick as before but now, I play the ♠A and follow up with the ♠7 to dummy's queen. Norman wins with the king and fires back another club. I play my king and look anxiously at Sandra. Slowly, she discards the ♦3. She's out of trumps! I pull off my shirt and run around the room screaming madly.

	Norman	
	♠ K 4 3 ♥ A T 5 ♦ A T 9 2 ♣ T 9 3	
<p>LSP</p> <p>♠ Q 6 2 ♥ K 9 7 6 ♦ K Q ♣ 8 7 6 5</p>	Sandra	<p>Me</p> <p>♠ A J T 9 7 ♥ 2 ♦ 5 4 ♣ A K Q J 4</p>
	♠ 8 5 ♥ Q J 8 4 3 ♦ J 8 7 6 3 ♣ 2	

Back at my computer, I calm down and help myself to my ten tricks, losing ♠K, ♦A and ♥A.

That was fun.

It's a shame we don't get a second chance when playing for real..

## Something Different

After another competitive auction, we end up in 4♥. Gosh! I get to play a lot. What fun!

<p>LSP</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ T 9 7 4 ♥ A J 5 ♦ K 5 ♣ A 8 5 3</p> </div>	<p>Me: 1♥ LSP: 1♠ Norman: 2♣ Me: Pass LSP: 4♥</p> <p>Sandra leads 2♣</p>	<p>Me</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ A 5 ♥ K Q T 7 3 ♦ A 9 2 ♣ T 9 6</p> </div>
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I eye Sandra's ♣2 lead suspiciously. Didn't Norman overcall 2♣? It looks like Sandra is leading a singleton again. I am not going to be fooled this time.

I win trick one with ♣A and draw trumps. That's fixed Sandra! Now I cash the winners in my side suits, one spade two diamonds and one club. With the three trump tricks already won, that takes me to seven. I have two trumps remaining. That makes nine. Oh! Where's my tenth trick? I play the hand out but when Sandra wins the last trick with the ♦Q (and gives me another of her sweet smileys), I am down one. Oh no! I've blown it again. Sorry, partner.

Let's try again. If I had only counted tricks when dummy went down, I might have done better. Five trumps plus one spade plus two diamonds plus one club. That makes nine. I need one more. There are no handy finesses I can try. I don't see any way of establishing a trick in clubs or spades. What can I do?

Then, I notice that dummy has less diamonds than I have. That means dummy will be able to ruff the third round of diamonds – as long as dummy has trumps left to ruff with. OK. Plan B.

Instead of drawing trumps, I play a diamond to dummy's king. Next, the ♦5. Norman plays the jack and I win with my ace. I play my last diamond and ruff with the ♥5. There's my extra trick. Hey! No, it's not! Nasty Norman has over-ruffed with ♥8. Will I ever get it right?

It would have helped if I had paid attention to the cards Norman played to the first two diamonds: the three and then the jack. What's more I have all the top trumps and I can easily afford to ruff with a high one. So, I go for the spectacular and trump with ♥A. As they say, "Never send a boy to do a man's job." Norman discards a club and I have my extra trick.

	Norman	
	<p>♠ K Q 2 ♥ 9 8 4 ♦ J 3 ♣ K Q J 7 4</p>	
<p>LSP</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ T 9 7 4 ♥ A J 5 ♦ K 5 ♣ A 8 5 3</p> </div>	Sandra	<p>Me</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ A 5 ♥ K Q T 7 3 ♦ A 9 2 ♣ T 9 6</p> </div>
	<p>♠ J 8 6 3 ♥ 6 2 ♦ Q T 8 7 6 4 ♣ 2</p>	

I get out of my chair, scream and attempt a backward somersault. I fall in a moaning heap and Kate helps me back to my chair.

Rather painfully, I draw trumps and cash the rest of my winners making ten tricks.

LSP texts with no hint of sarcasm showing "Well done. Third time lucky, hey."

## In Control

My 4♥ may have been optimistic but watch out! I'm on a roll!

LSP		Me
♠ K 9 7 4 ♥ A J 5 ♦ K 6 5 4 ♣ 5 3	Me: 1♥ LSP: 3♥ Me: 4♥  Sandra leads ♦Q	♠ A 5 ♥ K Q T 7 3 ♦ A 3 2 ♣ T 9 6

Sandra leads the ♦Q and dummy goes down. Having learned my lesson from the last hand, I pause to count my tricks. Two spades, five trumps and two diamonds make nine. You wouldn't credit it but I am one short again. I can't see spades or clubs offering me anything. Diamonds may provide an extra trick if they break evenly but the odds are against that. Can I do better?

Dummy has less clubs than I have. There is a prospect of ruffing a club to provide an extra trick. The trouble is I will have to lose the lead twice before I can get my ruff. Who knows what mayhem Sneaky Sandra and Nasty Norman can create if I give them a chance. Still, the club ruff seems my best option so I'll give it a go.

I win the diamond lead in my hand. Instead of drawing trumps, I play the ♣T. Sandra wins with ♣J and continues with ♦J. I win this in dummy with ♦K and continue my club theory. This time, Sandra wins with the queen and plays yet another diamond, the ten. That wins the trick and is the third trick I have lost. I can't afford to lose any more. It's getting a bit tense. Meanwhile, Norman discarded the ♣8 on the diamond.

Sandra plays yet another diamond, the nine and now Norman discards the ♣K. That's strange. Still, I am happy because I can ruff the diamond in my hand. I play my final club and ruff in dummy with the ♥5. Oh no! Not again! Nasty Norman over-ruffed with ♥7. Now the reason for the ♣K discard is obvious.

Gosh, I am a slow learner. Replaying this hand, I ruff with ♥A as I did on the previous hand. Then, I can take the rest of the tricks and make my contract. Kate has given me my medicine so no histrionics this time. Just a quiet raise of the eyebrows.

	Norman	
	♠ Q 6 3 2 ♥ 9 8 4 ♦ 8 7 ♣ K 8 7 4	
LSP		Me
♠ K 9 7 4 ♥ A J 5 ♦ K 6 5 4 ♣ 5 3	Sandra	♠ A 5 ♥ K Q T 7 3 ♦ A 3 2 ♣ T 9 6
	♠ J T 8 ♥ 6 2 ♦ Q J T 9 ♣ A Q J 2	

Memo to self.

I really must count things out at the start and always watch what the opposition are playing. Especially with tricky opponents like Nasty Norman and Sneaky Sandra.

## Last Hand of the Day

It's funny how BBO throws up similar hands board after board. Anyway, I am playing another 4♥ contract.

LSP		Me
♠ K 9 4 ♥ A J 5 ♦ 6 5 4 ♣ A 5 3 2	LSP: 1♣ Me: 1♥ LSP: 1NT Me: 3♦ LSP: 3♥ Me: 4♥ Sandra leads ♣K	♠ A 7 ♥ K Q T 7 3 ♦ A 8 3 2 ♣ T 9

The opening lead is the ♣K. I look at dummy and count my tricks. Two spades, five hearts, a diamond and a club. The total is nine. No surprise there. All I can see is the possibility of the diamond suit breaking evenly in which case my fourth diamond will be a winner. As we know, the chance of this happening is not good.

Just a moment! Perhaps, the diamond suit offers another, different opportunity. I have more diamonds than dummy so maybe I can ruff one in dummy. Of course, by the time I get to the third and fourth round of diamonds, the opponents will be ruffing too. That won't matter as long as I cash my ace of diamonds first because I can ruff the fourth diamond with my trusty ace of trumps. What's more, if the diamonds do happen to break evenly, I won't need to ruff at all.

Here goes. I win the first trick with the ace of clubs. I follow that with a diamond to the ace and then lead a small diamond. Norman wins with the jack and plays a club to Sandra's queen. The jack of clubs comes next but I ruff that in my hand. Now, a third round of diamonds. Sandra wins the trick and Norman discards a spade. Sandra sends back yet another club. I have to ruff again. Gosh trumps are getting a bit tight. I hope they don't break badly.

Finally, I lead my last diamond and ruff with my patent ♥A. I draw trumps. When they break nicely, I take two spade tricks and make my contract.

	Norman	
	♠ Q 6 5 3 2 ♥ 9 8 4 ♦ Q J ♣ 8 7 4	
LSP		Me
♠ K 9 4 ♥ A J 5 ♦ 6 5 4 ♣ A 5 3 2	Sandra	♠ A 7 ♥ K Q T 7 3 ♦ A 8 3 2 ♣ T 9
	♠ J T 8 ♥ 6 2 ♦ K T 9 7 ♣ K Q J 6	

The medicine's wearing off. I am back to the clenched fist.



## Aftermath

After the session, the results were posted and I scan down the list looking for our names. What's this? How can we be last? Only 36%? What happened? After all those contracts I made?

LSP tells me "Sorry, mate. They didn't allow all those second and third attempts."

Oh, no. This is so depressing.

LSP offers some advice. "Next time" he says. (Oh, great there will be a next time.) "Next time, I want you to do these few things every time you play a suit contract." He gives me a list.

*When dummy goes down, answer this list of questions before you play a card.*

1. How many **T**ricks do I need for my contract and how many sure tricks do I have?
2. If I don't have enough tricks, where can I get the **A**dditional tricks I need?
3. Can I draw **T**rumps or do I need trumps in dummy in to create my extra tricks?
4. What have I learned from the **A**uction and opening lead?

What? I have to do all of that? How can I possibly remember all this? It will take ages!

"Stick with it" LSP says. "It's easy to remember – just think TATA. With a little practice, you can do it! See you next time."

