

Knockout Strategy

The following represents a solid strategy to employ in Knockout matches and Swiss Team games. Note that it is NOT a good strategy for either Board-A-Match contests or for Matchpoint games.

1. **Bid games.** If there's a better than 25% chance that a game will make, bid it. The missed game bonus is the single biggest reason matches are lost. *Stretch for games.*
2. **Only bid slams** if there is at least a 70% chance of success. If you throw away a game bonus and come away not making the slam, it is likely to mean the match. On the other hand, if the slam is a high percentage, and seems to be easily biddable, you have to be there. *Do not stretch for slams.*
3. *Play all contracts to make.* If there is a low percentage play that will make the hand, but could cause it to go down an extra trick if the play fails, make the play. The extra undertrick is nothing compared to making the contract. But if you're doubled and in trouble, minimize the damage...
4. *Defend all contracts to set.* Don't worry (much) about giving declarer an overtrick. If there is a low percentage play that can set the hand, take that play. The overtrick is nothing compared to the value of the set.
5. *Do not sacrifice.* The only time you "sacrifice" is if there is some remote possibility that your contract might actually make. You cannot come back to the table with a minus 800 and find out the contract you sacrificed against didn't make.
6. *Do not double the opponents* unless you are guaranteed a two-trick set, and think you have more. Base your doubles on trumps and aces, not slow tricks; slow tricks have a nasty habit of disappearing at inopportune times.

7. *Do not push the opponents into a game, simply because you think you might set them. Be content to let them play a partial. You might lose some points, but it is unlikely to cost you a match.*