Losing Trick Count

Losing Trick Count (LTC) is a method to evaluate trick taking potential of **two hands combined**. It allows to quantify strength **and** distribution. It is applicable primarily to suit contracts and a fit by allowing quantifying the strength and the distribution of your hand.

LTC should be used in conjunction with **common sense** and the standard HCP point-counting system of 4-3-2-1.
In its basic form LTC requires the following:

A. Count your losers.
B. Add your partner's expected losers.
C. Subtract the total from 18.

The result will **give you the level** at which you can expect to play with the fit suit as trumps.

There are three basic rules of LT counting:
1. Only the **first three cards** in any suit can be losers.
2. Only the **A,K and Q** are winners.
3. **'Droppable honors' are losers** (i.e. a singleton king or a doubleton queen).

Example 1.
♠ A K 8 – one loser
♥ J 8 5 4 – three losers
♦ K Q 6 - one loser
♣ 7 5 2 - three losers
Total: 8 losers and 13 HCP

Example 2.
♠ A Q 6 3. – one loser
♥ Q 8 – two losers
♦ K Q 8 4 3 – one loser
♣ 9 5 - two losers
Total: 6 losers and 13 HCP

Example 3.
♠ A K 8 6 4 2 – one loser
♥ --------- no losers
♦ K Q 6 4 3 – one loser
♣ J 8 – two losers
Total: 4 losers and 13 HCP.
Remember: we only count LT when we have a fit.
This is the power and the beauty of the LTC: it is able to evaluate the long suits, the short suits and the high-card points to produce one simple answer.

Compare these two hands:

Hand 1	Hand 2
♠ Q 6 3 2.	♠ A 8 5 3
♥ Q 7 5 3	♥ A 7 5 3
♦ Q 8 5 2	♦ A 6 3 2
♣ 8.	♣ 8

Both of these hands have just 7 losers, but there is a distinct
difference between them. Clearly the queen is over-valued.
To adjust that problem the unsupported queen is counted as half a loser.
So the **Hand 1** above contains 8.5 losers, and **Hand 2** has 7 losers.
When the Q combines with another honor, it is clearly much stronger.
So ♠K-Q-4-3 would count as 1 loser and ♥Q-J-4-3 would count as 2 losers.
Unsupported queen ♦Q-8-5-2 would count as 2.5 losers.
Use common sense when evaluating queens.

The full set of four rules is thus:

1. Only the first three cards in any. suit can be losers.
2. Only the A,K or Q are winners.
3. 'Droppable Honors' count as. losers
4. The queen counts as half a loser except when in combination with A, K or J.

Now lets look at more examples:

♠ K Q 6 ♥ A Q 5 4 3 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ 6 3
Total = 6 losers and 14 points

♠ Q 5 4 3 ♥ Q J 3 2 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ Q 2
Total = 8 losers and 12 points

Lets look back now at the basic LTC rules:

A. Count your losers
B. Add your partner's losers
C. Subtract from 18

So how do we go about working out LTC of **partner's hand**?

The key numbers are:
Minimum **opening** hand = 7 losers
Minimum **responding** hand = 9 losers
To reach game in major suit the combined hands should
have no more than 14 losers as 18-14 = **4**.
For slam combined hand should have no more than 12 losers as 18-12= **6**.

In the LTC counting we always assume partner has
a **minimum hand** for her bid unless she tells us differently.

Examples:
How many losers does each of these hands have?
1. ♠AK532 ♥AJ73 ♦986 ♣K has 1+2+3+1 = 7 losers (and 15 HCP)
2. ♠A73 ♥J73 ♦KQ86 ♣KJT has 2+3+1+2 = 8 losers (and 14 HCP)
3. ♠QJ8432 ♥63 ♦KQJ98 ♣-- has 2+2+1+0 = 5 losers (and 9 HCP)
4. ♠8432 ♥KJ3 ♦KQJ9 ♣87 has 3+2+1+2 = 8 losers. (and 10 HCP)

Step 2. Estimate partner's losers:

Partner's opening hand	**LTC**
Minimum 1- level	7
Weak Two	7-9
1NT opening	6-7
2C opening	3-4
Partner's responding hand with fit	
Single raise	8-9
Limit raise	8
GF response	7
***Other bids**	
Take-out double	6-7
Overcall	6-8
Weak jump overcall	8-9
1NT response	9-10
Reverse	5-6

This table may look overwhelming, but estimating losers in partner's hand will come naturally with some practice.

Step 3: Add your losers to expected partner's losers and **subtract this number from 18** to get the level of a reasonable final contract.

Examples:

1. Partner **opens** and you have minimum GF hand with some sort of a fit.
   Partner has minimum of 7 LT and you have 7 losers.
   18-7-7= 4 so you belong at least on 4 level.
2. The bidding goes:

Partner	Opp	You	Opp
Pass	Pass	1♥	DBL
2♥	Pass	?	

   With 7 losers you **pass** since partner has 8-9 losers,
   so LTC gives 18-7-8= 3♥
   With a better hand of 5-6 losers LTC gives 18 -5 -8 = 5 so 4♥ is a safe contract.

More examples will be discussed on Tuesday.

Losing Trick Count References

Warrington Bridge Club, Intermediate Lesson 17, Losing Trick Count

Andrew Robson Bridge, How to use the Losing Trick Count

Losing Trick Count Part 1 by Paul Karas

The Losing Trick Count - some more situations you can use it.

Losing Trick Count

Oct 2024

Losing trick count (LTC) is a method of hand evaluation supplementing high card point counting
for hands where the fit exists.

There are three basic rules of LT counting:

1. Only the **first three cards** in any suit can be losers.
2. Only the **A,K and Q** are winners.
3. **'Droppable honors' are losers**
   (i.e. a singleton king or a doubleton queen).

- Example 1.
- ♠ A K 8 – one loser
- ♥ J 8 5 4 – three losers
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- Total: 8 losers and 13 HCP
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- Example 2.
- ♠ A Q 6 3. – one loser
- ♥ Q 8 – two losers
- ♦ K Q 8 4 3 – one loser
- ♣ 9 5 - two losers
- Total: 6 losers and 13 HCP
-
- Example 3.
- ♠ A K 8 6 4 2 – one loser
- ♥ --------- no losers
- ♦ K Q 6 4 3 – one loser
- ♣ J 8 – two losers
- Total 4 losers and 13 HCP

Compare these two hands:

Hand 1	Hand 2
♠ Q 6 3 2.	♠ A 8 5 3
♥ Q 7 5 3	♥ A 7 5 3
♦ Q 8 5 2	♦ A 6 3 2
♣ 8.	♣ 8

Both of these hands have just 7 losers but the QQQ?

Rule 4. The queen counts as half a loser except when in combination with A, K or J.

LT Counting process:

- **A. Count your losers**
- **B. Add your partner's losers**
- **C. Subtract from 18**

Typical situations:

- Minimum **opening** hand = 7 losers
- Minimum **responding** hand = 9 losers
  To reach **game** in major suit the combined hands should have **no more than 14 losers** as 18-14=**4**.
- For **slam** combined hand should have **no more than 12 losers** as 18-12= **6**

- **Step 2. Estimate partner's losers:**

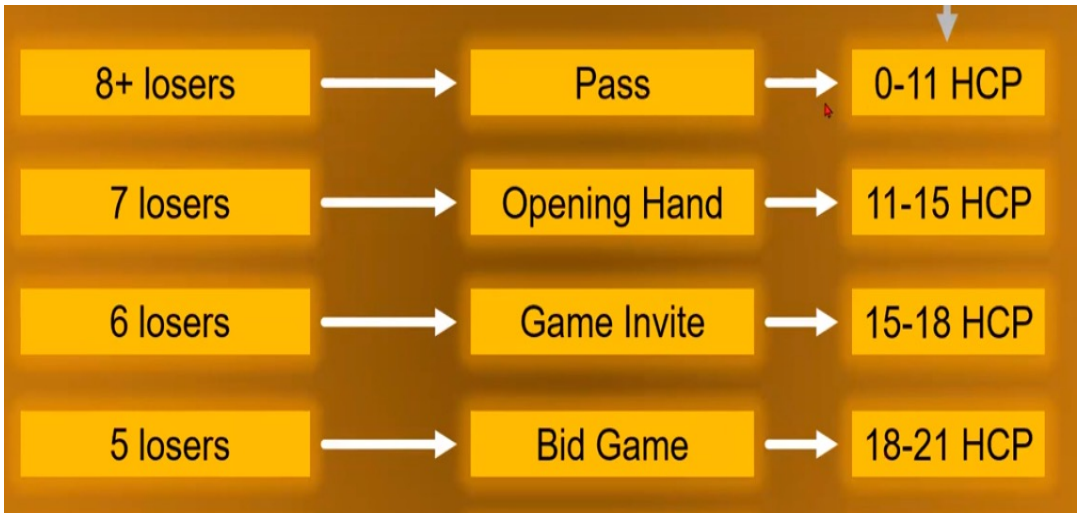
Partner's opening hand	**LTC**
Minimum 1- level	7
Weak Two	7-9
1NT opening	6-7
2C opening	3-4

Partner's responding hand with fit

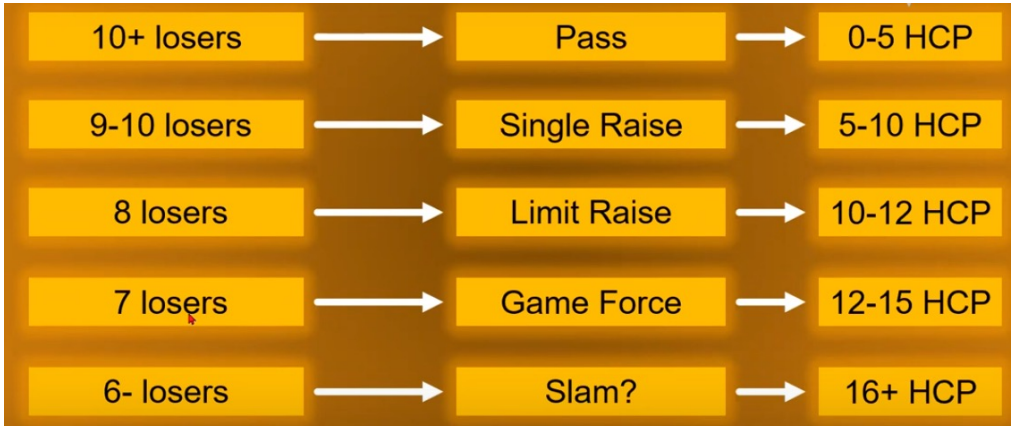
Single raise	8-9
Limit raise	8
GF response	7

- **Step 3: Add your losers to expected partner's losers** and **subtract this number from 18** to get the level of a reasonable final contract.

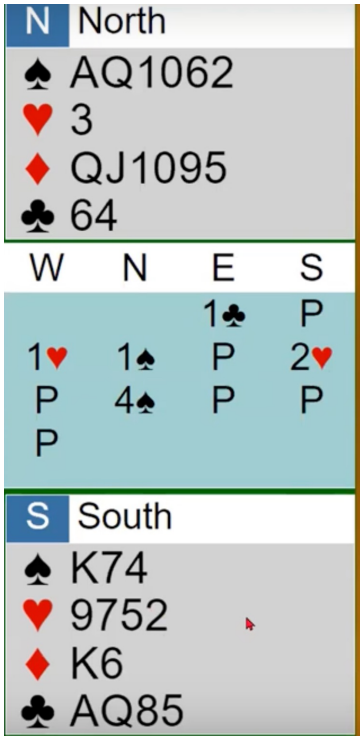
Opener's LTC


8+ losers
Pass
0-11 HCP
7 losers
Opening Hand
11-15 HCP
6 losers
Game Invite
15-18 HCP
5 losers
Bid Game
18-21 HCP

Responder's LTC



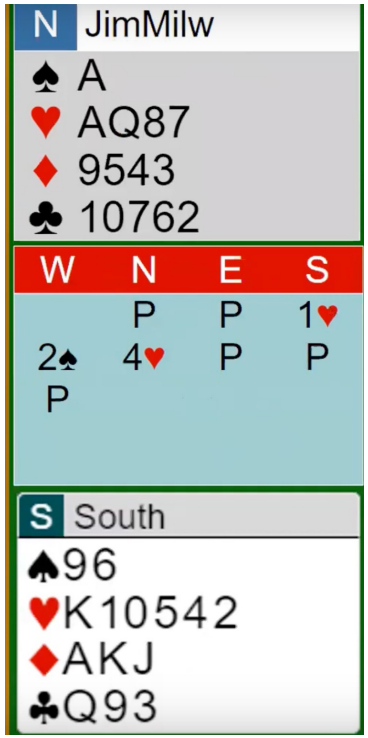
6 losers
9 HCP



7 losers
12 HCP

LTC count:
18 –13 =5
Making 5♠ with only 21HCP by taking advantage of distributional features of each hand.

7 losers
10 HCP



Game has been reached thanks to distribution of North's hand and proper loser counting.

7 losers
13 HCP

18 - 14 =10

Making 4♥

What to do with **8 losers** ?

N	E	S	W
P	1NT	2♣	P
2♦	P	2♥	P
?			

(2♣ = single suit in Cappeletti)

(2♦=forced,asking for South's suit)

N North
♠ K10765
♥ J73
♦ A974
♣ 5

S South
♠ Q2
♥ AK10986
♦ 10
♣ KJ74

S	W	N(You)
1♥	P	?

7 losers
12 HCP

18-14=4
Bid game with forcing
Jacoby **2NT**

7 losers
only 9 HCP

18-14=4
Bid game with forcing
Jacoby **2NT**

Game reached on 21 HCP

What should N bid?

S	W	N (you)
1♠	P	?

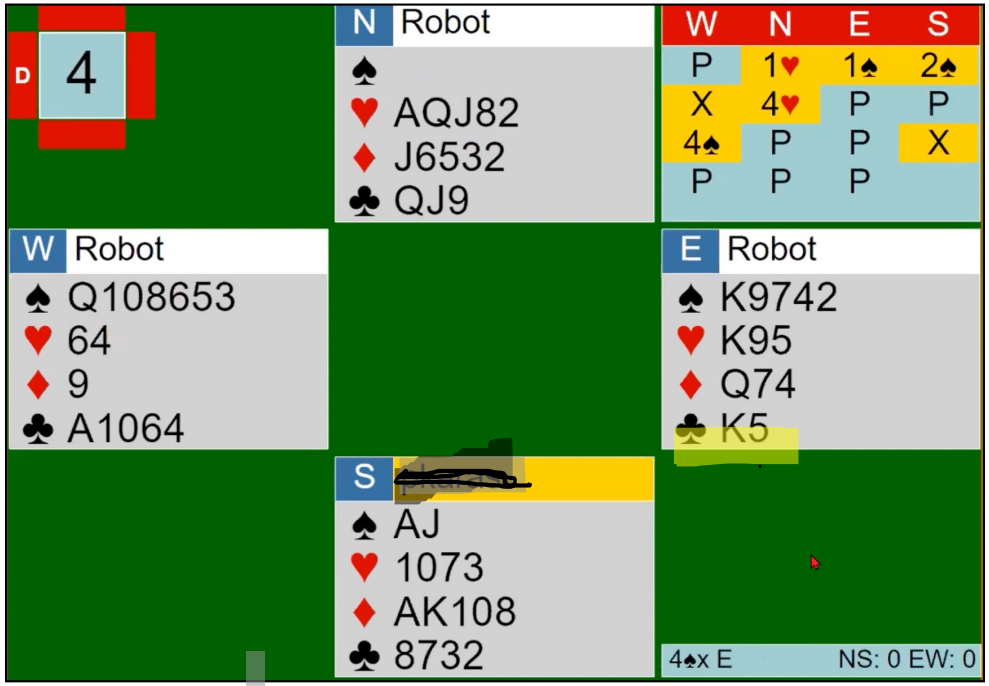
8 losers
11 HCP

18-15=3
Bid 3♠

S promised 7 losers
3♠ - limit raise

8 losers
Only
7 HCP

18-15=3
Bid 3♠



Making 4♠ doubled by E for -790

What happened here ?

Both sides are using LTC counting.

1. N with 5 losers bids game opposite limit raise (8 losers).
2. W with 7 losers bids game.
3. S with two aces opposite opening hand doubles 4 ♠
4. E makes 4♠
5. N is not a happy robot.

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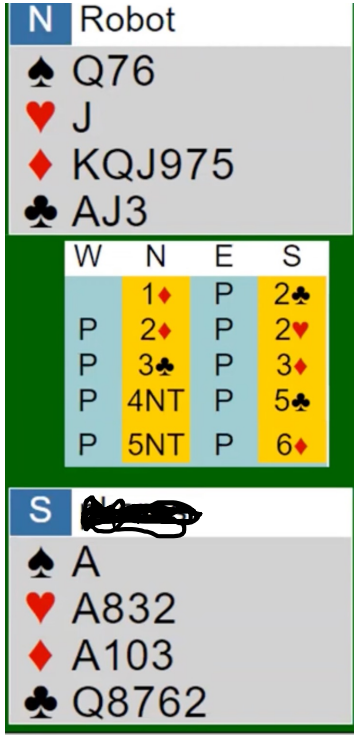
6 losers
14 HCP



6 losers
14 HCP

LTC count:
18-12=6
Making 6

Slam on 28 HCP

N opens 1♦
S responds with GF 2♣ bid

N shows real diamond suit with his 2♦
S shows his major

N shows club control and some extras
S shows diamond support

N asks for key cards (0314)
S shows his three aces

N bids 5NT asking for extras
S bids 6♦ - no extras