Losing Trick Count
John Williams February 28, 2017 Unit 503 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, QTx, each have 2 losers.
2 1/2 loser suits: Q93, Q87532
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	5-4	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+	6-5	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	10-9	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. (from a club 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. (from a club Swiss game)

West				East	
♠ AQ87	1	1♦	1♠	♠ KJ65	2
♥ A75	2	2♠	Pass	♥ K84	2
♦ KJT3	2			♦ 984	3
♣ 76	2			♣ A94	2
	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	2			♣ K5	1
	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.