

'SWISS' EVENTS

The Swiss system for running Bridge events has become very popular over the past few years, one reason being that players don't have to actually be high ranked in order to win prizes; players ranked in any position can usually expect a 'prize' – often some master-point award. The system originated in the Chess world, where it was first used in 1815 in a tournament in Zurich (hence the name), and has now been introduced not only into bridge, but Scrabble, Go, and other games.

Unlike a 'normal' multi-teams or round-robin event in which all competitors play the majority (if not all) of their opponents, or in a 'knock-out' in which a large field is successively whittled down to just a few competitors, the Swiss system is employed in competitions where, due to a high number of entrants, it is impractical to play a high proportion of the field. They are non-eliminating events; players can remain in the event throughout and still play primarily against pairs or teams of a similar standing, and so have a reasonable chance of being finally ranked according to their standard.

These events feature a fixed number of rounds, so competitors do not play against all other opponents. For each new round, players are allocated against other pairs or teams with a similar running score at that point in the competition – an ideal situation is the first pair/team plays against the second, the third plays against the fourth etc. So in principle, poorer players play against other poor players, and expert players play against other good players (except for the first round which is usually based on a random draw, and possibly the second round in which the tournament is still 'settling-down'). Scores are carried forward from each round, and the event winner is the pair or team with the highest score; the fact that are 'top' means that they are deserving of their win, having played most rounds against other good competitors.

During each round, players play the same boards (a form of Barometer scoring), usually computer dealt and Duplimated. Each round is typically between 6 and 12 boards. Whether pairs or teams, the total for each round is usually converted to Victory Points – this ameliorates the situation where one team has a succession of 'lucky' boards accumulating a very high score (particularly in the earlier rounds where abilities may be slightly mis-matched).

In any Swiss event, when allocating a round, it is usual that competitors do not play against competitors they have already played against (exception – see Swiss Teams).

Swiss Pairs

Each round can be scored as either match-pointed pairs, or Cross-Imp (this has largely superseded the less precise Butler scoring), before converting to Victory Points (usually a share of 20VPs).

If match-pointed pairs scoring (the more usual), your total percentage for the round is converted to VPs using a special scale such as:

% of Match Points	VPs	% of Match Points	VPs
Up to 50.65	10-10	59.64	16-4
51.98	11-9	61.75	17-3
53.33	12-8	64.40	18-2
54.74	13-7	68.35	19-1
56.23	14-6	>68.35	20-0
57.83	15-5		

When organising a Swiss Pairs event, it is highly recommended that a standby pair is available, so that in the event of a ‘half-table’, they are able to fill-in. Otherwise if you do have a half-table, a pair may have to sit-out for 6+ boards – to be avoided.

Swiss Teams

Each round is scored as imps per board which are then converted to VPs according to the standard scale for the relevant number of boards.

The main problem which occurs in Swiss Teams events, is when there is an odd number of teams, in which three teams (usually the lowest), compete in a ‘triple’ or ‘triangle’ match. Two options are available:

Long Triple – If the three teams are A,B,C, then two matches are played over two rounds, i.e. NS ‘A’ v EW ‘B’; NS ‘B’ v EW ‘C’; NS ‘C’ v EW ‘A’ on round ‘x’; and NS ‘A’ v EW ‘C’; NS ‘B’ v EW ‘A’; NS ‘C’ v EW ‘B’ on round ‘x+1’.

Special sets of boards are used for these matches:

By definition, this method can only be used in even number of round sets (and not between two sessions).

Short Triple – the pairings are the same as for a ‘long triple’, but only half the number of boards are played in each of their mini-rounds i.e. two of their rounds approximate to on ‘normal’ round.

Sometimes in a Swiss Teams, particularly if there a large number of rounds, towards the end of the event you may find a ‘good’ team playing against a ‘poor’ team, since they’ve already played all the intervening teams. This would give the good team an advantage. In this case the Director may set the allocation (by computer), to allow teams to play one-another twice, to get a more balanced allocation (the Danish system) – teams play against one another according to their actual ranking.

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