

IMPs and Matchpoints

There are two main ways to score a duplicate bridge event: IMPs and Matchpoints. The differences between these two scoring systems often lead to different styles of play.

Matchpoints. When playing matchpoints, your score is compared to the other teams that played the same hands, and you receive points as follows:

Matchpoints

You are awarded 1 matchpoint for every pair that you beat on a given board, and
You are awarded ♦ matchpoint for every pair that you tie on a given board.

For example:

Rank	Matchpoints
Top (1st place)	2
Tied for 1st	1 ♦
Middle (2nd)	1
Wash (3-way tie)	1
Tied for 2nd	♦
Bottom (3rd place)	0

Matchpoints with 3 pairs.

When playing matchpoints, all hands count equally, so that you are not penalized too much for one horrible play or given too many points for one moment of brilliance. Keep the following in mind:

- The magic number is 50%. For example, you should bid game if there is at least a 50% chance of making it, and you should not bid game if there is less than a 50% chance of making.
- Overticks count a *lot*. It is very common for one pair to get a top simply because they made one more trick than everyone else. In general, try for an overtrick if the chance of getting it is greater than the chance that the try will hurt you. (You can even risk going down!) Remember, going down when everyone else makes game is only a bottom, while making an overtrick that no one else made is a shining top!
- The 10 bonus points for notrump are also useful. It is common for one team to get a top because they made 4NT instead of 4 of a major.
- Also strongly consider 3NT instead of minor-suit game. Even if you are certain that minor-suit game will make, you should be in 3NT anyway if the chance of making 4 is greater than the chance of going down.

- Little partscore hands matter a lot in matchpoints. Matchpoint players tend to overcall often, balance a lot, and generally bid aggressively when all the hands seem to have equal strength.
- Try to make penalty doubles often. You should make a penalty double whenever you think there is at least a 50% chance that the opponents will go down.
- Try for slam if possible, and push to grand slam if reasonable. If you think everyone else made it to slam, you should venture for grand slam if there seems to be at least a 50% chance of success. Also, if everyone else makes 7♥ then you will get a top for making 7NT. (7NT is worth 10 more points.)

IMPs. IMPs is the normal method of scoring in team events, or any event where only two tables play each board. When playing IMPs, your score on a contract is compared to the score of the other team who played the same hands. You are then either rewarded or penalized a certain number of IMPs based on the difference:

Diff. in Pts.	IMPs	Diff. in Pts.	IMPs	Diff. in Pts.	IMPs	Diff. in Pts.	IMPs
20 - 40	1	270 - 310	7	750 - 890	13	2000 - 2240	19
50 - 80	2	320 - 360	8	900 - 1090	14	2250 - 2490	20
90 - 120	3	370 - 420	9	1100 - 1290	15	2500 - 2990	21
130 - 160	4	430 - 490	10	1300 - 1490	16	3000 - 3490	22
170 - 210	5	500 - 590	11	1500 - 1740	17	3500 - 3990	23
220 - 260	6	600 - 740	12	1750 - 1990	18	4000 and up	24

When playing IMPs, hands with a *big swing* (i.e. a large difference in points) count much more than hands with a *small swing*.

- Bid game whenever reasonable, especially when vulnerable. Bidding game when the opposing pair does not is worth 10 IMPs vulnerable, but going down in game when your opponents make a partscore only costs 5 IMPs.
- Be wary of big sacrifices. If you go down 3 doubled when your opponents wouldn't have made game, you lose 11 IMPs!
- Don't worry too much about making overtricks. Taking two extra tricks is only worth 1 IMP.

When playing IMPs, you should concentrate on making you contract.

If you go down one in 4♠ and the opposing pair makes game, it is a 10 IMP swing!

- Similarly, don't worry about getting the 10 extra points for being in notrump instead of a major suit, since the difference is usually only worth 1 IMP.
- Also, you should consider bidding 5 of a minor instead of 3NT if there seems to be a greater chance of making minor-suit game.
- Choose a safe small slam above a risky grand slam. Making grand slam instead of small is worth 10 IMPs, but going down when the other team makes small slam is 14 IMPs!