

Bridge Team Tactics.

Unlike pairs where a bad board is just that and may be compensated by a good board elsewhere in the session, at teams every board is important to the overall result. Bearing this in mind the following is a brief guide to tactics to be used in a teams match.

- 1) Making your contract is important, do not take unnecessary risks to make an over-trick always choose the safest line of play to make your contract.
- 2) Bid game if there is a reasonable chance of making. eg there is no virtue in stopping in 2NT making nine tricks and finding your opponents have bid and made the game. The odds favour bidding any game that has even a 40% chance of making.
- 3) Look for the safest part score or game. Do not strive for the extra points for playing in No-Trumps. Making a safe 5 Clubs when 3NT may struggle is the best tactic.
- 4) Make sure your overcalls are full value. If vulnerable or your overcall is at the 2-level you should promise a good suit and the playing strength of a full opening bid.
- 5) Don't compete too boldly at the part score level, especially if you are vulnerable. Unless you have a good suit and hand let the opponents play in their contract and beware of pushing them into a making game. Don't let the opponents push you to the 3-level unless you are sure of a 9-card fit.
- 6) Don't double part score contracts for penalty unless 100% sure of defeating them. If the opponents sacrifice against your game and you are in doubt about whether to bid higher, double and take your sure plus score.
- 7) Only sacrifice if you are reasonably sure that you won't go down more than two tricks non-vulnerable and virtually certain of only one off vulnerable. Sacrificing when vulnerable is generally not recommended.
- 8) Be optimistic and fairly aggressive in defence. Be cautious of making risky and unusual opening leads – the 'normal' lead is best. If there is a layout of the cards that will result in a set, play for that possibility even if it means conceding an overtrick if you are wrong.
- 9) 1NT doubled, a few off, especially vulnerable, is one of the most common and costly penalties to concede. Have an escape from 1NTx in your bidding agreement. (I have a reasonable working escape system if you are interested.)
- 10) Remember that you are playing, not for yourself, but for the team as a whole and you should be striving for a positive score, where possible, on each board.
- 11) At teams of four at the end of a session, if you are E/W you should return to your team-mates table and 'score up'. It is impolite not to do so and a discussion of the scores and hands may help to improve your game. Similarly the N/S pair should wait for their team mates to return with their scores.
At teams of eight you should obviously take your scores to the team captain.
(Please do not take the attitude "we have had a bad session, we are off home".

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