Losing Trick Count

An alternative method of *hand evaluation*, used once you expect to play in a suit contract. (Not used for No Trump).

Takes into account your points and distribution.

Count your losers in each suit. Just look at the top 3 cards in each suit:

A, K or Q are winners, everything else is a loser

Count 3 losers maximum in each suit

Unprotected honours (e.g. singleton K) are *losers*

	Losers		Losers
♠ A K **2**	**1**	♠ A Q **J** 3 2	**1**
♥ **9 3**	**2**	♥ **9**	**1**
♦ Q **J** 7 5 4	**2**	♦ K Q **7** 5 4	**1**
♣ K **9 4**	**2**	♣ **Q J**	**2**
Total Losers	**7**	Total Losers	**5**

Once you find a fit in a suit

1. Count your losers

2. Add your partner's losers

3. Subtract the total from 18

The result is the level at which you can play in your chosen trump suit.

Opener			Responder	
Points	Losers		Points	Losers
12-15	**7**	Minimum	6-9	**9**
16-18	6	Medium	10-12	8
19-21	5	Maximum	13-15	7

A typical minimum opener's hand – one of a suit has 7 losers

A typical minimum responder's hand – raise 1♠ to 2♠ has 9 losers

♠ A Q 10 9 ♥ K Q 2 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ 5 3 2	West East	♠ K 8 6 5 4 3 ♥ A 10 5 3 ♦ 9 5 2 ♣ ---
Open 1♠ with 15 pts		How many losers: ? What should East bid ?

Opener			Responder	
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16-18	6	Medium	10-12	8
19-21	5	Maximum	13-15	7

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A typical minimum responder's hand – raise 1♠ to 2♠ has 9 losers

♠ A Q 10 9 ♥ K Q 2 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ 5 3 2	West East	♠ K **8** 6 5 4 3 ♥ A **10** 5 3 ♦ **9 5 2** ♣ ---
Open 1♠ with 15 pts		7 losers.

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♠ A Q 10 9 ♥ K Q 2 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ 5 3 2	West East	♠ K 8 6 5 4 3 ♥ A 10 5 3 ♦ 9 5 2 ♣ ---
Open 1♠ with 15 pts		7 losers. Assuming partner has 7 losers: $18 - (7 + 7) = 4$ Jump to 4♠

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♠ A Q 10 9 ♥ K Q 2 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ 5 3 2	West East	♠ K 8 6 5 4 3 ♥ A 10 5 3 ♦ 9 5 2 ♣ ---
Open 1♠ with 15 pts		7 losers. Assuming partner has 7 losers: 18 – (7 + 7) = 4 Jump to 4♠
7 losers (a minimum): Pass		

Opener			Responder	
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12-15	**7**	Minimum	6-9	**9**
16-18	6	Medium	10-12	8
19-21	5	Maximum	13-15	7

♠ A 4 ♥ A K 10 9 7 ♦ 6 ♣ K Q J 3 2	West East	♠ K 8 6 ♥ J 8 5 3 ♦ 9 8 7 5 2 ♣ 4
Open 1♥ with 17 pts		9 losers. Assuming partner has 7 losers: 18 – (7 + 9) = 2 Bid 2♥
Only 4 losers: 18 – (4 + 9) =5 Bid 4♥ (no point in 5♥)		

Opener			Responder	
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12-15	**7**	Minimum	6-9	**9**
16-18	6	Medium	10-12	8
19-21	5	Maximum	13-15	7

♠ K 4 3 2 ♥ A K 4 3 2 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ 2	West East	♠ A 8 6 5 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q 7 6 ♣ 9 7 6
Open 1♥ with 13 pts		1 ♠ (6+ pts)
How many losers? **What should West bid?**		

Opener			Responder	
Points	Losers		Points	Losers
12-15	**7**	Minimum	6-9	**9**
16-18	6	Medium	10-12	8
19-21	5	Maximum	13-15	7

♠ K 4 3 2 ♥ A K 4 3 2 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ 2	West East	♠ A 8 6 5 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q 7 6 ♣ 9 7 6
Open 1♥ with 13 pts		1 ♠ (6+ pts)
6 losers:		

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♠ K 4 3 2 ♥ A K 4 3 2 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ 2	West East	♠ A 8 6 5 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q 7 6 ♣ 9 7 6
Open 1♥ with 13 pts		1 ♠ (6+ pts)
6 losers: Jump to 3♠		8 losers:

Opener			Responder	
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12-15	**7**	Minimum	6-9	**9**
16-18	6	Medium	10-12	8
19-21	5	Maximum	13-15	7

♠ K 4 3 2 ♥ A K 4 3 2 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ 2	West East	♠ A 8 6 5 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q 7 6 ♣ 9 7 6
Open 1♥ with 13 pts		1 ♠ (6+ pts)
6 losers: Jump to 3♠		8 losers: One fewer loser than a minimum: Bid 4♠

A Further refinement is that the queen *without the ace, king, or jack is a further ½ loser:*

Q765 = 2 ½ losers

QJ6 = 2 losers

Also downgrade a hand with more queens than aces.

♠ K J 8 7 2 ♥ K 2 ♦ K 6 ♣ Q 9 3 2	West East	♠ Q 6 5 4 ♥ Q J 5 ♦ Q J 8 7 5 ♣ 7
(12 pts) 1♠		7 ½ losers – but downgrade due to lack of aces -> 8 losers 3♠ (at most)
6 ½ losers -> treat as 7 losers Pass		

Other Opening Bids

Opening Bid	Points	Expected Losers
2 ♣	23+pts	3 or fewer
3-level pre-empt	Under 11	7 - non vulnerable 6 – vulnerable
Weak Two	6-10	8 minimum 7 with a 'feature'
1NT	12-14	Usually 8

♠ J 4 3 ♥ K 3 2 ♦ K Q 9 ♣ Q J 10 4	West East	♠ 8 ♥ A Q J 8 5 4 ♦ 6 5 ♣ K 7 6 2
1NT (12-14) – 8 likely losers		10 pts, but only 6 losers. 18-(8+6) = 4 4♥ or transfer to hearts, then jump to 4♥ Makes 4♥

	West East	♠ A 8 ♥ Q J 7 5 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ A 7 6 3
2♠ (6-10pts, 7-8 losers)		15 pts, 7 losers 2NT (Feature Request)
3♠ (No feature or bare minimum)		

♠ K Q J 7 5 4 ♥ 9 8 6 ♦ 7 2 ♣ 4 2	West East	♠ A 8 ♥ Q J 7 5 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ A 7 6 3
2♠ (6-10pts, 7-8 losers)		15 pts, 7 losers 2NT (Feature Request)
3♠ (No feature or bare minimum)		Pass
		Makeable: 3♠

♠ K Q J 7 5 4 ♥ K 8 6 ♦ 7 2 ♣ 4 2	West East	♠ A 8 ♥ Q J 7 5 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ A 7 6 3
2♠ (6-10pts, 7-8 losers)		15 pts, 7 losers 2NT (Feature Request)
3♥ (♥A or ♥K)		4♠
		Makeable: 4♠

♠ 4 3 2 ♥ K Q 10 5 4 3 2 ♦ 7 ♣ 4 2	West East	♠ A 8 7 ♥ J 9 7 ♦ 9 6 ♣ A K Q 6 3
3♥ (6-7 losers)		14 pts, 7 losers 4♥
		Probably makes 4♥

How to Use the Losing Trick Count

• Try it – as a useful crosscheck of what to bid, or if you are unsure of what to bid

• You can use it even if your partner does not know it!

• The direct jump to game e.g 1♥ - 4♥ is used for a relatively weak hand with 7 losers, but good shape. With a stronger hand you should find another bid (Jacoby 2NT, or just bid a new suit)

• Be careful using it when supporting your partner's **minor** suit, as you may end up in No Trump.

• Two Excellent Articles

– www.bridgeclass.co.uk/handouts (Losing Trick Count 1 & 2 - Mr. Bridge Magazine)

♠ K Q 7 5 4 ♥ 2 ♦ A K Q 10 2 ♣ A 2 (18 pts)	West East	♠ A 9 8 2 ♥ 9 8 6 ♦ 6 5 ♣ K Q 6 2 (9 pts)
1♠ 3 losers: 18-(3+8)=7!		3♠ (8 losers)

♠ K Q 7 5 4 ♥ 2 ♦ A K Q 10 2 ♣ A 2 (18 pts)	West East	♠ A 9 8 2 ♥ 9 8 6 ♦ 6 5 ♣ K Q 6 2 (9 pts)
1♠ 3 losers: 18-(3+8)=7 4NT 6♠		3♠ (8 losers) 5♦ (1 ace)