

Scoring with IMPs

The most important point is that whether you are playing Pairs or Teams, the bridge is very nearly the same. The rules are identical, it is just the scoring that is different, and that may have a small effect on your strategy and your play.

★ With **Pairs** scoring, it only matters that you do better than other pairs holding the same cards; the size difference in your scores is irrelevant. If everyone is scoring +400 for making 3NT, then whether you make +430, +460 or +800, your score on the board is 100% - a top!

★ With **Teams** scoring, the difference between the scores does matter. The difference is converted into IMPs (International Match Points) according to the scale shown on your scorecard. In the 3NT example above, if everyone else is making +400, then your +430 will score +1 IMP, +460 will score 2 IMPs and +800 will score 9 IMPs.

One good board, gaining +9 or +12 IMPs, say, will more than compensate for a few narrow losses of -1 IMP.

(For those of you that play golf, there is a parallel between match play and stroke play.)

The method of scoring means you should make some small changes to your bidding style and card-play tactics.

★ Bidding at IMPs:

- Look for the safest contract, not the one that will score a bit more. 3NT+1 (430) and 4♠= (420) is zero IMPs and a flat board.
- Don't be scared to explore minor-suit slams. Bailing out in 5♣/♦ for +600, when others are in 3NT+1, is not the disaster it would be at pairs.
- Don't compete too aggressively in part-score battles. Bidding 3♣ over their 2♠, trying to get a better score (-100 against their +110), might be worth it at Pairs, but if your 3♣ is doubled for -200 or -500, you will lose a lot of IMPs.
- You should bid non-vulnerable games that are 50-50 but, vulnerable, you should be bidding games that have a 40% chance of making.
- Don't double part-scores too aggressively, especially if you may be doubling them into game.

★ Declarer Play at IMPs:

- Do not risk your contract for an overtrick. Try and find a line where you can guarantee the contract, and overtricks are then the icing on the cake.

★ Defence at IMPs:

- Your aim is to beat the contract and if that occasionally costs an overtrick or two, then so be it. At Pairs your plan may be to let them make their confidently bid contract and ensure that they don't get an easy overtrick.

★ IMPs and Cross IMPs

- When you have two teams-of-four competing against each other, then the IMPs table is used to determine the result between you and the other team.
- When you have a Cross-IMPs pairs competition, your score is IMPed up against each of the pairs competing the other way, and then the average taken.

(The EBU have a conversion table that they use to generate a pair's equivalent score for NGS purposes. A score of +24 IMPs (ie: 1 IMP per board) equates to a pairs score of 56.5%.)