

Losing Trick Count

John Williams April 30, 2013 Lecture

Note: most of this material is from Ron Klinger's excellent book,
The Modern Losing Trick Count

Using *Losing Trick Count* to figure your trick taking potential:

1. Count Your Losers.
2. Estimate Partner's Losers.
3. Add these together and deduct the total from 24.

The answer is the number of tricks your partnership will probably take, assuming:

- normal breaks and half your finesses working
- at least an 8-card trump fit or a self-sufficient suit (important!)

The answer for your trick potential is estimated to be at least 80 per cent effective. Don't expect the LTC to be accurate if trumps break 5-0 or if every finesse fails. (If you always wear a belt and suspenders, maybe LTC isn't for you.)

Step 1. Count your own losers: Each suit counts 3 losers at most:

3-card or longer suit Count a loser for missing the ace, king or queen.

0 loser suits: AKQ, AKQ4 and AKQ432 each have 0 losers.

1 loser suits: AQ3, AQ32 and AQ7432 each have 1 loser.

2 loser suits: A85, A8532, K43, K863, QJx each have 2 losers.

2 1/2 loser suits: QT3, Q9872

3 loser suits: JT9 or worse.

2-card suit Count a loser for missing the ace or king.

0 loser suit: AK

1 loser suits: Ax, KQ, Kx, AQ (special case – count as only 1/2 a loser)

2 loser suits: QJ and all others with ace and king missing.

1-card suit count as 1 loser except for ace singleton which is no loser.

Void = 0 losers

Examples:

How many losers does each of these hands have?

1. ♠AK532 ♥AJ73 ♦986 ♣K has 1+2+3+1 = 7 losers

2. ♠A73 ♥J73 ♦KQ86 ♣KJT has $2+3+1+2 = 8$ losers
3. ♠QJ8432 ♥63 ♦KQJ98 ♣- has $2+2+1+0 = 5$ losers
4. ♠8432 ♥KJ3 ♦KQJ9 ♣87 has $3+2+1+2 = 8$ losers

Step 2. Estimate partner's losers:

Points	Losers	Typical hand
13-15	7	Min. opening
16-18	6	Strong notrump
19-21	5- <u>4</u>	Jump shift
22-24	4	Forcing opening
7-9	9-8	Simple raise
10-12	8	Limit raise
10+	8-	Forcing response
12-18	7-6	Takeout double
8-16	8-6	Overcall
6-10	8-7	Weak jump overcall
11-14	7-6	Interm. jump overcall
16+	6- <u>5</u>	Reverse
6-8	8	Minimum Weak 2
8-10	7	Maximum Weak 2
6-9	9-10	1NT response
?	7-6(vul)	3 level pre-empt
?	6-5(vul)	4 level pre-empt
0-6	<u>10</u> -9	Preemptive raise
11+	7-	Splinter raise

The normal expectancy for minimum openings is 13-15 points and 7 losers. As strength increases, there are more tricks so fewer losers. 16-18 points with ordinary shape will usually have 6 losers. As strength decreases, there figure to be fewer tricks. With 10-12 points and no special shape, expect 8 losers.

There are 40 HCP in the deck and 13 tricks, so roughly 3 HCPs = 1 trick. So 13-15 points = 7 losers; 16-18 = 6 losers; and so on according to the following chart relating points, expected losers, and cover cards (cards that are likely to “cover” losers in partners long suited or 2-suited hands.)

Points	Losers expected	Cover cards expected
0-6	10-11	0-1
7-9	9	2
10-12	8	3
13-15	7	4
16-18	6	5
19-21	5	6
22-24	4	7
25-27	3	8

Step 3. Add these together and deduct the total from 24.

Where does that figure of 24 come from? There are at most 3 losers in each suit, so there are at most 12 losers in your hand; the same is true for your partner's hand. That makes 24.

Why are there at most 3 losers in any suit? Consider:

♠K986 ♥83 ♦KJ84 ♣J42

Suppose you are in a spade contract (remember LTC applies only with a trump fit.) Then the 4th ♠ is good with the probable 3-2 split, and the 4th ♦ is not a loser if partner has 4 or more or if partner has fewer than 4 and can ruff it.

Some examples:

1. Board 2 from the April 21, 2013 Swiss game

you			partner	
♠ A9852	2	1♠ 2♠	♠ JT4	3
♥ J2	2	4♠	♥ AT863	2
♦ 4	1		♦ 8653	3
♣ AKQJ9	0		♣ 2	1
	5			9

24 - (5+9) = 10 Bid game.

{ only 25% of EW pairs were in 4♠ }

2. Board 12 from the April 21, 2013 Swiss game

West				East	
♠ AQ87	1	1♦	1♠	♠ KJ65	2
♥ A75	2	2♠	Pass	♥ K84	2
♦ KJT3	2			♦ 984	3
♣ 76	<u>2</u>			♣ A94	<u>2</u>
	7				9

24 – (7+9) = 8 2♠ is high enough. If West invites, will East accept with 11 points?
 {many pairs floundered in 3 or 4 spades }

3. A 24 point cold slam.

you				partner	
♠ K86532	2		1♦	♠ AQ74	1
♥ 4	1	1♠	4♠	♥ J8	2
♦ 72	2	?		♦ AK943	1
♣ A943	<u>2</u>			♣ K5	<u>1</u>
	7				5

you have 7 losers
 partner has ~19 points, or 5 losers
 $7 + 5 = 12$
 $24 - 12 = 12$ tricks are probable. Explore with
 4NT since partner opened diamonds.

Note: The lecture will contain many more examples of using LTC to determine when to bid games, stop in part scores, or explore for slam, as well as a discussion of further topics: adjustments to LTC, cover cards, and controls. <http://members.shaw.ca/conventions/ltc.pdf> has an excellent (39 page) condensation of Klinger's book .

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Board 1

North Deals ♠ A K Q 5 4
None Vul ♥ Q 9 5

♦ 5 4

♣ K Q J

♠ 8 3

♥ A 2

♦ K 10 7 6 3 2

♣ 9 7 4



♠ 10 7 2

♥ K 8 7 4 3

♦ 8

♣ A 10 8 3

♠ J 9 6

♥ J 10 6

♦ A Q J 9

♣ 6 5 2

NS 2N; NS 2♠; NS 1♥; NS 1♦; Par +120

LTC Williams

Board 2

East Deals ♠ J
N-S Vul ♥ K Q 10 5

♦ 10 8 5 3

♣ K 10 7 4

♠ K 9 5 2

♥ 8 6 4 2

♦ 7 6

♣ A 9 3



♠ A Q 8 7 6

♥ 7 3

♦ A Q J 4 2

♣ 6

♠ 10 4 3

♥ A J 9

♦ K 9

♣ Q J 8 5 2

EW 4♠; NS 4♣; EW 1N; EW 2♦; NS 1♥;
Par -200; NS 5♣×-1

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Board 3

South Deals ♠ 7 5 4
E-W Vul ♥ K 8 6 2

♦ K 4

♣ A 6 4 3

♠ Q 8

♥ 10 4

♦ Q J 10 7 5

♣ 10 9 8 5



♠ J 10 9 3

♥ J

♦ 9 8 3 2

♣ K Q J 7

♠ A K 6 2

♥ A Q 9 7 5 3

♦ A 6

♣ 2

NS 6♥; NS 5N; NS 5♠; NS 1♦; NS 1♣;
Par +980

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Board 4

West Deals ♠ J 10 4
Both Vul ♥ A Q 10

♦ 10 9 5 4

♣ 8 3 2

♠ A Q 8 7 6

♥ 9 7 3

♦ A Q J

♣ 6 5



♠ K 9 5 2

♥ J 8 6

♦ K 7 6

♣ K J 4

♠ 3

♥ K 5 4 2

♦ 8 3 2

♣ A Q 10 9 7

NS 3♥; EW 2♠; NS 3♣; NS 1♦; Par +140