



Counting Your Tricks



1. Counting tricks as Declarer:

- Playing in No Trump: Count your winners.
 - If you have enough tricks to make your contract, “take the money and run.” That is, take your tricks and go on to the next deal.
 - If you don't have enough quick tricks, come up with a plan to develop the extra tricks you need.
 - Let's try this example:

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
Pass	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	All Pass	

Opening lead: ♥ J

North
 ♠ A K Q 5
 ♥ A 6
 ♦ K 10
 ♣ Q 6 5 3 2

South
 ♠ 7 6 3
 ♥ K 7
 ♦ Q J 9 8 3
 ♣ K J 4

When dummy is placed on the table, remember your first task: Count your tricks. You can count 5 easy tricks in hearts and spades. The four extra tricks will have to come from clubs or diamonds. Look at

the two suits closely and you will realize that the diamond holding is more solid. The club suit could be problematic if the suit is split 4-1. The diamond suit, on the other hand, can be a certain source of four tricks once the ace is knocked out.

There's one more question to answer: In which hand should you win the first trick? Since you have identified the diamond suit as your source of extra tricks, you'd better save the king of hearts entry to the South, the hand with the diamond length, for later. So the correct play is to win the ace of hearts in dummy, then go to work on diamonds to knock out the ace. Play the king of diamonds first. If the opponents don't win their ace, continue with the ten of diamonds, overtaking it with the jack in the South hand. Keep playing diamonds until the ace appears. You will then be in a position to claim nine tricks.

2. Counting tricks as Declarer (cont'd.):

- **Playing in a Suit Contract:** Count your losers first. Then count your winners, too.
 - **Losers:** If your loser count is too high, develop a plan for eliminating losers.
 - This may involve trumping a loser or losers in dummy.
 - Or it may involve discarding loser(s) on developed winners.
 - **Winners:** Then count your winners, too. This is a good insurance policy. The count of winners can spotlight a problem that the count of losers cannot, or vice versa.
 - If your winner count isn't high enough, develop a plan for creating more tricks.
 - This usually involves trumping tricks.
 - You can trump tricks in the dummy, i.e., the hand with the shorter trumps, and buy yourself extra tricks.
 - Sometimes you have to trump tricks in both hand, i.e., cross-ruff to get enough tricks.
 - You can also develop extra tricks by developing a side suit, i.e., a non-trump suit.

- Here's an example:

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
Pass	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	All Pass	

North

♠ J 8 3
 ♥ K 7 4
 ♦ A K 7 2
 ♣ Q J 5

Opening lead: ♥ J

South

♠ K 10 9 7 6 2
 ♥ A 5 3
 ♦ 6 5
 ♣ K 4

When dummy is placed on the table, remember your first task: Count your tricks. In a trump contract, it's best to look at your losers first. You see that you may lose two trump tricks. There's also a loser in hearts, if the opponents knock out both your ace and king. And there's a loser in clubs. This totals four losers, one too many.

Do you see the way to eliminate one of your losers? It consists of knocking out the ace of clubs, thereby allowing a discard on the third round of clubs. Your priority must go to this plan. Since there are plenty of entries to dummy, it doesn't matter where you win the first trick. The important thing is to immediately play the king of clubs to drive out the opponents' ace. They will surely play another heart, but you win that, then cross to dummy to play two club winners, discarding your heart loser in the process. Finally you can tackle the trump suit, not caring whether the finesse for the queen wins or loses.

If you count winners in this example, it may seem that you have enough tricks. You have two easy winners in each red suit and two more tricks can be established in clubs. The trump suit should provide 4 or 5 tricks, bringing your total to an easy 10 or 11 tricks. But counting losers, the dangerous trap is revealed. You can't play trumps early, otherwise the opponents will knock out your other heart stopper and defeat you.

3. Counting tricks as Defender:

- It's essential to ask yourself: How many tricks do we need to take to defeat this contract?
 - As a defender, it's tougher to count your side's tricks since you can only see your cards, but not your partner's cards.
 - Still, you should try to visualize where your side's defensive tricks are coming from.
 - After the dummy is placed on the table, it should be easier to get some idea of where your side's defensive tricks will be.
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- Here's an example:

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
–	1 ♥	Double	2 ♥
4 ♠	All Pass		

	<u>North (You)</u>	<u>East (Dummy)</u>
Opening lead: ♥ K	♠ K 7 2	♠ Q 10 8 5
	♥ K Q 10 8 2	♥ 7 3
	♦ 3	♦ A J 8
	♣ K Q 8 4	♣ A J 9 7

For better or worse, you decide to lead the king of hearts. This wins the trick. It's time to take stock. How many defensive tricks does your side need to defeat 4 Spades? Answer: 4 tricks. It's clear that the heart suit will provide two tricks at best, since dummy can trump the third round. The trump king in your hand is the third defensive trick. Where is the fourth trick coming from? It's coming from your diamond ruff. To prepare for this play, you must shift to your singleton diamond right now. Declarer will win this trick and will begin playing spades. When you get in with the king of spades, your shining moment has arrived. You must play a low heart to partner's ace. Partner will then be happy to play a diamond for you to ruff.



Counting

Losers



1. When playing in a suit contract, it is generally best to begin by counting losers. In particular, you should count the possible losers in the hand with the longer trumps, generally the declarer's hand.
2. How to count losers:
 - Look at your hand first (declarer's hand.)
 - Count one suit at a time.
 - With one card in a suit,
 - Count the A as a winner; anything lower is a loser.
 - With two cards in a suit,
 - Count the A and K as winners; anything lower is a loser.
 - With three cards in a suit,
 - Count the A, K and Q as winners; anything lower is a loser.
 - With four cards,
 - et cetera
 - Then look in your own hand and dummy to see if there are high cards to cover these losers.
 - There are never more losers in a suit than the number of cards you hold in the suit.
 - Repeat the process for each suit and total the number of losers.
 - Ask: Can I afford this many losers and still make my contract?

(Please turn to back side of this sheet.)

3. Let's look at an example. You have bid to four spades and West leads the heart ten.

	<u>North</u>	
	♠A75	
	♥75	
<u>West</u>	♦A1095	<u>East</u>
♠Q9	♣AJ64	♠J106
♥109864		♥KQJ
♦763	<u>South</u>	♦K82
♣872	♠K8432	♣K1093
	♥A32	
	♦QJ4	
	♣Q5	

First, count the possible losers in the long-trump hand—that is, South. Let's do this suit by suit.

- Count one loser in spades. You must hope for a 3-2 break in spades to restrict the trump losers to one.
- In hearts you have two potential losers. You note that if you give up a heart trick before drawing trumps you will be able to ruff a heart, reducing the losers in the suit to one.
- In diamonds you have one possible loser and you could try a finesse to eliminate that loser.
- In clubs you also have one possible loser. You could try a finesse here too, but you are not inclined to do so because the diamond suit will provide a place to discard your club loser whether the diamond finesse works or not.

So you have identified 5 possible losers, when you can only afford to lose 3 tricks. But you have also thought about ways to eliminate two of those five losers.

4. Now you make a plan: "I will duck a heart, so that I can ruff a heart in dummy. After drawing trumps, I will finesse in diamonds. Even if this loses, I will then have a place to discard my club loser." Now start playing.

You allow East's jack of hearts to win the first trick. Let's say he plays another heart. You win with the ace, ruff a heart and then you play the ace and king of trumps. The suit breaks 3-2. Good! You run the queen of diamonds and this loses to East. Whatever he returns, you will discard your potential club loser on the fourth round of diamonds and you will make your game. Good job!



Counting

To 13



1. It seems as though it should be easy to count to 13. But we're so accustomed to thinking in multiples of ten, it can be difficult when we count higher than ten.
 2. And yet it's quite important to count to 13 in bridge. After all, this is the number of cards in each suit. It's also the number of cards in each player's hand. Oh, yes, it's the number of tricks that will be played, too.
 3. One thing we commonly do as declarer is draw trumps. We are expected to be able to count the trumps in order to know when we're finished drawing them. We could try counting up to 13. Or, even better:
 4. Count down from 13:
 - First, check your hand and dummy.
 - How many trumps do you have between you?
 - Add your count and dummy's count.
 - Subtract this number from 13.
 - The answer tells you the number of trumps the opponents hold.
 - Just keep count of those missing trumps, since it's a much smaller number.
 - Example:
 - Dummy: Q 9 8 2
 - Declarer (You): A K 10 5 3
1.
 - You have five trumps and dummy has four.
 - You have nine trumps between you.
 - Subtract nine from thirteen to get an answer of four.
 - Be on the lookout for four opponent's trumps.
 - Draw one round of trumps.
 - If they both follow suit, four minus two is two.
 - Continue until the answer is zero.