



Pairs or Teams?

The system doesn't change. What changes is what a good result looks like — and so what you do with a close decision.

Pairs — matchpoints

Every table plays the same board. Your score on it is compared with every other pair who held your cards: beat a pair, one point; tie, half. Only the **comparison** survives — **how much** you won or lost by is thrown away. A part-score that outscores the room by ten is a complete win; a slam one down is a complete loss.

Teams — IMPs

Your team of four sits at two tables, and the two results on each board are compared. The **difference** in points becomes IMPs on a scale that compresses big swings — a 30-point overtrick is 1 IMP; a vulnerable game against a part-score is 10. At teams, **size matters**, and that drives every row below.

	PAIRS	TEAMS
What wins	Beating the room, however narrowly. Frequent small gains.	Big swings — games, slams, doubled contracts. Avoiding big losses.
Overtricks	Matter a lot: the overtrick is often the whole board. Play for it when it's safe-ish.	Barely matter. Make the contract first ; take the safety play every time.
Close games	Bid what the room will bid; on a coin-flip, stay with the field.	Bid vulnerable games on less — the bonus is huge, the penalty for failing small beside it. A little more sober not vulnerable.
Slams	Bid the <i>right</i> slam — 6NT outcores six of a suit; a thin slam is a 50-50 board.	Bid a slam you're confident in; a thin one risks a large swing. Be sure.
Doubles	Double part-scores readily when they've pushed too far — +200 beats every part-score in the room.	Double only what you're sure to beat . A doubled contract that makes is a catastrophe; letting them make an undoubled part-score costs a few IMPs.
Defence and leads	Lead passively; protect your overtricks. Sometimes the best defence is holding declarer to the contract.	Beat the contract . Take the aggressive lead that might set it; the overtrick you concede when it fails is nearly free.

THE ONE SENTENCE FOR EACH

Pairs: *Underbid and overplay* — stay with the room in the auction, then squeeze every trick.

Teams: *Overbid and underplay* — go for it in the auction, be punchy, then make the contract safely.

Which will you meet?

Club nights are nearly always **pairs**. Inter-club matches, leagues and cups are **teams**. Learn pairs first — it's the everyday game — and switch instincts at the door when you play a match.

Three traps

- 1 Playing teams like pairs** — chasing an overtrick and going down in a game: a 10–13 IMP swing to save 1.
- 2 Playing pairs like teams** — bidding a thin vulnerable game “because the bonus is big”. If the room stops in a part-score and you go one down, you've lost the board outright.
- 3 Sacrificing at teams**. Sacrifices are a pairs weapon. At teams, only when you're sure their game makes *and* sure your loss is smaller — twice as many ways to be wrong.

The IMP scale

DIFF.	IMPS	DIFF.	IMPS	DIFF.	IMPS	DIFF.	IMPS
20–40	1	170–210	5	370–420	9	750–890	13
50–80	2	220–260	6	430–490	10	900–1090	14
90–120	3	270–310	7	500–590	11	1100–1290	15
130–160	4	320–360	8	600–740	12	... 4000+	24

