

Scoring – Competing and Game bidding

You ought to have an idea of how much common contracts score at the bridge table.

Any contract, making, scores:

In a minor: 20pts per trick

In a major: 30pts per trick

In No Trumps: 40pts for the first trick, then 30 thereafter

Overtricks score the same as bid tricks.

Then for making a partscore there is 50points bonus

For a game there is 300pts bonus (not vul) and a 500pts bonus (vul)

There are also bonus points for small and grand slams.

If a contract goes down then the side defeating the contract score:

If not vul: 50 pts per trick (undoubled)

But doubled it is 100 for the first trick, 200 for tricks 2 and 3, and 300 thereafter

If vul: 100 pts per trick (undoubled)

But doubled it is 200 for the first trick, and 300 thereafter.

So...

2♦ + 1 scores?

110 (3 x 20 + 50 bonus for partscore)

2NT just making scores?

120 (40 + 30 + 50 bonus for partscore)

3♠ + 2 scores?

200 (5 x 30 + 50 bonus for partscore)

4♥ + 1 (vul) scores?

650 (5 x 30 + 500 game bonus)

3NT + 1 (not vul) scores?

430 (40 + 3 x 30 + 300 game bonus)

5♠ + 1 (not vul) scores?

420 (6 x 20 + 300 game bonus)

5♦ - 1 (not vul) scores ...?

50

4♠ - 2 (vul) scores?

200 (2 x 100)

3NT X - 2 (not vul) scores?
300 (100 + 200)

4♠ X - 3 (vul) scores?
800 (200 + 2 x 300)

What does this mean for our bridge?

Playing pairs the object is just to get a better score than other pairs holding the same cards.

This means that playing in NT scores more than playing in a major, which itself scores better than playing in a minor (if you win the same number of tricks). At part score level we just tend to play in the best fit, but often at game level you should strongly consider playing in 3NT rather than 5 of a minor. Apart from the fact that you need 11 tricks for the minor suit game (rather than 9 for the No Trumps), any over trick will give a better score in the No Trump game

Strongly consider playing in 3NT rather than 5 of a minor when playing pairs

Eg

West

♠ A Q

♥ K Q

♦ 9 7 3

♣ Q J 8 4 3 2

East

♠ K 7 2

♥ 7 5 2

♦ K Q

♠ A K T 9 5

In the above hands East/West have an eleven card club fit and can make 11 tricks in clubs, losing just the two red aces. However there are always 10 tricks available in NT (6 clubs, 3 spades and one red trick) and this will score more at pairs. So here you must stay out of clubs and bid the NT game.

Consider playing in 3NT rather than 4 of a major if your hands are fairly flat

flat

West

♠ K T 8 2

♥ A 6 2

♦ K 8 5 2

♠ K 4

East

♠ A Q J 7

♥ K 9 5

♦ A 7 4 3

♠ A 6

In the above hands East/West will make 10 or 11 tricks, depending on whether the diamonds break 3-2 or 4-1, losing a heart and one or two diamonds. This will be true in both spades and NT, but, of course, 3NT+1 scores more than 4♠, so, at pairs, this is the winning option.

Competitive Auctions

Losing 100 points by going two off, not vulnerable, or one off vulnerable is often a good pairs score if the opposition can make a partscore. If they can make 3♠ for a score of 110, then losing 100 is a good score your way. Competitive auctions bring excitement to the bridge table. You will usually get a poor score if you fail to compete; or if you compete too much. Knowing exactly how high to bid on every deal is an impossible task — even experts have to guess sometimes.

When neither side has the clear majority of high-cards — each side holds 18-22 HCP — it is common for both sides to be in the bidding. The continuing problem is whether to keep bidding or to sell out to the opponents.

A very rough rule of thumb:

If your side has already raised a suit then generally compete to the level of the number of trumps your side probably has, unless you have very good distribution, when you should bid one more.

If your side has not already raised a suit, then compete to the level of one more than the number of trumps your side probably has.

Keep an eye on the vulnerability too. If you are vulnerable, be less inclined to compete.

West		East	
♠ A 2		♠ 9 4 3	
♥ K J 8 7 6		♥ Q 5 4 2	
♦ K Q 4		♦ T 5	
♣ 8 4 3		♣ A J T 5	

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠	3♥	

Here East/West have already raised a suit. East competes to 3♥ because it is almost certain his side holds nine trumps. If East did not bid 3♥, West should pass 2♠.

West		East	
♠ 9 7 6		♠ 3	
♥ Q T 8 3		♥ K 4	
♦ Q 9 2		♦ K J 8 7 4 3	
♣ K J 8		♣ A 9 7 6	

West	North	East	South
1♠	3♠	4♦	
3♦			

Here East/West have already raised a suit. East competes to 4♦ because of his 6-4 shape. He suspects his side has only 9 trumps, but can afford to bid one more because of his good distribution. If this goes down one, it is likely that 3♠ would have made.

West		East	
♠ A 9 8 7 6		♠ 5 2	
♥ A 4 3		♥ J 9 7 5	
♦ K Q T 2		♦ J 9 8 4	
♣ 3		♣ A 8 2	

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	1NT	2♠
2♦	3♠	3♦	

Here East/West have not already raised the diamonds. East suspects an 8 card diamond fit and should compete to the three level. Note that West would not know of the fit without East's raise.

Competitive Game tries

If partner has raised your suit and your right-hand opponent bids, it is impractical to use a bid in the raised suit as a game try — else how could you compete? Most good partnerships have these agreements: Any bid in the raised suit is competitive (not a game try).

West		East	
♠ 3 2		♠ A J 7 6	
♥ A K J T 8		♥ Q 7 6	
♦ K T 6 5		♦ Q 9 7 2	
♣ 3 2		♣ J 7	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♠	2♥	3♠
3♥			

Here West competes because his hand is unbalanced. He is *not* trying for game. To make a game try in this sort of situation, you must bid a new suit. This is forcing and it may not be a real suit. Partner should return to the raised suit with a minimum; or bid game with a maximum.

West		East	
♠ 3 2		♠ T 5 4	
♥ K Q 9 7 6 3		♥ A T 4	
♦ A 2		♦ K J 8 7 4	
♣ A 9 3		♣ 8 4	

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
3♠	Pass	4♥	

West improvises 3♠ to try for game, because 3♥ would be competitive. East has a maximum so he accepts.

High Level Decisions

When both sides have a trump fit, the bidding sometimes gets to the four or five level very quickly — usually because of extreme distribution around the table. Assuming the high cards are about evenly divided (18-22 for each side), it is difficult to gauge which side can make what. In many cases each side can make its contract if the distribution is wild enough.

What to do? I would be guessing like anyone else, but experience has shown the following general advice to be sound:

In a “pressure situation” tend to bid one level higher than you normally would if necessary to buy the contract.

If the enemy competes further, let them play it. (Double only if you expect a two-trick set.)

West		East	
♠ 3		♠ 8 4	
♥ K Q 9 7 3		♥ J T 4	
♦ K Q 9 7 5		♦ A 8 6 4	
♣ A 3		♣ J 8 4 2	
West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	4♠
5♥			

West normally would bid 4♥ so the push to 5♥ is justified under pressure. This time 5♥ will be set, but there is a good chance the opponents would have made 4♠.

West		East	
♠ A J T 8		♠ Q 7 5	
♥ 9 7 4		♥ 2	
♦ 4 3		♦ A 8 7	
♣ K 9 6 5		♣ A Q T 8 4 2	
West	North	East	South
	1♥	2♣	4♥
5♣			

West normally would compete to 4♣ (based on the known 9+ card fit and not having raised clubs) so he wings it to 5♣ under pressure. Note that 5♣ will make if the spade finesse works; and if it loses, the opponents probably could make 4♥

Sacrifice Bidding

Until now it was assumed the high cards were about evenly divided. Another case is a “sacrifice bid,” a deliberate overbid when opponents have most of the high cards and you expect them to make game.

Here the score is important. If you go three off doubled, not vulnerable (which costs 500) and the opponents can make a vulnerable game (making at least 600) then it is a good score from your side.

We will focus on sacrifice bidding next lesson.