

FORCING PASS

A forcing pass is a pass that is made in the expectation that partner will bid. No matter how bad his hand is, he should either double or make some other bid. Usually you will make a forcing pass when you are not sure whether to double the opponents or bid on. Later we can look at some other uses of the forcing pass.

One of the most frequent uses of the forcing pass is when you have redoubled their take out double and you may only have 2 of their suits controlled.

1S X XX P	6
P 2C	AQT3
	KJT42
	K54

With this hand you plan to either defend 2C doubled or look for your own contract. Anytime partner has 4 clubs or 3 good ones you are happy to defend 2C doubled; if he has 2 clubs you need to look for 3NT or perhaps 4H.

There is no need to guess. Your redouble has set up a forcing auction and partner is expected to either double or bid on.

One decision you need to make is how high do you play the forcing pass after the redouble. If you redouble on a balanced 10 count and the auction goes like this

1S X XX 3H	
P P	xx
	Kxx
	Axxx
	QJxx

It is not clear what to do. Partner may have a 16 count but wants to let you double if they are in trouble. My suggestion is to bid 1NT with 7-10 and redouble shows 11+ and play forcing passes through 3 of your suit. You may get an occasional bad result but no agreement is perfect.

You and your partner should decide if the redouble sets up a forcing auction when you are a passed hand. Since partner may have opened quite light in third seat, I think it is best to play the force is only on responder and only applies through 2 of your suit. In other words, if the auction goes

P P 1S X
XX 2C P P

Responder is forced to bid or double, opener may have a good hand. However, if the auction goes like

P P 1S X
XX P P 2C
P P

Opener is not forced. He knows responder is a passed hand and has around 11 points. If he choose to pass, he is making an informed decision.

A similar situation comes up after you have doubled a two suited bid, ie. Michaels or the unusual notrump.

1S 2S X or 1S 2NT X

You may have one of the opponents suits and hope partner has the other.

Qx
KQxx
AJTxx
xx

You hope partner can double clubs, you will happily double Diamonds or Hearts.

Occasionally I see an auction go

1S 2NT X 3C
P P P

I always wonder what opener is supposed to do with

AKJxx
Axx
xx
Kxx

Surely he wants to pass and see if partner can double 3C, however if partner is allowed to actually pass 3C then the partnership is in trouble.

The other time that forcing passes become common is when the opponents have saved over your game and you need to decide whether to bid on or double. My belief is that moreimps are won and lost with 5 level decisions than any other part of the game.

1H 2S 3S 4S

You opened and partner made a forcing raise over their weak jump shift.

Your hand is x
AQTxx
KQxxx
Kx

Red versus white you would like to be in 5H opposite

xx		KQx
KJxx	but would like to be in 4SX	Jxxx
Axxx		xxx
QJx		AQJ

Here you want to pass the decision to partner. You certainly don't want to play 4S undoubled.

The main issue partnerships have to decide about forcing passes at the 5 level is when have we established a force.

All sorts of agreements are possible

- A) We are vulnerable and they are not.
- B) We have voluntarily bid a game
- C) We have shown strength
- D) They have shown weakness.

My preferences are to choose C and D.

A can be a disaster if they have good hands when non vulnerable. Edgar Kaplan once said " Just because they are non-vulnerable doesn't mean they can't make a 5 level contract."

Many times you want to jump to game in competition to make the opponents guess but that doesn't work if your partner feels you have set up a force.

1S X 4S 5H

People who believe in A say its forcing if we are at unfavorable vulnerability. B people believe its forcing because we bid a game. I think we haven't shown strength and its not forcing. My feelings are that when you have a good hand and want to force, you need to cuebid to let partner know that you have a good hand.

1S 3H 4H

4H is not necessarily a slam try; it simply sets up a force in case the opponents save.

One way to define we have shown strength is to say we have shown limit raise values opposite an opening hand or we have made a 2/1. However when a 2/1 is made in competition it can be quite light. My recommendation is that a 2/1 in competition sets up a force at the 3 and 5 levels but not the 4 level.

1S 2D 2H 3D and 1S 2D 2H 5D we are in forcing auctions

1H 1S 2C 4S we are not forced.

When the opponents have shown weakness it is generally best to play forcing auctions.

P P 3D X
5D

Pass should be forcing. A preempt opposite a passed hand will not make game that often. Many times you will have a good hand and not know what to do. In these cases double should be discouraging and pass encouraging. So I would double 5D with a bust and no trump tricks just to stop from encouraging partner to bid at the 5 level. If they make it, no system is perfect.

One more case of forcing passes can happen at the 6 level. You are exploring slam and the opponents have saved at a very high level. Typically you can make a forcing pass to promise control of their suit. Doubling would deny control.

1S 3D 4D 5D Pass by opener would promise no worse than second round control of diamonds.

1S 3D 4D 6D Pass here would promise first round control of diamonds