

Handicap Events

Not all bridge players are of equal experience and ability. In club duplicate sessions where Grand Masters are playing against Novices, the former will almost always do better than the latter. A handicap system is a way of levelling the playing field such that players of all standards can play against each other as if they were of equal ability. In some sports, such as golf, players regard their handicap as a measure of form and aim to improve on it, although this is uncommon in bridge. Some bridge clubs do, however, run handicap events on a regular basis; others run them occasionally, often with small prizes for the winners on handicap.

Setting handicaps

The most obvious way to decide a player's handicap is to take an average of his percentage scores over, say, the last year and set the handicap as the difference between that and 50%. E.g. a player who averaged 55% over the year would have a 5% handicap. If the two members of a pair had averaged 53% and 55% respectively, their joint average would be 54%, and the pair's handicap would be 4%. This is the amount that would be deducted from their score in a handicap event. If the joint average percentage were 46%, the pair would have 4% added to their score in a handicap event.

Scoring programs, the NGS and handicapping

The most commonly used computer scoring programs allow the calculation of handicaps for individuals and pairs. You should be able to set the program to apply a multiplier to the handicap if required, e.g. a multiplier of 1.5 would raise our first example pair's handicap to 6%. The program can be set to produce ranked results both with and without handicaps applied for any given club duplicate. Thus you can run a duplicate where there is a winning pair on handicapped scoring as well as a winning pair on normal scoring. For details, see the help files in your scoring program. The new National Grading Scheme (NGS) will also provide a way for clubs to apply handicaps to their events. For more details see the separate section on the [NGS](#) in this handbook.

Master Points

Please note that EBU Master Points can only be awarded to players based on actual scores, not on handicapped results, but clubs can choose to award prizes and trophies on whatever basis they wish.

For another way of encouraging less experienced players which does allow the award of EBU Master Points, please see the section on [Stratification](#).

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