

Scoring with IMPs (International Match Points)

IMPs scoring is an alternative method of scoring Pairs events. All scoring methods involving IMPs use the actual score at the table, whereas in MP (Matchpoint) scoring it's your rank in the field that's relevant. The use of the actual score leads people to the conclusion that IMPs scoring is more faithful to the principle of game and slam bonuses laid out in the rules of Bridge.

In Cross-IMPs (or X-IMPs) a table result (e.g. +420 to NS) is compared against every other table in the field. Then the average is found (total IMPs divided by the number of results) to give a measure of how much better or worse the result is compared to the field. In Butler scoring a table result is compared against an adjusted (extremes removed) average score. Modern analysis has shown Cross IMPs to be superior to Butler scoring.

Below is a simple example of a 6 table field. This calculation applies to the two pairs sitting at Table 3 where NS scored +420.

	Contract	Score	Comparison	IMPs
1	4H/N making 11	+450	$+420 - 450 = -30$	-1
2	3H/N making 11	+200	$+420 - 200 = +220$	+6
3	4H/N making 10	+420		
4	3H/N making 11	+200	$+420 - 200 = +220$	+6
5	4H/N making 9	-50	$+420 + 50 = +470$	+10
6	4Hx/N making 10	+590	$+420 - 590 = -170$	-5
			Total IMPs	+16
			Average (16 divided by 5)	+3.2

The calculation of IMPs is based on the following table (also found on scorecards)

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

In this example the NS pair scoring +420 at Table 3 lose 1 IMP compared to NS (scoring +450) at Table 1. NS at Table 2 failed to bid the game and only scored +170, yielding +6 IMPs to NS at Table 3. Compared with the other 5 Table scores NS earn +16 IMPs – an average of +3.2 imps on this board. EW earns the opposite -3.2

In IMPs it's important to remember the **size** of the score does matter, as this affects its distance from other scores on a board. In both IMPs and MPs a good board is still a good board (and a bad board is a bad board) but in IMPs it is a matter of how much better or how much worse that is relevant.

There are three important implications when playing IMP based scoring?

1. Declarer's top priority is making the Contract (overtricks will only yield perhaps 1 IMP but going down can cost 10 Or more IMPs)

2. Try to Bid Games (a vulnerable 4S making versus 3S also making 10 tricks is worth $(620-170 = 450)$ ie +10 IMPs)
3. Defenders' first priority is to defeat the contract rather than limiting the overtricks