

Tournament Terminology 101

If you're confused by the terms used to describe the different types of bridge events played at clubs and tournaments, you're not alone. Here's a list of common bridge events with explanations.

Knockout Teams: an event in which a team (of four, five or six players, with four playing at a time) plays another team. The losers are eliminated or "knocked out" while the winners play other winners until only one winning team remains. The length of a KO match may vary from a single session to a full day (the Vanderbilt and Spingold) to a multi-day event (the Bermuda Bowl).

Bracketed Knockout Teams: a KO event in which teams are divided into groups, usually of 8, 16 or 32 teams, based on their masterpoint holdings. The top group (Bracket I) and all other groups compete in a separate event with their own set of winners.

Compact Knockout Teams: a shorter version of Bracketed KO teams.

Swiss Teams: an event in which a team (of four, five or six players, with four playing at a time) plays other teams in seven-, eight- or nine-board matches. Team A sits North-South at Table 1 and East-West at Table 2 while Team B sits East-West at Table 1 and North-South at Table 2. The results are compared and scored by International Match Points (IMPs). Pairings for the first round are random. Pairings for succeeding rounds are determined by a team's win-loss record or Victory Point total.

International Match Points (IMPs): the most common method of scoring Swiss Team matches. Scoring example: if Team A scores plus 620 for bidding and making 4♠ on a particular deal and Team B scores only plus 170 (they didn't bid the game), the difference is 450, which converts to 10 IMPs. The IMP chart is shown on the inside of your convention card.

Victory Points (VPs): a method of scoring Swiss Team matches. After the scores are compared and converted to IMPs, the IMP total is converted to Victory Points. A team's VP total may be used to determine its next opponents and its final standing.

Side Game Series: a series of single-session pair games that pay red points. These series include at least three sessions and may have as many as six. You may play in as many sessions as you like, but only pairs who play in at least two sessions are eligible for overall gold points. Your best two sessions are used for determining overall winners.

Flighted pairs: When flighting is used, the field is divided by expertise or experience or both into several separate games. Flight A ("unlimited masterpoints") will be open to all players while the remaining flights will be limited. Flight B might be 0-500 MPs or 0-1000 MPs while Flight C might be 0-300 or 0-500. Each flight is scored individually, and masterpoint awards are made for each flight. The masterpoint holdings of the players determine their flight. If one player is quite expert while his partner is new to the game, the pair must compete in Flight A. In flighted events, you may play up but not down. That means you may play in Flight A or Flight B even if your masterpoint holding qualifies you for Flight C. Conversely, you may not play in Flight B or Flight C if you are a Flight A player.

Stratified Pairs: The idea is to compete against everyone but to be ranked only with your peers. Each pair is assigned a stratum or "strat" based on the masterpoint holding of the partner with more masterpoints. *Example:* A = 1000+ masterpoints; B = 300- 1000; C = 0-300. Thus, the most experienced players are placed in Strat A, intermediate players in Strat B and less experienced players in Strat C. Masterpoints are awarded for placings in all strats but gold points are awarded only in A and B. The game proceeds normally; the difference comes when the scores are tabulated and ranked. In a three-strat game, the scores are ranked three times. The first ranking is done as in a regular open game. These are the Strat A results. If a B or C pair does well in this ranking, they receive full credit for that performance. It is not all that uncommon for a Strat C pair to place first overall, and they receive the full masterpoint award for that game. *Note:* A pair is eligible for only one set of masterpoint awards and automatically receives the highest award. The second ranking compares the scores of only the B and C pairs: The scores of the Strat A pairs are eliminated. Once again, if a C pair does well, they receive points for their finishing position in the Strat B results. The third and final ranking compares the scores of only the C pairs: All the scores of the Strat A and B pairs are eliminated.

Strati-Flighted Pairs: The top group plays in a game of their own — Flight A. The rest of the field is divided into strats and plays as in a regular stratified pairs. There can even be stratification within Flight A. Flight A may be listed as 3000+ MPs while Flight X may be listed as 0-3000 MPs.