

# A Competitive Bidding Framework

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## 1 The Useful Space Principle

- 1.1 Every bid should have an agreed-upon meaning. The meaning could be “not used.”
- 1.2 Transfers and relays can be used to increase the number of available bids. Example: the DONT convention has eight bidding sequences that end at the two level when the opponents have opened 1NT.

## 2 The LAW of Total Tricks

- 2.1 In a competitive auction (both teams having between 17 and 23 high-card points) the total number of tricks (both sides) is approximately equal to the number of trumps (both sides).
- 2.2 Example: North-south has nine spades; East-West has eight hearts; the LAW predicts that the total number of tricks is seventeen.
  - 2.2.1 The LAW does **not** predict who will win the tricks. North-South could have eight tricks and East-West could have nine. North-South could have five tricks and East-West could have twelve. Any combination that totals seventeen is possible.
  - 2.2.2 The LAW is almost always accurate within one trick if neither team makes a mistake. There are a few adjustments that make it very accurate.
  - 2.2.3 The LAW is most useful in determining whether to bid one more, pass, or double.
- 2.3 The **corollary**, which is dependent upon the scoring in bridge, says that it is safe to bid to the number of trumps.
  - 2.3.1 Example: the corollary says that if your side is known to have nine hearts, it is “safe” to bid to the three level (contracting for nine tricks).
  - 2.3.2 It does not say that you can make 3♥, but it does say that the result will usually be better than if you allow the opponents to play below that level.
  - 2.3.3 The corollary is MUCH more accurate if the bidding side is not vulnerable.
  - 2.3.4 Larry Cohen recommends bidding to the number of trumps **as fast as possible**. Most experts agree.

Next week: Your partner bids one of a major. The opponent on your right overcalls. What are your options?