

Bridge Team Strategy for Victory Point Scoring

In a bridge team game playing Victory Point scoring, your strategy is different than in Duplicate pairs scoring.

In Duplicate, where Match Point scoring is in effect, you may go all out for overtricks, even at the risk of going down. On the defensive side, you may double more often because +200 is usually a very good Match Point score. And everyone seems to savor +800 and +1100. You risk going down or having the opponents make a doubled contract because your result on each board is generally only 1/26th of your total score for the session.

In a Team Game, where a match is typically seven (7) boards, a disastrous result on a single board may cost your team the whole match. Therefore, in a Team Game, you don't risk the contract to make overtricks, nor do you make close doubles, doubles of contracts the opponents may make with a little luck in the distribution or a small slip in the defense.

International Match Points

The 1st step in Victory Point scoring is to convert the results the two (2) partnerships achieved on a board to International Match Points (IMPs). On a given board, add the scores together to come up with a net plus or net minus. The result is input into a "Diff" column in a table (see Table 1 below) and the International MatchPoints (IMPs) are read from the associated "IMPs" column.

You only win IMPs if you have a positive difference of 20 points or more. If you lose by 20 or more points, you lose the appropriate number of IMPs. A dead tie or a difference of only 10 is called a "push" and neither team earns any IMPs. All boards played are converted to IMPs and totaled to arrive at a single IMP score for the match.

International Matchpoint (IMP) Scale					
Diff	IMPs	Diff	IMPs	Diff	IMPs
20 - 40	1	370 - 420	9	1500 - 1740	17
50 - 80	2	430 - 490	10	1750 - 1990	18
90 - 120	3	500 - 590	11	2000 - 2240	19
130 - 160	4	600 - 740	12	2250 - 2490	20
170 - 210	5	750 - 890	13	2500 - 2990	21
220 - 260	6	900 - 1090	14	3000 - 3490	22
270 - 310	7	1100 - 1290	15	3500 - 3990	23
320 - 360	8	1300 - 1490	16	4000 & up	24

Table 1. International Matchpoint (IMP) Scale

Victory Point Scoring

Victory Points are derived from IMPs based on either a 20-point scale or 30-point scale. The 20-point scale is the one most widely used and is shown in Table 2.

20-Pt. Victory Point (VP) Scale			
IMPs	VPs	IMPs	VPs
0	10-10	14-16	16-4
1-2	11-9	17-19	17-3
3-4	12-8	20-23	18-2
5-7	13-7	24-27	19-1
8-10	14-6	28+	20-0
11-13	15-5		

Table 2. 20-Point Victory Scale

The conversion to Victory Points is done for the total IMP score for the match. Unlike IMPs, Victory Points do not go negative. The 2 teams split the available VPs. As shown, a dead tie in IMPs gives each team 10 VPs. If a team wins by 1 or 2 IMPs, that team gets 11 VPs and the losing team gets 9. A win by 28 IMPs or more has all 20 VPs going to the victors, and is known as a “blitz.”

Victory Point scoring essentially turns a team game from a series of individual matches into a single, long match. This transformation happens because the Victory Points accumulate during the course of all the matches and the winners are those with the most Victory Points, not those with the most wins. Wins are still satisfying, but the unit of importance is the number of Victory Points, not the number of wins. Thus, it's not necessary to go all out to win a particular match.

Even if you go undefeated, eking out victories in all your matches, you may not be the winner in Victory Point scoring. A team that wins several matches big and then loses to you in a squeaker, will best you in Victory Point scoring.

Now we're beginning to see a bit of a strategy conflict in Victory Point scoring. We don't want to go all out to pull out a victory in a single match, thereby risking a bigger Victory Point loss, but on the other hand, we want to win big if possible. To accommodate both perspectives, you simply need to keep your killer instinct intact. Each board is important, even if you're way ahead in a particular match. Remember, it's Victory Points, not wins that count. So, don't let up, don't lose your concentration, don't feel sorry for your opponents even if they're obviously suffering. Work to safely maximize your result on every board.

Some Team Strategy Tips

Stretch to bid Vulnerable games.

Stretch to Invite game/small slam, but not to Accept the invitation.

With a long suit and a likely wide-open suit, don't sit for 1NT; pull the contract to 2 of your long suit.

Don't double a low-level contract into game, unless you're 120% sure you're going to beat it, even if the opponents have distributional hands.

Don't risk the contract to make overtricks, which are usually not significant.

Defend to set their contract. Here too, overtricks are not usually significant.

Playing Victory Points, don't go all out to win a particular match, with the possible exception of the last one.

In Victory Points, every board counts. Don't let up, don't lose your concentration, don't feel sorry for your opponents. Work to maximize your result on every board.

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