

TIP OF THE WEEK: Losing Trick Count

Losing trick count is a method for evaluating the combined trick-taking potential of your and your partner's hand **once a suit fit has been established**. LTC can be used by responder at his first opportunity, or by the opening bidder on his rebid.

Source: Warrington Bridge Club

A useful mnemonic will help you remember when you use it. It's **UFO!**

U is for **unbalanced hand**. (If your hand is balanced, just bid as you normally would based on your point count.

F is for when you have found a **Fit** with partner.

O is for when you are the **Opening side**, don't use it when the opponents have opened or your partner overcalled.

According to **Robert Todd**, "This method can be a helpful tool in evaluating shapely hands. This method, however, breaks down for hands that don't end up in suit contracts. This means LTC is often ineffective for balanced or misfit hands. It should be **one of the tools** in your toolkit, but **not the only thing you depend on**".

THE METHOD

1) Calculate the number of losers in your hand.

- Count losers only in the first 3 cards of each suit.
- With 3+ cards in a suit, count A,K,Q as winners with anything else being a loser.
- If the Q is supported by another honor it is a winner. However, if it has two spots with it, count it as "half a loser" (Qxx = 2 and 1/2 losers)

. AQ = 1/2 loser

Qx = 2 losers

QJ53 = 2 losers

- With 2 cards in a suit, count A, K as winners.
- With 1 card in a suit, count the A as a winner.

2) Estimate the number of losers in your partner's hand.

If you opened the bidding, determine partner's LTC based on his response...

. 1 level raise = 9 losers

. 2 level raise = 8 losers

[1H - 3H = 8 losers, Limit Raise]

If your partner opened at the 1-level ...

- . Minimum Hand (12 - 15) = 7 losers with ordinary shape
- . Medium Hand (16-18) = 6 losers with ordinary shape
- . Maximum Hand (19) = 5 losers
 - 1D - 1S
 - 4S -----> 5 losers
- . **Strong 2C opener = 4 or fewer losers**

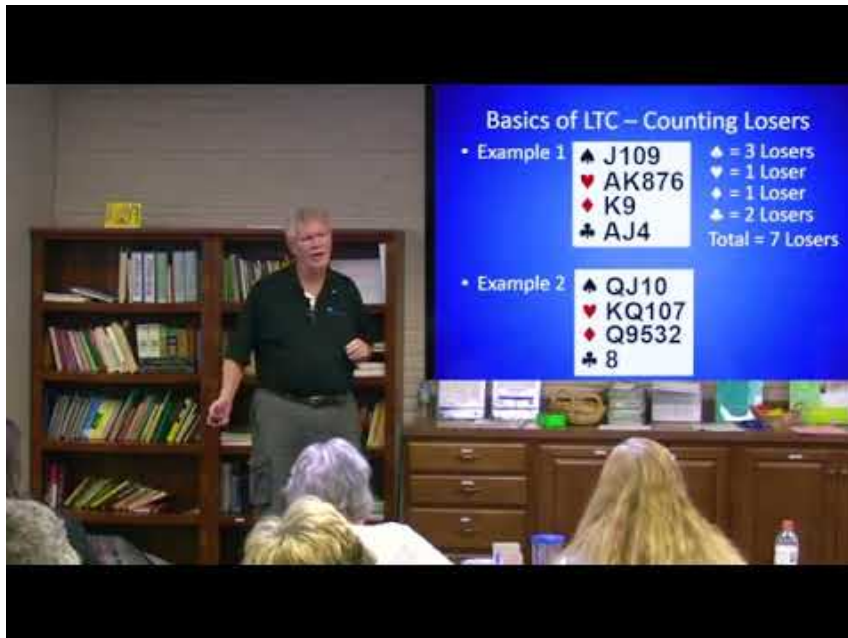
Partner opens 1D.... Losers expected: 7 or fewer. Could be a minimum opening bid or stronger.

You respond 1S and partner bids 2S. This confirms a trump fit and only a minimum hand. Place partner with 7 losers.

3) Add losers in both hands and subtract from 24. This equals the number of tricks you can take.

Count your losers, add on 7, deduct the total from 24. The answer = the number of tricks you're likely to win.

Jim Ricker on the Basic of LTC



<https://youtu.be/TzjpN3lasTk>

“HAND EVALUATION: LOSERS AND COVERS,” by ROBERT TODD....

<https://bridge-tips.co.il/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Hand-Evaluation-Losers-and-Covers-Losing-Trick-Count.pdf>

**High Level Contracts
(Source: Warrington Bridge Club)**

Partner opens 1S and you hold spade support, a shapely hand and only five losing tricks. You count seven losing tricks for part + 5 for your hand = 12. Then you subtract from 24 and get 12. Should you bid 6S?

Absolutely not! The LTC method will tell you that game should be near certain and slam might be possible, but it's not very accurate on its own. You need to explore other methods to see if slam is possible (i.e: ace-asking, cue bidding)

Reminders:

- . Be aware of unsupported queens when counting your losers!
- . Doubletons
 - C: 64
 - D: 52 — — — —-> Total is 4 losers.
- . Singletons only count as 1 loser, so you'd rather hold a 3-1 holding rather than the 2-2.
- . If on the borderline, a hand with no aces should be shaded down in value.