

TRUMP SUIT PREFERENCE

by Maritha Pottenger

A useful defensive tool is trump suit preference. If your trump spots are irrelevant, you can play them in an order to show strength in side suits. Playing your lowest trump first would show either a forced play or (possibly) a card(s) in the lowest (or a lower) side suit. Playing your highest trump first would show something in the highest (or higher) side suit. High trumps first time around are definitely a signal. Lowest trump first may or may not be a signal.

Examples:

Spades are trump and you hold 832 of spades. If you play the **2** first, you suggest strength in **clubs**. If you play the **8** first, you suggest strength in **hearts**. If you play the **3** first, you suggest strength in **diamonds** (assuming partner can figure out that the 3 is a middle spade for you). Please note: **if you do not have anything, indicate suit preference for a suit that is very strong in dummy so partner will know not to expect you to hold cards anywhere**—so not to finesse him/herself.

Spades are trumps and you have 82 of spades. If you play the **2 first**, you like either **clubs** or **diamonds**. (Partner will have to figure it out, based on his/her hand and dummy.) If you play the **8 first**, you have something in either **hearts** or **diamonds**.

Many times there are actually only two suits left to show. If, for example, partner leads the Queen of hearts on opening lead, and you play the 2 (attitude—no future here), then only two suits are left in terms of suit preference. If spades are trumps, then a **high spade** from you shows you prefer **diamonds** and a **low spade** shows you prefer **clubs**.

This is a very useful tool (if both partners remember and pay attention), because Declarer often pulls trump right away, so this is your earliest opportunity to show partner the suit(s) in which you have valuable cards.