Losing Trick Count

Since you're interested in getting to game you should have about nine tricks to take in *your* hand. But, how do you count your trick-taking potential? One common way is to use the Losing Trick Count (LTC).

Look at each suit in your hand, one at a time, and look at the top cards that you have in that suit.

- If you are **void** in the suit, you have zero losers;
- If you have a **singleton** and it is not the ace, you have one loser;
- If you have a **doubleton**, each card that is not the ace or king is another loser; and,
- If you have a **three-card** or longer suit, each card in the *top three cards only* that is not the ace, king or queen is a loser. **HOWEVER**, if you hold the Q without either the A, K, J or T, we have one **more** loser than we counted at first. [The Q is not "*backed up*" by another honor.]

It may sound complicated, but don't worry. Once you get used to it, it's pretty easy.

Let's just look at a few examples. We're only going to look at one suit for this practice, but remember that you have to do it for *each* of the four suits when you count up the whole hand.

a) ♣AJT987	The top three cards are A, J and T. We don't have the K and Q, so we have **two losers**.
b) ♣KQ	With a doubleton suit, we count each non-ace or non-king card as a loser so we have **one loser**.
c) ♣AQ432	We don't have the K in the top 3, so we have **one loser** (Note that the Q is *backed up* by the A.)
d) ♣A	We have a singleton and it is the ace. Therefore, we have **no/zero losers**!
e) ♣KJ74	We're missing the A and Q of spades, so we have **two losers**.
f) ♣Q8532	We're missing the A and K of spades, so we initially count two losers. However, the Q is **not** *backed up* with another honor, so we have an extra loser. Thus, we have **three losers**.

Now that you know how to count losers (by LTC) you subtract the total number of losers from 13 (the number of cards you hold). The idea is that we'd wish every card in our hand would *win* a trick (13 winners), so we subtract the number of *"losers"* in our hand from those 13 winners and we'll be left with cards that have the best potential to take tricks: the "real" winners.

The resulting number of "winners" gives you an idea of the "trick taking potential" of your hand. Thus with Hand A shown at the beginning of the lesson, we'd determine its trick taking potential in this way.

A) ♣AKQ9765 ♥AK ♦AQJ ♣2 [26 points with length]

♣AKQ9765 has no losers,
♥AK has no losers,
♦AQJ has one loser and
♣2 has one loser.
This totals to two losers. Subtract 2 from 13 and we get 11 playing tricks. WOW!!

Let's try one more full hand for LTC:
♣AJT5 ♥AQJT873 ♦K ♣K [21 points with length]

♣AJT5 has two losers,
♥AQJT873 has one loser,
♦K has one loser, and
♣K has one loser.
This totals to five losers. Subtract 5 from 13 and we get 8 playing tricks.

LTC is just *another way to assess* the strength of the hand. You can use it *along with* counting points to give you an idea of how good your hand is. It is **most** commonly used with distributional hands (not flat hands). It isn't quite as helpful if the hand is flat and I'd recommend just sticking with point count for the flat hands.