

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PAIRS AND TEAMS?

In both forms of bridge, the way you bid and play is exactly the same. The basic score you get on the board is also the same (e.g., if you bid and make 4♠ (not vulnerable), your basic score is +420 in both forms) and this is still calculated by the computer. What is different is the way your final result on each board is calculated from that basic score and this may make a difference to the tactics you adopt.

Duplicate Pairs is the form of bridge played in most sessions at our club. Here, the result is determined by the number of match-points you and your partner win. You win 2 match-points for each pair playing the same cards with a lower basic score and 1 match-point for each pair with equal basic score. Whether the basic score of the other pair is lower by 10 points or 1000 points is irrelevant to the match-point calculation.

Teams is only played occasionally at our club. You play as a team of two pairs. One of the pairs will play all their boards as North-South and the other pair will play the same set of boards as East-West. Each team will play several matches against other teams. For each board in a match, the North-South pair in one team will play against the East-West pair in the other team and vice versa. The result for each board is determined by adding the basic score of the North-South and the basic score of the East-West pair and converting the sum to International Match Points IMPs using the table on the next page. If your team's sum of basic scores is positive, your team's scores plus that number of IMPs, while if the sum is negative you score minus that number of IMPs. The result for the matches is the total number of IMPs awarded from all the boards.

As an example, suppose North-South is vulnerable on a board and the North-South pairs in both teams bid 3NT. The contract is made exactly by the declarer in one team but goes one down when played by the declarer in the other team. The basic score for the team that makes the contract is +600 to North-South and +100 to the East-West pair in the same team. The team where the contract is made adds their scores (+600 for the North-South pair and +100 for the East-West pair). From the table, the sum of basic scores of 700 corresponds to 12 IMPs. The team making 3NT scores +12 IMPs and the team going down scores -12 IMPs on that board.

Notice a big difference between the two forms. In Duplicate Pairs, the amount by which your basic score exceeds another pair's basic score doesn't matter. In Teams, the size of the basic scores does matter a lot.

Tips for playing Teams

1. Make your contract. The number of IMPs won or lost from the number of overtricks or undertricks is small compared with what you lose if a positive score becomes a negative score because you risked your contract in the hope of making an overtrick. Don't risk your contract for overtricks. As declarer, if you think the contract is too easy, look for what bad things may happen (e.g., a 5-0 trump break) and look for a play that may succeed in that case, even at the cost of overtricks if the suits are distributed normally. Similarly, if the contract looks hopeless, look for a layout of the opponent's cards where the contract will make, even at the cost of possible additional undertricks if your play fails.
2. On defence, aim to defeat the contract. This is just the converse of 1. If there is some possible layout of the unknown cards where the contract will be defeated, play for that and don't worry about conceding overtricks if your play fails. Conversely, if you are assured of defeating the contract with some play, don't try to get more undertricks if it risks allowing the contract to make.

3. Bid vulnerable games if you judge the chance of making is at least 40%. Suppose you need to decide whether to play in 3♠ or bid 4♠ and suppose further your opponents play in 3♠. If you bid 4♠ and it makes, your basic score is +620 and your teammate's basic score is -170. The total is +450 and you gain 10 IMPs. If you bid 4♠ but make only 9 tricks, your basic score is -100 and your teammate's basic score is -140, assuming your opponents also make 9 tricks. Your total basic score is -240 or -6 IMPs. So, you have more to gain than to lose by bidding 4♠ so you should bid your vulnerable game on hands that you would judge would be marginal at Duplicate Pairs. This does not mean you should bid game on every hand, but you should be a little more aggressive. The downside may be that spades break badly; the opponents double your game bid and you go down several tricks rather than just one as in the example.

Point difference		IMPs	Point difference		IMPs	Point difference		IMPs
From	To		From	To		From	To	
0	10	0	370	420	9	1500		17
20	40	1	430	480	10	1750		18
50	80	2	500	590	11	2000		19
90	120	3	600	740	12	2250		20
130	160	4	750	890	13	2500		21
170	210	5	900	1090	14	3000		22
220	260	6	1100	1290	15	3500		23
270	310	7	1300	1490	16	4000 plus		24
320	360	8						

IMP Table