

Losing Trick Count (LTC) in bridge

The Losing Trick Count (LTC) in bridge is a way of evaluating the strength of your hand when you have at least 8 trumps between you and your partner.

1.

Count:
your losers +
partner's losers

2.

Subtract:
from 18

3.

Result:
the level that you should bid to

Step 1: Count your losers

Only the first three cards in any suit are potential losers.

♠AQ9864 With this spade suit we can ignore the 864.

3 card suits

Looking at just the first three cards in a suit then, an ace will never be a loser.

♠A76 = 2 losers.

A King in a three card suit is not a loser because when the Ace is played you can throw a small card, keeping the King.

♠K76 = 2 losers.

A Queen in a three card suit is not a loser either because even when the Ace and King are played your Queen is still there.

♠Q76 = 2 losers.

So assume each Ace, King or Queen in a 3 card suit is going to take a trick and count the other cards as losers.

♠AQ6 = 1 loser

♠KQ6 = 1 loser

♠AK7 = 1 loser

And remember that only the first three cards in any suit are counted as potential losers.

♠AQ6432 = 1 loser

♠KQ653 = 1 loser

♠AK75 = 1 loser

2 card suits

If you have a 2-card suit, you have 2 potential losers. A Queen will fall on the second round so it's counted as a loser.

♠A2 = 1 loser.

♠K2 = 1 loser.

♠Q2 = 2 losers.

1 card suits

Count a singleton as a loser unless it's the Ace.

♠K = 1 loser.

♠7 = 1 loser.

♠A = 0 losers.

Count your total losers

Count the losers in the following hand...



1 spade loser, 1 heart loser, 2 diamond losers and 1 club loser.
total = 5 losers.

Step 2: Assess partner's losers

Here's how to estimate partner's losers.

Partner was the opener

- An average opening hand (12-15) = 7 losers
- A stronger opening hand (16-18) = 6 losers
- A maximum 1-level opening (19) = 5 losers
- A strong 2♣ opening (20) = 4 losers or fewer

Partner was responding to your opening bid

- A raise to the 2-level = 9 losers
- A raise to the 3-level = 8 losers
- A raise to game = 7 losers

The stronger the hand, the fewer the losers and the lower your Losing Trick Count.

Step 3: Combine your losers

Add your losers to partner's losers and subtract the total from 18. The answer will tell you how many tricks your side can expect to make.

Losing trick count practice hand

W	N	E	S
1♦	2♠	P	1♠
P	5♦	P	4NT
P	P	P	6♠

Play

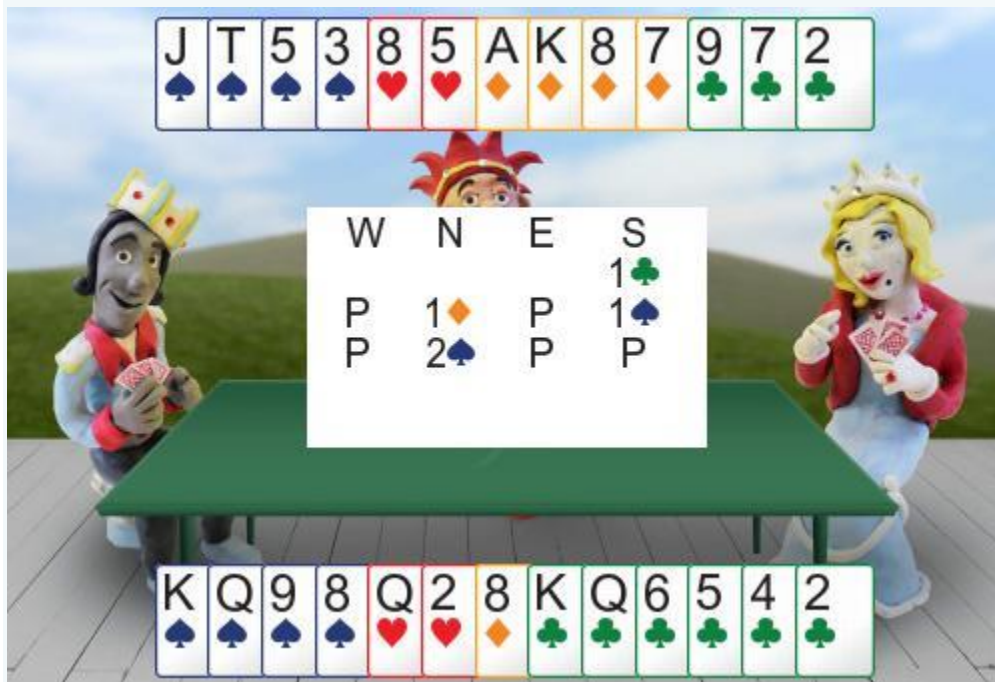
Once North raises to 2♠, South can use the Losing Trick Count to determine how high to bid. Remember that it is only useful once you have found a fit. What should you do with this hand now?

Partner has a minimum opening = 7 losers. You have 5 losers, therefore 12 in total. $18 - 12 = 6$ so you can bid to make 6♠. Check that you are not missing 2 aces using [Blackwood](#) and then [bid the slam](#).

Ace vs Queen adjustment

This small and not well known adjustment will considerably improve your LTC calculations.

A32 is obviously stronger than Q32. Add half a loser for each queen. Subtract half a loser for each ace. So, A32 is 1 and a half losers, and Q32 is 2 and a half losers.



South's hand isn't so good. Too many Queens!