

The unassuming cue-bid

Have you heard of the Law of Total tricks?

It's bridge bidding guideline stating that in competitive auctions, the total number of tricks available to both sides is roughly equal to the total number of trumps held by both sides in their respective best suits.

For more details, see: https://www.bridgebum.com/law_of_total_tricks.php

The Law of Total tricks in action

Dir: North
Vul: E/W

Optimum
NS 5CX, NS 5DX: -100

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
25

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	4	4	-	2	-
S	4	4	-	2	-
E	-	-	4	-	-
W	-	-	4	-	-

17
7 10
6

EW has 11 hearts,
NS has 9
diamonds, so
there are 20 total
tricks. In this case
EW can make 4H,
and NS 4D.

The Law of Total tricks in action

Don't let opponents play at the 2-level in an 8-card fit, as you will have one too. So double for take-out

In competitive auctions, it's usually safe to bid to the level that equals the number of cards you hold in that suit

Applying the Law

Partner opens 1 heart, and your right-hand opponent bids 1 spade. What do you bid with this hand?

N North

♠ 2

♥ Q10862

♦ J86

♣ Q752

Playing Acol, bid 3H (9 hearts)

Playing 5 card majors,
bid 4H (10 hearts)

One consequence of the Law

Partner opens 1 heart, and your right-hand opponent bids 1 spade. So what do you bid with this hand?

N	North
♠	32
♥	AQ108
♦	J8
♣	AQ752

You want to invite to game. But you can't bid 2H/3H, as that shows a weak hand with 4 card heart support. So, what do you do?

The solution: The unassuming Cue bid

Bidding opponent suit shows trump support, and 10 + HCPs. Partner can stop at the 3 level with a weak hand, bid game, or – if you play this – cuebid.

Let's practice. Assume team's scoring – so don't worry about overtricks

More uses for the UCB: Slam?

The UCB can be used to see if partner is maximum, to investigate slam possibilities without getting too high

	N North	
	♠ 32	
	♥ AKQ43	
	♦ A3	
	♣ A543	
W West		E East
♠ Q9865		♠ AKJ107
♥ 62		♥ 87
♦ 8542		♦ J10
♣ J10		♣ 9862
	S South	
	♠ 4	
	♥ J1095	
	♦ KQ976	
	♣ KQ7	

Maybe 1H-(1S)-2S-4H-4NT-5C-6H

More uses for the UCB: After double

Suppose the bidding open 1D by opps, then double by partner. And this is your hand...

S	South
♠	KJ92
♥	AK54
♦	65
♣	Q32

The UCB forces to game, and ensures the best contract is reached, by asking partner to bid their major.

More uses for the UCB: After 2 suiter

Suppose your partner opens 1S, opps ,bid 2NT
(5-5 in the minors), and this is your hand...

S South

♠ KJ92

♥ K54

♦ 6543

♣ A2

Bidding a minor 3 clubs can't be natural, so, you and you partner can agree that either 3C or 3D is an UCB. This allows 3S to show 7-10 HCPs, with support.

Let's practice. Arrow switch after 2 boards

Hands 1-4

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=1&d=n&v=-n=s279ah79aktd9jc5k&e=s5kqtjh56d456c4aq&s=s346h24qjdakc6789&w=s8h38d2378qtc23jt&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1h1s2sp4hppp>

Declarer should avoid the ruff, but play the end play, throwing declarer in with spade after drawing trumps and stripping the diamond suit.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?d=e&b=2&v=nn=s4h478d5789c27akq&e=s37ajqh239ad234c9&s=sth56kqjdtaqc346j&w=s25689khtd6kjc58t&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1s2h4sppp>

Declarer makes an overtrick by finessing diamonds twice.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?d=s&b=3&v=en=s3qjh345d45akc456&e=s5678h79kjd89jtc8&s=s29akthaqtd23c23q&w=s4h268d67qc79akjt&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1s2c3cp4sppp>

Declarer must finesse hearts twice.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=4&d=w&v=bn=s3h35kd67qjtkc47k&e=s4789h4ajtd39c5aq&s=s56th26qd258c89jt&w=s2akqjh789d4ac236&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1s2d3dp4sppp>

Declarer must finesse the heart twice (called double finesse)

Boards 5-8

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=5&v=n&d=nn=s3468h29aqtdakqc2&e=s59akjh7d358c468j&s=s2h68kjd247c57akt&w=s7qth345d69tjc39q&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1h1s2sp4hp4np5hp6hppp>

If declarer draws three rounds of trumps they may finish a trick short. They must ruff 2 spades in dummy

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?b=6&v=e&d=en=s8atqh9jtkd457ctq&e=s256h34d29kjtckaj&s=s34kjh25adaqc5789&w=s79h678qd368c2346&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1d xp2dp4sppp>

Not much to the play. Declarer should put nearly all the HCPs with West when declaring.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?d=s&b=7&v=bn=h57ktd346kc458ak&e=s67kth8d289tc679t&s=s2345h69aqjdajcqj&w=s89aqjh234d57qc23&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1h1s2sp4hp4sp5dp5sp5np7hppp>

An advert for exclusion blackwood, and upcoming lesson! 4S asks for Aces outside the trump suit. 5D shows 2 Aces. 5S asks for the Queen of trumps. 5NT shows the Q of trumps, no Kings. N can bid 7H, knowing that South's HCP are probably all outside the spade suit. Not much to the play.

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?d=w&v=-&b=8n=s3akh78atd234qc34&e=s2469h23d59jc678k&s=s57jth49qjd6akc59&w=s8qh56kd78tc2aqjt&b=1&d=n&v=-&a=1c xp2cp4hppp>

Not much to the play. But the UCB let's NS find the major suit fit.