

Ruffing in the Short Hand

Masterclass, 2024

- Ruffing in the short hand – explained
- When it is difficult to spot
- When to choose an alternative line

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- Remember that in situations where you have more trumps in one hand than the other, these are referred to as the **long hand** and the **short hand**.
- Ruffing in the long hand does not gain you any tricks you do not already have.
- Ruffing in the short hand often does.

Visualisation

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2. Picturing how the trump-drawing will proceed.

Visualisation – base hand

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- Remember, too, that the long hand should be the one you choose to be the base hand.
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- Remember that the base hand is the hand that **limits the number of potential losers in each suit** depending on the number of cards in the suit in that hand
- Remember, too, that the long hand should be the one you choose to be the base hand.
- When you ruff in the base hand, you are not changing the number of side-suit losers in that hand because you are playing a trump; therefore, your side suits stay the same length.
- However, when you ruff in the short hand, you are ruffing a card from the base hand that you had been expecting to lose initially: if that trump wins, the expected loss becomes a win.

Visualisation – base hand

Short hand: ♠ xxx ♥ x ♦ xxxxx ♣ xxxx

Long hand: ♠ xxxxx ♥ xxx ♦ x ♣ xxxx

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Where c = no. c cards in base hand,

$c_{♠} = 5$, $c_{♥} = 3$, $c_{♦} = 1$, $c_{♣} = 4$

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Notice that ruffing ♦ in the long/base hand will not change the fact that $c_{♦}$ is 1.

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Notice that ruffing ♦ in the long/base hand will not change the fact that $c_{♦}$ is 1.

However, ruffing ♥ in the short hand once will reduce $c_{♥}$ to 2; then a second ♥ ruff will reduce $c_{♥}$ to 1 (the round you have to play to void yourself in ♥ in the short hand).

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- If you draw the trumps and take no ruffs, you can make up to c trumps (the length in the long hand).
- If you draw the trumps and ruff in the long hand with the remaining trumps, you can still only make up to c trumps.

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- If you draw the trumps and ruff in the long hand with the remaining trumps, you can still only make up to c trumps.
- If you ruff in the short hand and then draw the trumps, you can make up to the number of ruffs (r) + c .

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Ruffing in short hand: maximum **7 trump tricks**

(e.g. 2 ♥ ruffs + the 5 trumps in base hand)

Note that to ruff in the short hand, you must not draw all the trumps first!

Visualisation

Finally, remember that ruffing in the long hand may result in a loss of trump control or an inability to cope with a bad trump break!

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Then, ruffing the third round will prevent that from being a loser.

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Note that a trump lead would prevent this from working!

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- It helps with entries: after winning the ♥A, you will be in the correct hand for playing the third ♥ to ruff.

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- It helps with entries: after winning the ♥A, you will be in the correct hand for playing the third ♥ to ruff.
- It may disguise your intentions from the defenders.

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First, you must void the dummy in ♥.

Then, you ruff the second round.

Now, you have 4 trumps in Declarer and 3 in Dummy: Dummy is now the short hand, so a second ♥ ruff gains a trick.

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Declarer: ♠ AKQJ ♥ 532

First, you must void the dummy in ♥.

Then, you ruff the second round.

Now, you have 4 trumps in Declarer and 3 in Dummy: Dummy is now the short hand, so a second ♥ ruff gains a trick.

On the other hand, ruffing in Declarer means you will no longer be able to cope with a 4-1 trump break.

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Attempting to ruff two ♥ in the short hand (1) risks the opponents finding a ♣ ruff and (2) will not work on a trump lead.

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Attempting to ruff two ♥ in the short hand (1) risks the opponents finding a ♣ ruff and (2) will not work on a trump lead.

You have two extra ♦ winners, so choose to discard your two ♥ losers instead.

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Short hand: ♠ QT8 ♥ QJ ♦ KQT32 ♣ KJ3

Long hand: ♠ AKJ97 ♥ 532 ♦ 4 ♣ AQ74

Contract: 4♠

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Attempting to ruff a ♥ in the short hand (1) risks the opponents finding a ♣ ruff and (2) will not work on a trump lead.

However, if you play a ♦ to the ♦K immediately, you will be able to discard the third ♥ on a ♦ winner.

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Bidding: 1♥ (1♠) X (P) ;

2♥ (2♠) 4♥ AP

Lead: ♠K

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You know from the bidding that the ♠ are 6-2.

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You know from the bidding that the ♠ are 6-2.

So attempting to ruff the third round of ♠ would be futile!

Now head to the

Ruffing in the Short Hand tournament
and try the practice hands!