

Counting Losers

Once your bidding has found a trump fit, you can count the number of losers in your hand to try to determine how high you should bid.

Count losing tricks only for the top three cards of each suit. With three or more cards in a suit, count the A, K, and Q as winners; any card lower is a loser. With a doubleton in a suit, only the A and K are winners; any other card is a loser. With a singleton in a suit, only the A is a winner; any other card is a loser.

There are never more than three losers in a suit. There are never more losers in a suit than the number of cards in the suit.

Count your losing tricks, add your partners losers, and subtract the total from 24. (There are only 3 losers per suit per hand - or a maximum of 24 losers in a hand.) The difference is the number of tricks you should be able to take.

How do you know how many losers partner has? Here's how to estimate partner's losers:

Partner opened the bidding:

- A minimum opening hand (12-15 HCPs) = 7 losers
- A stronger opening hand (16-18 HCPs) = 6 losers
- A maximum one-level opening (19 HCPs) = 5 losers
- A strong 2 club opening (20+ HCPs) = 4 losers or fewer

Partner responded to your opening bid:

- A single raise to the two level = 9 losers
- A jump raise to the three level = 8 losers
- A jump to game = 7 losers

Improve the accuracy of your losing trick count by adding $\frac{1}{2}$ a loser for each Q and subtracting $\frac{1}{2}$ a loser for each A. So Axx is $1\frac{1}{2}$ losers and Qxx is $2\frac{1}{2}$ losers.

Figure It Out!

How many losers do you have?

AK874	J86	1076	Qx
J109632	K	AQ	K642

How high should you bid after partner opens 1 spade?

AKx	KJ109	987	AQ5
AQ76	J1098	Q7	A42

How high should you bid after partner opens 1NT and you find a 4-4 heart fit?

AK42	AQ10	AJ96	J4
A56	K582	Q97	1098

How high should you bid after partner raises your 1 spade opener to 2 spades?

AQJ752	AQ	AJ853	J
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Answers: 9, 7; 4S, 3S; 6H, 3H; 4S.