

RUFF THEIR WINNERS

by Maritha

The reason we play in trump contracts is to be able to ruff those pesky winners in the opponents' good suits. However, there are times when it is not right to ruff their winners---even though we can!

DO NOT RUFF WHEN YOU WOULD RISK LOSING CONTROL IN YOUR TRUMP SUIT

Often when you are playing a 4-3 trump fit, you cannot afford to ruff all of the opponents winners. You may have to wait (or even not ruff at all) rather than risking ruffing in the "long" (4-card) trump hand and perhaps losing control (where the opponents end up with more trump in a hand than you have. Even with a 5-3 trump fit, if a 4-1 break is likely (28% of the time normally and more likely with certain auctions), you may not be advised to ruff their winner(s).

DO NOT RUFF WINNERS WHEN YOU CAN DISCARD SURE LOSERS INSTEAD

There is no need to risk losing control of your trump suit when you have sure losers you can discard instead of ruffing. If you are able to discard one or two times, the short trump hand may also run out of the suit which you did not ruff. Then you are sitting pretty!

DO NOT RUFF IN THE SHORT TRUMP HAND IF YOU WOULD LOSE AN ESSENTIAL ENTRY.

If dummy (or the short trump hand) has a long suit to develop, a trump entry may be your only way back to that long suit after you develop it. If you ruff early, you lose your entry and cannot put that long suit to good use.

DO NOT RUFF WHEN YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE OVERRUFFED.

You may know from the auction that ruffing a particular trick risks an overruff by the next hand. In such cases, it is far better to discard a sure loser from the hand that could ruff. This can involve transferring a ruff, so instead of ruffing one suit (and being overruffed), you discard from a different suit and eventually ruff a card in that second suit.