

Playing IMPs

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Source: Andrew Gumperz

Goals

- “Bid vulnerable games and slams”
- Receive positive scores!!!
- Overtricks do not matter as much, nor does 420 vs 400.
- Contracts should be viewed as a risk of X IMPs to earn Y IMPs.

Principles

- Play the odds: vulnerable games have better odds than non-vulnerable games.
- In a swing (double-game situation), keep bidding! Only stop when you are willing to double the opponents.
- If the opponents have a game or slam, do everything you can to get in the way. The difference between -420 and -500 is minimal (3 IMPs), the difference between -420 and +50 is huge 10 IMPs).

Principles

- Don't make risky bids that offer slim rewards: be careful with sacrifices at unfavorable vulnerability (be within 1 trick), and only bid near certain (90+%) grand slams.
- Don't bid light vulnerable when your side has no chance for game but could easily be set for a number.
- When the reward is fixed, minimize the risk. Settle for sure games or part scores instead of bidding frivolously to reach un-makeable contracts. Avoid bidding 3M.

Principles

- When risk is certain, maximize the reward! Avoid playing in 2NT or 4m: instead look for 3NT and 4M.
- Always look for major suit fits first (Walsh). 3NT or 4M is much more likely to make than 5m.

Favorable Odds

- Some contracts have favorable (better than 1:1) odds; others don't.
- A close vulnerable game will gain 10 IMPs or lose 6 IMPs if defeated. With nearly 2:1 odds, when in doubt bid the game.

Break Even Odds

- Some decisions are high risk/high reward.
- Bidding a slam with either gain or lose 10 IMPs. Don't risk losing the game bonus unless the slam makes more than 50% of the time.
- In a competitive auction, be careful bidding 3NT: poor splits could result in -500. Temper your aggression-don't say a prayer and hope for the best.

Unfavorable Odds

- Your partner has opened 3H. You raise to 4H. The opponents have now bid 4S and you must decide whether to sacrifice at 5H.
- You estimate that 5H will be down 3 for -500 against a possible -620 if 4S makes.
- Your upside occurs when you indeed have a cheap sacrifice: + 4 IMPs; your downside occurs when you can defeat the 4S game: - 11 IMPs. Thus, you should be nearly 100% confident that 4S makes before you even consider bidding at the 5-level.

Auctions

- Make game tries conservatively, but accept aggressively.
- Look for slams above game cautiously. 5M down one will not make your teammates happy.
- Bidding the level of fit: bid carefully with only an 8 card fit, but with a known 9 or 10 card fit, always bid to the level of fit and do so IMMEDIATELY- regardless of vulnerability. Don't give the opponents any more time than necessary- they can always make a wrong guess.

ODR

- The Offense-Defense Ratio should tell you when it is right to declare or defend.
- Declare when your side has a big trump fit, high cards are in your longest suits, and tricks will come from ruffs instead of honors.
- Defend when your side does not have a good fit, high cards are in the opponents' suits, and tricks will come from natural winners instead of eliminate losers.
- Low ODR ratio hands should declare or defend notrump contracts.