

The Unit 103 Tournament Guide

PLEASE NOTE: This Unit 103 Tournament Guide is not meant to replace, but rather to supplement to the ACBL's Sectional Tournament Planning Guide, which can be found online at this web address:

[Sectional Tournament Planning Guide.indd \(acbl.org\)](#)

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Unit 103 Tournament Guide

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of COVID to the duplicate bridge playing population has accelerated the decline in participation in this wonderful game of cards. Now, more than ever, bridge players need to be engaged at all levels of experience and at all levels of competition – *especially* at the tournament level. (Players that get familiar with tournament play at the local level are the ones who feed the larger open regionals.) While some local tournaments may find it a struggle to make money in the near term, the longer-term payoff will be worth it as more players come back to the tournament table (both at your future events and by feeding the larger regionals and even national events). Obviously, players will not play in tournaments if the tournaments are not held; and if (for any reason) local tournaments are not being held a few years in the future, why not have them now - while we can - for bridge players of all experience levels to enjoy?

OVERALL ORGANIZATION

When deciding how to have a tournament, or if a tournament is even feasible, there are many factors to consider. Some examples:

- Does your local group have the staff willing to put on a tournament?
- Is there enough interest locally (and enough of a player pool to draw from) to host an event?
- What are the budgetary constraints of holding a tournament?
- Who is responsible for the profit or loss of your tournament?
- What rules must you follow from the governing bodies of bridge (such as your Unit or District, in addition to the ACBL)?
- What game schedule should you run during your event?
- Understanding the process of sanctioning your event.

Here's a look at each of these items:

STAFFING

To have a tournament, you'll need volunteers. The person in charge of the tournament and who is responsible for all aspects of the event would be the Tournament Chair.

The Tournament Chair:

- Organizes the staffing of the event
- Oversees the securing of the location of the event

- Puts together the budget for the event
- Submits the budget to the sponsor for approval
- Is in constant communication with the Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator
- Arranges the proper number of tables, chairs, bidding boxes, etc. for the event
- Is with whom the buck stops

The Tournament Chair is responsible for pretty much everything regarding your tournament (organizing the tournament, the staff, submitting the budget, etc.). As such, everyone working on the tournament (Partnership Chair, Hospitality Chair, etc.) must be in constant contact with the Tournament Chair when situations arise – before, during and after the event. It's best to have a tournament chair that is local to the event (for example, a St Paul tournament should have a St Paul tournament chair, etc.).

NOTE: It's a good idea for the tournament to also have a Co-Chair; this isn't someone who shares duties with the Tournament Chair equally as much as is someone who can step into the role of Chair in the event that the Chair is unable to fulfill those responsibilities. (Think of the Co-Chair as a co-pilot, someone who can take over when needed.) If there's a death in the family, or the Chair gets sick the weekend of the tournament, etc., you'll be really happy to have someone able to step in and assume the responsibilities of the Tournament Chair.

The Partnership Chair:

- Takes phone calls or emails in advance of the event to arrange partnerships, and has a player on standby for each session of the tournament for a player who might need one for that session
- Has a pair available for team events in case a pair is needed
- Sets up the mechanism during the tournament that allows players to pair up with each other (or other pairs to make a team), such as a white board at the tournament or post-its or index cards, etc.

During the tournament, a white board (or bulletin board) with notes from players who are looking for partners can help match players to form partnerships¹. In addition to a name, it's beneficial to have some form of experience level attached to each player request (either masterpoints, or ACBL rank, for example).

For team events, the easiest way to ensure no one is turned away is for the Partnership Chair (and partner) to agree to step aside if another pair ends up looking to play and needs teammates. (This isn't the ideal situation for the Partnership Chair, of course, but by arranging partners and teams in advance, it's unlikely that the Chair will not get to play the day of the team event.) The Partnership Chair can also arrange to have another pair on standby, who won't mind whether they play or not – and can easily be plugged into a team if need be.

¹ See Exhibit "C" on page 21 for an example of a partnership request form.

There are a couple of other options for filling a table at your tournament. One is to poll the room prior to the start of play; everyone there is a bridge player, and everyone there knows another bridge player (or two) – someone who is at your event may know someone who would be interested in playing. Another option for filling a team game table would be to ask if there is a pair at your event who would be interested in being part of a six-person team. That way, they could play in the morning (or afternoon) and have the other session off – while the pair who is looking to play will be able to play at least one session in this case.

Nothing is more important to your event than making sure everyone who wants to play in each session has the opportunity to do so, and the goal is to strive to make sure they do.

The Hospitality Chair:

- Is responsible for the coffee, sodas, snacks and lunch service (if any)

Some Hospitality Chairs prefer to do it all themselves. Purchasing the sodas and snacks, making the baked goods for players, arranging the delivery of the lunch (or preparing the lunch the day of the service), clean up after each session, etc. It can be a bit overwhelming, so most Hospitality Chairs will organize a sub-committee of people to do the work. . .one person to be in charge of baked goods, one person in charge of daily clean-up, one person in charge of getting the lunch, etc. The Hospitality Chair should receive a budget figure from the Tournament Chair so they know how much money is available to spend.

The Promotion Chair:

- Is responsible for promoting the tournament (most, if not all of this, is done well in advance of your event)

There are multiple ways of promoting your tournament², and you should employ every possible option to do so – you can't overpromote a bridge event! This includes:

- Flyers (printed with the tournament details and schedule, and snail-mailed to other clubs in the area) – these flyers are issued usually several months in advance of the event
- E-mails (blasts through the ACBL or a third-party email service like MailChimp or Pianola that go to ACBL players with email addresses on file) – email blasts are most effective six, four, and two weeks in advance of the event
- Direct mail marketing (postcards, for example, which can go to active ACBL players within 90 miles of your event) – think of them as individual flyers for your tournament that can get posted to a player's fridge with a magnet. . .a reminder that the tournament is coming up – best sent out four weeks prior to the event

² Unit 103 has a Publicity Chair on the 103 Board of Directors – have your Promotion Chair check with the Unit 103 Publicity Chair for ideas and costs, etc.

- Personal, on-site visits – if feasible, travelling to different clubs or board meetings to personally invite players to your tournament is very well received.

The Field Event Safety Coordinator:

- Is responsible for checking vaccination cards (and booster updates, if part of your event's COVID protocol) to make sure everyone in the playing area is properly vaccinated.
- Runs (or assigns to run) the Health and Safety Desk.

Prior to players entering the playing area (or building, even, if warm enough outside!), the Field Event Safety Coordinator should have a table set up along with the most current Unit 103 Vaccination List. As players approach the tournament, their vaccination cards and IDs should be checked to ensure everyone playing at the tournament is doing so as safely as possible. Usually, this includes either a hand stamp or a wrist band or some other method of making sure nobody is playing who shouldn't be. Some tournaments employ what they refer to as the "wrist shake" before every game, where players ready to go all raise their wrists with the wrist band visible – so all can see that everyone has been checked. But it could be as simple as walking around the room prior to the boards coming out to look at everyone's wrist.

Note that presently, the ACBL *requires* a Field Event Safety Coordinator for your tournament.

Of course there will be additional volunteers needed – for set up and take down of the tables and bidding boxes, clean up after each session, etc. The more people that are involved in the production of the event, the better.

THE BUDGET

Bridge tournaments cost money, and while it may be challenging in the current bridge environment to make a buck putting on one of these things, they don't have to lose a lot of money if your planning is careful (and promotion successful). Profit is not the primary consideration with a local tournament; any loss is considered an investment in our local bridge playing population.

Budgetary considerations include:

- Rent for the playing space; depending on whether it's a local church or VFW club, or something more complicated that requires a contract, you'll need to know how much it will cost to have your tournament at the location you want.
- Director costs; just like getting your car repaired, one of the biggest expenses with a bridge tournament can be the labor charge. ACBL directors get roughly \$700 per day (with hotel, per diems, etc.). There may be an option to mitigate some of this cost (which follows on page 6).
- Promotional charges; things like flyers, postcards, magazine advertisements, 3rd party e-mail services, etc. Proper promotion will really help your turnout, but "you've got to spend money to make money" as they say on Madison Avenue.

- Hospitality charges; if you're serving snacks or a lunch service, you'll need to budget for that. Are sodas and coffee free? Bridge players go through a lot of coffee – and snacks, too. Some more formal playing area contracts will require a catering minimum – but is it worth it for what you get?
- Set-up costs for the tournament; how much are you being charged for bidding boxes (if rented)? Hand record printouts? Check with your Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator for some of the smaller detailed charges (for example, the ACBL charges you just to create the hand record file for each session of the tournament!).

Generally, when it comes to the bottom line, the rule of thumb when putting on a tournament is that you don't want to lose a lot of money, but you also don't want to make a lot of money. It's ok to operate a little in the red (the investment in tournament play is worth it) – but if you are making too much money, then you should be spending more on the players.

One option some tournaments have chosen to try and save some money on their labor costs is to have a "downgraded" Open Sectional. This is an Open Sectional that is not staffed with an ACBL director. Rather than have a Tournament Director from the ACBL, local directors direct the games. Check with your Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator to see if this option is available, and if so, how you could save some money on your event^{3 4}. The "downgraded" in a downgraded Open Sectional refers to the masterpoint awards. First, they are 65.6% of the normal Open Sectional masterpoint awards, so the masterpoint payout is not as high as an ACBL-staffed event. Second, the masterpoints at all Sectional tournaments used to be 100% silver – however if you choose to forego an ACBL director, your MPs will be awarded at 80% silver and 20% black. (Naturally, there are some downsides to not having an ACBL director run your tournament!) Your Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator can help you make a decision that works best for your event.

With a limited masterpoint sectional (like an I/N Sectional), you can use local directors without downgrading (or reducing) the normal masterpoint awards. Check with your Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator if this appeals to you (and/or your budget).

For a budget example, look to page 21 of this packet. You'll also find some of the more major costs that you'll incur from the ACBL through their sanction fees and payments on page 22.

Once you have your budget put together, your Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator will send you a spreadsheet to enter the various expected costs. If there are any additional expenses (or tweaks that need to be made) the UTC can assist with this – and once the budget is set, it gets turned back into the UTC who keeps track of all the Unit 103 tournaments.

³ Page 19 lists the various costs for ACBL staffing of your Unit 103 tournament.

⁴ If you require an out-of-town DIC, using a local director will save not just the per diems, but travel costs and hotel room costs associated with housing a DIC from out of town. This can be a significant savings to your budget.

WHO'S INVITED TO YOUR TOURNAMENT? (AND STRATS!)

Generally, there are two types of tournaments regarding who can play in them – Open and Limited masterpoint tournaments. The type that you will run determines who is allowed to play in it.

The limited masterpoint tournament, or I/N tournament, has a limit to how many masterpoints the players can each have. In addition, an I/N (or “Intermediate/Newcomer”) tournament excludes Life Masters from play. Part of putting together your tournament will be determining the “strats” or “stratification” of the event⁵ – so that less experienced players will have masterpoint awards in their own category, even if they are lumped together with more experienced players in the same game. There are typically three strats in a tournament – so with a limited masterpoint tournament, an example of the stratification for a 749er Non-Life Master tournament might be:

A (300-749), B (100-300), C (0-100)

If you have a 499er Non-Life Master tournament, then your strats might be:

A (300-499), B (150-300), C (0-150)

Sometimes your tournament director will need to adjust the strats to try and have the proper number of pairs in each strat. One reason they may adjust the strats is because there must be five pairs in a strat for those players to be eligible for overall masterpoint awards. If you have a game with only four “C” pairs, the TD may move the strat to ensure there are five “C” pairs so that all five of them will be eligible for the bigger MP awards.

The open tournament has no limit to how many masterpoints a player can have – it’s “open” to everyone. There can be a concurrent section during an open tournament session of limited masterpoint players, so for example with an open tournament you can have both an Open section and a NLM section playing the same boards. This way the NLMs are not playing in the shark-infested waters, and the Open players get credit for the limited masterpoint tables in their overall awards (as if they were all playing in one big game). The strats you determine for an Open sectional will vary, but could be:

A (3000-unlimited); B (1000-3000); C (0-1000)

NOTE: If you have a concurrent limited masterpoint game going on at the same time as your open game, you should make sure the upper limit of the “C” strat in the open is at least 2x the top masterpoint player allowed in your limited game.

⁵ Stratification simply means that within the masterpoint range of all players, they are sub-divided into two (or three) additional groups according to their masterpoint holdings. This allows for each group of similarly experienced players within the overall game to play and be compared to each other for their own group’s masterpoint awards.

For example, if you have an Open game and a 499er game going at the same time, your strats for each game might be:

A (3000-unlimited); B (1000-3000); C (0-1000) and in the 499er game
D (300-499); E (100-300); F (0-100)

If your Open "C" strat was 0-500, and you have a limited masterpoint game going on at the same time with a top limit of 500 masterpoints, you won't have enough "C" players in the Open. So your Open "C" strat should be at least 2x the top limit of 500 masterpoints in your lower game – or at least 1000. Your Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator can help advise with this.

THE TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

You'll need to determine what your tournament schedule will be. . .what days of the week will you run it? Most events that are held include tournament sessions during a weekend (like Thursday/Friday/Saturday or Friday/Saturday/Sunday). Your sectional can be a 1-day event, or a 4-day event, but most are 2- or 3-days long.

And what dayparts will you operate? Some events have three sessions a day, usually 9am, then 1pm and 7pm, for example. . .but most tournaments nowadays have two sessions. However you schedule your sessions, make sure that there is plenty of time in-between for both the players and the Tournament Directors to have a decent lunch break. With bridge games running around three and a half hours, you won't want to schedule one session at 10am and another at 1:30pm. Maybe not even at 10am and 2pm. However – it's not feasible to have too long of a break between sessions, either. If you have one session at 10am and another at 6pm, you're not likely to have players stick around for both sessions.

The most popular times for tournament sessions are currently 9:30am and 2pm, or 10am and 2:30pm, but some tournaments prefer to have an evening session for those that work during the day. Also, some players enjoy playing three times a day – especially when having to travel to the event. Most tournament schedules will require the approval of the Unit 103 Board, so it's best to communicate with the Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator who can advise on what's worked in the past (and what hasn't worked at all!).

WHAT TYPES OF GAMES CAN YOU RUN?

You can hold pretty much any type of game at a Sectional that you want to run. As you are considering the schedule for your tournament, keep in mind:

- Some games are more complicated than others to run
- Some games are more difficult for players to understand how they work
- Some games pay more masterpoints per table than others
- Some games are more popular with players than others (so attendance +++)
- Remember that whatever game schedule you want to run, it should be run by the Unit Board for approval, especially if the Unit is the sponsor

Although you *can* run any type of game at a Sectional, there are only a few types of games that *are* run at most Sectionals – and that’s probably for a good reason. (Think of it as a lot of trial and error that has been done over the years from which you can benefit. Still – there’s nothing wrong with offering something new to your players.)

Pairs games

The easiest game to operate and for players to understand is a **pairs game**. In an Open Sectional, pairs games have an unlimited masterpoint restriction. . .although you can run a concurrent pairs game with a limited masterpoint restriction at the same time. This is commonly done to allow 749ers (or 499ers, or 99ers, whatever your schedule allows) to play in their own pairs game. . .while the open pairs group gets “credit” for all the tables in the lower masterpoint restricted events and thus huge masterpoint awards.

Most common pairs games at the sectional level:

- Single session pairs
- Two-session pairs
- Three-session pairs (best two out of three session scores, also known as “Choice Pairs”)
- Pairs/teams games (also known as Board-A-Match or “BAM”)
- Fast pairs

The easiest pairs game to operate and for players to understand is the single-session pairs game, which is a one-session stand-alone game.

If you have two sessions in one day of tournament bridge, you can run two single-session pairs games – this allows players to have a different partner in the morning and afternoon.

You can also run a two-session pairs game; this requires players to have the same partner for both the morning and afternoon, but the overall masterpoint awards are much higher for a two-session championship event. Two-session pairs games are almost always run during consecutive sessions on the same day. . .but you *could* have a two-session pairs game over two days (session one on Friday morning with session two on Saturday morning, for example). This is a bit more complicated and also requires the players to commit to two days of play.

One modification of the two-session pairs game is that you can advertise a two-session pairs game with “single-session entries allowed.” This allows for both the maximum number of awarded masterpoints – but also if a pair only wants to play in one session, they can (they would not be eligible for the overalls, but that probably would be of no concern to them).

You can also run a three-session pairs game! This would be done all in one day (9am, 1pm, 7pm, for example) and would not require players to play in all three. Rather, it would require them to play in two sessions with the option to play in a third – and then their score would be based on the two sessions with the best score for them. (This is frequently called “**Choice Pairs**” since it

allows a pair to “choose” their two best results out of three.) This allows for some flexibility with schedules (a pair can play in the morning and then either afternoon or evening after dinner, or play in both the afternoon and dinner sessions) – and also allows for the “best 2 out of 3” if a partnership has a great session (and a not-so-great one). . .the third session might get the bad result tossed out of their overall score.

These games can be run with any masterpoint restrictions (Open, NLM, I/N, etc.).

Another type of pairs game is the **fast pairs** event; this is a one- or two-session pairs game event where the players get five minutes per board rather than the standard seven minutes. The 24-board game gets over in about 2½ hours. You could run a fast pairs game at any time, but generally, they are most often scheduled on the last day of a tournament when the Swiss teams are played – it allows for people who don’t like teams to also play that day (and get out the door in a hurry!!).

Team games

There are several types of team games; the most common is the **Swiss Teams**. Generally, Swiss Teams play a random draw for each match. The problem that some players have with Swiss Teams (especially the less experienced teams) is that the computer matches the two best-faring teams for each round; so if you have a “C” team that dominated a “C” team in round 1, they are going to play an “A” team that dominated an “A” team in round 2. It can be hard on the lessor experienced team. Swiss teams can be single-session events (four rounds of six boards, and that’s it!) or they can be two-session events (either morning and afternoon, or morning of day 1 and morning of day 2, etc.).

There are two options to fix having inexperienced players meet pros in teams play. You can ask the director-in-charge to do manual pairings for the Swiss Teams. That means they will have all the “C” teams play the other “C” teams until there are no more available – and *then* they will start playing more experienced teams. It’s more work for the DIC but better for the players. This option would be for a team game of 13 or fewer teams in the contest. The other option is to run **Bracketed Swiss Teams**, where the director groups teams (by masterpoints) into brackets, where the teams *only play those teams in their bracket*. This is the option to use for 14 or more teams (there must be at least 7 teams in each bracket of a bracketed swiss event). Bracketed Swiss teams must be two-session events, so again, keep an eye on your schedule.

Although waning in popularity and rarely held at the sectional level, you could play **Knockouts**. This is where teams play each other over 24-board matches (regular KOs) or 12-board matches (compact KO) rather than the standard Swiss teams 6-board matches. When a Swiss team loses in the KO, they are “knocked out” and go back to playing in another game (pairs, etc.).

Knockout events require 3- or 4-sessions, so they usually are over two days of sectional play. The 4-session KOs are always played on consecutive days of the tournament, whereas the 3-session KO could be played in one day (9am, 1pm, and 7pm, if your schedule has three sessions in one

day). **Compact KO** events require only 2 sessions, so they can be played in the same day (morning and afternoon, or morning and evening, etc.).

A popular game for players now is the hybrid **Pairs/Teams game**. This is a pairs event run with full tables (no ½ tables, thus no sitouts) which allows the event to be scored twice – once as the pairs event and once as a team event. The teams of four players (either randomly assigned by the DIC⁶ or who show up as their own team, depending on the sponsor’s rules) start the game at the same table. Each pair (N/S or E/W) plays a pairs game that is also scored separately as a type of team game. While it’s more confusing for players, because it is scored both as pairs and teams, it provides players two opportunities to earn masterpoints. NOTE that players do not earn masterpoints for *both* the pairs scoring and teams scoring – they only get the highest award available to them. For this event, you must have full tables (no ½ tables, no sitouts). Specifically:

A pairs/team game is a pair event with run with full tables which allows the event to be scored additionally as a team event. The pairs starting at North/South and East/West are considered a team for a separate section that the director sets up for scoring purposes. The players play as regular pairs, and the first set of results are based on their scores against other pairs playing in their direction. At the same time, your DIC will get results from team matchups based on Board-a-Match scoring, where the result of each board is either a win, a loss, or a tie; this creates a second set of results used for the masterpoint awards. The reason this is popular with players is because there are two chances to win masterpoints, and it requires no additional entry fee or strategy considerations on the part of the players. (Players can play their regular game with their partners!) Those pairs that score well in the pair event will be awarded accordingly. Should their “teammates” also score well, it may turn out that the team score will give them a higher masterpoint award. Again, please note that each playing pair will receive the higher award of the two results, but not both. This allows the masterpoints to be spread throughout the field and means that even if a pair has only moderate results in the pairs contest, they can still score well if their teammates turn in a good round.

Unit 103 endorses the principles behind the pair/team format but wishes to address two issues that have been raised throughout the years of its use.

The first issue to address is the issue of *fairness*. Unit 103’s policy is that when setting up the “teams” at the start of a session, the director, to the best of their ability, will match ‘A’ pairs with ‘C’ pairs and ‘B’ pairs with ‘B’ pairs. If an ‘A’ pair are going to do well in pairs, they will receive the appropriate reward in the scoring. Whatever the ‘C’ pair does in pairs play will not diminish the pair score of their ‘A’ teammates. If you choose to run this type of game, you may need to remind the DIC that Unit 103’s policy to pair ‘A’ with ‘C’ in pair/team games. Combining ‘B’ pairs as teams will help to equalize the team field. The

⁶ Unit 103’s policy on Pair/Team games is to have “A” strat pairs and “C” strat pairs make up teams whenever possible, and “B” strat pairs combined with other “B” strat pairs – this policy having been adopted January 2023.

addition of the team scoring is a bonus awarded by the game format. Any masterpoints won as a team will be through the combination of each pair's contribution.

As an additional issue of fairness, if you choose to run an open section as a pairs/team game and also have a non-life master section run at the same time, you should run both sections as pairs/team. It's important to include lower ranked players with the opportunity to earn extra points through the pair/team format and helps introduce NLM's to this type of game.

The second issue to address with regards to the pair/team format is *education*. Opportunities to learn about team play are frequently absent for newer players. Team scoring (IMPs in particular) is the same game of bridge – but the strategy is often completely different than matchpoint play (less sacrificing, less working for overtricks, etc.). Declining opportunities to educate 'C' teams can lead to fewer tournament entries for 'C' teams and declining entries of 'C' teams in the Grand National Team trials. The pair/team format is a perfect opportunity to introduce newer players into the team experience. To utilize this opportunity to the fullest, Unit 103 strongly encourages the following:

Before the start of a pairs/team session, someone on your tournament committee (or any experienced player) should provide an explanation about the pair/team format and how the team scoring works. You may choose to provide a written explanation to hand out to the newer players, but a short verbal presentation should also take place.

After the session is complete, the players who began the event at the same table should meet at their home table to compare scores. Stronger players can help out advancing players by answering any questions that may come up (when scoring or questions which may have come up during the bidding or play) or offer advice about any tricky deals they experienced. (This does not need to be a lengthy discussion, but as a Tournament Chair you should insist that both parties take the time to compare scores. The team score is a bonus, and the players involved should be willing to commit to a few minutes of their time to educate and encourage our newer players towards team play.

This format requires extra work from your director to set up the two sections for scoring purposes. It also requires full tables in order to function properly, so your tournament partnership chair needs to have people on standby as possible fill-ins for all sections involved. When all conditions are met, you should see satisfied players at the end of each session, and that is one of the marks of a successful tournament event.

There's a shortened version of the team knockout game known as **ZIP knockouts**. This is a team game that is played with shortened minutes per board – and is only one session in length. Things really "zip" along with this type of KO event. They are not common at sectionals, but your DIC will know more about them if you're interested.

Adding sessions not on the schedule

Many sectionals currently operate a morning and afternoon game each day with a lunch break in between. Some operate an evening session, although with a sectional, just as with getting your muffler replaced, labor is the biggest expense. So if you have a third game session in a day, be sure to have the tables to cover the ACBL's directing costs.

Still, sometimes people travel and stay overnight in hotels to play in your tournament – and if you find that on day 1, there are a lot of out-of-towners, check with your DIC about adding an evening session if you don't have one on your schedule. If there is enough interest, you can add a "out-of-towner special" that starts that evening after dinner (6:30pm or 7pm). Your DIC won't be doing anything else, and probably will be happy to have the extra pay. Your players may be happy to have another chance to play. This may not always work out – check with your DIC – but more often than not, that option is there for you.

"40% more masterpoints!"

Every ACBL game from the club level to the National Tournament stage has a "masterpoint rating." This tells you how many masterpoints will be awarded based on the number of tables. For example, a 12-table club game that is for NLMs will have a top award of 0.96 masterpoints. The same 12-table game in a single session open sectional event has a top award of 4.03 masterpoints.

When you have an Open Sectional of 3 or more days in length, the ACBL allows you to have one day's worth of games with a **regional rating** of masterpoints – that's 40% more masterpoints for every game in those sessions than normal open sectionals provide. It's a great promotional tool for your event (players like more masterpoints!) plus there's a bonus, more on that shortly.

The regionally-rated sessions of your tournament can both be in the same day, or the two sessions that are regionally-rated can be spread out over two days (both morning sessions, for example). To get the absolute MAXIMUM masterpoint awards for the regionally-rated sessions you should run a 2-session event (either a 2-session Open Pairs, or 2-session Swiss Teams, etc.).

The mechanism which allows you to pay the extra masterpoints (and have two sessions be regionally-rated) is by making every game in these sessions as **charity games**. You may have run charity games at your local club, and it's very similar during a sectional tournament. There's an extra charge to run a charity game (\$1/player or \$4/table) which is either passed on to the players with an extra \$1 per player that session – or the extra charge can be absorbed by the sponsor. (Make sure to include this in your budget.) Most commonly, an ACBL charity (Education Fund, Junior Fund, International Fund, etc.) will be the beneficiary of the extra funds – but depending on the month of your tournament, it's possible your local area charity can get the donation.⁷

⁷ If you are allowed to designate a local charity for your tournament's charity games, you will be responsible for making the donation (not the DIC). Be sure to keep good records of this donation, as Unit 103 and/or the ACBL may audit your tournament to make sure the donation was made.

There is a formula for determining the charitable contribution amount, and you can get more about that from your DIC. . .but generally it amounts to the previously mentioned \$4/table. Remember that if you choose to make your regionally-rated day part of a two-session event (such as the "Sunday Swiss") then you'll be charged the extra \$4/table for each of the two sessions.

Shoveling masterpoints out the door

If you are looking to provide the most masterpoints available to your players, here are the types of games in descending order of overall masterpoint awards. Keep in mind that when you run both an open event and a limited masterpoint event (499ers, for example) in the same session that the open event awards masterpoints based on all of the tables in the room. They get "credit" for the 499er tables, so their masterpoint awards are that much higher.

- Knockout team games (3 or 4 sessions)
- Bracketed Swiss Teams (2 sessions)
- Open Pairs (2 sessions)
- Swiss Teams (2 sessions)
- Pairs/Teams game (1 session)
- Open Pairs (1 session)

THE TOURNAMENT SPONSOR

Almost always, a tournament is sponsored by at the Unit level. This means that the Unit is responsible for the profit or loss of the event. One of the stated purposes for an ACBL Unit is to have and hold tournaments for players, so more often than not, Unit 103 will be the "sponsor."

When the Unit is sponsoring your event, the Unit will have to approve what you plan to do for your tournament. For example, they may want you to have your event on certain days of the week – or help you with the type of games that you are going to schedule (so they don't lose a ton of money). Remember to run everything by your Unit Tournament Coordinator, who will forward everything to the Unit 103 Board, before you make any commitments or sign any contracts. Because the ACBL is the body that sanctions your event (which means it's allowed to happen and award masterpoints), the ACBL must approve of your event – and at every level. That will start with the Unit, whether they are the sponsor of your tournament or not.

Occasionally, a tournament organizer may wish to have their local club be the sponsor for their tournament. This is rare, however it removes some of the Unit's oversight and restrictions as to what games can be held, etc. The Unit 103 Board would have to agree to allow a local club to sponsor a tournament, but remember that if you do sponsor it locally and there is a loss, it must be covered locally (and not by the Unit). The advantage to running a tournament with a local sponsor is that if you are sponsoring your tournament locally, and you make a profit, it's yours to invest in your club (and players). Remember, though, you don't want to make TOO much money. *The financial goal of having a Unit 103 tournament is always to break even (or as close to it as possible).*

UNIT INVOLVEMENT IS CRITICAL

The Tournament Chair should be in communication with the Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator at every step of the way, who will advise and approve (or submit to the Unit 103 Board for approval) everything that requires the Unit Board's blessing. Think of the Unit Tournament Coordinator as the liaison between your event and the ACBL (because that's really what they are). In addition to helping out with any questions you may have, the Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator will make sure the Unit 103 Board is aware of everything you plan to do for your tournament.

GETTING ON THE CALENDAR

Once you've decided to have an event, you'll need to get on the D14 calendar to have the ACBL sanction your tournament. This process involves the following (and in this order):

- Tentative tournament approval by the Unit 103 Board
- Coordination for available dates with the Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator
- Sanction request filed through the TourneyTrax application on the ACBL's website
- Approval at the Unit 103 level by the Unit Tournament Coordinator
- Approval at the District 14 level by the District Tournament Coordinator
- Approval by the ACBL and sanction issued (along with the sanction number)

Once your tournament has been sanctioned, then you can submit to the ACBL the schedule which will be posted on their website. They'll look it over, and once they approve of it, they will issue an email to the Tournament Chair which states that everything has been approved – and that you can now start printing flyers and postcards and advertising the event. The ACBL is not known for their immediacy with things like this, so some patience may be required – but it's in their best interest to have your tournament sanctioned as soon as possible (and successfully run!), so it will surely happen.

The tournament calendar can be quite crowded, and there are many restrictions to when tournaments can be held (for example, no sectionals during a week when there's a D14 Regional going on – even if that regional tournament is 500 miles away, or no sectionals during a D14 STAC week). Because the tournament calendar gets so crowded, it's important to get on the calendar well in advance – preferably *years* in advance if possible. The general rule of thumb is to request a sanction at least 1 year in advance, and sometimes 2-3 years in advance if possible. The sooner the better with such a crowded field, and if you elect to cancel your tournament, please let your U103 Tournament Coordinator know and remove it from the ACBL's calendar and website immediately to open up those dates for others.

TOURNAMENT COVID PROTOCOLS

COVID has really upended the bridge world, and unfortunately COVID protocols are no longer so easy to predict. Vaccinated bridge players are getting infected anyway, the criteria for masking requirements can change on a daily basis (even once your tournament starts!), and so on - so it

can be very confusing. Your Unit Tournament Coordinator will be able to help with the latest ACBL COVID protocols as you move forward with your planning.

Remember, at this time your tournament *must* have a Field Event Safety Coordinator – more on that is listed under “Staffing” on pages 4-5. You may choose to have everyone at your tournament provide a valid e-mail address (or some other contact information) just in case they need to be notified of any medical concerns after the tournament. (Hopefully you will not have to let your players know there was a COVID-positive player playing at your event, but it’s happened many, many times in the past few years – and attending players appreciate the notification.)

DURING THE TOURNAMENT

The Tournament Chair should check with the Director-In-Charge (or “DIC”) as to how everything gets set up – do they need help taking money, how will they want the various sections of tables arranged, anything the DIC needs will be communicated to the Tournament Chair. In addition, the Tournament Chair needs to have clear and specific communication with the DIC during the event as to any specific needs or concerns the Tournament Chair may have.⁸

There may be last minute items that have been forgotten – pencil sharpeners, single dollar bills for entry change, Swiss Team scorecards, etc., and the Tournament Chair should be ready to answer to any call to action during the tournament. This may include setting up an appeals committee for review of any Director’s rulings; if such a committee is required, check with the DIC to ensure the proper group of people are involved.⁹

Most tournaments (especially those run by ACBL staff) are moving to a cashless entry system, where a credit card is used to pay for the entry fees. That money is then sent to the ACBL, who will in turn deposit that money (minus their fees) into a bank account that is specified by the Tournament Chair for the tournament sponsor. You may still have players who wish to pay cash for their entry fees – and that’s up to you and your staff – but keep good records of everything.

SCORING YOUR GAMES

Your DIC will score your games using ACBLscore, whether you use BridgePads, BridgeMates, or travellers (!). Following the tournament, they’ll report the results (see next section). If you are running a tournament using a local director, you’ll need to score the game on ACBLscore but in a different fashion. As of November 2022, the ACBL requests that locally-directed sectionals score their games as single session STAC games on ACBLscore. Set them up just like a regular STAC game, but when it asks if this a multi-site game, be sure to say NO.

⁸ For example, if you’re running a session with both an Open and a limited masterpoint section, if you’re running the Open section in the Pairs/Teams format, the I/N section might also be run in the Pairs/Teams format.

⁹ For example, players that were not directly involved with the original ruling that led to the need for the committee – also, players on the committee should be of a similar skill or experience level as those players involved with the original concern that led to the need for the committee.

REPORTING YOUR RESULTS

Following your tournament, you'll need to have your results posted by the ACBL – only when this happens will your players get the masterpoints that they have earned. If your Director-In-Charge is of the ACBL staff, then they will know how to report this (and will do so immediately after each session of your event). If your D-I-C is local, then you will have to report the results to the ACBL via email.¹⁰ After the tournament is finished, email your gamefiles from ACBLscore to keith.wells@acbl.score and also tournaments@acbl.org. The gamefiles on your computer will have the date, followed by an extension of .ACM or .ACA or .ACE. That process is a bit more complicated to report, and the ACBL's processing of your gamefile can take considerably longer. Your Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator can assist with what this, if that is the route you go for your tournament.

PAYING THE TOURNAMENT BILLS

Throughout the course of putting an ACBL tournament together, you should keep all your receipts. Once the tournament is over, and there is either cash (from entries) or a credit (to the assigned bank account) – or both - you need to reimburse expenses and pay bills immediately. All bills should be paid no later than a couple of weeks after your event, and then submit the final profit and loss statement to your Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator.

If all of your expenses are to be paid from the Unit's checking account, then gather all your receipts and provide them to the Unit Treasurer who will issue checks to the outstanding creditors. Some Unit Treasurers prefer to have expenses and reimbursements paid with cash as much as possible (to write fewer checks, among other things) – so check with your Unit Treasurer as to what's the best way to handle expenses and reimbursements.

If your tournament is directed by an ACBL Tournament Director, then you will be provided with a detailed accounting of the incoming entry fees, ACBL fees, etc., along with a balance sheet. This will be helpful in putting together your final profit and loss statement, which you should complete and turn in to the Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator. Remember that whether you make money or not is not the most important thing about having a tournament. Players that have a good time and will want to return make for a good investment in the future of bridge. . .and occasionally that will cost a few dollars.

THE TOURNAMENT POST-MORTEM

The Tournament Chair should meet with the local staff immediately after the tournament is held. What went right? What went wrong? What could be done better? This constructive communication will allow for better tournament planning in the future.

¹⁰ Most clubs have someone well versed in ACBLscore, and if you choose to use local directors for your tournament, you'll definitely want someone to score the games with complete knowledge of ACBLscore. That will be critical in terms of reporting the results.

Once this meeting is held, the Tournament Chair should have a similar discussion with the Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator. This discussion is usually no more than one to two weeks after the tournament is held, while everything is still fresh. The Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator will share your information with the Unit 103 Board, so that every future tournament chair will benefit from your event (and not just your players at the big event!).

Any questions – ask any Unit 103 Board member. They're here to help.

As time goes on, it gets harder to find volunteers willing to donate their time and efforts to keep bridge going – and putting on a bridge tournament can seem at times like it is a thankless job. But your efforts (and those of your staff) are greatly appreciated by everyone involved in the bridge playing community – and you'll find helping to put on a Unit 103 tournament can be *very* rewarding.

EXHIBIT "A" – TOURNAMENT CHECKLIST EXAMPLE

Here's a comprehensive example of a checklist from a Unit 103 Tournament; you'll find a checklist such as this helpful in all aspects of planning your tournament.

2022 Sectional Checklist

- A. Determine types of games, dates, and place** – *done for 2022*
 - a. For 2023, learn about advantages/disadvantages of Charity game for Regionally-rated game. Learn the advantages/disadvantages of different types of games for different levels of players.
 - b. Dates/Place arranged at Sartell for 2023 – **CN - done**
 - c. For 2023: Is there any reason to change out our games offered?

- B. Get Sanction Number** no later than December of prior year to insure inclusion in Bridge Bulletin, starting in March
 - a. Go through Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator (Matt B)/ Larry B (Dist 14)/ ACBL Tournaments (Crystall M) -- in that order – *done for 2022 (CN)*
 - b. *Need to do now*: Replenish sanction numbers for next three years; then keep a rolling three-year sanction numbers up to date – **CN/Kory** – in process

- C. Publicity**
 - a. Prepare Flyers
 - i. Send into ACBL for posting – *done (CN)*
 - ii. Send to bridge clubs around state – **CN** given to Kim H, Tony, Warren, Rajiv, Rochester, Chip Blue
 - iii. Bring flyers to Unit 103 Awards luncheon and Gopher – *CN - done*
 - b. Use Electronic means
 - i. Put in Unit 103 Newsletter – **CN**
 - ii. Put on Minnesota Bridge - **CN**

- D. Space rental arrangements and payment**
 - a. 2022: Sartell Community Center reserved. – *done (CN)*
 - i. Payment to be made **by May 23rd** – Nancy S **to do**

- E. Tournament Budget Communication** w/ Unit 103
 - a. Send Projected budget to Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator – *done (CN)*
 - b. Send Post-tournament Actual to Unit 103 Tournament Coordinator – CN/Kory will do

- F. Supplies Checklist**
 - a. Buy wristbands to indicate Vax status – *done (CN)*
 - b. Entry forms & hand records – **Kim** will bring entries and hand records (2022)
 - c. Pencils, bidding boxes, convention cards, bridge-mates – **Kory to bring**
 - d. Boards and cards to shuffle for team games – **Kory to bring**
 - e. Money for change – Bring \$100 in \$1s; \$100 in \$5s. - **Nancy to bring**
 - f. Credit card machine – **Kim to bring**

G. Hotel room for Director

- a. Make reservation – **done** Connie
- b. Pay week of June 20th – Connie **to do**

H. Set Up

- a. Tables and Chairs – We should bring 8+ card tables - **Scott to do**
- b. Set up Thursday morning – Community Center staff - **arranged**
- c. Making the Boards for Pair/Team games – **Kim** will do.

I. Food/ Beverages

- a. Find Caterer for Saturday lunch – Coordinate with Unit 103 President
 - i. Get price quotes from several – **done** (CN)
 - ii. Decide/book – **pending** – Kory/ CN
 - iii. Finalize #s w/caterer week before tournament – CN will do
- b. Make list/map of nearby restaurants: **Nancy S- done; CN to copy – done**
- c. Treats –
 - i. **Sue K** to get volunteers to bring goodies each day.
 - ii. **Roger K** to get volunteers for each day of Tournament to keep coffee and water filled/ food table looking nice
- d. Small Plates for snacks – **done** (CN)
- e. Coffee pots – **Center - arranged**
- f. Coffee/coffee cups – **We bring. – CN To do.** Center will start the coffee ea. day.
- g. Dry creamers/ sugar packets/ stir sticks – **Do we need?**
- h. Napkins – **Community Center - Arranged**
- i. Large water dispenser – **Kory to bring**
- j. Ice – **Community staff** will help us access. – **done**

J. Health and Safety Desk – New this year.

- a. Get metro vaccination status list– **Matt B provided Gopher list**
- b. Name “Event Safety Coordinator” – **Sue K**
- c. Need 1-2 volunteers to staff b/4 sessions – check vax status; secure wrist bands
 - i. Thursday **Sue K**
 - ii. Friday **Sue K**
 - iii. Saturday **Sue K**

K. Partnerships. **Connie and Kory**

- a. **Connie** is Partnership Chair. Maintain list of all local club members already playing & those willing to be partners
- b. **Arrange for two people** to stand by for each session.

L. Game registration and Fee payment – **Kim H to do. Arranged**

M. Clean-Up – Community Center staff w/ our help – **Arranged**

N. Post Tournament Budget and Feedback to Unit 103 Coordinator – **Connie** to do

EXHIBIT "B" – BUDGET EXAMPLE

Here is a sample of a budget (along with the actual costs) for a tournament:

UNIT 103 TOURNAMENT BUDGET
Enter Financial information in column F

MED CITY SECTIONAL - ROCHESTER APRIL 7-9 2022

	BUDGET▼	ACTUAL▼	
Entry fee per player	\$12.00	\$12.00	
TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE			
# of days bridge is being played	3	3	
Total # of bridge sessions	6	6	A 2-session Swiss = 2 bridge sessions
EXPECTED EXPENSES			
Director Fees	\$1,260.00	\$1,260.00	ACBL Director gets \$210 per bridge session (or \$210 x
Director Transportation	\$108.56	\$105.30	ACBL Director gets \$0.59 per mile, round trip, from St. P
Director Hotel	\$263.96	\$243.80	ACBL Director gets \$96 per night for lodging; a 3-day ev
Director Per Diem	\$237.00	\$160.00	ACBL Director gets \$79 per day for per diem; a 3-day ev
Sanction Surcharge	\$180.00	\$180.00	= \$180 for Open Sectional, is \$0.50 per table for I/N Sec
Sanction Fee	\$388.80	\$291.60	= \$3.24 per table for Open Sectional, is \$2.13 per table f
Additional ACBL Fees		\$36.00	
Supplies			
SUB TOTAL	\$2,438.32	\$2,276.70	
EXPECTED PAYMENTS			
Advertising + Publicity	\$500.00	\$396.93	PC stamps, PC, Flyers, Postage
Printing	\$25.00	\$119.34	Office Depot, eat flyers, welcome, Covid check-in, Swiss
Hand Records/Recaps	\$50.00	\$31.08	Office Max
Playing Space Rental	\$850.00	\$750.00	
Set up/take down	\$50.00	\$50.00	
Bidding Boxes	\$40.00	\$40.00	
Card Tables	\$40.00	\$40.00	
Caddies	\$80.00	\$40.00	
Miscellaneous Expense	\$75.00	\$99.97	Conv cards, scoresheets, pencils, brown bags, snack cu
Board Duplication	\$60.00	\$80.00	Eight sets at \$10@
Wireless Scoring	\$60.00		
Hospitality	\$400.00	\$328.86	Costco run #1, #2, returned items
Food Service	\$600.00	\$366.01	Mr Pizza North, minus \$27 soda credit
Local Charity		\$104.00	
SUB TOTAL	\$2,830.00	\$2,446.19	
EXPECTED EXPENSES	\$5,268.32	\$4,722.89	TOTAL EXPENSES
EXPECTED TABLES	120	90.5	TOTAL TABLES
EXPECTED TABLE FEES	\$5,760.00	\$4,624.00	ACTUAL TABLE FEES
EXPECTED PROFIT/LOSS	\$491.68	-\$98.89	ACTUAL PROFIT/LOSS

When completed after your event please email this form as an attachment to Matt at medcitybridge@gn

When setting up your budget, here are some of the tournament costs the ACBL will charge you from their "Appendix G":

**Appendix G
PRICES AND FEES
Last Update 2/09/21**

CHAPTER 6, SECTION 2

Sectional Tournament Sanction Fees

Open, Senior

Per table	\$3.24	Can\$3.99
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199er, 299er, Non-Life Master

Per table	\$2.13	Can\$2.62
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Surcharge for Sectional Tournament

Open, Senior, Junior	\$180.00	Can\$221.40
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Intermediate/Newcomer

Per table	\$.50 (\$180 max)	Can\$.62 (\$239max)
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CHAPTER 7, SECTION 2

Tournament Director Session Fees

Tournament Director	\$210.00	Can\$258.30
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Paid by Sponsor Per Session

Associate Tournament Director	\$180.00	Can\$221.40
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Local Tournament Director

Paid by Sponsor Per Session	\$135.00	Can\$166.05
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ACBL Handbook of Rules and Regulations

EXHIBIT "C" – PARTNERSHIP REQUESTS EXAMPLE

When trying to arrange partnerships, it's important to include not just names and availability – but also playing levels (or masterpoint totals). Does the player who is looking for a partner prefer team games? Pair games? Does it matter? Here's an example of a form you can have for your local club prior to your tournament (to try and arrange partnerships in advance) – or for your partnership bulletin board at the tournament itself.

ROCHESTER SECTIONAL PARTNERSHIP REQUEST FORM		
I'm looking to play in the following session(s):		
<input type="checkbox"/> THU AM	<input type="checkbox"/> FRI AM	<input type="checkbox"/> SAT AM
<input type="checkbox"/> THU PM	<input type="checkbox"/> FRI PM	<input type="checkbox"/> SAT PM
My masterpoint total:		
Preferred event (pairs or teams):		
Prefer to play with:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone more experienced than myself		
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone less experienced than myself		
<input type="checkbox"/> Will play with anyone!		
My contact information:		

NOTES
