

The Law of Total Tricks

In a competitive auction, where both sides have a fit, the combined number of trumps should equal the combined number of tricks that can be taken.

The more total trumps there are, the more total tricks can be taken.

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A J 7 5 4 ♥ 10 4 ♦ Q J 6 5 ♣ Q 6	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A K 6 5 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ A 9 8 7	N W E S	♠ 10 9 6 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ 10 5 4
	♠ K Q 2 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ K J 3 2	

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
?			

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A J 7 5 4 ♥ 10 4 ♦ Q J 6 5 ♣ Q 6	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A K 6 5 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ A 9 8 7	N W E S	♠ 10 9 6 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ 10 5 4
	♠ K Q 2 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ K J 3 2	

In a heart contract how many tricks can West make? 8

In a spade contract how many tricks can North make? 8

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A J 7 5 4 ♥ 10 4 ♦ Q J 6 5 ♣ Q 6	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A K 6 5 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ A 9 8 7	N W E S	♠ 10 9 6 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ 10 5 4
	♠ K Q 2 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ K J 3 2	

In a heart contract how many tricks can West make?

In a spade contract how many tricks can North make?

Total Trumps = 8+8=16

Total Tricks = 8+8=16

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 6 4	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A 9 8 7 ♦ A K 6 5 3 ♣ A 8	N W E S	♠ J 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q J 9 4 ♣ K 5 3 2
	♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ K J 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 9 7	

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
?			

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 6 4	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A 9 8 7 ♦ A K 6 5 3 ♣ A 8	N W E S	♠ J 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q J 9 4 ♣ K 5 3 2
	♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ K J 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 9 7	

In a diamond contract how many tricks can West make? 9

In a spade contract how many tricks can North make? 9

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 6 4	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A 9 8 7 ♦ A K 6 5 3 ♣ A 8	N W E S	♠ J 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q J 9 4 ♣ K 5 3 2
	♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ K J 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 9 7	

In a diamond contract how many tricks can West make?

In a spade contract how many tricks can North make?

Total Trumps = 9+9=18

Total Tricks = 9+9=18

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 6 4	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A 9 8 7 ♦ A K 6 5 3 ♣ A 8	N W E S	♠ K 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q J 9 4 ♣ K 5 3 2
	♠ J 9 6 2 ♥ K J 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 9 7	

Swap ♠K for ♠J

In a diamond contract how many tricks can West make?

In a spade contract how many tricks can North make?

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 6 4	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A 9 8 7 ♦ A K 6 5 3 ♣ A 8	<p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p>	♠ K 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q J 9 4 ♣ K 5 3 2
	♠ J 9 6 2 ♥ K J 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 9 7	

Swap ♠K for ♠J

In a diamond contract how many tricks can West make? 10

In a spade contract how many tricks can North make? 8

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 6 4	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A 9 8 7 ♦ A K 6 5 3 ♣ A 8	<p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p>	♠ K 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q J 9 4 ♣ K 5 3 2
	♠ J 9 6 2 ♥ K J 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 9 7	

Swap ♠K for ♠J

In a diamond contract how many tricks can West make?

In a spade contract how many tricks can North make?

Total Trumps = 9+9=18

Total Tricks = 10+8=18

Chart for 18 Total Tricks – Not Vul/Vul			
We play in 3♠		They play in 3♦	
Our Number of Tricks	Our Score	Their Number of Tricks	Our Score
10	+170	8	+50/100
9	+140	9	-110
8	-50/100	10	-130
7	-100/200	11	-150

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 6 4	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A 9 8 7 ♦ A K 6 5 3 ♣ A 8	<p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p>	♠ J 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q J 9 4 ♣ K 5 3 2
	♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ K J 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 9 7	

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
3♦	Pass	Pass	

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 ♣ Q J 10 6 4	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A 9 8 7 ♦ A K 6 5 3 ♣ A 8	N W E S	♠ J 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q J 9 4 ♣ K 5 3 2
	♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ K J 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ 9 7	

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
3♦	Pass	Pass	3♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A J 7 5 4 ♥ 10 4 ♦ Q J 6 5 ♣ Q 6	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A K 6 5 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ A 9 8 7	N W E S	♠ 10 9 6 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ 10 5 4
	♠ K Q 2 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ K J 3 2	

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
?			

Chart for 16 Total Tricks – Not Vul/Vul			
We play in 3♠		They play in 3♥	
Our Number of Tricks	Our Score	Their Number of Tricks	Our Score
10	+170	6	+150/300
9	+140	7	+100/200
8	-50/100	8	+50/100
7	-100/200	9	-140
6	-150/300	10	-170

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A J 7 5 4 ♥ 10 4 ♦ Q J 6 5 ♣ Q 6	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A K 6 5 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ A 9 8 7	N W E S	♠ 10 9 6 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ 10 5 4
	♠ K Q 2 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ K J 3 2	

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
P	P		

Dealer: West Both Vul	♠ A J 7 5 4 ♥ 10 4 ♦ Q J 6 5 ♣ Q 6	
♠ 8 3 ♥ A K 6 5 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ A 9 8 7	W E S	♠ 10 9 6 ♥ Q J 9 3 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ 10 5 4
	♠ K Q 2 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ K J 3 2	

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
P	P	3♥	P

- If both sides have an 8-card trump fit, you should not let the opponents play at the 2-level.
- If both sides have an 8-card trump fit, you should not outbid the opponents at the 3-level. You should NOT bid 3♠ over the opponents 3♦.
- If you suspect that there 17 or 18 trumps, you should outbid the opponents at the 3-level. You should bid 3♠ over the opponents 3♦.
- With freak distribution, you should consider bidding more!
- If both sides have a good fit in each major, it is generally right to outbid 4♥ with 4♠
- **Generally, you should compete to the level equal to the combined number of trumps held by your side, but bid one more in order to outbid the opponents if they settled at the two level.**