

Australian Masterpoint Scheme - How does it work?

In most countries around the world, masterpoints are used as a measure of a bridge player's achievement. In each country the scheme is different.

In Australia, we have 3 grades of masterpoints: Green, Red and Gold. Each bridge event, from national and international congresses right down to normal club sessions, awards masterpoints on a scale based on a number of factors: the number of players in the field, the grade of the event (as determined in advance by the ABF), any restrictions on entry (seniors, women's etc), and in some events, the strength of the field.



Points are usually awarded to the top half of the field, based on placing. First place gets the most, and awards for subsequent places diminish but are proportional to first place. Some events award points on a different basis, for example, events with qualifying sessions. Some events also award points based on an overall result in addition to the awards for sessions that make up the event. And in some circumstances, points can be awarded on a "wins" basis per match instead of the normal "top half" formula. This is common in Teams events, but can also be done for Pairs in some circumstances. Some events also carry additional weightings, increasing the basic awards.

Every session or event has a masterpoint colour. Club sessions are green, except for specially designated red point sessions. (Each club is allocated a certain number of red point sessions per year.) Congresses are usually red, and some large events, and the GNOT and GNP zone-based events, are gold point events.

As players earn masterpoints, they graduate through the "Master" ranks. After a humbling start as "Nil Master" a player will be conferred the status of "Graduate Master" after earning 2 points, which for a beginner can seem an unattainable goal. The scale goes all the way to Diamond Grand Master when a player reaches 15,000 masterpoints. (As an aside, until recently, the scale used to end with Gold Grand at 5,000 points, but as some prolific players passed the 10,000 masterpoint mark, it was decided to introduce two additional ranks - Emerald and Diamond.)

Once you reach Regional Master, further promotion depends not only on the total number of points earned, but also requires that the total number include a certain number of red points. Likewise, to reach Life Master and beyond, promotion depends on having a minimum number of both red and gold masterpoints.

There is an ongoing competition for the player from each masterpoint rank who earns the most masterpoints in a calendar year. This (the McCutcheon Award) is run nationally, and a similar one is run for Queensland players (the James O'Sullivan Award). Progressive totals are published on the Masterpoint Centre and the QBA websites after each month end.

The Masterpoints Scheme is administered at the club level by a Club Masterpoint Secretary, (Nev O'Brien, Joan McPheat and Di Jones, for CCBC, SCCBC and Coolum respectively), and each state has a State Masterpoint Secretary - Joan McPheat is Queensland's, and has been in that role for many years.

Nationally, administration is handled by the Masterpoint Centre, presently located in Sydney, and which is a division of the Australian Bridge Federation. Throughout each month, the Centre receives masterpoint files from club and congress directors (via the Club or State Masterpoint Secretaries), and at the end of each month, these are allocated to player accounts, and new point balances are uploaded to the Masterpoint Centre website, where players can look up details of awards issued. Various reports are then produced and sent to each club, and promotion certificates are issued for the lucky players who've moved up a rank.

Want more information? You will find all you are looking for, including an on-line and downloadable Masterpoint Manual on the Masterpoint Centre website: www.masterpoints.org.au.

The masterpoint scale can be found on the back of your annual registration card. (Ed)