

# Duplicate Bridge

## IMPs vs. Matchpoint Scoring

There are two main ways to score a duplicate bridge event: **International Match Points (IMPs)** and **Matchpoints**. The differences between these two scoring systems often lead to different strategies and styles of play.

### Matchpoints

When playing matchpoints, your score is compared to the other pairs who play the same hands, and you receive points according to how many pairs you beat.

When playing matchpoints, all hands count equally, so that you are not penalized too much for one horrible play or given too many points for one moment of brilliance.

### Strategy:

- You should always bid games that have at least 50% chance of making and not bid game when there is less than 50% chance of making.
- Overtricks are very important. It is very common for one pair to get a top simply because they made one more trick than everyone else. In general, try for an overtrick if the chance of getting it is greater than the chance that the try will hurt you even if you risk making the contract! Remember, going down when everyone else makes game is only a bottom, while making an overtrick that no one else made is a shining top!
- The 10 bonus points for notrump are also useful. It is common for one pair to get a top because they made 4NT instead of 4♥/♠. Remember that our 1<sup>st</sup> priority is finding 8+ cards in a major.
- Also strongly consider 3NT instead of minor-suit game. Even if you are certain that a minor-suit game will make, you should be in 3NT if the chance of making 4NT is greater than the chance of going down.
- Little partscore hands matter a lot in matchpoints. Matchpoint players tend to overcall often, balance a lot, and generally bid aggressively when all the hands seem to have equal strength.

**International Match Points (IMPs)** - In international matchpoint scoring, on each board the total point difference between the two scores compared is converted into IMPs according to the following scale:

Difference in points	IMPs
20-40	1
50-80	2
90-120	3
130-160	4
170-210	5
220-260	6
270-310	7
320-360	8
370-420	9
430-490	10
500-590	11
600-740	12
750-890	13
900-1090	14

## IMPs

IMPs is the normal method of scoring in team events, or any event where only two tables play each board. When playing IMPs, your score on a contract is compared to the score of the other team who played the same hands. You are then either rewarded or penalized a certain number of IMPs based on the difference of the results from both teams. For example say both team were in a 3NT contract and one team made 4NT while the other made only 3NT. The difference would be 430 against 400 or 30 points. The difference, 30, is looked up on a table as above and the associated IMPs are assigned to that board. Every board is compared in that fashion and the IMPs are tabulated for all boards played. The team with most IMPs is the winning team. The results are cumulative from board to board compared to matchpoints where the result of that particular board does not carry over.

### Strategy:

- When playing IMPs, hands with a big swing (i.e. a large difference in points) count much more than hands with a small swing.
- Bid game whenever reasonable, especially when vulnerable. Bidding game when the opposing pair does not is worth 10 IMPs vulnerable, but going down in game when your opponents make a partscore only costs 5 IMPs.
- Be wary of big sacrifices. If you go down 3 doubled when your opponents would **not** have made game, you lose 11 IMPs!
- Overtricks are not as important since according to the table an overtrick as indicated above is only worth 1 IMP.
- It is most important to make your contract especially games and never jeopardizing the contract for the extra trick like in matchpoint. For example if you go down one trick compared to the other team making 4♥/♠ i.e. -50 vs 420 it would be a total of 470 and looking on the table it would be worth 10 IMPs. If the game was vulnerable i.e. -100 vs 620 for a total of 720 then you would lose 12 IMPs.
- At matchpoint we try hard to play in a major or NT however at IMPs if the best/safest makeable contract is 2♣/♦ do not try to bid 1NT if it increases the risk of not making the contract.
- Similarly if 5♣/♦ is less risky than 3NT we play in 5♣/♦ rather than 3NT since the difference between 430 or 400 (only 1 IMP) is not worth the increased risk.
- Similarly, don't worry about getting the 10 extra points for being in notrump instead of a major suit, since the difference is usually only worth 1 IMP.
- **IMP players always consider risk vs rewards.** So **safety plays** by sacrificing an extra trick are used more often to guarantee the contract.

## Summary

### IMP Strategy

- Must make your contract
- Bid “close” vulnerable games
- Find a safe suit fit contract
- Only one pair/team to beat
- Results **carry forward**

### Match point Strategy

- Try for over tricks
- Bid 50+% games
- If not a major suit bid NT
- Must beat the field
- It's only 1 board