Quick Tricks

Quick tricks are aces and kings and sometimes queens. There can only be two quick tricks in a suit. They are counted as per the following table.

Holding	Quick Tricks	Notes
An ace with or without small cards	1	
Ace and king in the same suit	2	
Ace and queen in the same suit	1 ½	The queen will make if partner or right hand opponent has the king
King and queen in the same suit	1	
Ace, king and queen in the same suit	2	Maximum of two per suit
King and one or more small cards	½	The king will make if partner or right hand opponent has the ace
A singleton king	None	It will fall to the ace unless partner has that card

Losing Trick Count

The losing trick count is an alternative method of hand valuation. High card points work very well on balanced hands. With unbalanced hands adjustments for distribution must be applied – especially when supporting partner's suit. The losing trick count system is a way of simplifying matters.

The theory underlying the Losing Trick Count is that there can be no more than three losers in a suit.

- With three or more cards in a suit:
  - Count the ace and king as winners.
  - Count the queen as a winner only if the suit contains another honour.
  - If the suit does not contain another honour, count the queen a half a winner.

  Subtract the number of winners from three to determine the number of losers.

- With two cards in a suit, the ace and king are winners. Everything else is a loser.
- With a singleton, the ace is a winner and everything else is a loser.

Some Examples

A K Q 9 2	No losers.
A Q 5	One loser. The queen is supported by the ace.
A J T	Two losers. Only A, K and Q are counted as winners.
A Q	One loser. With only two cards in the suit, don't count the queen as a winner.
Q 7 3 2	Two and a half a losers because the queen has no supporting honour.
Q T 3 2	Two losers because the queen is supported by the ten.
K Q 9 8 7 2	One loser.
A (singleton)	No losers.
K (singleton)	One loser.

How does the Losing Trick Count fit in with High Card Points?

There is an approximate correlation between high card points and losers.

	High Card Points	Losers
Minimum support of opener's suit	6-9	9
Game invitation in opener's suit	10-12	8
Minimum opening hand	12-14	7
A 1NT opening	15-17	6
An unbalanced hand suitable for a jump rebid	16 or more	6 or less
A hand suitable for a 2NT rebid	18-19	5
A 2NT or 2C opening	20-22	4

Supporting Opener's Suit

Some mathematics

An opening hand represents about seven losers. If both opener and responder have opening hands, that is enough for game in a major. Therefore, a combined fourteen losers is enough to make ten tricks. This leads to the rule:

Subtract the total losers in both hands from 24 to give the number of winners.

A Tweak to the Losing Trick Count System

When counting distributional points, four card support for opener's suit is worth an extra two points. Translating this to the Losing Trick Count System:

Deduct one loser if you have four card support for opener's suit.

Some Examples

Let's say partner has opened 1♥. What do we do with these hands?

Your Hand
♠ A 6
♥ T 8 6
♦ 9 7 5 2
♣ 8 6 4 2

Ten losers: one spade and three in the other suits.

Pass.

Your Hand
♠ A 6
♥ Q T 6
♦ 9 7 5 2
♣ 8 6 4 2

Nine losers: one spade, two hearts and three in clubs and diamonds.

Bid 2♥.

Your Hand
♠ A 6
♥ Q 7 6
♦ K 7 5 2
♣ Q 7 4 2

Eight losers: one spade, two and a half in hearts and clubs, two in diamonds.

Bid 3♥.

Your Hand
♠ A 6
♥ J 7 6 4
♦ K 7 5
♣ T 7 4 2

Eight losers: one spade, three in hearts and clubs, two in diamonds. That adds up to nine but deduct one for the extra trump.

Bid 3♥.

Your Hand
♠ A 6
♥ Q 7 6
♦ Q 7 5 2
♣ A Q 4 2

Seven losers: one spade, two and a half in hearts and diamonds, one in clubs.

That is enough for game. Bid 2♣ for now and support hearts at the next turn to call.

Your Hand
♠ A 6
♥ T 7 6
♦ K Q 7 2
♣ A Q 4 2

Six losers: one spade, three hearts, one diamond and one club.

That is enough for game. Bid 2♣ for now and support hearts at the next turn to call. If opener shows more than minimum, slam is a possibility.

Example 1

North

♠ Q J 8 4
♥ K 7 6 4 3
♦ 2
♣ A K 5

West

♠ K 9 2
♥ A Q T
♦ J 9 7 6
♣ 9 7 6

East

♠ T 6 5 3
♥ J 2
♦ A K 8 5
♣ Q 8 4

South

♠ A 7
♥ 9 8 5
♦ Q T 4 3
♣ J T 3 2

West	North	East	South
	1♥ [1]	Pass	2♥ [2]
Pass	Pass [3]	All Pass	

East leads the ♦A.

1. A minimum, 7 loser hand.
2. 9 losers so a minimum response.
3. Sixteen combined losers, so a probable eight winners.

Win the second trick and cross to dummy's ace of spades. Lead a low heart towards the king. When that finesse succeeds, there are at least eight tricks, losing a spade, two hearts, a diamond and a club.

Example 2

North

♠ Q 5
♥ A T 8 6
♦ J T 8
♣ A 5 3 2

West

♠ T 8 6 4
♥ 9 2
♦ K 5 4 2
♣ K 9 6

East

♠ A K 7 3 2
♥ K 7 4 3
♦ A 3
♣ 7 4

South

♠ J 9
♥ Q J 5
♦ Q 9 7 6
♣ Q J T 8

West	North	East	South
		1♠ [1]	Pass
3♠ [2]	Pass	4♠ [3]	Pass
Pass	Pass		

South leads the ♣Q.

1. Only six losers, a strong one level opening.
2. Eight losers after deducting one for the extra trump.
3. Six losers plus eight is fourteen. Deduct from 24 and there are ten tricks.

The defence take the first two club tricks. Ruff the third club. After the unlucky start, a bit of fortune is required. Play out the ace and king of trumps. Follow up with ace of diamonds and dummy's king. Now, play a low heart towards the king. When that finesse succeeds, the contract is home.

Example 3

```
                North
                ♠ K J 4
                ♥ T 5
                ♦ A K 5 3 2
                ♣ A T 5
West                            East
♠ 6 3                           ♠ Q T 2
♥ A 9 8 7                       ♥ J 6 4 3
♦ J 8 6                         ♦ Q T
♣ 7 6 3 2       South           ♣ Q J 9 8
                ♠ A 9 8 7 5
                ♥ K Q 2
                ♦ 9 7 4
                ♣ K 4
```

West	North	East	South
			1♠ (1)
Pass	2♦ (2)	Pass	2NT (3)
Pass	4♠ (4)	All Pass	

West leads the ♣6.

1. A minimum, seven loser hand.
2. Seven losers, enough for game. Bid diamonds first as an immediate 4♠ shows a weak, distributional hand.
3. Shows exactly seven losers.
4. Settle for game.

Win the opening lead, cash the ace of spades and try the spade finesse. That fails and the defence will probably try another club. Regain the lead and draw the last trump. There are two possible heart losers and they will have to disappear on dummy's long diamonds. Since dummy has no entries remaining outside diamonds, give up a diamond right away. Win the return, play out the diamonds and discard heart losers.

Example 4

```
                North
                ♠ 6 4 3 2
                ♥ Q 2
                ♦ J 7 5 2
                ♣ J 7 6
West                            East
♠ A 9                           ♠ K T 7
♥ A K J 9 6 4                   ♥ T 7 5 3
♦ K 9 8                         ♦ A T
♣ 8 4           South           ♣ A Q T 2
                ♠ Q J 8 5
                ♥ 8
                ♦ Q 6 4 3
                ♣ K 9 5 3
```

West	North	East	South
1♥ (1)	Pass	2♣ (2)	Pass
3♥ (3)	Pass	4NT (4)	Pass
5♣ (5)	Pass	6♥ (6)	All Pass

North leads the ♠4.

1. A six loser hand.
2. Six losers, more than enough for game.
3. Six or less losers and six or more hearts.
4. A combined 12 losers. Subtract from 24 to get 12 winners. Slam inquiry.
5. Zero or three key cards.
6. It has to be three!

Even with the club finesse failing, there are twelve easy tricks.