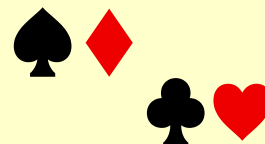


Bridge on Sundays



Counting your Losers and The Losing Trick Count

Losers are an alternative method of hand evaluation for deciding the level of suit contracts. Losers do not replace high card points as a first assessment and, for no-trump contracts, hcps are the chosen method.

Losers are particularly important:

- When raising partner's suit
- When deciding the level of a re-bid in your own suit
- In deciding whether to open at the two level (strong), subject to new EBU guidelines

Counting losers

There is a maximum of three possible losers in any suit. However there cannot be more losers in a suit than the number of cards held in the suit. Deduct any A or K or Q from the 3 possible losers.

- ♠AK984 ♥Q654 ♦10 ♣3 How many losers? =7
1 in ♠, 2 in ♥, 1 in ♦, 3 in ♣
- ♠76 ♥85432 ♦AKJ ♣AQ6 How many losers? =7
2 in ♠, 3 in ♥, 1 in ♦, 1 in ♣
- ♠J972 ♥AQ842 ♦AJ7 ♣A How many losers? =6
3 in ♠, 1 in ♥, 2 in ♦, 0 in ♣
- ♠KJ98543 ♥AK ♦6532 How many losers? =5
2 in ♠, 0 in ♥, 3 in ♦, 0 in ♣

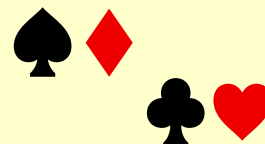
Caution

Count Qxx as three losers unless balanced by an ace elsewhere. But with two such suits, count only 5 losers between the two suits

The Losing Trick Count

An opening hand normally has 7 losers (may be worse or better of course but never worse vulnerable).

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Raise partner's opening bid in a MAJOR when you hold 4 or more cards in partner's suit, as follows:

- You hold 9-10 losers so raise to the 2 level
- with 8 losers raise to the 3 level
- with 7 losers raise to the 4 level

A combined total of 14 losers between your hand and partner's is usually sufficient for game in a major suit but 12-13 losers combined is usually required for a minor suit game.

Example: You open 1♠ and partner responds 3♠. Partner is known to have 8 losers. If you opened with 7 losers then pass, if you opened with 6 losers then raise to 4♠.

Another example: You open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. When you hold 4 cards in ♠s in addition to your suit of ♦s, raise to 2♠ with a 7 loser hand and 3♠ with a 6 loser hand etc.

With minors do not raise beyond the 3 level without considering 3NT as an alternative.

Do not raise direct to a SLAM with 5 losers but first find out about controls using *Blackwood* or *cue bids*

Using Losers With Re-Bids

- With a 7 loser hand and a 5 card suit, open at the 1 level and re-bid at the two level.
- With a 6 loser hand and a 6 card suit, open at the 1 level and re-bid at the 3 level.
- With a 5 loser hand you may be able to open at the 2 level. If you open at the 1 level, re-bid at the 4 level with a major suit and a 7 card suit.

Remember that losers are a guide. Like high card points, they cannot guarantee that a contract would make. Losers are a superior method of hand assessment to points for major suit contracts.