

# WELCOME!

to the  
**North American  
Bridge  
Championships**

An Intermediate and New Player  
Guide to the NABCs



**Join the fun!**



American Contract  
Bridge League



# Welcome to the North American Bridge Championships

The American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) would like to welcome all players who are attending a North American Bridge Championships (NABC) for the first time.

This booklet is your personal guide to the events and activities available to you at the NABC. It also provides helpful information to assist you now that you are an official NABC tournament player!

Three times a year, the ACBL offers these NABC tournaments as the ultimate bridge experience. From world-class players and events to guest lecturers and hospitality, the NABCs offer bridge at its finest for all levels of players. For new players and players new to duplicate, the NABC offers the outstanding Intermediate/Newcomer (I/N) Program, designed especially for players with 0 to 299 masterpoints.

Each NABC has its own personality. The flavor and adventure of each of these tournaments are the result of the special hospitality touches added by the local bridge community. Great food, registration gifts, giveaways, sightseeing adventures and special events are just a few of the exciting things that await you. Take advantage of as many as you can — they are a part of the overall NABC experience!

Enjoy the excitement of the NABCs and get ready to come back again and again!

Sincerely,  
ACBL Management



# Table of Contents

An Overview of the NABCs.....	1
Are You a Member? Join the ACBL Now! .....	2
The IN Program .....	3
Need to Know – Duplicate Tips .....	4
Need to Know – Policies, Procedures and Regulations.....	6
Need to Know –Types of Pair Games .....	11
Stratified Pairs.....	11
Flighted Pairs.....	12
Strati-flighted Pairs .....	13
Side Game Series Pairs .....	13
IMP Pairs .....	13
Need to know – Types of Team Games .....	14
Knockout Teams .....	14
Bracketed Knockout Teams .....	14
Compact Knockout Teams .....	14
Swiss Teams .....	14
Board-a-Match Teams .....	15
Need to Know – Scoring and Results.....	15
Masterpoints .....	18
Rankings.....	18



## NABC Overview

Nothing expresses the spirit of the NABCs more than the hustle and bustle of the busy corridors before game time, the hush of those same corridors as the game is being played and the good times to be had after the final card is played.

Although each NABC has a personality of its own, all offer a superb variety of pair and team events. Morning, afternoon, evening and well into the night, bridge players can take advantage of playing the schedule they prefer while also enjoying the hospitality of the host city.

For newer duplicate players and first-time attendees, each NABC presents a full schedule of Intermediate/Newcomer (I/N) events and activities.

The Daily Bulletin, a newspaper produced each day by the ACBL and available each morning, is your best guide to all activities. This publication provides information on the playing schedule, the prior day's results and a list of special events. In addition, the Daily Bulletin features interesting deals, plays and the latest information on what is happening at the tournament and in the bridge world.

You will find the Daily Bulletin in news racks throughout the playing area and host hotel(s).

Don't feel like playing on a particular day? Take advantage of a local tour and get to know the host city. Visit the local information booth and talk to the volunteers about suggestions for spending a fun day away from the tournament. They'll steer you in the right direction!

## Are You A Member?

The ACBL offers sanctioned games at local clubs and tournaments, on cruise ships and on the Internet.

The ACBL is a service-oriented membership organization offering many benefits to its members, including reduced playing fees at tournaments.

If you are not a member of the ACBL, join today to take advantage of the reduced rates at this NABC!

You will receive your ACBL number immediately, and any masterpoints you win at this tournament will be recorded automatically.

The ACBL offers a special first-year membership package.

Ask one of the tournament directors for details.





## The I/N Program

The NABCs are a showcase for the I/N Program. Through this program, the ACBL offers the best opportunity for the newer tournament player to enjoy the NABC experience!

The I/N Program is run in its own area and offers bridge activities designed especially for the player with fewer than 300 masterpoints.

Some of the highlights of the I/N program are:

**Welcome reception** — Held on the first Saturday of the NABC.

**Opportunity to compete with your peers** — Games are stratified to ensure that your results are compared to those of other players at your same level of expertise.

**Variety of Games** — Pair games and team games.

**Two celebrity speakers daily** — Enjoy meeting and listening to some of the game's best players and top bridge teachers. Handouts are available for each of the lectures.

**Free two-hour lessons** from world class teachers.

**Free BridgePlus+** games for players with 0-20 masterpoints, perfect for those who want to try their first duplicate game.

**Trophies** given for wins at all levels.

**The Winners' Circle** — Pictures of the I/N winners are displayed in the I/N area.

**Special partnership desk** — Partners are guaranteed for players who sign up one hour prior to game time.

**Special registration gift** — New players in the I/N area consistently get a little something extra.

There is a lot to do during the 11 days of each NABC. Take advantage of as much as you can while you enjoy bridge at its finest.

- Do not engage in extraneous conversation or talk at the table once you have taken your cards from the boards. Even in an informal game, your vocabulary for the auction is limited to 15 words: pass, the numbers one through seven, double, redouble, spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs and notrump. “I bid one club,” contains two too many words. Slow passes, fast doubles, loud overcalls, etc., are not acceptable behavior in duplicate. Bidding boxes are used in all NABC games, so many of these problems are avoided.
- When you are the dummy, you have limited rights. It is unacceptable for the dummy to go around the table and look at declarer’s hand (or exchange hands with partner). The dummy is an active participant at the table charged with turning cards for partner and preventing partner from revoking or leading from the wrong hand.
- Do not write down the contract in your convention card until there have been three consecutive passes. Writing it down prematurely is tantamount to telling your partner you want him to pass.
- Make your opening lead face down on the table. At the same time you should say, “Questions, partner?” If it is not your lead, your partner and/or the opponents will let you know.
- Be a good partner. Regard your partner with respect. Remind yourself that for the duration of the session, your partner is your best friend and part of your responsibility is to make his life and his decisions as easy as possible. Always root for your partner to do the right thing. If he misplays or misguesses, sympathize and console — he hurts worse than you. That not only makes the game more pleasant, it makes it more rewarding in both a personal and

practical way. Your partner will play better, you will play better, your results will be better and you will more closely approach harmony with life and bridge.

- Play up to speed. When polling players to find what their biggest bridge pet peeve is, slow play was unequivocally the winner! You are given seven minutes per board, which should be plenty of time for even the toughest hands. It is irritating to wait for your opponents to arrive at the table while the clock is ticking and your time for playing the next round is being eaten up. Equally, if not more irritating, is to be East-West and have to wait for people you are following to vacate your chairs. It is awkward to stand and wait without people thinking you are watching other boards being played. Remember, no one cares how well you play, only how fast!
- Bid in tempo. Bidding too fast or thinking too long before bidding could send unauthorized messages to your partner. If you pass too quickly, it seems that you have no interest in this deal. If you pause for a long time, you probably have choices to make and can't decide which is the best action.
- Play in tempo. If you take too long to play a card, the message is that you have a problem. Never hesitate before playing a singleton. You have no problem, and planting the idea that you do is highly unethical.
- Keep it in the past/No postmortems. You can't afford to use mental energy rehashing the past. Put aside a bad result and start fresh with the next 13 cards. Successful partnerships will discuss difficult hands and situations where something went wrong after the session and in private.
- Practice active ethics. A primary objective of the ACBL is to instill in all players the concept that vigorous efforts should be made to provide equity in bridge. Every player should take pains to make sure that the opponents have in no way been harmed through incomplete or misleading information as to the meaning of conventional calls and treatments. An aggressive approach along these lines on the part of each and every individual will do much to make sure that bridge remains a game that is enjoyed so much by all.

- Call the director. Many newcomers are afraid to call the director because they fear it makes the game unfriendly. The director's job is to alleviate any strain there is or may develop, actually making the game more fun. By calling, you will ensure the game is fair for everybody, not just you and your opponents. Duplicate bridge is a sport — the director must touch the ball to get it back into play.

## Need to Know

## Policies, Procedures and Regulations

### Zero Tolerance Policy.

The ACBL Board of Directors and Management are committed to improving acceptable player behavior at all times. This commitment is fully expressed with the Zero Tolerance Policy.

The ZT policy outlines what is expected of all players during NABCs and other ACBL-sponsored events, as well as in the playing area before and after each session. The ultimate purpose of the ZT policy is to create a more pleasant atmosphere at our NABCs.

A player should maintain at all times a courteous attitude toward partner and the opponents. A player should carefully avoid any remark or action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player, or that might interfere with another player's enjoyment of the game.

Below are some examples of commendable behavior, which, while not required, will significantly contribute to the improved atmosphere:

- Being a good host or guest at the table.
- Greeting others in a friendly manner.
- Praising the bidding and/or play of the opponents.
- Having two clearly complete convention cards readily available to the opponents. (This one is a regulation, not just a nicety.)



The following lists some examples of behavior which will not be tolerated:

- Badgering, rudeness, insinuations, profanity, threats or violence.
- Negative comments concerning opponents' or partner's play or bidding.
- Constant and gratuitous lessons and analyses at the table.
- Loud and disruptive arguing with a director's ruling.

If a player at the table behaves in an unacceptable manner, the director should be called immediately. Annoying behavior, embarrassing remarks or any other conduct which might interfere with the enjoyment of the game is specifically prohibited by Law 74A. Law 91A gives the director the authority to assess disciplinary penalties.

A Zero Tolerance Report Form is available for players to report incidents which occur away from the table and for directors to document complaints and action taken.

### **Bidding Boxes.**

At the NABCs, you will find bidding boxes on all of the card tables. These are devices that permit silent bidding.

To make a call, the player takes the appropriate card from a box, filled with cards designating all possible bids and calls, and places it on the table in front of him. All bidding cards remain on the table until the auction is concluded.

This provides an instant review of the bidding and eliminates the possibility of mishearing a call. (See Alerts, Announcements and Skip Bids for more information on using bidding boxes with these requirements.)



### **The Convention Card.**

Before you play, you and your partner need to fill out a convention card. A convention card is just that: a card that shows the conventions you use along with your general approach to bidding.

The card serves two purposes: One, it tells your opponents what you play. (They, by the way, not you, are the only people entitled to look at it during the game, though clubs are somewhat lenient about this rule for the new player.) Two, making out a card allows you and your partner to get your understandings straight. Many longtime partnerships have improved just on this alone.

At first sight, the card can be intimidating. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance from an I/N tournament director or a New Player Services member. New players may prefer to use the "Fat Free Card" which is simplified and can be found in the I/N area.

Unusual conventions are shown in red on the card and need to be Alerted. Bids shown in blue require an Announcement.

### **Alerts, Announcements and Skip Bids.**

When a conventional call is made, it is up to the partner of that player to immediately say, "Alert." No further explanations should be volunteered. Either opponent may then, at his proper turn, inquire as to the meaning of the Alerted call. When an opponent asks you about a call or an Alert, you should ensure that your explanation makes available all the information your partnership has about the call. This is the principle of full disclosure. The name of a convention is not an explanation and may be taken by your opponents as an attempt to intimidate them. If you are questioned about a call that your partner has made and you have no agreement, it is proper to reply "We have no agreement as to style."

If partner makes a mistaken explanation, an incorrect Alert or fails to Alert, the declarer or dummy must notify the opponents and call the director after the final pass. A defender facing the same situation must notify the opponents and call the director after the play ends.

An Announcement is required in four situations. This tells the opponents directly the meaning of partner's call:

1. State the range (e.g., "15 to 17") after all opening 1NT bids,
2. Say "transfer" after a diamond or heart bid which transfers to hearts or spades at any level in response to a notrump opening bid, overcall or after opener's natural notrump rebid,

3. Say “forcing” or “semi-forcing” after a 1NT forcing or semi-forcing response to a 1♠ or 1♥ opening bid,
4. Say “short” after all non-forcing opening bids of 1♣ or 1♦ which may be fewer than three cards.

Another duplicate novelty is the Skip Bid Warning, which is used whenever you “skip” the bidding — when you open at the two level, for example. You either say, “Skip bid, please wait,” or use the red “Stop” card in the bidding box. The opponent waits 10 seconds before bidding. This gives the opponent an opportunity to recover from the “surprise” of your jump and prevents the “fast pass.” (Translation: I may have been surprised, but I didn’t have anything to bid anyway!)

### **Claims.**

“Play it out!” is the common cry heard when someone attempts to claim. Law 68 is very clear that once a claim or concession is made that all play must cease.

If done properly, claiming can save time and energy. The proper way to claim is to face your hand and state your line of play. You must be very specific. If there are trump cards out, be certain to mention that and how you plan to deal with them.

Don’t be afraid to say you don’t understand or don’t agree with the claim, but don’t get into a confrontation with the claimer. Call the director. It is possible that the claim is Invalid.

In a contested claim, the director will ask the claimer to repeat his claim. Then the director will require all players to face their remaining cards. Once that is accomplished, the director will hear the opponents’ objection to the claim and determine whether the claim is valid or invalid. If the claim is not valid, any tricks that could have been lost by any normal line of play will be awarded to the opponent. Normal play includes play that is careless or inferior for the class of player, but not irrational.

### **Appeals.**

An appeal is a request for a review of a director’s ruling. Any ruling by a director may be appealed, but an appeals committee does not have the authority to overrule the director on a point of bridge law or a bridge regulation.

If you wish to appeal a director's ruling, notify the director at the time of the ruling or immediately following the round. The director will explain the appeals procedure to you.

### **Kibitzing.**

A spectator in bridge is called a kibitzer. Kibitzing is an interesting and fun way to learn from the experts, but there are rules of etiquette that must be followed.

The kibitzer's etiquette comes from "The Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge".

## **SPECTATORS**

### **A. Conduct During Bidding or Play**

1. One Hand Only — A spectator should not look at the cards of more than one player, except by permission.
2. Personal Reaction — A spectator must not display any reaction to the bidding or play while a hand is in progress.
3. Mannerisms or Remarks — During the round, a spectator must refrain from mannerisms or remarks of any kind (including a conversation with a player).
4. Consideration for Players — A spectator must not in any way disturb a player.

### **B. Spectator Participation**

A spectator may not call attention to any irregularity or mistake, nor speak on any question of fact or law, except by request of the director.



Each NABC offers a variety of pair and team events for various levels of play. NABC+ events are at the highest level and offer platinum points to the winners. Regional-rated events offer gold and red points, and I/N events offer red points. You are free to play in whatever division you are comfortable in.

In a pair game, you and your partner play together throughout the event against a series of opponents. Your “real” opponents, however, are sitting in your direction. They are the players who hold the same cards as you and whose results you are trying to beat.



Your bridge scores are compared with the bridge scores of those other pairs and your total matchpoint score is determined by adding together the matchpoints you earn on each deal.

Some adjustments have been made to pair games to make it possible for new and less-experienced players to earn masterpoints. The most common methods are stratifying, flighting and handicapping. Most pair events in the I/N Program are stratified.

### **STRATIFIED PAIRS**

This type of game is different from most others because it produces more than one set of winners. The field is divided into two or three strata, each with a predetermined maximum and minimum masterpoint limitation. The tournament directors attempt to seed the field in such a manner that approximately equal numbers of players from each stratum are competing in each direction. During the course of the event, pairs from each strata play pairs from all other strata.

All pairs in the event are ranked when computing the overalls in the top stratum. The pairs in the top stratum are then eliminated, and a second set of rankings is determined for the pairs remaining. Next, the pairs in the second stratum are eliminated, and a third ranking is done for the third stratum. It is possible for pairs in the second and third strata to place in a higher stratum, but pairs in the top stratum are eligible for awards only in the top stratum.

The stratum in which a pair plays is determined by the member of the pair who has the most masterpoints. Unlike flighted events, pairs do not have a choice of strata — they are automatically placed in the lowest stratum for which they are eligible.

The game is run like an ordinary Open Pairs, although the field is carefully seeded so that each Strat A pair plays against all Strat A pairs in the section against which they are competing.

Masterpoints are awarded for all three strata, but a pair is eligible for only one masterpoint award and will receive the highest award.

### **Flighted Pairs**

When flighting is used, the field is divided by expertise or experience or both into separate competitions.

Flight A — unlimited masterpoints — will be open to all players regardless of their masterpoint holdings. Any pair can choose to play in this flight. The remaining flights — usually Flight B and Flight C — will be limited to players with a certain number of masterpoints. Flight B might be 0 to 750 MPs or 0 to 1500 MPs while Flight C might be limited to players with 0 to 300 or 0 to 500 masterpoints.

Each flight is scored individually, and masterpoints are awarded separately for each flight. The masterpoint holdings of the players determine their flight. If one player is an expert and that player's partner is new to the game, the pair must compete in Flight A.

In flighted events, a pair may play up but not down. That means that a Flight C player could choose to participate in Flight A or Flight B even if that pair's masterpoint holding qualifies it for Flight C. Conversely, a pair may not play in Flight B or Flight C if its masterpoints qualify the pair for Flight A.

## **Strati-flighted Pairs**

The top group of masterpoint holders plays in a game of their own — Flight A. The rest of the field is divided into strata (e.g., Strat B, Strat C and Strat D). These pairs play in the same manner as they would in a regular stratified pairs.

## **Side Game Series Pairs**

This is a series of one-session games open to all players. Participants may enter as many sessions as they wish and play with the same or different partners. Overall ranking is done on an individual basis by computing the sum of each player's two best games. At NABCs and regionals, gold points are awarded to section-top-placing players who have competed in at least two sessions of this event. Each session of a Side Game Series Pairs is also scored as a one-session stratified pairs.

## **IMP Pairs**

The scoring is based upon International Matchpoints (IMPs). This type of contest reduces the effect on the scoring of one or two big swing boards. The general effect of using IMP scoring is to dampen the value of high scores and to heighten the value of partscore contracts.

A chart of conversion points can be found on the inside of the standard ACBL Convention Card. Ask the tournament director for more information.

In team events, groups of four, five or six players (with only four playing at a time) compete against other similar groups. Here is a guide to the more popular types of team events you will find at an NABC.

### **Knockout Teams**

A team of four to six players (with four playing at a time) plays another team. The results are compared and scored by International Matchpoints (IMPs).

The losers are eliminated or “knocked out” while the winners play other winners until only one winning team remains. The length of a KO match may vary from a single session (a few hours) to a full day (the Vanderbilt and Spingold) to a multi-day event (the Bermuda Bowl — an international competition sponsored by the World Bridge Federation).

### **Bracketed Knockout Teams**

The teams are divided into groups — usually of 8, 16 or 32 teams — based on their average masterpoint holdings. The top group — Bracket 1 — and all other groups compete in a separate event with its own set of winners. Bracketing permits the determination of a winner within a limited number of matches.

### **Compact Knockout Teams**

This is a shorter version of Bracketed KO Teams and is limited to teams of four players.

### **Swiss Teams**

Teams (of four, five or six players — with only four playing at a time) play other teams in seven-, eight- or nine-board matches. For example, Team A sits North-South at Table 1 and East-West at Table 2, while Team B sits North-South at Table 2 and East-West at Table 1. The results are compared and scored by IMPs.

Pairings for the first round are random. Pairings for succeeding rounds are determined by a team's win-loss record or Victory Point total. (See — Methods of Scoring Team Games.)

As with pair games, Swiss teams may be flighted, strati-flighted or stratified.

### **Board-a-Match Teams**

This is a method of playing multiple team matches in which each team plays against a variety of opponents in a Mitchell-like movement and each deal has a top of exactly one matchpoint. The only possible scores are 1,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and 0 (win, tie, loss).

The movement is arranged so that if the North-South pair of Team 1 plays a board against the East-West pair of Team 3, Team 1's East-West pair will play the same board against Team 3's North-South pair.

## **Need to Know**

### **Scoring and Results**

**Scoring** at the NABCs is done with electronic scoring devices. There is one scoring device on each table. After the auction, North enters the contract into the device that looks like an oversized calculator. When play is completed, North enters the result, then hands the device to one of the opponents to verify that it is accurate. After the opponent verifies the score, it is sent via radio signal to a computer that is compatible with ACBLscore. When the final score of the session is entered, the complete results are available for printout – just as though the data had been entered by hand.

**Matchpoints** — Each pair is ranked according to how well the partnership did in comparison to the other pairs who played the board. You will receive one matchpoint for each pair whose result you have beaten and one-half point for each pair you have tied.

Example: If a board was played five times, and you scored 420 in a game contract, while two others scored 450 (Making five! Where did I lose that overtrick?), one went down one (-50), and one forgot to bid game (scoring only 170), you will get 2 matchpoints for beating two pairs. The pair who went down will get a zero (0), a bottom on the board. The folks who made 450 will share a top on the board, getting 3.5 matchpoints (they beat three pairs and tied one). The most matchpoints that were available on that board were 4, since it was played five times and the opportunity existed to beat only four other pairs.

An average result on the board would be 2 matchpoints (with a 4 top), so if 20 boards were played in a game, an average score for the entire game would be 40. When you add up all of your matchpoints, you will be able to see whether you did better or worse than the average players in that game. You will also be able to see which boards you found troublesome and take the opportunity to discuss them with some former opponents. Lasting friendships, partnerships and even marriages are made this way!

**International Matchpoints (IMPs)** — An IMP is a unit of scoring used according to a schedule established by the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge. In a team game, the difference in trick and bonus scores of the North-South pair and the East-West pair on the same team is used to look up IMPs from a chart.

**Victory Points** — When using Victory Point scoring, the IMP score on each board is calculated first. The total IMP score on the boards of the match are then converted to Victory Points in accordance with a predetermined scale.

**Victory Points in Swiss Teams** — Even in win-loss type Swiss events, a form of Victory Points is used frequently. To receive credit for a full win, a team must win by 3 or more IMPs. A win by 1 or 2 IMPs constitutes a 3/4 win, with the losing team getting the other quarter of a point. However, the team winning the match receives the entire masterpoint award for the match.

## **Results**

The directors will post the results of the game on a computer generated recap sheet. The I/N directors and New Player Services volunteers in the area will be happy to help you read the results.

In general, here is what you will find on these recap sheets:

The top line identifies the event, the session (e.g., Thursday afternoon, 1 of 2) and the section and direction of the results (e.g., score for Section A, North-South players).

The next line tells when the event was played (e.g., March 7, 2005) and gives information about the sanction number and event code.

The third line shows where the event was played (e.g., Pittsburgh), the rating of the tournament (e.g., NABC) and the type of movement used (e.g., Mitchell, Howell, etc.).

Line four tells what the average score is and what is top on each board. It gives the masterpoint limits (if there were any) and the name of the tournament (e.g., Spring NABC).

Line five will give specific information if it applies to the event. This line might define the number of pairs playing different strata (e.g., Strat A-14/B-7/C-0).

The list of contestants follows, and you will read across to find out the results. You'll find overall rankings, total points, carryover (if there was a previous session), session rankings, score for the current session and final masterpoint awards.

If you check the scores and find a number in the rank column, this indicates that you have won some masterpoints. The final column on the recap sheet tells you how many points you won.

For most new players, reading the recap sheet is a matter of trial and error. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

Trophies are awarded to all of the winners in the I/N Program. Section tops are awarded to the players who did the best both North-South and East-West in each section. You will go to the Prize Desk for the whole tournament in order to claim your section top prize.

# Masterpoints and Rankings

## Masterpoints

Masterpoints are a reward for winning or placing at duplicate bridge. Masterpoints, also referred to as points or MPs, come in many sizes and colors and are awarded for different levels of play. Generally, the awards are:

- Black points at club and unit games.
- Silver points at sectionals, progressive sectionals and STaCs.
- Red points in all events at regionals and the three NABCs.
- Gold points are awarded for overall placings and section tops in regional and NABC events of at least two sessions. The upper masterpoint limit must be at least 750 masterpoints and applies only to the top two stratifications of stratified or stratiflighted events. In open-bracketed events (such as a bracketed knockout team), each bracket will award some percentage of the overall award as gold, irrespective of the masterpoint holding of the teams in that bracket. Gold points may be awarded for special games, such as the ACBL-wide Instant Matchpoint Game.
- Platinum points for all NABC+ championship events.
- Unpigmented points for online play on the Internet.

## Rankings

As a player accumulates points, certain milestones or ranking levels will be reached that indicate progress. Each ranking requires that the player have a certain number and a certain type of points.

These are the seven levels of achievement to reach the coveted rank of Life Master. There are more levels after that.

If you joined the ACBL after to Jan. 1, 2010 or reinstated your membership after that date:





**Rookie** — 0 to 5 points, any color.



**Junior Master** — 5 to 20 points, any color.



**Club Master** — 20 to 50 points, at least 5 black.



**Sectional Master** — At least 50 points, including at least 10 black, 5 silver.



**Regional Master** — At least 100 points, including at least 15 black, 15 silver and 5 red or gold/platinum.



**NABC Master** — At least 200 points, including at least 20 black, 25 silver, 15 red or gold/platinum, at least 5 must be gold/platinum.



**Advanced NABC Master** — At least 300 points, of which at least 50 must be black, 50 must be silver, at least 25 must be red or gold/platinum and at least another 25 must be gold/platinum.



**Life Master** — At least 500 points, of which at least 75 must be black, 75 must be silver, at least 50 must be red or gold/platinum and at least another 50 must be gold/platinum.



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