Losing Trick Count

7 July 2020

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♥ **We are familiar with counting High Card Points (HCPs) to assess the strength of a hand**

♣ **The other dimension to consider is the shape of a hand – the favourability of its distribution**

♦ **One way of combining strength and shape of a hand is to adjust the HCPs as follows:**

    ♣ **Add 5 for a void**

    ♣ **Add 3 for a singleton**

    ♣ **Add 1 for a doubleton**

♠ **Losing Trick Count (LTC) is a more accurate way of assessing both your strength and distribution**

♥ **NB If you are using LTC, don't add points as well for voids, etc.**

Features of Losing Trick Count

♥ **Concentrates on losers rather than winners**

♣ **Use as a conversation tool between you and your Partner**

♦ **Only use when you have agreed or are agreeing a trump suit with your Partner**

♠ **Use LTC for deciding whether to bid to game in unbalanced hands**

♥ **LTC is less effective with balanced hands**

♣ **LTC is not sufficient, on its own, to decide whether to bid a Slam**

Determining the LTC

♥ Assumes a **maximum** number of losers in each suit as the lower of:

1. **the number of cards you hold in that suit, and**

2. **3**

♣ A void suit counts as no losers

♦ **A singleton counts as one loser unless it is the Ace**

♥ A doubleton counts as 2 losers unless:

they are **A K** – counts as no losers;

they are **A x** – counts as 1 loser;   **(x is a card less than a Queen)**

or they are **K x** – counts as 1 loser.

♠ In practice, you count one loser for each of the top three cards in each suit that is not an Ace, King or Queen – with some minor refinements

Determining the LTC (cont.)

♥ **We have covered the general principles for determining LTC**

♣ **Here is a table that includes the refinements:**

Holding	Losing Tricks
A K Q	0
A K x	1
A Q x	1
A J T	1
A J x; A x x	2
K Q	1
K x x	2
Q J T; Q J 9	2
Q J x; Q x x	2.5
K	1

I find it easier to count a Q (without a K or A) as a winner if in trumps, otherwise as a loser

♦ **Add the losing tricks for each suit and round the total up for your LTC**

♠ **Add another losing trick to your count if you have no Aces in your hand**

Using your LTC

Firstly, you must know that you and your Partner have a fit of 8+ cards

♥ **When you are responding to an Opening bid by your Partner:**

    Assume your Partner has an LTC of no more than 7

    Add your LTC to 7 and subtract the total from 18 to give the level of bid you can respond with.

♣ **When you are the Opener re-biding after your Partner has supported your suit:**

    Responder will have assumed you have 7 losers when they decided what level to respond

    If you have an LTC of less than 7, you can raise the level of bid by the difference

♦ **Restrict your bid to the 4 level in a major (Game) and the 3 level in a Minor to explore whether you should be in 3 NT**

Using your LTC (cont.)

LTC can also be used:

♥ **When you are responding to an Overcall bid by your Partner:**

Your partner is a little less likely to have fewer than 7 losers – probably safer to assume she has 8 losers

N.B. Bidding to the Level of Fit (< 10 HCP) and Unassuming Cue Bid or 1 NT (10+ HCP) are better tools if you can remember them

♣ **When you are the Opener re-bidding after your Partner has changed suit:**

Your Responding Partner may be weaker than if she were making an opening bid in the suit

Assume she has an LTC of no more than 9

Example 1

Example 1

You are Responder

Your partner has opened the bidding with 1 ♥

Your hand:

♠ K 7

♥ 8 7 6 5 4

♦ A 7 5 4 3

♣ 8

What is your bid? _____

Example 2

Example 2

You are Responder

Your partner has opened the bidding with 1 ♥

Your hand:

♠   K   7   2

♥   8   7   6   5

♦   A   7   5

♣   8   7   6

What is your bid?   _____

Example 3

You are Responder

Your partner has opened the bidding with 1 ♥

Your hand:

♠ Q 7 6 5

♥ K 3 2

♦ K

♣ A 10 4 3 2

What is your bid? _____

Example 4

You are Opener who bid 1 ♦

Your partner has responded with 1 ♠

Your hand:

♠　K　8　6　3

♥　5

♦　K　Q　7　6　5　2

♣　K　J

What is your rebid? _____

Example 5

You are Opener who bid 1 ♠

Your partner has responded with 3 ♠

Your hand:

♠   A   K   5   4   2

♥   Q   9

♦   K   8   5   3

♣   K   7

What is your rebid? _____

Thank you