

MINI UNIT 1 **Winners and Losers** ♠♥♦♣

Counting winners and losers

Declarer's first task on seeing dummy is to make a plan. The approach is slightly different when playing in a trump contract. The starting point is to count winners and losers.

1. Are there enough winners for you to fulfil the contract? If not you need to set about establishing extra tricks. (How many tricks can you make without losing the lead)
2. Are there too many losers – if so then do you need to deal with those losers straight away or can you/should you wait? (Are you missing the A, K or Q in a suit)

There is then a decision to be made about how to use the trump suit to greatest advantage. Because you do not want the opponents to ruff your winning cards in other suits, sometimes your priority is to use your top cards in trumps to draw all their trumps. At other times you need to be able to ruff your losers to fulfil your contract, so drawing trumps has to be postponed.

Count winners

Example 1: In a spade contract, how many winners are there between these two hands?

♠ KJT832	♠ AQ7
♥ A53	♥ K42
♦ K43	♦ A62
♣ 5	♣ JT98
Declarer (West)	Dummy (East)

spades	6
hearts	2, the ace and king
diamonds	2, the ace and king
clubs	0
Total	10

Example 2: In a spade contract, how many winners are there here?

♠ AKQ32	♠ 654
♥ 98	♥ KQJ
♦ AQ	♦ 983
♣ K843	♣ AQ52
Declarer (West)	Dummy (East)

spades	this depends on the distribution of the cards in the defenders' hands: if they are divided 3-2, then there are 5 winners, but if you are unlucky and one defender holds all 5 outstanding cards then there will only be 3 winners
hearts	0 at the moment but 2 after the ace has been knocked out
diamonds	1 or 2 depending on the finesse: if North has the King, then there is only one winner
clubs	3 at least, perhaps 4 if they are divided 3-2
Total	12 as a maximum but in the worst case only 9

It is easy to understand why it is necessary to count winners. Enough winners are needed if the contract is to succeed. It is not so easy to understand why declarer should count losers. The count of losers highlights dangers and pitfalls.

Count losers

Example 1: In a spade contract, how many losers are there here?

♠ KQJ98

♥ 985

♦ K

♣ K832

Declarer (West)

♠ T765

♥ KQJ

♦ 983

♣ AQ5

Dummy (East)

spades – 1, the ace

hearts – 1, the ace

diamonds – 1, because while there are 3 low cards in the East hand, West can ruff the second and third rounds

clubs – 1, unless there is still a trump in the East hand to ruff the fourth round

Total = 4

Example 2: In a spade contract, how many losers are there here?

♠ AKQ32

♥ 98

♦ AQ6

♣ K83

Declarer (West)

♠ 654

♥ KQJ

♦ 983

♣ AQ52

Dummy (East)

spades possibly 0 if the defenders' trumps are divided 3:2 between the two hands, but 1 if an opponent holds 4 trumps and 2 if an opponent holds all 5 (!)

hearts 1, the ace

diamonds possibly 1 if the finesse is successful, otherwise 2 – but note that after the heart ace is knocked out, you can discard one loser on a top heart

clubs 0

Total could be only 1, assuming ♦ finesse works & can discard a ♦ on a ♥, but in the worst case could be 5

The count of losers helps you to think about the possible pitfalls in a hand – hope for the best but prepare for the worst!

Quizzes ♠♥♦♣

Q1: Declarer (West) is in a NT contract. How many top tricks are there?

Declarer (West) Dummy (East)

♠ K 5 3

♠ A 6

♥ A 5 3

♥ K 4 2

♦ K J T 8 3

♦ Q 9 7

♣ 5 3

♣ A J 8 4 2

Answer: 2 spades (Ace & King), 2 hearts (Ace & King), 0 diamonds, 1 club (Ace).

Q2: In the hand above, which suit is likely to give Declarer the most extra tricks?

Answer: Diamonds – Declarer only needs to force out defenders' ♦A and then he can win 4 tricks in the suit. He has to lose one trick in order to gain 4.

Q3 In the hand above it seems obvious to count if you have enough winners to make your contract, but why bother to count losers?

Answer: If Declarer just cashed winners the contract will be down by one trick (only 9 winners). Thinking through the loser situation gives a clue about where to find that extra trick. "Losers – 1 diamond but there will more if there are no trumps left in Declarer's hand to ruff the 2 small cards". Declarer needs to ruff at least one Heart in Dummy. Do this before drawing trumps. Two hearts ruffs would see the contract make + 1. "Look for Ruffs in the Short hand"

Q4 You are declarer playing a 4♥ contract (i.e. to make 10 tricks) in the hands below.

A How many winners are there?

B How many losers have you?

C Plan the play. Lead is ♠Q – looks like top of a sequence.

♠ K 5 3 2

♠ A 8 4

♥ K Q J T

♥ A 4 3 2

♦ T 5

♦ K Q J 9 7 6

♣ KQ6

♣ -

West (Declarer)

East (Dummy)

Answer: A Winners – 2♠, 4♥, 0♦, 0♣ = 6. 4 more winners needed

B Losers – 1♠ (provided 4th round can be ruffed in Dummy), 0♥, 1♦, possibly 1♣ (0♣ if opponents play clubs first) = 2/3 Looking good

C Plan – Win the first trick. Draw trumps. Extra tricks from ♦s. Play ♦s starting with the ♦T from West (**high card from the short hand first**) & then continue the suit until defenders win their Ace. There are now are a total of 5 ♦s winners on which to discard losers from the West hand.

SET BOARDS

<p>Board 1 ♠ 9 7 North Deals ♥ J 6 5 None Vul ♦ A K 8 ♣ A K 8 4 3</p> <p>♠ Q 10 4 2 ♠ K 8 6 ♥ K 9 8 2 ♥ A 10 7 ♦ 6 5 2 ♦ Q J 10 7 ♣ Q 2 ♣ J 10 5</p> <p>♠ A J 5 3 ♥ Q 4 3 ♦ 9 4 3 ♣ 9 7 6</p> <p>West North East South 1 NT All pass</p> <p>Lead: ♦ Q</p>	<p>North's 1NT shows 15-17 HCP & a balanced hand. South has 7 HCP - no chance of game so passes</p> <p>Theme: Length in clubs Lead: ♦Q top of 3 card seq Winners: 1♠ 2♦ 2♣ Play: Win lead, play ♣A & ♣K (noting opponents play to both the ♣ tricks). Lead a 3rd ♣ which loses but ♣4 & ♣3 are now winners. (Alternative is lose first ♣ trick)</p>
<p>Board 2 ♠ J 7 3 East Deals ♥ K 8 7 5 None Vul ♦ 8 6 ♣ Q J 8 5</p> <p>♠ 6 4 ♠ A Q 9 ♥ A J 6 ♥ Q 10 3 ♦ J 7 2 ♦ K Q 10 9 5 ♣ A 10 7 3 2 ♣ K 9</p> <p>♠ K 10 8 5 2 ♥ 9 4 2 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ 6 4</p> <p>West North East South 3 NT All pass 1 NT Pass</p> <p>Lead: ♠ 5</p>	<p>West has 10 HCP so bids game. East has 15-17HCP</p> <p>Theme: Length in ♦s Lead: ♠5 (4th highest from an honour) Winners: 1♠ 1♥ 2♣ Play: Win lead with ♠Q & immediately play ♦s as can win 4♦ tricks. The ♠Q making the 9th trick. (Advanced: best to hold up on 2nd round of ♠s)</p>
<p>Board 3 ♠ 8 7 4 2 South Deals ♥ K Q J None Vul ♦ K Q ♣ A 8 7 6</p> <p>♠ J 6 ♠ 10 3 ♥ A 10 5 4 ♥ 7 6 3 2 ♦ J 10 9 7 6 ♦ 8 5 4 3 ♣ 10 3 ♣ K Q J</p> <p>♠ A K Q 9 5 ♥ 9 8 ♦ A 2 ♣ 9 5 4 2</p>	<p>South plays in 4♠</p> <p>Theme: Draw trumps, force out A, discard loser on winner Lead: ♦J - (top of seq.) Losers: 1♥ 3♣ Winners: 5♠ (unless 4-0 split) 2♦ 1♣ - need to force out ♥A Play: Win lead & draw trumps immediately (split 2:2). Then play a ♥ &, once ♥A is forced out, have 2 ♥ winners - discard ♣ on 3rd round of ♥s</p>
<p>Board 4 ♠ A 7 5 3 West Deals ♥ 6 3 None Vul ♦ Q J 10 5 4 2 ♣ A</p> <p>♠ Q 10 ♠ J ♥ A J 9 4 2 ♥ K Q 8 7 ♦ A 7 ♦ K 9 8 6 ♣ J 10 9 8 ♣ K Q 5 2</p> <p>♠ K 9 8 6 4 2 ♥ 10 5 ♦ 3 ♣ 7 6 4 3</p>	<p>West plays in 4♥</p> <p>Theme: Ruff in short hand, force out ♣A Lead: ♦Q - (top of seq.) Losers: 1♠ 1♣ Winners: 5♥ 2♦ Play: Win lead & draw trumps (counting they split 2:2). Lose the 1st round of ♠s but can ruff 2nd round in East. Once ♣A is forced out have 3 ♣ winners so making 10 tricks</p>