

## How the Scoring Works

### Why do we need to know how to score?

Obviously, scoring is used *after* a hand has been played, to record what happened. But if we don't have a clear idea of how the scoring works, we can't *really* say we play bridge! Why do I say that? Bridge is a competitive game, and scoring is at the heart of our decisions when we're bidding.

- Why is it better to bid and make 9 tricks in 3NT, rather than “play safe” and stop in 2NT and make the same 9 tricks?
- Why would we want to bid a slam – in 6♥ hearts, say – when we could just bid 4♥ and make comfortably? Would we be happy when dummy goes down, and we can see an easy 12 tricks, when our contract was “only” 4♥? If not, why not?
- How do we know when it's a good idea to compete in the bidding, when opponents bid? Is it better to bid on and risk going down in our contract, or just pass and let the opponents play in their contract? Unless we know what they'll score for making, and what we'll lose for going off, we can't tell which is the better thing to do.

The only way we can make sensible decisions is if we know the implications for the score.

### What is vulnerability?

If you're used to playing rubber bridge, you'll know that when one pair has made a game, they are “vulnerable”. That means they incur bigger penalties if they declare a contract and go down, but they also get bigger bonuses if they bid and make a game contract or a slam. Vulnerability makes no difference to the score for bidding and *making* a part score (ie any contract less than game).

When we play other forms of bridge, such as Duplicate Pairs, each hand stands alone (unlike rubber bridge), and doesn't depend on what you did on a previous hand. So the vulnerability is allocated arbitrarily. But how? When you play Duplicate Pairs, the cards are held in a board, with a slot for each hand of 13 cards.



The board is positioned in the centre of the table, oriented so that NORTH is pointing to the “North” side of the room. There will always be a sign up in the room to indicate which is “North” (which might not correspond to geographic North). Each player is therefore sitting in one of 4 positions: N, S, E or W. You must keep the board in the centre of the table, and pointing in the correct direction, all during the bidding and play of the hand, so you always pull out and play the correct hand, and always put it back in the correct slot afterwards. You will tell the vulnerability from the colours- here is Board 3, where EW are vulnerable (shown in **RED**) and NS are non-vulnerable (shown in **GREEN**).

The idea of Duplicate Pairs is that everyone plays the same hands, which takes a lot of the luck out of things. If you and your partner are sitting NS, you will normally stay put for the whole session. After each round (which might be for example 2 or 3 boards) EW will move to the next table in one direction, and the boards will move to the next table in the opposite direction. Thus during the whole session, all the NS pairs will play the same hands as the other NS pairs, and all the EW pairs will play the same hands as the other EW pairs. So whether you get a good hand or a poor one is less important than what you do with it: everyone sitting

in your direction plays the same hands with the same vulnerability. In this arrangement, there will be two winning pairs – the pair which comes top NS, and the pair which comes top EW.

That’s a bit on the mechanics of playing Duplicate Pairs. It will become a lot clearer when we start doing it in practice.

But now let’s return to how the scoring works. Before you begin bidding on a deal, you need to check the vulnerability – as we’ll see, it affects how you bid the hand, especially if the bidding is competitive (both sides bidding)!

### Effect of Doubling

If a contract is played “doubled”, then the penalties for failing to make the contract are increased. And if the contract fails by several tricks, the penalties become quite severe! That is especially the case when vulnerable.

But if a doubled contract makes, or makes with overtricks, then the successful declaring pair gets extra points.

### Scoring

Let’s go through the main aspects.

I’ll ignore redouble (the **XX** card) for the present, as that is quite rarely used. We will discuss it later in the course.

(TIP: if you look at the back of the bidding box cards, you’ll see a table of scores. The **PASS** card shows the penalties for going down undoubled, both non-vulnerable and vulnerable. The **X** card shows the penalties for going down doubled, both non-vulnerable and vulnerable. The BID cards (1♣, 1♦, 1♥, etc etc) show the score for making that contract, both non-vulnerable and vulnerable, and for undoubled, doubled, and redoubled, for making exactly, and for any possible number of overtricks).

Don’t worry if you’re not clear about doubling at this stage – we’ll be covering that in a future lesson.

### Trick scores – contracts made

20 points for each trick, over the first 6, in a minor suit (♣ or ♦)

30 points for each trick, over the first 6, in a major suit (♥ or ♠)

40 points for the first trick, over the first 6, in NT, and 30 points thereafter

A “game” contract is one which scores at least 100 points.

So

- in a minor suit, game requires 11 tricks (5 x 20 = 100)
- in a major suit, game requires 10 tricks (4 x 30 = 120)
- in No Trump, game requires 9 tricks (40 plus 2x30 = 100)

A small slam requires bidding and making 12 tricks

A grand slam requires bidding and making all 13 tricks

In addition to the score for tricks bid and made, there are bonuses:

part score (any vulnerability)	50
non-vulnerable game	300 (3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣, 5♦)
vulnerable game	500 (3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣, 5♦)
non-vulnerable small slam	800 (6♣, 6♦, 6♥, 6♠, 6NT)
vulnerable small slam	1250 (6♣, 6♦, 6♥, 6♠, 6NT)

non-vulnerable grand slam	1300 (6♣, 6♦, 6♥, 6♠, 6NT)
vulnerable grand slam	2000 (7♣, 7♦, 7♥, 7♠, 7NT)

So you can see for example it is far better to make 9 tricks declaring in 3NT, than the same 9 tricks declaring in 2NT. That's all part of the risk/reward of bidding, and what makes the game of bridge so endlessly fascinating.

Note: you can double a part-score contract into game, and if it makes, the declarer receives the game bonus, not just the part score bonus of 50. For example, 2♥ doubled vulnerable, making 8 tricks, scores the game bonus of 500, as if the contract were 4♥. Each doubled trick counts 60 (2x30), and there's a further 50 points "for insult". So the total score is 120+50+500= 670. Be careful when doubling your opponent's contract into game.

All of these score the game bonus if making, doubled: 2NT, 2♥ or 3♥, 2♠ or 3♠, 3♣ or 4♣, 3♦ or 4♦. However, you can't "double a contract into slam" – slam bonuses only apply if directly bid to the 6 or 7 level.

It gets even worse if you double their contract and they not only make, but make with overtricks. If the declaring side makes one or more overtricks, the side collects per overtrick:

for a doubled contract, non-vulnerable	100
for a doubled contract, vulnerable	200

So, let's work out the score for 2♥ doubled, vulnerable, making 9 tricks (ie 1 overtrick):


Count 60 for each of the two bid heart tricks = 120  
 Count vulnerable game bonus = 500  
 Add 200 for the doubled vulnerable overtrick, and add 50 for insult  
 Total = 870 (you can check on the back of the 2♥ card in your bidding box)

### Penalties for going down

#### Non-vulnerable

Undoubled: each trick 50. For example, 5 down is -250

Doubled: first trick 100, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> trick 200, each subsequent undertrick 300. For example, 5 down doubled is -1100

So, even if your opponents are non-vulnerable, if you think they're going to go down, you should be bringing out the  card.

#### Vulnerable

Undoubled: each trick 100. For example, 5 down is -500

Doubled: first trick 200, each subsequent trick 300. For example, 5 down doubled vulnerable scores -1400. Contracts going heavily down doubled vulnerable is the territory where we can get into quite exotic numbers.

### Getting used to scoring

The more you practice working out the score, for each hand you play, the easier it all becomes. You'll find certain numbers keep cropping up again and again, so you'll no longer have to work them out. Common ones are

3NT making 9 tricks exactly: 400 if non-vulnerable, 600 if vulnerable

4♥ or 4♠ making 10 tricks exactly: 420 if non-vulnerable, 620 if vulnerable

You will also find it far more fun playing bridge when there are competitive auctions, slam bidding, doubling, etc. Kitchen bridge with friends will take on a whole new dimension! Scoring is essential for all that to work, and also if you ever want to continue further with the game and try playing duplicate, or teams.

That's why all through this Intermediate class, we'll be encouraging everyone to record their score on all the set hands we play, and we'll provide a standard scoresheet, and lots of help to fill it in, where required. That way, everyone will get used to the scoring, and it will quickly become second nature.

Here's an example, filled in with some made-up scores, to show what it looks like and how it works.

### Warrington Bridge Club

Name: <span style="color: blue;">Jim</span>								Date: <span style="color: blue;">8/9/22</span>		
Hand	Board number	SEAT N, S, E or W	VUL None, we, They, Both	Partner's name	CONTRACT	By N, S, E or W	LEAD	Tricks	SCORE	
									+	-
1	3	N	<span style="color: blue;">They</span>	<span style="color: blue;">Mike</span>	4H	W	AC	11		650
2	4	N	<span style="color: blue;">Both</span>	<span style="color: blue;">Mike</span>	3NT	N	4H	9	600	
3	5	N	<span style="color: blue;">We</span>	<span style="color: blue;">Mike</span>	2D	W	KC	7	50	
4	1	N	<span style="color: blue;">None</span>	<span style="color: blue;">Mike</span>	6S	S	AH	12	980	
5	2	N	<span style="color: blue;">We</span>	<span style="color: blue;">Mike</span>	4S*	N	7D	8		500
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										
16										
<b>TOTAL</b>								1630	1150	
<b>NET SCORE</b>								480		
<b>+/-</b>										


#### How can we tell how well we've done on a hand, in relation to other pairs?

There's another important slip of paper, called a Traveller. There is one for each board, and it stays with the board it belongs to, folded up and slotted into the side or the underside of the board. For the style of board illustrated above, it goes on the underside.

It is always the responsibility of the person sitting in the North seat to fill it in. After the hand is played (**not before**, as that would provide unfair information), North pulls out the traveller and fills it in. After doing so, she checks with East or West that they agree with what she's written, then folds up the traveller and slots it back into the board, ready for the next time that board is played.

Before the start of play, the person in charge of running the session (called the Tournament Director, or TD) will have put a Table Number on each table. Normally all the NS and EW pairs will take their

pair number for the session based on their position at the start of round 1. So the two pairs sitting at Table 3 at the start of play, for example, would be NS3 and EW3, and they retain those pair numbers for the whole session.

Section		Board Number 5						
Pair No.		Contract	By	Lead	Tricks	NS +	EW +	Match Points
NS	EW							
1								
2								
3	3	3NT E		4C 10			430	
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
 <b>A.L. FLEMING</b> <a href="http://www.alfleming.co.uk">www.alfleming.co.uk</a> - 01689 891122							F11	

Here is a typical traveller. This has been the first hand of the session, as there is only one score filled in on the traveller. In this example we are playing 2-board rounds, so at the start of the session, the TD will have placed boards 1&2 on Table 1, 3&4 on Table 2, 5&6 on Table 3, etc.

Therefore this one, Board No5, was the first hand played on Table 3, and North on Table 3 has filled in the traveller. You will note she has entered the score on Row 3, the row for 3NS. The person sitting North on Table 3 will ALWAYS complete Row 3, and only Row 3, on the traveller for each board she and her partner play. She will in each case enter the correct EW pair number in the EW column.

In this example, can you work out whether EW were non-vulnerable or vulnerable?

As the session proceeds, the various rows on each traveller will get filled in. At the end of the session, the Scorer will collect in all the travellers, and use the information on them to work out the results for

the session. That's why it's important that each North is careful to complete the travellers correctly and legibly!

It might all sound a bit complicated, but with a bit of practice, it becomes quite straightforward.

