



There are many ways to evaluate your hand.

The most important one is the High Card Point Count (4 for each Ace etc). HCPs are excellent for judging how many No Trumps tricks two balanced hands, with some coverage of each suit between them, will make.

Playing Tricks For relatively strong hands containing long suits, playing tricks are defined as the number of tricks expected, with no help from partner, given that the longest suit is trumps. For long suits the ace, king and queen are counted together with all cards in excess of 3 in the suit; for short suits only clear winner combinations are counted:

$A = 1, AK = 2, AKQ = 3$

$KQ = 1, KQJ = 2$

An Acol strong 2 of a suit opening bid is made on 8 playing tricks

There is also the "Rule of Twenty" (adding the HCPs in your hand to the total of the cards in your two longest suits and comparing the result with 20). The Rule of Twenty is used to decide whether to open a suit at the one level with a weak unbalanced hand. Another similar measure, for strong hands, is "Rule of 25".



The Losing Trick Count is another way to evaluate your hand. It is used when you and your partner have found a trump fit. It helps you to judge how many tricks you will be able to make between you with that suit as trumps. It is often more accurate than HCPs in finding games and slams in trumps.

Here's how to do it:

- ♣ First find a fit (i.e. at least eight cards of the same suit in total in your hand and your partner's hand)
- ♣ Count the losers in your hand
- ♣ Estimate the number of losers in your partner's hand
- ♣ Raise to the level indicated by the Losing Trick Count

Counting Losers

"Losers" are cards that will probably fall on the Ace, King or Queen. You count "losers" in a slightly artificial way.

Count a **maximum** of three losers in any **suit**.

♥ 6 5 4 3

three losers.



Count no more losers in a suit than you have cards in it.

♦ 6 5	two losers.
♣ 6	one loser

Aces are not losers; Kings and Queens are usually not losers

♠ A	has no losers
♠ A K	has no losers
♠ A K Q	has no losers
♠ void	has no losers

Suits with one loser

♣ A x	
♥ K x	
♣ A K x	
♥ A Q x	
♣ K Q x	all have one loser



♥ x

♦ K

♥ Q

Any singleton that is not the Ace is one loser

Suits with two losers

♣ x x

two losers

♥ J x

two losers

♣ A x x

two losers

♥ K J x

two losers

Suits with three losers

♥ x x x

three losers

♥ J x x

three losers.



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NOTES

Sometimes we make an adjustment when the highest card is a Queen

♥ Q J 10 two losers

Because this Queen has the Jack and the Ten to “force” out the Ace and the King

♥ Q 3 2 three losers

Because this Queen has no “guards” to “force” out the Ace and the King

Add up the losers in all four suits for the Losing Trick Count of the hand:

♠ 9 8 two losers

♥ A K Q 5 zero losers

♦ K x x x x two losers

♣ A x one loser

TOTAL: 5 losers

♠ 9 one loser

♥ A K Q 5 zero losers

♦ K x x x x 2 two losers

♣ A x one loser

TOTAL: 4 losers



Notes

- ♣ Losing Trick Count combines an assessment of the power of a hand with its shape
- ♣ Unlike HCPs, fewer losers=better hand
- ♣ Two hands with the same HCPs can have different LTCs
- ♣ You do not use the losing trick count to decide whether to open the bidding (you haven't found a fit yet)
- ♣ Beware the count of Ax being the same as Kx

Estimating the losers in partner's hand

An opening bid of one of a suit shows the longest or equal longest suit in a hand of between 10 and 19 High Card Points.

At the more common unbalanced 12-14 HCP end, such a hand typically has 7 losers, sometimes 6. If the hand has 15-19 HCP it is likely to have 5 losers.

So assume partner's opening of 1 of a suit shows a hand with seven losers.



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If partner re-bids a simple repeat of their opening suit, or your responding suit, or bids a new suit below the barrier, continue to assume seven losers.

If partner jump repeats their opening suit, or bids a new suit above the barrier, or jump repeats your suit, assume five losers.

One No Trump opening hands typically have eight losers.

Weak Two openings and Three Level pre-emptive bids typically have eight losers.

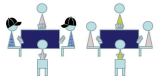
Assume one level overcalls have nine losers (they may turn out to have as few as seven).

Assume simple two-level overcalls have eight losers (they may turn out to have seven).

Overcalls of weak 1NT openings should show seven losers.

Intermediate jump overcalls (11-15 six cards in suit) should have seven losers.

Double for take-out should show seven losers.



Where the losing trick count is well used, partners may agree to base these bids or calls on the Losing Trick Count rather than High Card Point Count.

Raising Partner's Suit using Losing Trick Count

If partner has bid a major suit, and you have 4 cards in that major, you know that between the two hands there are at least 8 cards in the suit, a 'fit', so you raise the suit.

- ♣ Add the count of losers in your hand to your estimate of the count of losers in partner's hand.
- ♣ Subtract this total from 24. This is your estimate of the number of tricks you and your partner can make with your fit as trumps.
- ♣ Subtract this total from 18. Bid to that level.

You may find the Losing Trick Count gives you a different bid than your HCPs.

Bid to the higher of the different methods – be optimistic!



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Immediate Fit Examples – Partner opens 1♥

♠ K J 8

♥ J 4 3 2

♦ J 5 4 3

♣ A 7

10

HCPs

9

Losers

$9+7=16$

$18-$

$16=2$

Bid

2♥

The LTC warns that the hand is flat, and the Jacks may be useless.

♠ 7 4 3

♥ 10 5 4 3

♦ K Q 5 4

♣ A 4

9

HCPs

8

Losers

$8+7=15$

$18-$

$15=3$

Bid

3♥

The hand has 9 HCPs but the LTC reflects the better quality of the High Cards.

♠ Q J 8

♥ 10 5 4 3 2

♦ A 5 4 3

♣ A

11

HCPs

7

Losers

$7+7=14$

$18-$

$14=4$

Bid

4♥

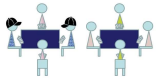
The hand has 11 HCPs but the LTC reflects the singleton ace.



Fit on Change of Suit Reply

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>		
					♠ K J 8 2
	1♥	Pass	1♠		♥ J 4 3
Pass	2♠	Pass	?		♦ J 5 4 3
				10 HCPs	♣ A 7
				9 Losers	
				9+7=16	Fit in spades found but the
				18-16=2	LTC and HCP total show
				24-16=8	game is not on
					Pass

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>		
					♠ 7 4 3 2
	1♥	Pass	1♠		♥ 10 5 4
Pass	2♦	Pass	?		♦ K Q 5 4
				9 HCPs	♣ A 4
				8 Losers	
Estimate Partner's Opening Hand at 7 losers with five hearts.				8+7=15	The hand has 11 HCPs but
				18-15=3	the LTC reflects the ace
				24-15=9	doubleton.
					Raise to 3♥.



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<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>		♠ Q J 8 7
	1♥	Pass	1♠		♥ 10 5 3 2
Pass	2♦	Pass	?		♦ A 5 4 3
				11 HCPs	♣ A
				7 Losers	
Estimate Partner's Opening Hand at 7 losers with five hearts.				$7+7=14$ $18-14=4$ $24-14=10$	The hand has 11 HCPs but the LTC reflects the singleton ace. Raise to game. 4♥

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>		♠ J 5 4 3 2
	1♥	Pass	1♠		♥ 10 5
Pass	2♦	Pass	?		♦ K Q 5 4
				10 HCPs	♣ A 4
				7 Losers	
				No Fit	Show no fit in a major, balanced hand with a club stop with 10-12HCP
					2NT(Pass)



Other Fits

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>		♠ Q J 8 7 6 5
1♥	X	Pass	?		♥ -
					♦ A 5 4 3
				11 HCPs	♣ A 9 8 7
				6 Losers	
Estimate Partner's Take out double at 7 losers with a four-card spade suit.				$7+6=13$ $18-13=5$ $24-13=11$	The hand has 11 HCPs but the LTC reflects the void. Raise to game. 4♠

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>		♠ Q J 8 7 6 5
1♥	1♠	Pass	?		♥ -
					♦ A 5 4
				11 HCPs	♣ A 9 8 7
				6 Losers	
Estimate Partner's Overcall at 9 losers.				$9+6=15$ $18-15=3$ $24-15=9$	The hand has 11 HCPs but the LTC reflects the void. Raise. 3♠