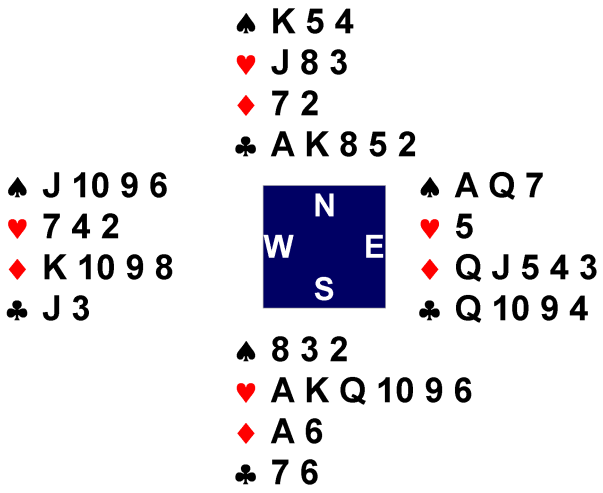
Setting up a Side Suit

One important way of creating extra winners in trump contracts is to use trumps to *set up* (= to *establish*) winners from small cards in a long suit held either by you or dummy.

In your following 4♥ contract, the defence take 3 spade tricks and switch to diamonds.



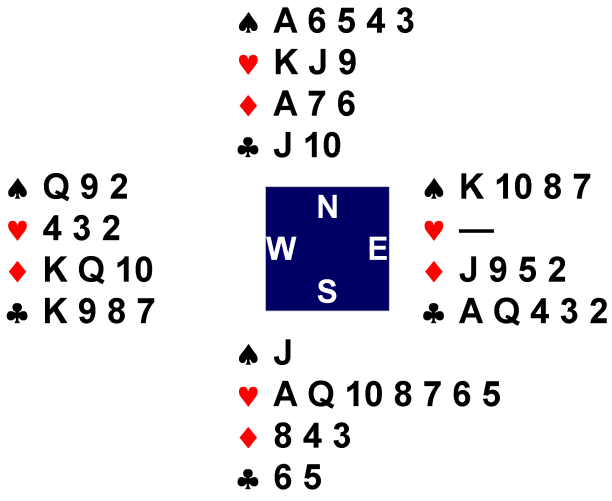
As declarer, you are now facing a fourth loser in diamonds and only 9 top tricks.

Your only hope is to set up a winner in clubs on which to discard your diamond loser.

The opponents' 6 clubs are more likely to break 4-2 (48%) than 3-3 (36%). If the former, you will need 2 entries to dummy in addition to the club suit, one to ruff a fourth club and one to enjoy the fifth club. *Both* these entries can come only from the trump suit.

After winning ♦A you cash the trump ace and ♣AK. Next ruff a club with ♥K/Q. Cross back to dummy by leading ♥6 to ♥8. Ruff a fourth club high with ♥Q/K. Now draw the last trump by overtaking ♥T/9 with ♥J in dummy, cash your winning club and discard the losing diamond in your hand.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣



You are in 4♥ after opening with a 3♥ pre-empt. ♦K is led.

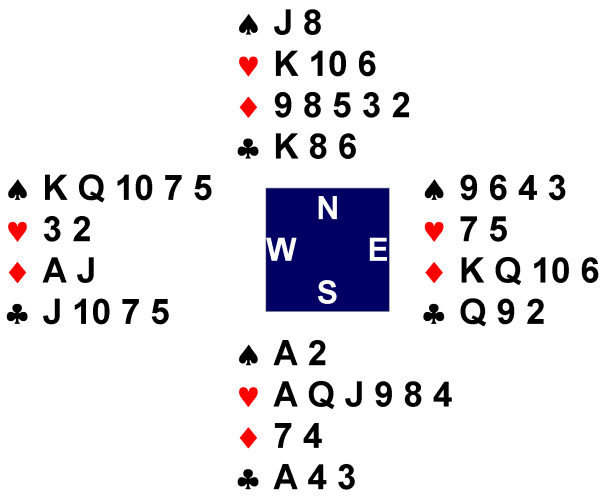
You have 4 losers in the minors – 1 too many – and only 9 top winners. What can be done?

The only hope of a tenth trick is to establish 1 in spades. Don't be put off by the poor quality of the spades – think only of their length. If spades break 4-3, you will be able to discard 1 of your losers in the minors on the fifth.

You will have to ruff 3 spades, requiring 2 entries outside spades and 1 more to reap the reward of your efforts. Again, ***you will need to use dummy's trumps as entries,*** all three of them, since your ♦A entry has been driven out at trick one.

After ♦A, play ♠A and ruff a spade. Cross to ♥9 and ruff a spade. Cross to ♥J and ruff the fourth round of spades, clearing the suit. Now cross to dummy with a heart, drawing their last trump if they originally broke 3-0, and throw a loser on your winning spade. 10 tricks made.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣



You are again in 4♥, this time on ♠K lead. You can now count 3 immediate losers – 2 in diamonds and 1 spade - when they gain the lead and an eventual loser in clubs. And you have only 9 sure winners.

This time your only hope of a tenth trick is to create a winner from dummy's moth-eaten diamond suit on which your losing club can be discarded.

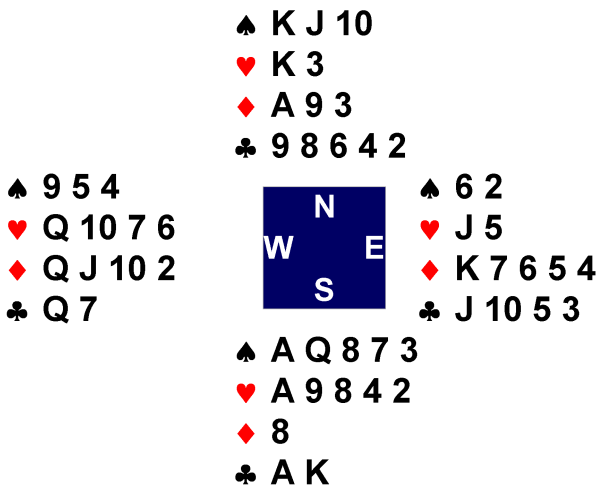
Again, a 4-2 break is most likely and a total of 3 entries to dummy will be needed - 2 to ruff diamonds and 1 to reap the rewards. With only 1 club entry, the other 2 will have to come from the trump suit.

Win the spade lead and play a diamond. They win, cash a second spade and switch to a club.

Following the very important principle:– to conserve entries to the long suit you hope to develop (here diamonds) - you must win this *in hand* and lead your second diamond. Win the club return in dummy and ruff a third diamond *high*. Play a trump to the ten and ruff a fourth diamond high. All the opponents' diamonds have been played.

Now cash ♥A, draw the last trump by crossing to dummy's ♥K and throw your losing club on dummy's diamond winner.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣



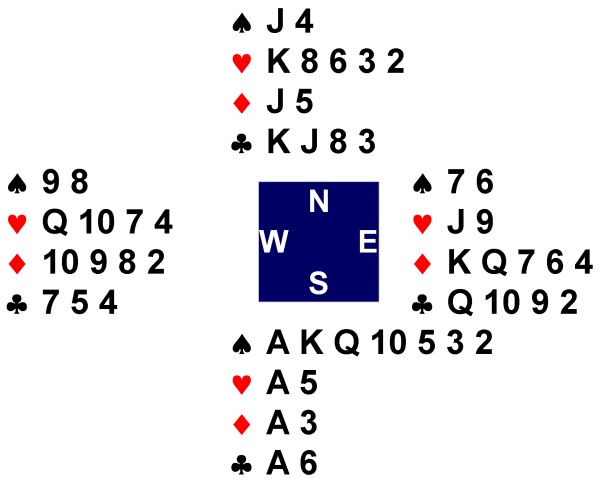
On the following deal, you have bid boldly to 6♠. What is your plan on ♦Q lead?

You have 10 top tricks and your only possible losers are in hearts. But as long as there are trumps in dummy you can trump two rounds. Remember that they are more likely to break 4-2 than 3-3.

Win ♦A and immediately play ♥K and a heart to the ace. Now ruff a heart. East shows out. Return to hand with a diamond ruff and ruff a fourth heart.

Your fifth heart is now a winner. All that remains is to draw trumps. Cash dummy's remaining trump and return to hand a club to play ♠AQ. Because trumps break 3-2 you make all 13 tricks.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣



This time you have soared to even bolder heights and are playing in grand slam - 7♠. What is your plan on a trump lead?

12 top tricks are in sight. The best chance of a thirteenth is in hearts if they break no worse than 4-2. The club finesse is only a 50% chance.

In order to ruff 2 hearts and get back to dummy for the final winner, you will need 2 entries outside hearts. One will have to be ♠J.

And so you win ♠T *in hand*, play ♥A and a heart to the king. Ruff a heart *high*. Now enter dummy via ♠J, drawing the remaining trumps, and ruff another heart. They break. Finally, cross to ♣K and pitch your losing diamond on dummy's winning heart. Grand slam bid and made.

Summary

Before playing to trick one:

- Count winners, identify your main side suit, and decide how many times it must be played/ruffed.
- Decide "trumps first or side suit first?" based on trump control and entry needs.

As you play the side suit:

- Track opponents' cards in that suit and adjust your plan if the split is better or worse than expected.
- Stop ruffing once the suit is established so you still have trumps to draw the opponents' trumps and enjoy your new winners.

Suggested Videos: Link here

- Pasadena Bridge Club (14 mins)

Bridge-Training Links

Practice these hands online

Hand 1 Hand 2 Hand 3 Hand 4 Hand 5 Hand 6
Hand 7 Hand 8 Hand 9 Hand 10

We thank Tina Zines for use of her material

Quizzes https://forms.gle/spQsxED9ndwk3jHA9

- In each situation below, suggest a line of play after following the recommended routine:
- How many losers, immediate and/or eventual?
- What might be done about them?
- How many guaranteed tricks?
- How to create more?
- Any problems you can spot?
- Can you draw trumps at once?
- Your actions at trick one and trick two?

1. **In 4♥ after losing 3 rounds of ♠s followed by a ♦ switch**

YOU	DUMMY
♠ 832	♠ K54
♥ AKQT96	♥ J82
♦ A6	♦ 72
♣ 76	♣ AK852

Losers: 3♠ 0♥ 1♦ 0♣ = 4
Top Tricks: 1♠ 6♥ 1♦ 2♣ = 10
Problems: Need to set up ♣s. If draw trumps will not have enough entries to set ♣s
Draw Trumps: No
Actions: Win ♦A & play ♣A & ♣K & then ruff a ♣ with ♥9. Draw one round of trumps & lead ♥6 to dummy's ♥8 & then ruff another club high. Lead ♥T to dummy's ♥J &, assuming split is no worse than 4:2, the fifth ♣ can be used to discard the losing ♦ in hand

2. **In 4♥ on a ♦K lead**

YOU	DUMMY
♠ J	♠ A6543
♥ AQT8765	♥ KJ9
♦ 843	♦ A76
♣ 65	♣ JT

Losers: 0♠ 0♥ 2♦ 2♣ = 4
Top Tricks: 1♠ 7♥ 1♦ 0♣ = 9
Problems: Too many losers. ♠s are the only chance to discard a loser in hand. With ♦A already played we need 3 entries in trumps
Draw Trumps: No
Actions: Win lead & play ♠A & then ruff a ♠. Play low ♥ to dummy's ♥9 & ruff another ♠. Repeat this twice more &, if ♠ split 4:3, the fifth ♠ will be a winner.

3. **In 4♥ on a ♠K lead**

YOU	DUMMY
♠ A2	♠ J8
♥ AQJ984	♥ KT6
♦ 74	♦ A9852
♣ A43	♣ K86

Losers: 1♠ 0♥ 1♦ 1♣ = 3
Top Tricks: 1♠ 6♥ 1♦ 2♣ = 10
Problems: There's a chance of an overtrick if can establish ♦s. Will need enough entries
Draw Trumps: No
Actions: Win lead & play ♦A & another ♦. When regain the lead go to dummy with ♣K & ruff a ♦ high. Back to dummy with a trump & ruff a fourth ♦. If ♦ split no worse than 4:2 the fifth ♦ is a winner & can be accessed using trumps.

4. **In 6♠ on a ♦K lead**

YOU		DUMMY
♠ AQ873		♠ KJT
♥ A9842		♥ K3
♦ 7		♦ A93
♣ AK		♣ 98642

Losers: 0♠ 0♥ 0♦ 0♣ = 0 but 3 slow ♥ losers
Top Tricks: 5♠ 2♥ 1♦ 2♣ = 10
Problems: Not enough top tricks &, if draw trumps, not enough trumps in dummy to ruff losing ♥s.
Draw Trumps: No
Actions: Win lead & play ♥K & ♥A & another ♥ & ruff in dummy. Back to hand with a ♣ & ruff a fourth ♥. Now draw trumps

5. **In 7♠ on a ♠9 lead**

YOU		DUMMY
♠ AKQT532		♠ J4
♥ A5		♥ K8632
♦ A3		♦ J5
♣ A6		♣ KJ83

Losers: 0♠ 0♥ 1♦ 0♣ = 1
Top Tricks: 7♠ 2♥ 1♦ 2♣ = 12
Problems: ♦ loser. Could try ♣ ruff or setting up ♥s
Draw Trumps: No
Actions: Win lead in hand & play ♥A & ♥K & another ♥ & ruff in hand. Over to dummy's ♠J & ruff another ♥. If ♥s split 4:2 the fifth ♥ can be used to discard the ♦ loser. If they split 5:1 you can still try the ♣ finesse