



# Adventures in Bridge, Inc.

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

PO Box 14915 ♠ Tallahassee, FL 32317

[info@advinbridge.com](mailto:info@advinbridge.com) ♠ 850 570 6459

[www.advinbridge.com](http://www.advinbridge.com)

## (124) Declarer Play: Suits - Ruffing Values

Date: Aug 2015 © AiB

Level: Novice/Intermediate

Robert S. Todd

[robert@advinbridge.com](mailto:robert@advinbridge.com)

### General

When playing a suit contract the trump suit is an important and complex thing to consider. Playing card combinations, even when not the trump suit, is difficult and a large topic, but when we introduce more complexities - stopping ruffs, getting ruffs, transportation, etc. - trump suit management becomes even more complicated and difficult to handle. Let's look at how we handle these pesky trumps.

### Ruffs

In suit contracts we try to produce extra tricks by ruffing. Traditionally this is done by ruffing our losers - that is, trumping losing cards from the hand we are setting up with the trump in the other hand. We are normally setting up (counting losers) from the long trump side, so we ruff our losers in the short side. This is important, as ruffing losers in the long side does not usually produce extra tricks. Let's look at a classic example.

#### Example

AKQJT                      987

If this is our trump fit and we do no ruffing then we will take 5 tricks in the trump suit. If we ruff in the long side, we will score our ruff and the remaining 4-trump in that side and we will still have a total of 5 tricks. However, if we ruff in the short side (987) then we still have 5 trump tricks in the long side and the ruff - for a total of 6 tricks. If we can ruff more losers in the short side we can produce even more tricks. So ruffing in the short side generally produces extra tricks and ruffing in the long side does not. In fact, ruffing in the long side exposes us to losing control of the hand when trump break poorly.

### Establishing a Side Suit

Ruffing a loser in the short side can result in more than just one extra trick.

#### Example

♠ AKQJT                      ♠ xxx

♣ AKxxx                      ♣ xx

If we can ruff the third round of this ♣ suit and the suit splits 3-3, then suddenly all of the ♣ are now winners – this is called “ruffing out a suit.”

When a long suit is in the other hand (the short trump side) then the only way to “ruff out the suit” is to ruff in the long side. (This is actually a more common situation than our previous example. The hand with shorter trump is much more likely to have a long side suit than the hand with long trump). This is one of the situations where we intentionally ruff in the long side. We are willing to spend our long trump in an effort to establish dummy’s side suit and produce additional winners (and possibly discards) for us. We do this when we need to even though ruffing in the long side increases our chance of losing control of the hand.

### **Conclusion**

Learning to use our trump effectively and efficiently is a challenging part of being a good declarer. Understanding that ruffing just any trick is not in and of itself a good thing is a major step forward. We want to learn to manage our trump – gaining tricks by getting rid of losers while trying not to lose control of the hand. Try to think in terms of your losers and use your trump as an asset to get rid of these losers.