

When Should We Draw Trumps?

The quick answer is nearly always. It is nearly always right to play trumps until the opponents either have none left or until they have only one left and it is the best. However, there are a few exceptions worth knowing about. A better question is “When **Shouldn't** We Draw Trumps?”

Don't Draw Trumps If You Need to Use Dummy's Trumps First

Often you will need to take ruffs in the short hand (the hand without many trumps). If you draw trumps first you will find that you run out and you may have some losers left at the end of the hand with no way of disposing of them. Imagine you are in Four Spades on the lead of the King of Clubs. You are West, the Dummy is East. How should you play the hand?

♠ AKQJT4	♠ 93
♥ A2	♥ T85
♦ KJ82	♦ QT73
♣ A73	♣ 52

Answer: Win the Ace of Clubs and immediately play another club. Our plan is to then ruff a Club in dummy. If we mistakenly win and draw all the trumps, we will then lose one Heart, one Diamond and TWO Clubs. The only way to get rid of one of our club losers is to trump it.

Don't Draw Trumps If You Need To Setup A Long Suit First

One often overlooked resource is a long suit. Often you will need to ruff a couple of rounds in order to establish it and you may need the trump suit to get there later to enjoy it. Once more, imagine we are in Three Diamonds and get the lead of the King of Spades.

♠ 3	♠ AT9842
♥ JT9	♥ 75
♦ AQT8764	♦ KJ9
♣ 95	♣ T6

Here we can hopefully establish our Spade suit, but only if we use Dummy's entries in trumps to enjoy them. Those who draw trumps immediately are likely to lose four tricks (five if trumps are three-three!) Those who establish dummy's Spades will only lose three.

Don't Draw Trumps If You Need To Use Them As Entries To Do Other Things

Suppose we open One No Trump and end up in Four Hearts in the following hand. We will need to use our trump entries to dummy to repeatedly finesse in the other suits.

♠ KJ5	♠ 9743
♥ QT43	♥ AK32
♦ AJT5	♦ Q7
♣ AQ	♣ T83

If we draw trumps immediately we will only get to dummy once or twice. But look how many times we are going to want to lead towards our hand! We will want to take a club finesse, one or two diamond finesses and maybe even lead towards our Spades. If we draw trumps too quickly we will end up in our hand and have to continue to lead away from our Picture Cards – nearly always a bad strategy!