

# Raising partner's bid suit

Bidding is designed to find the best contract in terms of suit or no-trumps and the highest playable level. A basic tenet of all systems is showing support for partner's suit by raising it to a higher level. Ideally for trumps, the combined holdings between declarer's and dummy's hands in this suit should be 8 or more. Hence to raise partner's suit you should hold 4 or more cards in the suit, unless partner's suit is known to be 5 cards or more when a raise may be made on 3 cards. This is called a prime fit. (Holding a singleton in an unbid suit the best option is often to raise the major suit with 3 cards instead of bidding 1NT) *Raise a major suit in preference to other actions, but with a minor suit bid a 4-card major in preference to raising the minor suit. Responder's suit may also be raised by opener with a minimum of 4 cards in the suit.*

## 1. Raising on high card points with a prime fit

Responder may raise as follows:

holding 4-8 hcps to the 2 level; 9-12 hcps to the 3 level; 13-16 hcps to the 4 level

Opener may raise responders 1st suit as follows:

holding 12-14 hcps to the 2 level; 15-16 hcps to 3 level; 17-18 hcps to the 4 level

Deduct 1 hcp from the requirements for each card over 4 in the suit held; deduct 2 hcps for any other 5-card suit in the hand.

## 2. An alternative method for deciding the level to raise using "losers and the losing trick count"

This gives a better idea of the trick making potential of the combined hands, holding a prime fit, than using hcps, by quantifying values for distribution. It must not be used for no-trump bidding or above the 5 level.

To count your losers in the hand, *we start off with the following assumptions:* Each suit has a MAXIMUM of 3 losers, *or the number of cards in the suit if less than 3.* Therefore, each hand has a MAXIMUM of 12 losers. So, there is a

potential of 24 losers in the combined hands of you and your partner.

For each suit, the number of losers is reduced by for each A, K, or Q held  
*(AQ643 has 1 loser (maximum 3, deduct A+Q = 2, losers = 1)*  
*(J7 has 2 losers (maximum 2 because only 2 cards, 0 deductions)*

*Caution:* A King-singleton should be regarded as 1 loser. A Queen-doubleton should be regarded as 2 losers unless partner has bid the suit, or bid no-trumps.

## 3. The "Losing Trick Count" for raising partner's suit

- (1) The system can be used ONLY when you have have a prime fit
- (2) OPENER is ASSUMED to have 7 losers. Opening suit bids at the 1 level are almost always 6-8 losers so 7 losers is a good average hand to open

Add up your losers, then with	9 losers	raise to 2 level
	8 losers	raise to 3 level
	7 losers	raise to 4 level

Example : with 8 losers,  $7(\text{opener}) + 8 = 15$ . Then  $24 - 15 = 9$  tricks i.e. 3 level  
It is usually easier to deduct from 18 instead of 24 to find *correct level of raise* but this has been done for you in the table!

*Opener knows how many losers you have by the level raised and can decide whether to bid further.*

- (3) The losing trick count may be used with openers first or second suit. but beware if the second suit is a minor as this might raise the level too high (We seldom want to finish up in 4C or 4D!)

- (4) MINOR suit openings: a fit with a minor suit often scores better in NTs. This is particularly true if you as responder have 8 or 7 losers, with values in at least two other suits. *Therefore raise to the 2/3 level using losing trick count* but with 7 losers (a raise to the 4 level), bid a new suit or NTs in preference to raising the minor suit. Holding a major suit bid this FIRST before raising Opener's minor.

## 4. Other uses of the “losing trick count”

The principle of losers can be used to raise responder’s first suit with a prime fit.

*Opener with 7 losers raises to the 2 level; with 6 losers to the 3 level; and with 5 losers to the 4 level. A minor suit should not be raised by opener initially if a major suit can be bid instead.* Look for 3NT holding a 5 loser hand and a minor suit fit with adequate combined high card strength of around 25 hcps

Responder now knows how many losers opener has, and can pass or raise further based on the total number of losers in responder’s hand.

Raising opener’s suit after it has been overcalled

1. You may use either hcps or losing trick count to raise partner’s suit with a prime fit.
2. You should be aware that a raise of your suit as opener at the 2 level can be based on only 3 cards, because the overcall may have ‘taken away’ responder’s bid in a new suit

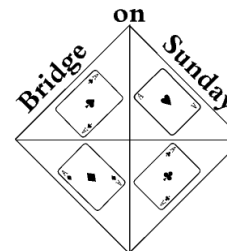
Making a trial bid after a direct raise by partner

Game trial bids: This is a useful technique when allied to Loser Count, for deciding whether to go for game in a suit or not, when the bidding has been say 1H-2H ( 9 losers with a 4- card fit guaranteed), and opener has a good 6 loser hand but 3 losers in a side suit (e.g. diamonds). Then after the 2H response opener bids 3D, and this says to partner: with more than minimum of 6 HCPs, and only 1 or 2 losers in diamonds, please bid 4H; with only minimum hand and no help in diamonds, please bid 3H partner. Once a major suit is agreed then new suits bid are not to play in that suit!

Raising to 4 of a major suit with a 4 card fit

With 7 loser hand(13-16 hcps) bid 4 of the major. If your hand has fewer than 7 losers a slam may be possible. However the losing trick count can let you down in the slam area because you need controls and not 2 quick losers! Some players use ‘splinter bids’, a jump 3 levels in a new suit, to show a hand of fewer than 7 losers, with a void or singleton in the ‘jump’ suit. Opener may sign off or bid a new suit with an Ace control if interested in a slam. Use with care, partner might forget!

## Bridge on Sundays



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