Bridge scoring – part 1

You wouldn't learn to play cribbage without learning how to score or play darts without knowing that the outer ring scored double or the bull was worth 50. Yet, I've become increasingly concerned that many beginners and novice players are not bothering to work out the score for the hand they have just played. They rely on the score tables on the back of the cards in the bidding box and have completely forgotten how to work out, for example, that 3NT is worth 400 or 600.

Don't get me wrong – I'm all in favour of bidding boxes. They are the single biggest boon to teaching bridge, but in this one aspect they have helped players become lazy.

Where knowledge of how to score is particularly useful is when you are in a competitive bidding situation. Should you let your opponents play in 2♠ or should you go on to 3♥. 2♠ making will score 110, whereas 3♥ going down by one trick will concede a lesser score, either 50 or 100. In normal pairs play you are aiming to do the best you can on a board, so going down is often the best result for your side – but if you do not know the scores involved it is very difficult to know what to do for the best. Should I let them play in 6♣ when non-vulnerable or should I sacrifice in 6♠, be doubled and go down four or five tricks. Non-vulnerable four down is 800 and five down is 1100 so four down is a good save. Vulnerable even four down is too many – 1100.

I have known teachers say to their students '*We won't worry about the scoring. There is too much to learn besides.'* I think this is misguided and we do not offer the students the best chance.

In an attempt to redress the balance here is the basic scoring table – no references here to doubled or redoubled scores, which I will cover next time.

Trick scores – scored by declarer's side when the contract is fulfilled		**Normal play**
For each trick above the first six in ♣ and ♦		20
For each trick above the first six in ♥ and ♠		30
For the first trick above six in NT For each additional trick in NT		40 30
A trick score of 100 points or more on one board is GAME; A trick score of less than 100 on one board is a PARTSCORE		
Bonus Scores	**Not vulnerable**	**Vulnerable**
For making a PARTSCORE	50	50
For making a GAME	300	500
Small slam bid and made	500	750
Grand slam bid and made	1000	1500
Overtricks		
Normal play	Trick value	Trick value
Undertricks		
For each undertrick	50	100

So why is 3NT vulnerable 600? It is 40 + 30 + 30 = 100 trick points; vulnerable game bonus 500. Total 600.
2♠ bid and made is 2 x 30 = 60; part score bonus of 50. Total = 110.

Spend a bit of time learning the scores for the more common contracts you play in. You will find it pays dividends in the long run.