**Law of Total Tricks**

**The LAW of Total Tricks** is a bidding guideline. It helps you to decide how high to compete, using this approximation:

With 8 trumps (you and partner), bid to the 2-level.

With 9 trumps—3 level

With 10 trumps—4 level

Use the **LAW** mostly on the 2-3-4 levels (not on the 5-level or higher).

The **LAW** is only needed when the auction is **Competitive**.

The **LAW** states that on most bridge deals the total number of trumps is approximately equal to the total number of tricks.

**Applying the LAW when Responding to 1 heart or 1 spade**

(The points in italics are those affected by the LAW.)

**If right-hand opponent passes:**

* Raise to the two level with 6-10 points and 3-card or longer support.
* Raise to the three level with 11-12 and 4-card or longer support.
* Raise to the four level with 13+ points and a 3-4-card support.

(Partnership Agreement)

**If right-hand opponent doubles:**

* Raise to the two level with 6-10 points and a 3 card or longer support.
* *Raise to the three level with 0-6 points and a 4-card support.*
* *Bid 2NT or redouble with 11-or points and 4-card or longer support.*
* *Raise to the four level with 0-6 points and 5-card or longer support.*

**If right-hand opponent overcalls:**

* Raise to the two level with 6-10 points and 3-card or longer support.
* *Raise to the three level with 0-6 points and a 4-card support.*
* *Cuebid the opponents suit with 11-or more points and 4-card or longer support.*
* *Raise to the four level with 0-5 points and 5-card or longer support*.

**Applying the LAW when Responding to a Weak Two-Bid**

**When partner opens a weak two-bid ( 6 cards in Suit):**

With enough strength that it is likely the partnership can make a game contract:

* Bid Game.
* Make a forcing bid (e.g.2NT) to get more information.

If it’s unlikely there is enough strength for game, compete to the level of the number of trumps held by the partnership:

* 0-2 trumps Pass
* 3 trumps Raise to the three level
* 4+ trumps Raise to the game level

**Balancing Guidelines**

* If you have shortness in the opponents suit- fewer than three cards-bid a suit or make a takeout double.
* Don’t Balance when the opponents have not found an 8 card fit.
* When partner balances (pass out seat) usually *Pass*, if partner had not overcalled originally he probably isn’t interested in going any higher.

**When we make a balancing call in this position, any one of three good things might happen**.

1. We reach a contract we can make.
2. We go down in our contract but lose only 50 or 100 points instead of the 110 or more points the opponents receive for making their contract. This small difference is crucial at matchpoint duplicate.
3. We may push them a level higher and then defeat them.

Try to be a little sounder if vulnerable-after all we don’t want to be minus 200 points when they can make only 110 points

**Don’t let the opponents play at the two-level in an eight-card fit!**

**Material from Larry Cohen’s Articles in Audrey Grants Better Bridge Magazine**