



## GUIDELINES FOR BIDDING AND PLAY IN TEAMS MATCHES

1. Use your normal bidding system.
2. In the *play*, concentrate on making your contract first. Do not go for an over-trick which would put you at risk of going down. In *Pairs*-play, going for a risky tenth trick in 3NT will give you a “top” if everybody else opts for the “safe” nine and your risk-taking pays off. In teams-play, that risk is unnecessary, because the scoring system is very different (which is actually a comfort-blanket for inexperienced players!)
3. However, when *bidding*, if there is a 50-50 chance of a game-bid, **take the plunge**, even if it is in a situation where you *wouldn't* take the risk at Pairs. This is especially important when you are Vulnerable. At Teams, if you bid three Vulnerable games that your opponents do **not** bid, you will still break even if you make only *one* of them.
4. Be very careful about making penalty-doubles of *part-score* bids. At Teams, it is disastrous to double your opponents into game. Be particularly wary of doubling on HCP alone, especially if their bidding is clearly based on distribution. Doubling when you are sure they are going down in a *game-bid* is fine (but see No.11).
5. At Teams, it is often recommended that you should be less aggressive with your overcalls. A rule of thumb is to upgrade by a Queen. For example, if you normally overcall with 6 HCP at the *one-level* in Pairs, make it 8 at Teams. If you are overcalling at the *two-level* or above, make sure your suit is genuinely strong.
6. Your pre-emptive bids also need to be a little more circumspect at Teams, especially when you are Vulnerable. It is sensible to re-introduce the “at least two Honours” rule you learned as Beginners!

7. Play in your safest contract, especially in part-scores. If you think 3D is more certain to make, say, than 3H, stay with the Diamonds. The extra 30 points are not significant in Teams scoring. The same applies at game-level. If you are pretty sure that 4S is a safer contract than 3NT, bid the Spades. Even if 3NT makes an overtrick, the 10-point differential (say, 630 rather than 620) produces an identical result in IMPs (Teams) scoring. (It's similar with Slams. Don't raise 6D to 6NT, if you think the Minor slam is more certain).
8. Talking of Slams, don't bid them at all unless you are genuinely confident. If you go one down, Vulnerable, in 6H and the opposing team bids 5H, making, that is a huge points-loss at Teams. By the same token, however, if you are at looking at a hand where you are pretty certain most pairs *would* bid slam, you should do so as well, because you can't afford to be over-cautious. **A difficult balance!**
9. Don't try to play catch-up if you suspect you are likely to be behind after a few boards, or you have gone down in a contract you should have made. Just bid normally and remember that you have no idea what is happening at the other table!
10. Avoid trying to be a hero by bidding something outlandish you wouldn't bid at Pairs, in the hope that it produces a coup for your team. What it actually produces is a grumpy partner!
11. You can afford to be a bit bolder with hands where there might be a game for *both* sides because of unusual distribution and/or double fits. In those cases, it is often right to be a little more aggressive (say, by bidding 5D over 4H). On the other hand, if you are almost certain they **can't** make, don't risk going that extra step. (Be cautious, though, about **doubling** such opposition game-bids when weird distribution is obviously the key feature, rather than HCP).
12. If your opponents are in a game you are pretty sure is solid, you can afford to take more risks with your leads at Teams. If you present them with an overtrick by doing so, that is only 1 IMP, which is insignificant. Should the unusual lead cause them to go down, however, with your team's second pair *making* at the other table, an excellent swing will be the result. (For example, what about leading KD from K2 against 4H, in the hope that your partner has the Diamond Ace or Queen, and that (s)he can get the lead quickly and present you with a ruff? Obviously, you would never try this at Pairs!)
13. Don't panic or lose confidence because of a tricky hand. Remember, if it's difficult for you, it's difficult for your opposite number at the other table.