

Tournament Jargon: how do I know what games to play?

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Tournament categories

Sectional

- Every ACBL Unit can have at least 1 per year. This means there are lots of them close to home.
- Silver points are awarded.
- Sectional Tournaments at Club - STAC

Regional

- Every District has 1 or more per year. District 20 has 4 - Vancouver, Seaside, Reno and Eugene or Medford (Bend will be added to and Reno dropped from the mix in the future).
- Red points and Gold points are awarded.

National

- 3 per year are held in different sections of the country.
- Red, Gold and Platinum points are awarded.
- High level national competitions
 - Some games are open to everyone – pay your money and you can play against all those people we read about in the bridge bulletin.
 - Some games are by invitation or qualification only.
 - The only source of Platinum points.
- Regional level competitions
 - Essentially a big regional tournament. Not many of the big names play in these games. Red and gold points are awarded.

Adjectives for events

Stratified

- Everyone plays against every one; but to determine winners, your score is only compared to others in your strat – A, B, or C.
- The point range for the strat depends on the tournament. Nationals and Regionals have higher limits for C and B than Sectionals do.

Strati-flighted

- A/X is for people with a high number of points (more than 3500) and/or those that want the challenge of playing against them. These people play against each other but not against B, C, and D players.
- B, C, and D strat are the same as described in “stratified” above.

Bracketed – Knockouts and Swiss Teams

- Brackets depend on the number of players that enter and the total points of the teams.
- Once you are assigned to a bracket, you play against teams in your bracket—teams with points comparable to your team’s points.
- If lots of teams enter, there will be lots of brackets and point limits will be narrow.

Events

Open pairs

- All tournaments hold one or more open-pair events.
- Stratified so everyone is competing for master points against pairs with similar points.
- Some are play through – you are expected to play in 2 sessions. Gold points are awarded for overall winners and section/session 1st and 2nd places.
- Some are single session—no gold points are awarded.

Swiss teams

- Stratified or Strati-flighted.
- A team of 4 (or 5 or 6) play 7 to 9 boards against another team.
- After you finish the boards, you compare how your team did on each board with how the other team. Imps are used to determine the winner.
- Win or lose, you get to continue to the end of the event. Masterpoints for each match won.
- Victory points most likely will be used. Victory points differentiate between a match you won big versus one that was a squeaker.
- If you place in a Regional/National A, X, or B strat, you get gold points.

Knockouts (bracketed)

- Held at National, Regional and some Sectional tournaments.
- A team game – instead of playing in all rounds of the event, you play until you are beaten, i.e., get knocked out.
- You generally play 24 boards against one team; but you may be in a round robin where you play 12 boards each against 2 teams.
- The brackets are designed so that an overall winner will be chosen after 3 or 4 rounds, played over 2 days.
- A variation is the Compact Knockouts – 12 board rounds are played, maybe 2 rounds a morning for 2 mornings, or 2 rounds in the afternoon and 2 at night.
- A popular event – many people have amassed their gold points (if you win 2 rounds) playing in Regional knockouts at Nationals and Regionals.

Board a Match (BAM)

- More likely at a National than Regional or Sectional tournament.
- It's a team game that moves like a pairs game. Sometime during the event, your N/S will play the same boards against an E/W pair that your E/W played against the other N/S pair—the magic of computers!
- You either win or lose a board. The team that wins the most boards is the winner (gold points at a National or Regional).

Barometer

- Somehow everyone plays the same board at the same time, so you know how you are doing as you go along. (Requires lots of preduplicated sets of boards.)
- More likely at a regional tournament.

Gold Rush

- A relatively new event.
- Limited to players with 750 or fewer points: Two strats with upper limits of 300 and 750.
- Since you aren't playing against the best players, you have a better chance of winning gold points. Gold points are awarded for placing overall and for section/session winners in the top strat.
- Only available at Nationals or Regionals.

Side games

- Single session events at Regionals and Nationals: Morning, afternoon and night.
- If you win your direction in a side game and play in another one, gold points are awarded.

299er or newcomer

- Limited to players with fewer than 300 points.
- If there are enough players, the game will be stratified.
- Available at most Sectionals and Regionals and all Nationals. No Gold points are available.

So, where should you play? It depends upon your goal:

- **Life master** – play in events where gold points are possible – everything except 299er.
- **To become a better bridge player** – start out in 299er games, but eventually move into side games, open pairs, team games etc.
- **To have fun playing bridge in a relatively stress free environment** – play in the 299er games as long as you can.