



Tournament Scoring

To win at duplicate bridge, it is essential to understand how a hand is scored. A strategic player uses that knowledge to bid and play each hand. Many players on BBO and in the BIL have been known to comment, “I don’t understand that score. We made five tricks and they only made three tricks and they got a better score than we did!” Ah... there’s the rub! Duplicate bridge scoring is based on the contract that is bid and the vulnerability of the partnership, not how many tricks a declarer makes.

Let’s say that you and your partner are vulnerable. If your contract is 1NT and you make five tricks, your score is 210. If another partnership bids 3NT on same hand and only makes the 3 tricks bid, that partnership scores 600. Why? Because in duplicate bridge when you bid “game,” you receive a game “bonus” or, as some call it, a “premium.”

Duplicate bridge scoring for individual hands is explained in BIL/BBO FAQ in the drop-down menu of “About BIL.” Our purpose here is to explain *how tournaments are scored on BBO.*



Be warned! *A duplicate player who knows how to calculate the potential score of each contract will—more often than not—strategically outmaneuver a player who lacks scoring knowledge. You are advised to know how to score an individual duplicate bridge hand. Understanding the following explanation of tournament scoring will be much simpler, as well.*

In duplicate bridge, the same hand is played unchanged across two or more tables and the results are ranked. The resulting scores for each board are expressed in matchpoints (MPs) or in international matchpoints (IMPs). Regardless of the actual contract, the competitor (pair or team) with the best performance on each board gets the highest number of points for that board and vice versa. The competitor with the highest total number of points becomes the winner of the tournament. Thus, even with bad cards, you can win the tournament if your bidding and play is better than the other players who have played the same set of cards.

The two principal methods of scoring on BBO are matchpoints (MPs) and international matchpoints (IMPs). These are often referred to as 'pairs' and 'teams' scoring and it is important to recognize the difference between the two, as you will change your strategies depending on the type of scoring. Some tournaments are designed for individuals to play against the other players. These “INDY” tournaments on BBO often use Total Points Scoring. In Total Point Scoring, the net total point score of all boards played is the score for each contestant.

MP Scoring

In MPs, you are competing against every other pair sitting at the tables in your direction (North-South or East-West). You, of course, are trying to beat their score. You receive one point for every pair that you beat and you receive half a point for every tie. These points are then converted to a percentage of your total possible score.

For example, suppose that there are 11 tables in play—this means that a 'top' on a board is 10 points (there are 10 partnerships playing against your partnership). The 'bottom' would be 0 points. So if every partnership beats you, you would receive 10 points.

Let's look at an easy non-vulnerable 3NT contract.

Five tables make 9 tricks for +400.

Five tables make 10 tricks for +430.

At your table, you make 10 tricks for +430.

You have tied with five tables. As explained above, you make half a point for every tie, so you receive 2.5 points ($5 \times .5 = 2.5$). You beat 5 tables and receive one point for every table you beat, which is 5 points. Now you add your combined points to get 7.5 points. You divide your total points by the number of tables you played against to calculate your percentage—7.5 divided by 10 equals .75 or 75%.

However, if you only make 9 tricks for +400, then you will tie with 5 tables (2.5 points) and lose to 5 tables (0 points) for a score of 2.5/10—which is 25%. See how important that overtrick became in MP scoring?

So in MPs it is not the relative size of your score that is important, but whether you beat other pairs. Overtricks are very important. Losing -100 when everyone else is losing -110 can be a top board. A bad sacrifice can be as costly as failing to make an overtrick in a partscore.

So your tactics in MPs should be to get *positive* scores, since these score well most of the time. Generally try to avoid 'extreme' positions where you put yourself into a top or bottom situation. In summary, your best strategy in MPs is to avoid close tries for games and slams.

IMP Scoring

In IMP scoring, every partnership score is subtracted from another score, and the difference is converted to IMPs, using the standard IMP table below. The purpose of the IMP Table is to reduce results occurring from huge score differences. In team matches using IMP scoring, your score is compared to the score at the other table and the difference is converted to IMPs.

To simplify, if you are in a two table match and you are playing N/S, your partners are playing E/W at the other table. You and your N/S opponents at the other table are playing the same hands.

Table A in a Two-Table Team Match

IMP Match Board 10

A: 44 IMPs
B: 16 IMPs
Other Table: 4♠ N +3 +710

N honestgolf
W LQun
E dshen
S bid better

Bidding Log:
LQun honest dshen bid bet
Pass 2NT Pass Pass
Pass 4♣ Pass 3♥
Pass 4♠ Pass 4♥
Pass Pass Pass

Table	North	South	East	West	Kibitzers	Chat	Tourneys
Table 1	honestgolf	bid better	dshen	LQun	4	Tables	Lobby
Table 2	luojiawei	efok	stjk	shark7nt	0	2	4160

In the example above, two teams of players are playing in a match—four players against four players. The N/S partnership at this table arrived at the same contract their N/S opponents reached at the other table—four spades.

After both tables played this board, the N/S partnership at the other table scored +710, with 3 overtricks. At this table, the N/S partnership made only 4S (no overtricks), scoring +620. The two scores are subtracted, giving the point difference. 710 minus 620 equals 90. Looking at the IMP Table below, 90 falls in the 90 to 120 range, giving the winning team 3 IMPs for this board.

IMP Table

Difference	IMPs	Difference	IMPs	Difference	IMPs	Difference	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

In IMP scoring, the larger the difference in the number of points the higher the number of IMPs. Differences of 10 points do not count, and generally the importance of overtricks is small. What is important is to bid games and avoid large penalties.

Let's expand our two-table match to a larger situation, such as the tournaments hosted on BBO. For example, let's imagine we are playing in a pairs tournament and it is Board 1. We are sitting N/S. We bid and make a non-vulnerable 3NT. Our +400 score is then *IMPed* (using the IMP Scale) against all the other N/S pairs who played Board 1.

Some tournaments get rid of some of the "extreme scores" at the top and bottom because they can have a serious impact on the average, making the resulting scores inaccurate. For example, if one pair plays a redoubled contract and goes down -2800 on a hand on which most players are bidding and making 3NT the other way, the average will be a lot different from the 400 or so that it should be. The pairs that correctly bid and made 3NT will lose an extreme amount of IMPs.


This "corrupting of the average" when you have a ridiculous result is why the tournament rules on BBO allow for adjustment of the average. When you knock off the top and the bottom score, you receive a "median" score, usually providing more accurate results for the tournament.

As you can see, MPs and IMPs can be very different. You can play the same game with both scoring methods and do reasonably, but you will improve your score with a little adjustment of your strategy for their differences.

BBO MPs and ACBL MPs

BBO MPs are awarded by BBO, not by the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) or any other organization. They are awarded in 'Pay to Play' tournaments, which are designated in the tournaments' lists with yellow dollar signs. They require an entry fee of \$1. These tournaments include the BIL's Exchange Bonanza Reward Tournaments, reserved for beginning and intermediate players.

The accumulation of BBO MPs results in a member getting an award symbol next to his or her User Name. The numbers and symbols are awarded according to the following scale:

Bridge Base Online - Useful Links and Information - Award symbols in your profile	
Masterpoints are awarded in pay tournaments. ACBL, Robot Race, Money Bridge Tournaments and clubs (BBO Land, Sky Club, BBO Turkiye, BBO Italy, BBO Poland, Ilacy and BIL) all award masterpoints. Only ACBL tournaments award ACBL masterpoints.	
A	Leader in the historical table of MPs won
K	2nd-10th in the historical table of MPs won
Q	11-50 in the historical table of MPs won
J	51-100 in the historical table of MPs won
10	1000+ Masterpoints on BBO
9	500+ MPs
8	300+ MPs
7	200+ MPs
6	100+ MPs
5	50+ MPs
4	20+ MPs
3	5+ MPs
2	1+ MPs
 Earned through participation in various World Championship events and/or success in major national and international tournaments. Please email support@bridgebase.com if you think you might qualify for this symbol.	

The above numbers are an award for consistency of results when playing in 'Pay to Play' tournaments. They are not a ranking; they are not an indication of skill level.

Good Bridging!