



# Play & Learn

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## Natural trump tricks

You are West defending against 4♥ after the auction shown. Choose your opening lead, then look at the dummy. Notice that you have a natural trump trick. Your ♥K will always win a trick. That's one defensive trick you can count. How do you hope to defeat 4♥?

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Dummy (North)

♠ J 6 5 3  
♥ 6 5 3 2  
♦ A K J  
♣ A 5

You (West)

♠ 7 4  
♥ K 10 7  
♦ 7 5 3  
♣ 7 6 4 3 2

Naturally, you lead partner's suit, selecting the ♠7 (top of a doubleton). Were you hoping that partner held the top two spades? Good news. When dummy plays low, partner wins the ♠10 and continues with two high

spades, declarer ruffing with the ♥J. Now what? Decide on your play before checking the full deal.

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

  

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

  

	N	
	W	E
	S	

If you overruff the ♥J with your king, 4♥ makes. Declarer draws your remaining two hearts with the ♥A and ♥Q and is left with all top tricks. If you discard instead, you have the setting trick. You will win your ♥K and your ♥10. Like magic, what first looked like one trump trick is turned into two. The problem with overruffing is that you used your natural trump trick. The defenders gain when they ruff with a card that is *not* a natural trump trick. Had declarer ruffed the third spade with the ♥9 instead of the jack, you would be happy to overruff with the 10, a trump trick you didn't plan on winning. Using the ♥10 to ruff doesn't cost you your natural trump trick. You still get the ♥K later.

Change the deal slightly to give

South the ♥A K J 10 6, and put the ♥Q 9 5 4 in your hand. On the same defense – you lead your doubleton spade, partner wins the first two tricks and continues the suit. Declarer ruffs with the ♥J or ♥10. Do you see the winning defense?

If you refuse to ruff, declarer will be left with ♥A K J 6 and you will have ♥Q 9 5 4. No matter what declarer does, you will come to two trump tricks to defeat the contract. Had you overruffed, declarer would have been able to win the next trick and pull your trumps with the top three hearts. Again, 4♥ would have made when it could have been defeated.

If you discard a diamond instead of overruffing, declarer can't draw trumps without letting you win both the ♥Q and the ♥9, a card that has been promoted into a winner by the combination of your great restraint and partner's third spade lead. If declarer doesn't draw trumps, you'll soon get to ruff a diamond with a low heart, return a club and wait to win your ♥Q — the setting trick.

Before overruffing with a natural trump trick, consider whether discarding might help create a second trump trick. When you hold a natural trick plus a relatively high spot card, discarding could easily promote that spot card into an additional trump trick. □

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