

The “Forcing Pass”

Most Bridge Partnerships know that certain bids invite, yes indeed, sometimes even force Partner to take bidding action. One forcing bidding scenario, not frequently discussed, but important and necessary in many bidding situations, is the “Forcing Pass”. “Forcing Passes” are alertable!

A “Forcing Pass” is defined as a “pass” by either Partner which forces his/her Partner to take action, either by bidding or by “doubling,” i.e., a “pass” during a competitive auction that asks Partner to choose the most profitable action, but, unequivocally, not to “pass.” The guidelines are not always consistent, but the Partnership must agree upon the definition of the “Forcing Pass” and recognize the circumstances under which the “Forcing Pass” comes into existence. Some of the more common scenarios are as follows:

1. One of the teams has volitionally reached Game-level, or has issued and accepted a Game invitation or force, and the Opponents have put in an obvious sacrifice bid in their own suit. A “pass” by one's Partner under these circumstances becomes a “Forcing Pass,” and implies the desire to continue the bidding, if the Partner asked is willing to bid higher. Alternatively, the Partner must, “double” for penalty, but under no circumstance may he/she “pass.”

<u>Example:</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
	1H	Pass	3H	Pass
	4H	“4NT” (Unusual NT)	Pass	5D
	<u>“Pass”(Forcing)</u>	Pass	<u>????</u>	

2. After the auction has begun, it becomes clear to both sides that a certain safety level has been reached, and to precede with the auction means that one side may decide to sacrifice or one side may decide to bid higher knowing that the contract will be defeated, all depending upon the expectation of a better score. This is the situation where a “pass” by one's Partner could become a “Forcing Pass” because of his inability to make a suitable call, and /or his desire to discover whether his Partner has sufficient values and distribution to “double” the contract of the Opponents.

<u>Example:</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
	1H	1S	2H	2S
	3H	3S	<u>“Pass”(Forcing)</u>	Pass
	<u>????</u>			

3. Under the scenario where Partner has opened the bidding, your RHO (Right-hand Opponent) has made a Take-Out Double and you have “re-doubled,” evidencing 10 or more HCP's. Your LHO (the Doubler's Partner) makes an Overcall, and Opener then “passes” (“forcing”) showing an absence of any extra values over and above his/her original opening count. It is obviously your Partnership has the majority of the HCP count and you, the Re-Doubler, must act.

<u>Example:</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
	1H	Dbl.	Re-Dbl.	1S
	<u>Pass (Forcing)</u>	Pass	<u>????</u>	

When using the “Forcing Pass” one must make certain that the concept is understood by both Partners. Additionally, the Partners must be aware whether or not the feature is alertable, and, if it is, then as a result of its special artificial significance, it must be alerted. . “Forcing Passes” are alertable!