

## Matchpoint vs. Team Strategy

Before we get to the strategy for Matchpoints vs. IMPs let's consider the difference between the two.

**Matchpoints**-- You are compared to many other pairs and are trying to get a high average and above on each board you play. A high board on one board can carry you on another board that you don't score so well on.. Even a zero or two will not prevent you from having a good overall score at the end of the game.

**IMPS**—International Match Points-- You are scoring each result against only one other pair(while playing your team against theirs) on several boards. One disastrous swing board can cost the match for your team and also cost you doing well at the end of the event.

We will compare the best way to play in Matchpoints( pairs) and in IMPS (teams). If you are playing both, it is easy to start mixing up the way to play Matchpoints.

Let's get started!!

## PARTSCORES:

**Matchpoints** - Compete aggressively and try to not let the opponents play below the 3 level. Partner will understand you are balancing to raise the level for the opponents. Once they have bid at the 3 level, gladly pass. Mission accomplished.

**IMPS**- Compete, but never with any risk. - -200,-300,-500 are not going to be good in IMPS. When you are Vulnerable, be especially cautious. don't fight over part scores. Sometimes PASS is the smart bid!

Let's look at an example hand: Dealer: W, N/S VUL

KJ632		
AQ		
9543		
T7		
Q4		AT98
T83		J7
KJ86		AQT
AJ54		9862
75		
K96542		
72		
KQ3		
NS 2H, EW 3D, EW 2C, EW 1S    Par -110 (NS perspective)		

This is a hand with part scores all over the place! What if you aren't competing in Matchpoints? You might as well hang up your game.

# BIDDING GAMES:

**Matchpoints**-- Bid games that are over 60% and even when risky if they score higher. Many times when 4H makes you have a play to make 4NT. This is the risk I am talking about. Making 4NT will give you an excellent Matchpoint score in comparison with making 4H. Use solid bidding to know when to push with the borderline hands. Distributional hands are also worth the extra push.

**IMPS**-- Bid aggressively and go to close games(might be 50%+), especially when vulnerable. Use the rule of "safest contract" not necessarily the highest scoring. So in this case you would bid 4H rather than 4NT, because it is safer. You cannot afford to miss a makeable game and go down in a risky one.

Here is an example hand of "choice of games" Dealer:N, No one vul

	T532	
	QJ52	
	K9	
	J86	
K86		AQJ7
K76		A743
QJT53		void
Q5		AK742
	94	
	98	
	A87642	
	T93	

5NT EW, 6C EW, 5S EW. Worth the riskier contracts in Matchpoints and stick with the safest contract in IMPS. Even though 6C makes, it is a very risky slam and unbiddable.

## BIDDING SLAMS:

**Matchpoints--** Bid slams if they are 50%+ Be willing to bid riskier slams if they score higher (NT vs. suit) . Use systems to get to your slams and avoid just jumping there. Many a slam that is jumped into has gone down for lack of key cards. Use your intuition as well to try for a slam. Perhaps you can smell one!

**IMPS--** Bid safest slam and explore using your tools, 10 extra points won't get you anything extra in IMP scoring, however missing a slam can cost the whole match.

**Example of Small Slam :** Dealer: N , No one Vul

	T	
	Q9872	
	AQ765	
	J6	
AKQ6		J9853
K54		A
J95		K
A74		KT9832
	742	
	JT63	
	T842	
	Q5	
5NT EW, 6C EW, 6S EW		

East should open this distributional hand with a Spade, and partner can bid Jacoby 2NT. The opps most likely will interfere making it even harder to get to this slam. The West hand should give a big push with their 17 count and 4 Spades. For those that go, a big reward.

## BIDDING A GRAND SLAM:

**Matchpoints**-- Use every tool you need (and have) to make sure this will make before bidding it. If you are not playing 1430 you need to start! Cue bidding is good up to the point where you will ask for key cards. Voids can make using 1430 difficult. A GRAND is usually worth a top or shared top board! Some will never risk it. **Don't let that be you!**

**IMPS**-- Bidding a grand is not for sissies! Make sure you have all the keycards (or voids or singletons). This can bring in lots of IMPS in a team game.

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## DEFENSE:

**Matchpoints**-- Avoid giving up over tricks. If you can hold the opponents to the fewest tricks you will normally get an average + score. The lead is so important. You and your partner should try to give lead direction on as many hands as possible. You can do this with a bid, a double over artificial bids, or even a balancing double.

### Example of a hand over calling for a lead:

AKJ75, 754, Q4, T93

**IMPS**-- Take risks to beat contracts. For example you might lead an Ace out against an IMP game or even part score trying to set the contract. Be daring, if they are in a game no one else is in, you are losing a lot of IMPS if they make it.

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## OVER TRICKS:

**Matchpoints**-- Take reasonable chances to make over tricks if you are in a normal contract. If you are in a contract no one else or few will be in, just make the contract.

**IMPS**-- Play safe to make the contract. Over tricks are good, but making the contract is everything!

Example of a hand with possibility of over trick: Contract:3NT

AK  
765  
KJT3  
AQ6

532  
AKQ  
Q842  
JT3

**In Matchpoints** : 2 of Spades led . You have 9 top tricks after you drive out the Ace of Diamonds. RHO wins the Ace of Diamonds and returns the 3 of Spades. Both of the defenders look like they only have 4 Spades. You should finesse the Clubs in Matchpoints. Worth the small risk.

**In IMPS**: Caution is best. Take your 9 tricks and don't trust the opponents signals. Tricky opponents can trick you into losing lots of IMPS!!

## DOUBLING:

**Matchpoints**-- Double aggressively, especially if they are Vulnerable . What is a Matchpoint Double? It is a double you are making to get your board back to get a positive score and at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  the matchpoints . Remember to reopen with a double after the opponent has bid and partner has passed, they may have a trump stack and can't double because it would be a negative double. **This should be a "given" that you are reopening with a double. Protect partner!**

**IMPS**-- Double cautiously, especially if you are doubling a PART SCORE. You need to have tricks in their trump suit and think you have enough tricks to set them at least 2 tricks. Doubling a part score into game is a huge loss, don't do it!

Example of a hand where you could double:

QJ97

AT8

964

754

The auction:	Pard	Opp	You	Opp
	1D	1S	1NT	2S
	3C	3S	X	

Partner has shown a good hand and you have plenty of values for a penalty double. You should expect to set this contract by at least 2 and probably more.

**HIGH LEVEL COMPETITION:** What do I mean by this? We are up at the 5 level or higher and trying to know what to do!

**Matchpoints--** Take the action that is most likely to have a plus score. Many times the opponents are trying to steal our game or they may really have their bid and we are trying to steal theirs! One thought is that if you are sure you have them set, double. If you are pretty sure they can make theirs, try getting them to one level higher by bidding yours again (don't be risking a big set). This is no doubt a very hard part of Match point bidding.

**IMPS--** Avoid double game swings . What do I mean by this? Sometimes both sides can make a game and if you let your opponents play in a makeable game and so do your partners at the other table, they can have 2 games and this is a huge loss. Make sure you are bidding your games so this doesn't happen.

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Bridge is like doing a dance. Every hand will be different, sometimes you are on toe shoes delicately bidding and playing along. Other times you are doing a tap dance and shuffling to a slam at breakneck speed. You might be waltzing into a game or slam.

Try being the opponent that everyone enjoys playing against. Compliment your opponent, use ethics and manners, bid and play in a timely manner, but mostly enjoy yourself, your partner and the whole experience! You are playing the best game in the world!



