

Cross Ruffing

	♠ 6	
	♥ A 9 8 7	
	♦ 6 5 4	
	♣ A 6 5 4 3	
♠ Q 10 8		♠ K J 9 7
♥ 4 3 2		♥ 6 5
♦ A Q 10		♦ K J 9 8
♣ K Q J 10		♣ 9 8 7
	♠ A 5 4 3 2	
	♥ K Q J 10	
	♦ 7 3 2	
	♣ 2	

4H by South. West leads the club King which you win in dummy with the Ace. What is your plan?

Counting losers from the South hand we have no club losers, 3 diamond losers, no heart losers and 4 spade losers. Clearly, we can't draw all the trumps as we will have at least 2 spade losers at the end to add to the diamond losers.

To start, this looks like a trump spades in dummy or set up the spade suit before you draw trumps. However, the only way back to your hand is by trumps, and if you do this you are drawing the trumps you need to ruff spades.

The answer is a complete cross ruff where you never draw trumps.

After you win the club King, ruff a club. Now play the ♠ A and ruff a spade. Ruff clubs in hand and spades in dummy until all the trumps are gone. You get ♠ A, ♣ A, 4 club ruffs and 4 spade ruffs for 10 tricks.

Note that the defence couldn't overruff at any stage. This is one of the 2 pre conditions of a cross ruff: **your trumps must be numerous and strong enough that the defenders can not overruff you at a critical point to lead a trump and break up the cross ruff.**

The other pre condition is the shortage in dummy in one side suit and a shortage in hand in another side suit so you can ruff backwards and forwards.

One further point; any side winners must be taken before you start the cross ruffing. In the above example if we had the diamond Ace, we should play it first before ruffing spades or clubs. We do this because the defender who can't over ruff spades or clubs may succeed in throwing all their diamonds away, and if you play the diamond ace at the end you will find it getting ruffed.

	♠ 6	
	♥ A 5 4 3	
	♦ K J 5 4	
	♣ K J 6 5	
♠ K Q J 10		♠ 9 8 7
♥ 10 9 8 7		♥ K Q J 6
♦ 10 9 8 6		♦ A Q 7
♣ 9		♣ 10 8 7
	♠ A 5 4 3 2	
	♥ 2	
	♦ 3 2	
	♣ A Q 4 3 2	

5C by South. West leads the spade king. What is the best plan?

This is a much trickier hand. We have no club or heart losers, but 2 diamond losers and 4 spade losers. It's probably not a good idea to test the diamonds as there is no assurance of saving a loser and it gives the opposition the chance to lead trumps if they win and cut down our cross ruffs.

A cross ruff will work as long as the early rounds of spades and hearts hold up. If spades are 4-3 and hearts 4-4 we will be ok.

Aim to get ♠ A, ♥ A, 4 spade ruffs and ♣ A Q at the end for 11 tricks.

1. Win ♠ A, ruff a spade , play ♥ A and ruff a heart
2. Ruff a spade, ruff a heart, ruff a spade
3. Lead the final heart, if East discards you can ruff small and must get home. If East ruffs, you can discard a small diamond and East can't beat you with any return.

Cross ruffing, or trumping in both hands is very committal, there is no plan B.

Therefore only embark on a cross ruff if you have no alternative, no long suit to set up.

The key ingredients are ; Shortages opposite length in 2 suits and good trumps, including spot cards to prevent over ruffing.