

AW OF TOTAL TRICKS

Author: Larry Cohen

No 24 - Date - UPDATED JUNE 2012 & Level: All

The [LAW of Total Tricks \(LOTT\)](#) is a bidding guideline developed by Jean-Rene Vernes. It helps you to decide how high to compete, using this approximation:

With 8 partnership trumps, bid to the 2-level.

With 9 trumps--3 level.

With 10 trumps--4 level.

So, if responder to 1♠ holds: ♠Q76♥54♦108765♣653, and hears partner open 1♠, he knows his side has 8 trumps. He won't raise immediately to 2♠, because that would be a lie. Bids still mean what they always meant and raising to 2♠ shows 6-10. So, responder has to pass, but he knows that if the opponents now balance (say 1♠-P-P-2♥) that he should be willing to compete to 2♠ since the partnership has 8 trumps. It doesn't mean 2♠ will make, but even if it is down, that is likely better than defending against 2♥ (likely making).

Similarly, if responder to 1♠ holds: ♠Q 8 7 6♥6 2♦6 4♣K 8 7 6 4, he knows his side has 9 trumps. He can't raise to 3♠ since that would be invitational. But, later, if he has to, he should compete to the 3-level (1♠-P-2♠-P; P-3♥-3♠).

With 5 trumps, responder to 1♠ will raise to 4♠ (which is defined as 5 trumps and weakish). Example: ♠KJ876♥5♦8432♣Q32.

Over partner's 2-level preempt (6 cards), be willing to compete to the 3-level with 3-card support (9 total trumps) and the 4-level with 4-card support (10 total trumps). After a 3-level preempt by partner, assume a 7-card suit and use the LAW accordingly.

Use [LOTT](#) only when you don't have game or slam interest.

Never Lie (1♠-2♠ means what it has always meant).

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

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

There are 4 articles on this website with more details, as well as a brief description of 3 books by Larry Cohen on the LAW:

BOOKS

[To Bid or Not to Bid \(the classic bestseller on the LAW of Total Tricks\)](#)

[Following the LAW \(sequel to above\)](#)

[Introduction to the LAW \(simplified "lite" version\)](#)

ARTICLES

[Responding to Preempts using the LAW](#)

[Responding to 1-Major using the LAW](#)

[Balancing using the LAW](#)

[Original Vernes article courtesy of Bridge World Magazine](#)