

LOSER COUNT – THE BASICS

Loser count is only strictly valid (and most accurate) when you have a suit fit.

Loser Count can be particularly helpful in finding light games and slams that the point count might miss. This is how it works:

1. In working out the loser count of your hand, you look at the top 3 cards in each suit ie AKQ of the suit

If missing any one of these three cards it is counted as a loser

Therefore:

(a) AKQ76 0 losers

(b) KQ2 1 loser

(c) K876 2 losers

(d) 9643 3 losers

2. If you have only 2 cards in a suit then the most losers you can have in the suit is two Therefore:

(a) AK 0 losers

(b) A6 1 loser

(c) 54 2 losers

3. If you have a singleton in a suit then the most losers you can have in the suit is one Therefore:

(a) A 0 losers

(b) 5 1 loser

4. Where the queen is not supported by the A or K, count Qxx as 2 ½ losers, unless the J or 10 is held. So, looking at the hand:

♠ AK765 1 loser

♥ 1094 3 losers

♦ KQ7 1 loser

♣ 86 2 losers

7 losers

When you know the number of losers you have and know the number of losers partner has shown from his/her bidding, you add the 2 together and take the result away from 18. This will give you level show should be bidding to .

For example, if partner has opened the bidding (at least a 7 loser hand) and I have the above hand of 7 losers, $18 - 14$ shows that we can possibly make a bid at the 4 level and we are in the game ballpark should our fit be

♠ or ♥

But how do we know how many losers partner has? The following point counts or bidding ranges roughly correspond to the number of losers partner has:

6-9pts, minimal response	9 losers
10-12pts, invitational hand	8 losers
12-15pts, minimal opening	7 losers
16-18pts, stronger opening	6 losers
19-21pts, very strong opening	5 losers
23+pts, game force opening	4 losers or less

However, prior to a suit fit it can give you a ballpark idea of where you should be bidding the hand to. For example, if my partner opens with a 1 level bid (at least a 7 loser), and I have a 5 loser hand, $7+5 = 12$ 18-12 Shows that we are in a possible make a small slam.

If there is no suit fit or the hands are very misfitting, then the loser count is likely to be inaccurate and too optimistic.

If you have a lot of queens and jacks, the Loser Count can also be inaccurate and too optimistic.

The suits: A98 Q108 are both “2 losers” but while the ace almost always will be a winning trick, the holding Q108 might not win any and be 3 losers.

The Loser Count is most accurate when you have a suit fit and lots of pointy cards

♠ AQJ
 ♥ A8753
 ♦ A109
 ♣ 53

♠ 92
 ♥ J10964
 ♦ K72
 ♣ 1042

♠ -
 ♥ KQ2
 ♦ QJ863
 ♣ QJ986

♠ K10876543
 ♥ -
 ♦ 54
 ♣ AK7

N	E	S	W
1H	2NT(minors)	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT (Ace ask)	Pass
5♣ (0 or 3)	Pass	6♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Once partner raises 3S to 4S showing the fit, the hand revalues upwards sharply.

According to the point count, the hand is worth 10 HCPs + 5 points for the heart void + 1 point for the diamond doubleton = 16 points.

This suggests we are not in slam territory (12 points minimum for partner + 16 for us = 28 and not the 33 we need for small slam).

However, the Loser Count says our hand is a 5 loser opposite an opening hand (at least 7 loser) so $18 - (5 + 7) = 6$. A small slam is possible 12 tricks.

The loser count is likely to be more accurate here as we have a big trump fit and lots of pointy stuff (aces and kings).

The problem with my hand is there could be 2 diamond losers off the top. So an Ace Ask is required. This says I have first round control (ace or void) or second round control (king or singleton) in clubs and am interested in slam but have a control problem in another suit. Partner bids 5D showing first or second round control in that suit, and I know we won't lose 2 diamonds straight away and am happy to bid 6S. Partner finally has a long think about bidding 7S. I have just bid 6S missing SAQJ which partner holds and with 2 losers in diamonds and partner has DAK. A 7S bid would not have been unreasonable.