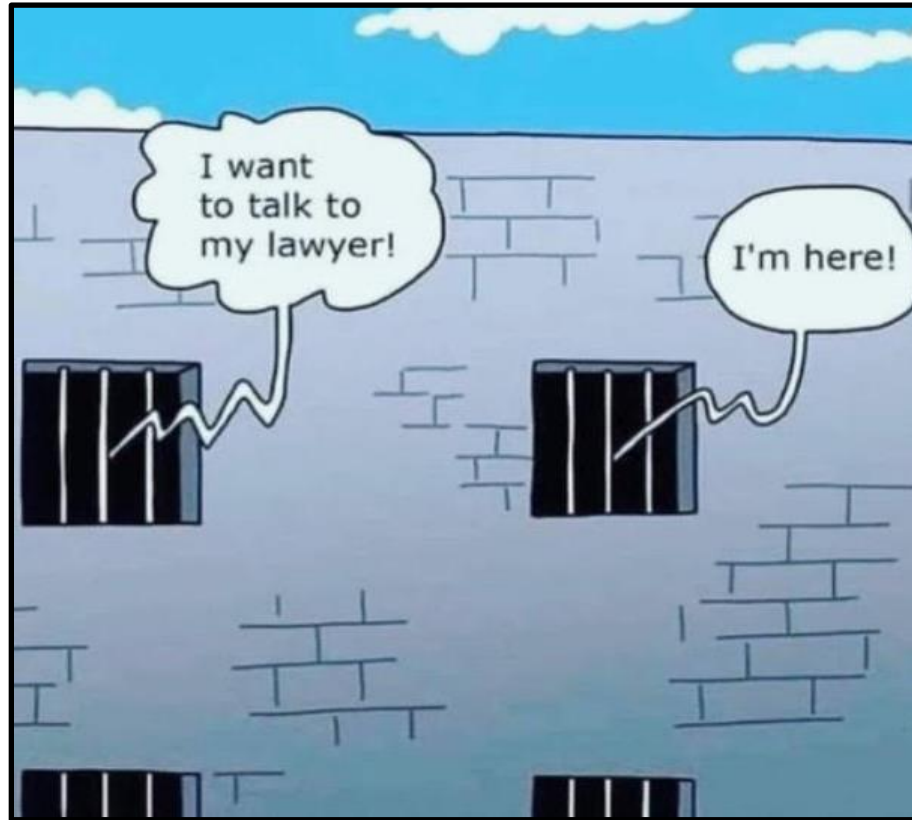
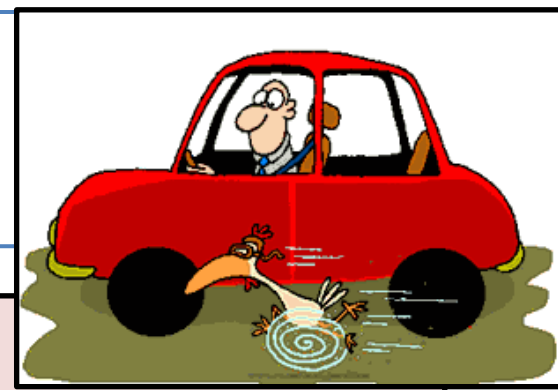


# Other Ways to Assess Your Strength Besides HCPs



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# Time for a Joke



**One day a traveling salesman was driving down a back country road at about 30 mph when he noticed that there was a three-legged chicken running alongside his car.**

**He stepped on the gas, but at 50 miles per hour, the chicken was still keeping up.**

**After about a mile of running, the chicken ran up a farm lane and into a barn behind an old farmhouse.**

**Being curious, the salesman turned around and drove up the farm lane.**

**He knocked at the farmhouse door, and when the farmer answered, he told him what he had just seen.**

**The farmer said that he was a geneticist and had developed a three-legged chicken because he, his wife and his son each like a drumstick for dinner. This way they would only have to kill one chicken.**

**"That's fantastic," said the salesman. "How do they taste?"**

**"I don't know," said the farmer. "We've never caught one."**

# High Card Points



Counting HCP's can be a good starting point for evaluating hands, especially flat ones, but even then, it can fail miserably. Example:

## Example #1

**North** ♠K103 ♥KJ94 ♦AJ ♣8765

**South** ♠AQJ2 ♥AQ ♦KQ32 ♣A43

## Example #2

**North** ♠K103 ♥KJ94 ♦AJ ♣8765

**South** ♠AQJ ♥AQ32 ♦KQ ♣A432

All four hands are considered flat enough for the No Trump Ladder.

The North hands in both examples are identical, with 12 HCPs. Both South hands have the same 22 HCPs but with different shapes.

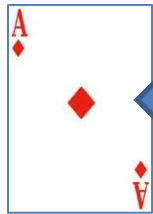
It generally takes 33 HCPs to make a small slam, so a total of 34 HCPs should easily produce 12 tricks in No Trump.

Example #1 will produce 13 top tricks, while Example #2 will only produce 10. This is due to Hand #2's duplication of high card values.

# HCPs (Cont'd)



Standard method of counting HCPs.

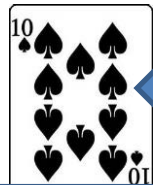


Ace = 4 HCP



King = 3 HCP

Queen = 2 HCP



Jack = 1 HCP

Ten = a pat on the back



This method has been found to statistically undervalue aces and tens.

## From Various Authors

- Deduct 1 HCP for no aces - add 1 HCP for all 4 aces.
- Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  HCP for each ten.
- Add 1 HCP if total of aces and tens  $\geq 3$ .
- Subtract 1 HCP for a singleton K, Q or J.

## From Marty Bergen

- Ace = 4.5 HCPs
  - King = 3 HCPs
  - Queen = 1.5 HCPs
  - Jack = 0.75 HCPs
  - Ten = 0.25 HCPs
- Total, then round off

# HCPs (Cont'd)



- HCPs can be added for **long suits**:
- 5-card suit = add 1 HCP
  - 6-card suit = add 2 HCP
  - 7-card suit = add 3 HCP, etc.

Example: A 5-card suit and a 6-card suit =  $1+2 = 3$  extra HCPs

Once a fit is found, HCPs can also be added for **shortness** too:

- On the long side of trumps:
- Doubleton = 1 HCP
  - Singleton = 2 HCPs
  - Void = 3 HCPs

On the short side of trumps:

**With 3 trumps:**

- Doubleton = 1 HCP
- Singleton = 2 HCPs
- Void = 3 HCPs

**With 4+ trumps:**

- Doubleton = 1 HCP
- Singleton = 3 HCPs
- Void = 5 HCPs

# More HCPs Adjustments



## Be pessimistic with:

- Singleton/doubleton honors, unless in pard's suit (K, Q, AQ, KQ, QJ, Qx, Jx).
- Honors in opponent's suit, especially if your LHO bid it.

## Be optimistic with:

- Honors in your long suits.
- Honors in partner's bid suit(s).
- Intermediates (10's and 9's), especially when supported by higher cards.
- Honors in a suit bid by your RHO.

# Losing-Trick Count (LTC)

## STEP #1



Besides HCPs, another method of evaluating strength is to **first** calculate the number of losers in your hand and add it to your partner's expected losers:

- Void = 0 losing tricks.
- Singleton other than an A = 1 losing trick.
- Doubleton AK = 0; Ax or Kx = 1; Qx or xx = 2 losing tricks.
- Three card suit: AKQ = 0; AKx, AQx or KQx = 1 losing trick.
- Three card suit: Axx, Kxx or Qxx = 2; xxx = 3 losing tricks.
- **Four card suits and longer can only have 3 losers maximum.**

|    |                         | Losers |    |                        | Losers |
|----|-------------------------|--------|----|------------------------|--------|
| 1) | ♠J632 ♥J32 ♦J43 ♣765    | 12     | 4) | ♠A ♥KQ532 ♦Q43 ♣Q765   | 6      |
| 2) | ♠87632 ♥--- ♦7643 ♣6542 | 9      | 5) | ♠Q3 ♥K3 ♦A109 ♣J98732  | 8      |
| 3) | ♠AK432 ♥Q ♦7643 ♣6542   | 8      | 6) | ♠J102 ♥53 ♦J10643 ♣KQ5 | 9      |

# LTC (Cont'd)

Note that LTC has been revised to value aces more and queens less, by using fractions and rounding the total.

## STEP #2

Estimate the losers in partner's hand.

Until further information is derived from the bidding, assume that a typical opening hand by partner contains 7 losers, e.g. ♠ AKxxx ♥ Axxx ♦ Qx ♣ xx, has 7 losers ( $1 + 2 + 2 + 2 = 7$ ).

## STEP #3

Deduct the total losers from 24. This will be a good estimate of the number of tricks your side will take.

1 loser

2 losers

Example

2 losers

2 losers

♠AQ32 ♥Q32 ♦K983 ♣Q4

Playing 5-card majors, your partner opens 1S. If he has a minimum opener, he'll have 7 losers, plus your 7 = **14** losers. Deduct from 24:  $24 - 14 = 10$  (the number of tricks you'll take).



# Other Counting Methods

Other ways of assessing the strength of hands include:

- **Quick Tricks** (for each suit: AK = 2, AQ = 1.5, A = 1, KQ = 1, Kx = .5) Each suit can have a maximum of 3 losers.
- **Playing Tricks**
- **Zar Points**
- **Rule of 20** (HCPs + length of your 2 longest suits)
- **Rule of 22** (HCPs + length of your 2 longest suits + Quick Tricks)
- **Law of Total Tricks**
- **Visualisation** (thinking up various hands partner could have for his bidding, then either interrogate him further if you can, or select the middle ground)
- **Pearson Points** (for opening in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> seats)

# Another Joke

**Two old men are sitting in a bar. One of them looks at the other and says, "You look familiar... where are you from?"**

**The second old man replies, "Ireland."**

**The first old man looks astonished and says, "No way, I'm from Ireland meself, what a small world!"**

**The second old man then looks at the first and asks, "What city?"**

**The first old man says, "Dublin?"**

**The second old man looks astonished again, "No way, I'm from Dublin meself! What a small world."**

**The first man looks at the second old man, "What school did you go to?"**

**The second old man replies, "Saint Mary's, class of '89."**

**The first old man is absolutely baffled, "No way, Saint Mary's class of '89 myself! What a small world!"**

**Another man walks up to the bar and says, "Hey, Joe! Anything going on?"**

**The bartender replies, "Not really... but the Murphy twins are drunk again."**

# Control Count



Another tool to address the deficiencies in the HCP system is **Control Count**.

It can be used as a “tie-breaker” for hands that evaluate as “coin tosses” using the HCP counting system. Hands with the same shape and the same HCP can have markedly different game/slam potential, depending on the control count:

These hands make 6S.

Example #1

|       |                      |
|-------|----------------------|
| North | ♠KJ632 ♥A2 ♦7543 ♣A5 |
| South | ♠AQ985 ♥K53 ♦A6 ♣K43 |

Same hands (12 HCPs)

Example #2

|       |                      |
|-------|----------------------|
| North | ♠KJ632 ♥A2 ♦7543 ♣A5 |
| South | ♠AQ985 ♥KQ3 ♦Q6 ♣K43 |

These hands make 5S.

**Controls:**

- Ace = 2 controls
- King = 1 control
- Queens, Jacks, Tens = 0 controls

Same shapes (both 16 HCPs)

Both North hands have 5 controls. Example #1's South hand has **6 controls**, but Example #2's South hand has **only 4 controls**.

## Controls:

- Ace = 2 controls
- King = 1 control
- Queens, Jacks and Tens = 0

# Control Count (Cont'd)



These hands make 6S.

Example #1

Same hands (12 HCPs)

Example #2

These hands make 5S.

North ♠KJ632 ♥A2 ♦7543 ♣A5

North ♠KJ632 ♥A2 ♦7543 ♣A5

South ♠AQ985 ♥K53 ♦A6 ♣K43

South ♠AQ985 ♥KQ3 ♦Q6 ♣K43

6 controls.

Same shapes (both 16 HCPs)

4 controls.

In both examples, after North opens 1S and South bids 2NT\* (Jacoby), North would rebid 4S to show no short suit and a minimum opener.

South, with 16 HCPs, could try for a slam in example #1, but not in example #2. (His average controls for 16 HCPs is 5.5).

In example #1, after South tries for a slam over 4S by cue bidding 5D, North would use the same chart to discover that his average controls for 12 HCPs is 4. He has 6, so he would cooperate.

| HCP   | Expected Controls |
|-------|-------------------|
| 5     | 1                 |
| 7-8   | 2                 |
| 10    | 3                 |
| 12-13 | 4                 |
| 15    | 5                 |
| 17-18 | 6                 |
| 20    | 7                 |



**Time for the Game**