

LOSING TRICK COUNT

What is it?

How do you calculate it?

How do you use it?

The object of the lesson today is to try to change your thinking about how you value your hand.

We look at our hand and count our HCP's. If we have 12+ points we open the bidding.

The Losing Trick Count is a Bridge hand evaluation method **when you have established an 8+ card fit with your partner**. It teaches you to judge your and your partner's hands through the prism of losers instead of HCP. It quantifies both HCP's and the shape of your hand and **can actually devalue or increase the actual strength of your hand**.

The whole idea of counting losers is to consider the top 3 cards in each suit. i.e AKQ. We focus on AKQ because if you have extra cards in that suit eg. AKQxxx – the 3 extra cards are considered to be winners.

To establish how many losers we have in our hand - we have to count which of the AKQ are missing – and count them as losers.

eg. Hand A

Axx	missing KQ	2 losers
KQJxx	missing the A	1 loser
Kxx	missing the AQ	2 losers
xx	missing the AK	2 losers

Total losers = **7** 13 HCP

Now, if we rearrange the honours:

Hand B

AKx	missing Q	1 loser
Jxxxx	missing AKQ	3 losers
Qx	missing AK	2 losers
Kxx	missing AQ	2 losers

Total losers = **8** 13 HCP (1 extra loser)

Same hand shape - same honour cards – but in different positions on the hands. If you were using HCP you would treat them the same! However, Hand B has 1 extra loser which is significant.

That's what I want you to start thinking about. HCP aren't everything. The true

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way to evaluate the hand when you have a fit with your partner is to count losers.

So how do we apply the loser count?

You need to commit to memory that a typical minimum opening hand 12-15 HCP has 7 losers.

What I am trying to do in this lesson is to change your way of thinking when you have a trump fit. Think in terms of the prism of losers rather than only through the prism of HCP. If you think back to the first example hands - you saw that the hands had exactly the same pattern, same HCP, same honours but when we change the position of an honour one hand has one more loser. So HCP don't always give you the whole answer.

So what we are going to try to do when we have an opening hand is to get used to trying to assess how many losers our partner has - based on the bidding.

We count our losers in the top 3 cards in every suit. From the 4th card onwards any extra cards are considered winners. The Q can be counted as an honour as long as it is protected by another honour. If it is on its own it is counted as a loser.

eg. Qxxxx = 3 losers

Void = 0 losers

Singleton = 1 loser unless it is an A

Doubleton = 2 losers unless it is Ax, Kx, KQ . These are all 1 loser combinations..

Ax, Kx, KQ - all 1 loser

KQ, AQ, or singleton K all 1 loser.

Consider this hand:

AQ984	1	
K4	1	
KJ32	2	The J whilst it may have some value in play as far as counting losers is concerned, it does not have any value.
Q6	2	Count the losers:

6 losers - an inviting hand

Counting partner's losers:

As we can't see our partner's hand we need to work out from the bidding how many losers our partner may have. **Remember you can only count losers when you and your partner have an established trump fit.** We add our losers to partner's losers and by using a simple equation we can estimate how many tricks we should make.

A guide to strength of hands and number of losers:

6-9 pts	9 losers	eg. 1H	2H	thinking in terms of losers expect	9 losers
10-12 pts	8 losers	1H	3H	" "	8 losers
13-15 pts	7 losers	1H	4H	" "	7 losers
16-18 pts	6 losers				
19-21 pts	5 losers				

You can see here that as your points increase by 3 pts your losers drop by 1. The stronger your hand – the less losers you will have. The whole idea here is to be able to assess your contract by counting losers instead of relying on HCP and shortage points entirely.

We now need to speak about how the Losing Trick Count formula actually works:

The magic number is 24.

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To explain why the number 24 is used in the calculation – we need to imagine the worst hands you and your partner could have with a trump fit:

Xxxx	3 losers	the 4 th card would be a winner
xxx	3 losers	
xxx	3 losers	
xxx	3 losers	12 losers

and opposite that:

xxxx	3 losers	the 4 th card would be a winner.	Whilst you have a spade
xxx	3 losers		fit
xxx	3 losers		
xxx	3 losers	12 losers	= 24 losers in total

This is the maximum number of losers it is possible to have in 2 hands: 24 losers. After we have established the number of losers in partner's hand (from the bidding) and we know the maximum number of losers possible we can combine the losers in yours and partner's hands to calculate the number of tricks we should make in that contract.

You add your losers to the number of losers you believe partner to have (from the bidding) and subtract it from 24 (the maximum possible number of losers.) This gives you the contract you should be in.

Consider these hands:

A643	2 losers	K98752	2 losers
97	2 losers	82	2 losers
KQ	1 loser	A762	2 losers
K9832	2 losers	4	1 loser
12 HCP	7 losers	7 HCP	7 losers

