

National Grading Scheme – Questions and Answers

This document contains a set of Q&As which are intended to amplify the NGS Overview level of information. Accordingly, it does not purport to answer any question of detail, those may appear later associated with the next levels of information on the NGS. However, if you have a question on the principles or the modus operandi of the NGS, i.e. germane to the NGS Overview, then please send an email to grading@ebu.co.uk and if the question is considered to be of general interest it and we have enough information at this time, its answer will be added to this document.

Q1. The NGS seems to be very complicated, is it necessary to understand the principles on which it is based? *from Connie Fused of Consett.*

A. It is not necessary to understand the theory or the computational machinations which underpin the NGS; one can simply choose to participate and then enjoy the outcome. The NGS has been designed to hide all the complexities from the individual (unless they really want to understand how it all works).

There are only two points at which the EBU member engages with the NGS. Firstly, the information on the performance of each partnership as embodied in the scoring return from the playing session made to Aylesbury. Since this contains everything needed by the NGS, there is nothing additional for the club or an individual to do. Secondly, observe the grade outcome by way of the private area of the EBU membership record.

So, forget about the NGS and enjoy your playing session. Play as well as you can and then later see what effect your results have had on your grading information.

Q2. Will the NGS have any effect on the ambience at a Club? *from Kurt Retorter of Kidderminster.*

A. The NGS should not have any effect on a club session. It is an adjunct to the game whose purpose is solely for the interest of the individual (either as an individual or in his/her various partnerships).

The NGS takes into account the grades of one's partner and the strength of the field one plays in. A good player could go to a weaker strength of field club and if he/she didn't do sufficiently well his/her grade could still go down, i.e. playing in a weaker field doesn't guarantee an improvement in one's grade, even if the visitor wins the event. The NGS bases any changes to an individual's grade using the actual performance achieved by the individual in the environment in which he/she has played.

So clubs, whose membership is primarily not interested in the NGS, should not fear "invasions" from the "hordes" trying to move up the grading list.

Q3. How does the NGS keep a grade current? *from Abel Player of Aylesbury.*

A. The NGS analyses the previous 1,000 boards for any individual. It treats the recent results as more significant by applying straight-line depreciation, such that the more recent results the more they contribute to the new grade, and the more distant results the less they contribute. This means that playing sessions after approximately the most recent 40 do not contribute to an individual's grade, i.e. such a distant poor (or outstanding) playing session will not affect an individual's grade.

Q4. How does a grade become uniform across the country? *from Stan Dard of Marke (Belgium).*

A. This occurs as a consequence of an effect referred to as "diffusion". The principle is that as individuals play in different affiliated clubs (or county or national events), and with different partners, their results in those different situations cause the comparison of grades to become universal.

Q5. Given that Bridge is a partnership game, how is an individual's grade determined? *from Matt E Matix of Margate.*

A. This is a capability of the underlying mathematics. Every time an individual plays, the NGS gains information on the performance of that person, but only in conjunction with his/her partner of that playing session. The NGS cannot distinguish solely from that playing session whether one player of the partnership played better or worse than the other. When one of those individuals plays in another partnership then new information becomes available. As more and more information is derived from playing sessions involving large numbers of participants playing in many more combinations, then there can be confidence that the individual grades become representative.

Q6. How will a National Grading scheme help to monitor ability? *from Di Gresham of Dartmouth.*

A. The Grading Scheme is a measure of **current** playing ability based on hands played (with the same or different partners in whatever environment, be it club, county, or national event). In addition, the analysis of the boards played takes into consideration its result and the strength (i.e. current gradings) of the field played in. The calculation for the boards of the playing session (typically a club evening) is factored into the grade value from which an individual's grade is determined. Note that the currency of the grade is reinforced as a consequence of the older playing results carrying a progressively diminishing weight to zero after 1,000 boards (about 40 playing sessions). As you improve your grade will improve, noting that the reverse is also true.

Q7. How will the NGS be of interest to the ordinary club player? *from Trixie Took of Tunbridge Wells.*

A. It is known that beginners like Master Points as a measure of their progress, but after a while such persons become daunted by the myriad of levels many of which seem unattainable, often at which point the individuals lose interest and say they don't want or value them.

In the NGS "currency" is the new dimension, so whoever you are a good result (or statistically a sequence of good results) can affect your grade at any time. Of course, people will settle into particular grades but one can go up (or down) with relative ease. Accordingly, it should be of interest to anybody, be they a newcomer to Bridge or one who has played for many years. Note that they work in other pastimes (e.g. chess and golf).

Also at the "Ace" end, individuals will probably be interested to know who the "top expert" players are (much like in any sport).

Q8. Does the NGS allow for mis-boardings and adjusted scores for whatever reason? *from Rev. Oke of Holy Island.*

A. All boards for which there is a result are taken into consideration by the NGS. Adjusted scores caused by whatever incident that occurred are considered to be part of the game.

Q9. If an expert plays with a novice, what is the effect on their grades? *from Clara Fication of Chandler's Ford.*

A. The contribution to a player's grade value from a session, whether a good or poor partnership result, is apportioned exactly equally to both players in the partnership irrespective of their independent skill level. This means that the resulting amendment to their grade value - after taking into account their past separate results history - is always a very similar amount; by far the usual effect is that both grade values either both go up, or both go down.