



Losing Trick Count



1. What is the Losing Trick Count?

- It is a method of hand evaluation.
- It doesn't replace the High Card Point system of evaluating hands, but rather supplements it.
- The Losing Trick Count method (LTC) assists in estimating the trick-taking potential of a partnership's two hands.
- LTC answers the question: How many tricks are we going to win?
- LTC doesn't offer a 100% guarantee, however it is surprisingly accurate most of the time.

2. When to use the Losing Trick Count method:

- Use it after you and partner have found your trump fit.
- Use it when trying to decide whether to bid to game, small slam or grand slam.
- Do not use it in No Trump auctions.
- LTC is not suitable for misfit hands.

3. Looking at losers:

- What is the value of this hand?
 - Hand A: ♠: A
♥: 7
♦: AKQ9876432
♣: 6

- If you use the 4-3-2-1 High Card Point method and say that this hand is worth 13 points, you're greatly underestimating the strength of this hand.
 - The correct way to view this hand is in terms of winners and losers. The hand has 11 winners and two losers, one each in hearts and clubs.
 - You clearly can produce 11 tricks playing in diamonds. All you need to know is whether partner can cover none, one or both of the losing tricks. A Blackwood inquiry will clear this up quickly.
4. Looking at the Losing Trick Count method:
- The LTC method uses a technique just like in the Hand A example, although the winner and loser count isn't usually so clear cut.
 - LTC will allow you to gauge the playing strength of your own hand.
 - Then you will assess the trick-taking ability of your partner's hand, based on his bids.
 - You will put the two together and arrive at the estimate of the number of tricks you will take. And most of the time your answer will be exactly right!
5. Applying the LTC Formula:
- Here is the simple LTC Formula:
 - 1) Count your losers
 - 2) Add partner's losers
 - 3) Deduct this total from 24
 - The answer is the number of tricks the partnership can make.
 - The LTC answer is the number of tricks you can expect to win if suits break normally and half of your finesses work.
 - Simple, isn't it?
6. Counting your losers:
- Here's how to get your loser count:
 - Only the first three cards in a suit can be losers.
 - With three or more cards in a suit,
 - Count the A, K and Q as winners; anything lower is a loser.

- With two cards in a suit,
 - Count the A and K as winners; anything lower is a loser.
- With one card in a suit,
 - Count the A as a winner; anything lower is a loser.
- There are never more than three losers in a suit.
- There are never more losers in a suit than the number of cards in the suit.

7. Try these examples:

<u>Holding</u>	<u>Losers</u>	<u>Holding</u>	<u>Losers</u>
J 10 9	3	8 7 6 4	3
A 6 4	2	A 6 4 3	2
K 8 6	2	K J 9	2
K Q 5	1	A K 9	1
A K Q	0	A Q 7 3	1
10 9 8 7 4	3	J 3	2
Q 6	2	Q J	2
A 6	1	K	1
K Q	1	A K	0
A	0	void	0

8. Let's apply the LTC method to a couple of complete hands:

- Hand B: ♠: AK93 = 1 loser
 ♥: KQ83 = 1 loser
 ♦: J3 = 2 losers
 ♣: 765 = 3 losers
 Total: 7 losers
- Hand C: ♠: AK963 = 1 loser
 ♥: KQ83 = 1 loser
 ♦: J3 = 2 losers
 ♣: 76 = 2 losers
 Total: 6 losers

Hand C is more unbalanced than Hand B, thus has fewer losers.

9. Assessing your partner's losers:

- It's easy to count the losers in your own hand. But how are you supposed to know how many losers your partner is looking at?
- Answer: You infer partner's loser count based on the strength shown by his bids.

<u>Points</u>	<u>Description of Strength</u>	<u>Expected # of losers</u>
• Opening bids:		
• 13-15	Minimum opening bid	7 losers
• 15-17	1 No Trump opening bid	6 losers
• 18-19	Strong No Trump rebid	5 losers
• 20 +	Very Strong Opening	4 losers
• 22+	Demand Opening	3-4 losers
• 6-10	Weak Two Bid	8 losers
• Responses:		
• 6-9	Single raise	9 losers
• 6 +	New suit at 1-level	9 losers
• 10-11	Limit raise	8 losers
• 12 +	Game forcing response	7 losers

10. Let's try a few examples:

<u>Partner</u>	<u>You</u>	
1 ♣	1 ♥	Partner is minimum, thus 7 losers.
2 ♥		

<u>Partner</u>	<u>You</u>	
1 ♣	1 ♥	Partner has more than minimum, thus 6 losers.
3 ♥		

<u>Partner</u>	<u>You</u>	
1 ♦	1 ♠	Partner is bidding for even one more, thus 5 losers.
4 ♠		

<u>Partner</u>	<u>You</u>	
--	1 ♠	If you're playing 2-over-1, the game force shows 7 losers or less. If standard, expect 8 losers.
2 ♦		

11. Subtracting from 24:

- Now that we know the loser count for both of us, add the two numbers and subtract from 24. The answer is the number of tricks we should be able to take.
- Why subtract from 24? Because we're only counting the first 3 tricks in each suit. Or looking at all four suits, we're looking at 12 possible tricks. In both hands, twice 12 is 24. Any losers should be subtracted from 24.
- Example:

Hand D:	<u>You</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>You</u>
	♠Q7	1 ♦	1 ♥
	♥KJ72	3 ♥	?
	♦654		
	♣Q765		

Your partner's strength is one better than minimum, therefore 6 losers. You have 9 losers. Subtract (6 + 9) from 24 = 9 tricks. So you pass.

- Thus, maximum possible losers (24) – actual losers = tricks expected.

12. Let's look at some pairs of hands and bid them:

	<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
• Hand E:	♠: AQ75	Hand F: ♠: K108643
	♥: 96	♥: 7
	♦: AKJ62	♦: 43
	♣: K9	♣: A842

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1 ♦	1 ♠
4 ♠	4 NT
5 ♥	6 ♠
Pass	

West has 5 losers and East has 7 losers. East realizes that partner has a 5 loser hand once he jumps to 4 ♠. So he knows it is right to try for slam since $24 - (5 + 7) = 12$ expected tricks.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
• Hand G: ♠: KQ864	Hand H: ♠: AJ1032
♥: K8	♥: Q76
♦: QJ3	♦: A65
♣: A65	♣: K3
<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
1 ♠	2 NT (Jacoby)
3 NT	4 ♠
Pass	

West has 6 losers and East has 7 losers. West can show that he is one loser less than a minimum opening bid by rebidding 3 NT. East can now add West's 6 loser count to his own 7 losers. $24 - (6 + 7) = 11$ tricks, so East signs off at game, realizing that small slam is not likely.

13. The bottom line: When you're faced with a close bidding decision about going to game or slam, do your LTC calculation to figure out how high to bid. You will be pleased with your improved accuracy. So will your partner!

Losing Trick Count

1

♠ 105	♠ AK963
♥ K	♥ AQ32
♦ AQ9842	♦ 6
♣ Q875	♣ 642

♠ J742	♠ Q8
♥ 109	♥ J87654
♦ K10	♦ J753
♣ AJ1093	♣ K

Dealer: East			
Neither Vulnerable			
West	North	East	South
		1 ♠	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening Lead: ♣ K

Limit Raise:
 East opens the bidding with 1 Spade. West realizes that her hand improves as soon as partner bids Spades. Using dummy points, West can add one point for each of her doubletons. This gives her about an 11 point hand, just right for a limit raise to 3 Spades. I think East also can upgrade her hand a bit once the Spade trump fit is revealed. Her singleton diamond rates to be useful as a ruffing value. So she raises to 4 Spades. There's not much difficulty in making the contract after the king of hearts falls under the ace.
 Using Losing Trick Count, East has a 6-loser hand and West 8 losers, so they ought to be able to make $24 - (8 + 6) = 10$ tricks.

2

♠ A6	♠ K1094
♥ K74	♥ Q105
♦ 102	♦ 98
♣ AK10962	♣ J873

♠ QJ752	♠ 83
♥ J862	♥ A93
♦ J74	♦ AKQ653
♣ 5	♣ Q4

Dealer: South			
Neither Vulnerable			
West	North	East	South
			1 ♦
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	3 ♦
Pass	4 NT	Pass	5 ♥
Pass	6 ♦	Pass	Pass

Opening Lead: ♣ 5

South has a Losing Trick Count of 6, one trick better than a minimum opening bid. So after the auction begins 1D -- 2C, South is justified in jump-rebidding 3D. North also has a Losing Trick Count of 6, so she appreciates that slam is almost a sure thing. She checks for aces and bids the slam. If she could find out that partner holds the queen of clubs, she would bid the grand slam.

3

♠ 4	♠ K952
♥ KQJ9	♥ 8642
♦ K53	♦ 76
♣ 107542	♣ A93

♠ AQ876	♠ J103
♥ 73	♥ A105
♦ AQJ42	♦ 1098
♣ 6	♣ KQJ8

Dealer: West			
Neither Vulnerable			
West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening Lead: ♥ K

West starts the auction with 1 Spade, the higher ranking of two 5-card suits. East, with a 9 loser hand, raises only to 2 Spades. West realizes that her hand is much better than an average opening bid, especially in light of the spade fit. West holds a 5 loser hand, two tricks better than a minimum opening bid. She has no qualms about raising to 4 Spades immediately.
 Using the Losing Trick Count formula, West calculates $24 - (5 + 9) = 10$ winners.

4

♠ K108643	♠ 9
♥ 7	♥ KJ8432
♦ 43	♦ 108
♣ A842	♣ Q1063

♠ J2	♠ AQ75
♥ AQ95	♥ 106
♦ Q975	♦ AKJ62
♣ J75	♣ K9

Dealer: South			
Neither Vulnerable			
West	North	East	South
			1 ♦
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	4 NT	Pass	5 ♠
Pass	6 ♠	Pass	Pass

Opening Lead: ♥ 4

After partner opens the bidding with 1 Diamond and you, North, respond with 1 Spade, partner leaps to game with a bid of 4 Spades. Do you contentedly pass, deciding that 4 Spades was a shut out bid? If so, you will be very disappointed when you easily score up 12 tricks. If you apply Losing Trick Count, you will see that you hold a hand of 7 losers, maybe even less. After all, you and partner have a ten-card trump fit. It seems wrong to count 2 losers in this suit; one loser seems more like it. Partner's leap to game shows a 5 loser hand. With only 12 combined losers, you should expect to make a slam. When you check on key cards, partners show two key cards and the queen of spades. You happily bid 6 Spades, confident that you'll make it.