

The Dummy Reversal (June 14, 2021)

Dummy Reversal is a technique in contract bridge whereby the declarer uses trump cards to ruff from the hand with more (longer) trumps, and retains the trumps in the other (shorter) hand to draw the opponents' remaining trumps.

Normally, in play technique, ruffs are taken from the hand with shorter trumps, retaining trumps in the longer hand for control. Because the declarer bid the suit first, he usually has more trumps than his partner (the eventual dummy). Thus, the term “dummy reversal” is used to describe the case where, during the play, the dummy is designated as the master hand.

The purpose of dummy reversal is to yield more tricks than the normal technique of ruffing losers in the short hand. You just need to imagine that you change seats with the dummy and play the hand from that side of the table.

Early in your study of bridge, you learned that one of the cardinal principles of declarer play is not to force the strong trump hand to ruff; but, to use dummy's trumps for ruffing purposes.

There are two exceptions to this principle:

- 1) the most common exception is where the hand is played as a crossruff (see June 7, 2021 lesson: The Crossruff).
- 2) The other exception is when you play the hand as a **dummy reversal**.

General Rule: You must ruff in the long hand until you have fewer trumps than the short hand.

Example 1.

A975
Q109
1083
Q76

Contract: 4H

Opening Lead: K of spades

KQJ10
62
Q52
J943

8642
853
AK97
108

3
AKJ74
J64
AK52

With South as the Master Hand:

With North as the Master Hand:

Losers: Spades = 0
Hearts = 0
Diamonds = 3
Clubs = 1

Losers: Spades = 3 (avoidable)
Hearts = 0
Diamonds = 3 (unavoidable)
Clubs = 0

Note: If you designate South as the master hand, after drawing trumps, you will lose three diamonds and one club unless the clubs break three/three. The better way to play this hand is to make North the master hand.

Play of the hand:

- 1) win king of spades with ace.
- 2) lead five of spades and trump with the **ace of hearts.**
- 3) lead small heart to the ten.
- 4) lead seven of spades and trump with the **king of hearts.**
- 5) lead small heart to the nine.
- 6) lead nine of spades and ruff with the **jack of hearts.**
- 7) play small club to the queen.
- 8) lead queen of hearts, pulling the opponents' last trump.
- 9) cash A/K of clubs. If clubs break, you lose only two diamonds. But, they don't; so, you lose two diamonds and a club and make your contract of four hearts.

The play of the hand is straight forward. It's the diagnosis to play the hand as a dummy reversal that is the key to making this hand.

How does one know when s/he should play the hand as a dummy reversal?

Indicators: Some indicators that a hand may lend itself to dummy reversal are:

- 1) shortness (singleton or void) in declarer's hand with length in the same suit in dummy.
- 2) loser(s) in declarer's hand that cannot be ruffed or discarded on a side suit.
- 3) adequate trump strength and length in dummy (typically a three or four card trump suit with at least two honors for drawing the final trumps).
- 4) entries to dummy outside of the trump suit.

Example 2.

AKJ
A854
AK2
A64
Q10853
6
954
J853

Contract: 4S

Opening lead 4 of spades.

You have five trump tricks, three side aces, and the king of diamonds off the top. Note there is no tempo to ruff a club in dummy, as the defenders will deprive it of the trumps after they regain the lead in clubs. The solution is to **ruff hearts in the South hand**. At trick two, play the ace of hearts and ruff a heart. Enter the dummy with the ace of clubs and ruff another heart. Enter the dummy with the ace of diamonds and ruff another heart. The declarer took three ruffs in hand, and still has two trumps in dummy to pull all of opponents' trumps (assuming that they are divided 3-2, which is the most common division of five cards).

Example 3.	9876	
	A102	
	KQ2	
	A43	
AJ104		KQ32
87		643
J103		7654
J765		108
	5	
	KQJ95	
	A98	
	KQ92	

Contract: 6H

Opening Lead: ace of spades

This is a textbook example of a dummy reversal. The play of the hand is as follows:

- 1) West leads the ace of spades.
- 2) West continues with another spade which you ruff with the king of hearts.
- 3) lead queen of hearts pulling one round of trumps.
- 4) lead small heart to the 10 pulling a second round of trumps.
- 5) lead another spade and ruff with the jack of hearts.
- 6) lead small club to the ace.
- 7) lead dummy's final spade and ruff with the nine of hearts.
- 8) lead small diamond to the king.
- 9) lead the final trump and throw away your little club.
- 10) claim your contract.

Let's look at some more examples of the dummy reversal strategy.

Example 4.	K54 KJ1096 A 7432 AQJ AQ5 J652 K105	Bidding: S N 1N 2D 2H 3N 4H Contract: 4H Opening Lead: King of diamonds
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Unless you are lucky enough to find the ace of clubs on your right there are only five heart tricks, three spades and the ace of diamonds for a total of nine tricks. Enters the **dummy reversal**. Remember the general rule: You must ruff in the long hand until you have fewer trumps than the short hand.

Play of the hand:

- 1)win king of diamonds with the ace.
- 2)lead small heart to your queen.
- 3)ruff a diamond.
- 4)lead spade to your jack.
- 5)ruff another diamond.
- 6)lead spade to your queen and trump your last diamond in the dummy.
- 7)at this point the dummy remains with only the king of hearts which you cash.
- 8)lead king of spades to your ace.
- 9)draw opponent's last trump.

You have taken the ace of diamonds, three diamond ruffs, three trump tricks and three spades for ten tricks.

Example 5.

QJ107
A54
J5
A1073

Contract: 3S

Opening lead: 4 of spades

543
KJ3
AQ
Q8542

2
Q987
K10963
KJ9

AK986
1062
8742
6

South can count five trump tricks, one heart and one club. Two more tricks must come from ruffs. One line of play would be to ruff two diamonds in dummy. To do so, South wins the first trick in hand and leads a diamond. West wins the queen and leads another trump. South wins again and plays another diamond. West wins again and leads his last trump. Now South can only ruff one diamond loser in dummy. The contract is set.

A better line is a dummy reversal. Instead of ruffing diamonds in dummy, South should ruff clubs in his hand. At trick two, the ace of clubs is cashed in dummy and a club ruffed in hand. A spade is led back to dummy and another club is ruffed. Declarer now crosses to the ace of hearts and ruffs dummy's last club for his seventh trick. Dummy's remaining spades provide the eighth and ninth trick to make his contract of 3S.

Assignment for Next Week: How would you play the following hand?

7632
A103
KQ8
A65

8
KQJ65
AJ4
KQ76

Contract: 6H

Opening Lead: Ace of spades followed by the king of spades.

The Suit Preference Signal Revisited

Recall that a suit preference signal enables an opponent to show his partner which suit to lead. A high card indicates the higher ranking suit. A low card indicates the lower ranking suit. CAUTION; Never try to signal if it can be misinterpreted.

	KQ3		Bidding: 1N (2S) 3C* (P)
	KQ64		5C All PASS
	K43		
	A108		*Lebensohl showing 5+ clubs and 10+ HCP
2		A1098765	
9853		AJ10	
98765		J102	
K52		VOID	Contract: 5C (Why not 3N?)
	J4		Opening Lead: 2 of spades
	72		
	AQ		
	QJ97642		

East wins the two of spades with his ace. He should return the 10 of spades (suit preference signal for partner to return a heart). When West trumps the spade return, she correctly leads a heart to her partner to set the contract.

If East leads back the six/seven of spades at trick two, West may have a problem in whether to return a heart (higher ranking suit) or a diamond (lower ranking suit). If she should misguess and lead a diamond, the declarer will take the ace and run the club finesse. He will make his contract by pitching heart losers on the third diamond and the good spade.

In conclusion, at trick two, East must return his highest spade (the 10). Now there should be no question that East is asking for a heart return.

Next Week: The Squeeze Play and Other Declarer Play Strategies

Let's finish by looking at last week's assignment.

Assignment: How would you play the following hand?

	K1093		Bidding: North	South
	Void		1C	1H
	AK85		1S	4S
	Q10854			
84		752	Contract: 4S	
A764		QJ10		
J7		Q10963	Opening Lead: Q of Hearts	
J9732		K6		
	AQJ6			
	K98532			
	42			
	A			

Play of the Hand:

- 1) ruff ace of hearts with 3 of spades.
- 2) cash the A/K of diamonds.
- 3) lead small club to your ace.
- 4) lead small heart and ruff with the nine of spades.
- 5) lead small club and ruff with the six of spades.
- 6) lead small heart and ruff with the ten of spades.
- 7) lead small club and ruff with the jack of spades.
- 8) lead small heart and ruff with the king of spades.
- 9) lead small club and ruff with the queen of spades.
- 10) cash the ace of spades.

The only two tricks coming to E/W is the two trump tricks at the end of the hand.