

THE FORCING PASS (circa 2004)

Some guidelines for partnership discussion:

A pass is forcing when. . .

- (1) The partnership is in a game-forcing auction.
- (2) An invitational bid has been accepted.
- (3) A bid is forcing to a particular level not yet reached.
- (4) A strong two-bid has been opened by our side (however, a 2NT bid, because it is limited does not create a force).
- (5) The partnership has VOLUNTARILY bid game after an adverse preemptive opening bid or overcall. . .

EXCEPTIONS: (a) the opponents open with a game preempt, direct overcalls create a force only if VUL vs NONVUL, e.g.
4H-4S-5H-Pass ... not forcing except VUL vs NONVUL

(b) after an opening bid, a preemptive jump overcall forces responder to bid game in another suit, e.g.
1C-3S-4H-4S ... Pass ... not forcing except VUL vs NONVUL.

(c) after an opening of 1H or 1S and a preemptive jump overcall, responder jumps to game instead of cue-bidding

- (6) The sound of bidding makes it so: if your opponents are willing to play a partscore and finally bid a game after you have voluntarily bid a game.

When a pass is forcing, either the opponents play a contract doubled or you play the hand.

Forcing passes at high levels express doubt, double suggests playing for penalty, bidding "one more" suggests primarily distributional extra values, and passing, then pulling a double when a suit is agreed suggests slam possibilities but when a suit is not agreed suggests a flexible hand.

Hopeless hands must double in "forcing pass" auctions to warn partner against bidding.

When two passed hands get to game after your side has VOLUNTARILY bid game, a forcing pass is always in effect.

When THIRD HAND preempts 3C, 3D, 4C or 4D, fourth hand doubles, and responder raises to game, forcing passes are on unless they (the preemptors) are VUL and you are NONVUL; e.g. Pass-Pass-3D-DBL; 5D-Pass.....forcing

AFTER A SINGLE RAISE

Opener can create a forcing pass situation after a single raise by:

- (1) Bidding a new suit at the three level, AND having responder accept this game try. However, if responder refuses and opener bids game anyway, a forcing pass is in effect.

If the opponents reach game BEFORE you do in this type of auction, there are NO forcing passes in effect because you have NOT stated that you would get to game, i.e. responder might have REJECTED the game try.

In these specific cases, double by opener says that he would have bid game anyway; responder may pass or pull.

Double by responder is a much more difficult thing. If we treat this as a normal non-forcing situation, responder's double would be in the TRANSFERABLE VALUES category, i.e. he would have ACCEPTED the game try and so has most of his values OUTSIDE the enemy suit. This idea is certainly valid and playable.

Or you might reason as follows: Opener went out of his way to show a second suit. Responder's values are all in the UNBID SUIT and the ENEMY SUIT. The bad guys have made a mistake. Why can we not impose full punishment by doubling for PENALTY? If you like this analysis better, then you really have no secure action when you have the other hand type (i.e. the TRANSFERABLE VALUES hand that would have accepted the trial bid); I guess you could double for PENALTY with that hand, hoping they will go down. Opener will virtually NEVER take out a PENALTY DOUBLE at this level when it means going to the five-level.

EOK RECOMMENDATION:

Maintain the same rules as always; treat this as a PASS=NF so DOUBLE IS TRANSFERABLE VALUES situation. In my opinion, the scenario has not changed so drastically from normal NON-FORCING PASS situations to merit a change in the basic structure of rules. Note that you still get SOME of your juicy penalties when opener can double to announce that he was always going to bid game anyway; you will pass that double.

To summarize: if your side has NOT actually accepted a game invitation after a three-level trial bid, doubles by both partners are NOT for penalty. They simply show extra values, normally without a powerful holding in the enemy suit.

- (2) Bidding 3NT after a single MAJOR raise. You might have a second suit and slam interest or a 6331 type where it is too bulky to cue-bid the enemy suit. Responder is encouraged to double with ANY BAD HAND; i.e. he does NOT need trump tricks. His pass is at least moderately encouraging; i.e. definitely NOT trump tricks.
- (3) Cue-bidding the opponent's suit, which invariably shows SHORTAGE.

- (4) Leaping to game VUL vs NONVUL (according to Kantar).

According to EOK:

A leap to game by opener (or by responder, after a single raise by opener) is to be treated as primarily DISTRIBUTIONAL. It does NOT ask for the "raiser's" cooperation. The guy who leaps to game may be intending to double his opponents UNILATERALLY after luring them into a PHANTOM SACRIFICE. Thus, he is not expecting a TRANSFERABLE VALUES DOUBLE from "raiser" and is planning to PASS/DOUBLE FOR PENALTY/BID ON by himself.

The only thing that "raiser" might do in such a situation is DOUBLE FOR PENALTY, i.e. real trump tricks and/or enough values to suggest that the opponents are going down.

This sort of situation is a SPECIAL CASE, one in which normal NFP rules do NOT apply. In brief: the guy who leaps to game after being raised (1M-2M;4M, or 1x-1M;2M-4M) is the CAPTAIN. The captain's partner may ONLY pass or double for penalty. If the CAPTAIN wanted to hear from the CREW about future OFFENSIVE prospects, he would NOT have jumped directly to game.

- (5) Bidding a new suit at the four-level (according to Kantar).

According to EOK:

Take: 1H-(1S)-2H-(2S); 4m ... This should indeed establish a force. Opener is showing concentration in two long suits (at least five-five). There is reason to believe that if the opponents can make their higher contract, opener's side can bid on with profit as a save or make. And if they are going down, we ought to double, if only to protect our likely plus.

But: 1S-(2H)-2S-(3H); 4m ... is NOT A JUMP. Maybe this makes a difference. Opener may not be certain he can make 4S here but would like to tell responder that he has a second suit. Of course, the partnership is in game arbitrarily if the opponents stop bidding (and that is the case for playing that future passes are forcing) but as a practical matter, the opponents will often bid 4H for a variety of reasons. It is not unreasonable to treat this as more of a GAMBLING situation, another SPECIAL CASE.

Responder may DOUBLE for penalty and may bid higher than the opponents when he has a double fit. Or he may pass when he is not sure of which way to go. It is almost as if that four-level new suit was a game try; it was NOT particularly strong, after all. Opener may be intending to DOUBLE himself to say that he was expecting to make game; responder would then be invited to PASS or PULL according to his hand (normally, he would PASS). Thus, in my opinion, this SPECIAL CASE is a HYBRID. Opener has given up CAPTAINCY with his four-level-bid; responder may DOUBLE for PENALTY, BID ONE MORE, or simply PASS. If responder chooses to PASS, Opener may double to bring his side back into the auction, but he too may PASS. In this example auction, Opener may continue over 4H with 4S. That WOULD establish a subsequent force.

Take: 1H-(1S)-2H-(3S); 4m ... Also NOT A JUMP. But here the opponents can outbid you on the four-level (and probably will). This is still one of these HYBRID cases. Responder may DOUBLE for PENALTY, BID ONE MORE, or PASS (NF). Opener may double to bring his side back into the auction, but he too may PASS. The interesting variation is that Opener may continue by bidding 5H or 5m. In my opinion, these bids would NOT establish a force. A bid of 4NT instead, WOULD establish a subsequent force. Thus Opener may show extra length to ensure playing in the RIGHT SUIT without risking a silly result later when responder thinks he MUST double or bid on. This HYBRID situation stresses the GAMBLING element in bridge. It is often a question of WHO MAKES THE LAST GUESS.

AFTER A LIMIT RAISE

- (1) Kantar: If opener bids a game over competition to the right, no forcing passes by the limit raiser, but forcing passes apply to the opener, VUL vs NONVUL.

According to EOK:

If the limit raise is based on HCP (as most of us play) and not merely distribution, then we are really in a situation where SOMEONE ACCEPTS A GAME INVITATION with extra values. While it is true that some of our extra values may be distributional, does it really pay to allow the opponents to play undoubled after we bid a game based on what figures to be more than half the high cards in the deck. If they can make theirs and we were planning to make ours (ACCEPTANCE), should we not either DOUBLE or BID ONE MORE (which should be cheap)?

Thus, for me, this IS a FORCING PASS SITUATION based on the MATHEMATICS OF BRIDGE, i.e. there is so little to gain by PASSING it out that it pays to do SOMETHING.

- (2) Kantar: After a limit raise, opener can create a forcing pass by cue-bidding, bidding a new suit, or bidding 3NT.

According to EOK:

The auction is ALREADY FORCING, so new suits are simply to help responder judge what to do when the opponents save (he may DOUBLE FOR PENALTY/BID ON/OR MAKE FORCING PASS). The new suit bid MAY turn out to be a slam try if opener follows with something strong next time, but it is for the time being a HELP PARTNER bid. 3NT is a CLEAR slam try and so is a SHORTAGE CUE-BID.

- (3) Kantar: A forcing pass is created on both players if the opponents compete to the five-level.

According to EOK:

We were forced after we accepted the limit raise invitation. This rule (3) applies even if we don't accept the limit raise AND there is no evidence to suggest that opener has psyched (e.g. opponents are at the five-level at UNFAV vul AND we did NOT accept the game invitation).

DIRECT RAISE FROM ONE TO FOUR

Opener can create a forcing pass auction after a preemptive game raise only by bidding a new suit or cue-bidding.

e.g. (a) 1H-Pass-4H-4S

Pass	Non-forcing
DBL	Transferable values
5H	No forcing passes
5m	Forcing passes follow

(b) 1H-2S-4H-4S

Pass	Non-forcing, because there was no cue-bid
DBL	Transferable values
5H	No forcing passes follow
5m	Forcing passes follow

AFTER A ONE-OVER-ONE RESPONSE

- (1) Opener invites game and responder accepts. Forcing pass in effect.
- (2) Responder invites game and opener accepts. Forcing pass in effect.
- (3) Opener invites game and responder does not accept. No forcing pass.
- (4) Responder invites game and opener does not accept. No Forcing Pass.
- (5) A cue-bid by opener creates forcing pass.
- (6) Opener raises to game or jump raises to game after a weak jump overcall. Forcing passes are in effect only by opener, VUL vs NONVUL (so says Kantar).

According to EOK:

The vulnerability does not matter; what is important is the NATURE OF THE RAISE. If it is defined as HCP, passes are forcing; if it is defined as distributional and tightly limited, there is no reason to treat a pass BY THAT HAND as forcing. Nor is there any reason to treat his partner's pass as forcing since he can do the right thing facing a well-defined hand.

- (7) Opener makes a single raise and responder bids game. Forcing passes by the responder, VUL vs NONVUL, or by either player if "sound of bidding" warrants such a notion. So says Kantar.

According to EOK:

This is exactly the same case as: 1H-(1S)-2H-(2S); 4H.
Responder will usually have a distributional hand and is on his own and may make a unilateral PENALTY DOUBLE or bid on, as he planned to do. Opener is invited to make a PENALTY DOUBLE of his own but he is otherwise expected to PASS. There are no FORCING PASSES. This is a variation of the SPECIAL CASE.

- (8) Opener's side voluntarily bids game with no established fit. All subsequent passes by both partners are forcing.
- (9) If both sides have an established fit, and both sides bid game, and there have been no weak jump overcalls, takeout, responsive or negative doubles, forcing passes are in effect when:
 - (a) VUL vs NONVUL (by the unlimited hand only);
 - (b) Opener leaped from one to four in partner's suit showing a big balanced hand;
 - (c) The "sound of the bidding" demands it (they are sacrificing);
 - (d) Your side clearly has the preponderance of high cards.

So says Kantar.

According to EOK:

(a) does not ring true. No one has shown the preponderance of high cards. Everyone may be a trick or two beyond their depth and gambling slightly. Passes are NONFORCING but DOUBLES show TRANSFERABLE VALUES and express an opinion about "ownership" of the hand.

AFTER A TWO-OVER-ONE RESPONSE

If your two-over-one response is forcing to game, all passes by either player are forcing until you bid a game or double the opponents.

If you play a standard two-over-one response (10+ H.C.P.) then:

(1) This response creates a forcing pass at the two-level unless:

- (a) opener has rebid his suit (not forcing)
- (b) responder has given non-forcing two-level preference.

(2) A two-over-one response creates a force at the three-level unless opener rebids his original suit or makes a non-forcing raise of responder's suit.

(3) Kantar: A two-over-one response creates a forcing pass at the three-level unless the responder has previously limited his hand by:

- (a) giving simple preference to opener's first suit
- (b) making non-forcing raise of opener's second suit
- (c) making a nonforcing rebid of 2NT
- (d) rebidding his original suit

For EOK:

A two-over one response creates a forcing pass only through the level at which responder promised to rebid. Thus, if a 2C response was forcing to 2NT, any opposing bid higher than 2NT kills the force on the 2C bidder's side. If 2C was forcing to game unless responder were to rebid precisely 3C, any opposing bid higher than 3C removes the force. This is true unless opener showed extra values, in which case, the auction is forcing to game and the force is on virtually forever.

NOTE: These principles apply to COMPETITIVE 2/1 RESPONSES [1H-(1S)-2C], and in these cases, once the "safety level" has been passed, a DOUBLE by both partners shows extra (game-forcing) values that cannot otherwise be expressed. A raise by Opener of a competitive 2/1 in a minor is NOT FORCING. With a better hand, Opener can pass below the 3m level but must take action if past the "safety level"...

For example: 1H-(1S)-2C-(2S):
Pass is forcing; a raise to 3C is not

However: 1H-(1S)-2C-(3S):
Pass is not forcing and neither is a raise to 4C. Opener must double or cue-bid or jump raise or bid a new suit or rebid his own suit in order to force.

NOTE: If the competitive 2/1 (new suit) was 2H or 2S, a raise IS FORCING.

The presumption is that if Responder found a fit for his major, he was going to go on to game. Not so in the minors, where eleven tricks may be too ambitious. Remember that a simple raise of the minor in competition just shows some trumps.

THREE-LEVEL FORCING BIDS

Responder makes a two-over-one and fourth hand competes at the three level:

- (1) A pass by Opener creates a force if the opponent's suit is lower-ranking than Responder's.
- (2) If Responder's original new suit response is at the three- or four-level (as opposed to the two-level), forcing passes are on throughout.

But if Responder was showing weakness with a three-level jump in competition, no forcing passes are in effect.

REMOVING PARTNER'S DOUBLE

After a fit has been established or one player has shown a totally independent suit, passing and then bidding is stronger than bidding at once. Pass expresses doubt, and that concern COULD be about slam potential. The auction now becomes quantitative.

Before a fit has been established, a forcing pass indicates at least a partial fit with partner, but doubt as to whether to go on. Raising partner is somewhat forward-going.

Exception: You open a major, partner responds with two-of-a-minor and right hand opponent bids at the four-level. A pass is forcing to allow responder to show support for opener. Opener's support bid over double does not promise extras. Opener's pass over the interference shows tolerance for responder's suit.

THE REDOUBLE

<u>WEST</u>	<u>NORTH</u>	<u>EAST</u>	<u>SOUTH</u>
1H	DBL	RDBL	

- (1) If South bids, and West and North pass, East must act. West's pass is forcing. EOK says only through 2H (in this example; through 3m if 1m opened). Beyond that level, double by both partners is COOPERATIVE TAKEOUT.
- (2) If South bids and West makes a non-jump bid ahead of the redoubler (indicating a weak distributional opener), the partnership is forced to the two-level in opener's first suit. This is Kantar's idea; I strongly disagree. Why should East not be able to play in a makable contract in Opener's second suit?
- (3) If the redoubler limits himself with a non-forcing bid at his second opportunity, all forcing pass sequences are off.
- (4) If the first bid after the redouble is made by the doubler, and there doubler does not make a single raise, forcing passes are in effect through the three-level of opener's suit.
- (5) If opener jumps at his second opportunity (in front of the redoubler) he shows an offensive hand with little defense (6-5). All forcing passes are off. So says Kantar.

EOK:

Since RDBL shows a balanced hand, there will ALWAYS be enough fit to BID ON or enough strength to DOUBLE. Thus, in direct opposition to Kantar, EOK says that Forcing passes are DEFINITELY in effect.

AGAINST ARTIFICIAL CONVENTIONS

- (1) After an **Unusual 2NT** overall has been doubled, the opponents cannot play the hand at the THREE- or FIVE-level undoubled. They can play undoubled at the FOUR-level. A Kantar rule; EOK: I think it may be worth trying, since nothing seems to be perfect here. Much will depend on what your DOUBLE of 2NT shows. For me, this is GENERAL VALUES - not ONLY minor suit defense, so there is a strong case for NF at the FOUR-level. We may not be able to double with profit and may not be able to make anything our way.
- (2) After a **Michaels Cuebid** for the majors has been doubled, the opponents cannot play undoubled at the TWO- or FOUR-level but they can at the three-level. If responder is a passed hand the auction is forcing through the two-level. If opener gets in the way of the doubler, by bidding ahead of him in a FORCING PASS situation, then forcing pass sequences are off (Opener is distributional). But in a NONFORCING situation, a bid shows extra strength AND shape, while a DOUBLE shows all-around values unsuitable for a directional call.

NOTRUMP OVERCALLS AND OPENING BIDS

After a 1NT overcall has been doubled all runouts create forcing pass sequences through the level of 2D only (says EOK).

However, when the notrump bidder rescues himself there are no forcing passes (Kantar). EOK: forcing passes through 2D.

THE OVERCALL

If the overcaller bids a new suit at the four-level opposite a partnership that is limited, a force is created for the partnership.

VUL vs NONVUL, forcing passes are "on" if both sides reach game, the opponents are limited, and no game-forcing cue-bids are available to the overcalling side. EOK: not clear that this should be so but can't be far wrong to play this one this way.

THE TAKEOUT DOUBLE

A two-level cue-bid by the responder creates a force through the three-level of the next ranking suit if the opponents compete further, e.g. 1C-DBL-P-2C: is forcing through 3D, but not higher.

A three-level cue-bid by responder creates a game force.

A jump to game by responder to a takeout double creates a forcing pass auction unless the doubler's side is NONVUL vs VUL. So says Kantar. EOK: NO FORCING PASSES unless we bid 3NT to make, more or less on POWER. Jumps to game are semi-PRE. The game bidder may double to announce that he was planning to make his contract. The takeout doubler may double to announce that he thinks his side should be taking further action (including a penalty pass by responder).

If the responder (to the takeout double) bids game without jumping at his first opportunity, forcing pass auctions are created only VUL vs NONVUL (Kantar).

EOK: NO FORCING PASSES; act as above.

A non-forcing jump by the responder to the takeout double does not institute forcing passes.

A nonforcing jump followed by a bid of a new suit by the takeout doubler creates a forcing pass situation.

After a takeout double followed by competition and a pass from partner, the takeout doubler can create a forcing pass by cue-bidding or by jumping to game.

After a takeout double of an opening bid, followed by a one-level or two-level response which has been doubled for penalties by doubler's side, forcing passes are in effect through the two-level. If a three-level response has been doubled, forcing passes forever. So says Kantar.

EOK: (1C)-DBL-(1H)-DBL ... just shows a moderate hand with four hearts. There are NO FORCING PASSES here.

After a takeout double followed by a responsive double, forcing passes exist if (1) the takeout doubler's side bids game; (2) the opponents bid to the five-level or higher.

THE NEGATIVE DOUBLE

If responder makes a negative double, forcing passes begin after the opener's side reaches game or the opponents wind up at the five-level or higher (Kantar).

EOK: A negative double of 3S or higher sets up FORCING PASSES for Opener's side. In such cases, a double by opener is no longer Responsive, but rather a penalty suggestion, which may be based on a misfit for the suits expected from Responder. A double by Responder is no longer "extra values." Just the opposite.

AFTER A PREEMPT IS RAISED TO FIVE OVER A TAKEOUT DOUBLE

Given that this is a Forcing Pass situation, the discussion can't really end here.

There are at least two main schemes worth considering here:

- (1) Pass indicates at least five-level interest with two places to play: doubler bids cheapest suit at five-level with some extra values, bids 5NT or cue-bids with more, bids suit slam with a strong one-suiter, doubles again with normal values.

Double indicates a poor offensive hand in context (parameters are a partnership matter).

Pass then pull to suit is strong; pull to 5NT is strain seeking; pull to cue-bid involves higher suits.

Five-level bid is positive but based on distribution.

- (2) Pass requests a second double, which advancer will most often pass: if doubler does not honour this request he is showing a hand strong enough to bid five more or less by himself.

Double indicates five-level interest with at least two places to play: this double will often be passed, but otherwise doubler bids his cheapest playable suit at five-level with some extra values, bids 5NT or cue-bids with more, bids suit slam with a strong one-suiter.

Pass then pull to a suit is strong; pull to 5NT is strain-seeking; pull to cue-bid involves higher suits.

Five-level bid is positive but based on distribution.

SUMMARY of FORCING PASS IDEAS

(1) If a PASS would be (according to your partnership's rules) NONFORCING, then a DOUBLE would NOT be for PENALTY. Instead, a DOUBLE in this sort of NF situation would be an attempt to get your side BACK INTO THE BIDDING. Remember that if you PASS and the auction is agreed to be NONFORCING, the bidding could end when the hand BELONGS TO YOUR SIDE.

(2) What does such a DOUBLE (in a NF auction) show?

It shows "two-way" values: which means ...

"extra strength that will be useful on BOTH offense and DEFENSE - aces and kings - NOT "slow" defensive values in the enemy suit(s), which would be good only for DEFENSE.

Remember that although your partner will often leave your "two-way" double alone and PASS for PENALTY, he IS allowed to remove it with special distribution (such as an extra trump or two for his bidding so far). So with KQ10 of trumps and two aces, you can't afford to double without some risk that your partner will take it out when they are going down. The higher the level that you double in a NF auction, however, the more likely that your partner will NOT take it out, so you might well DOUBLE 5D with that sort of hand (trump tricks) but should NOT DOUBLE 4H when partner is much more likely to take out to 4S (for example).

These "two way" doubles are also known as:

"transferable values" doubles, or
"one for the road" doubles, or
"competitive" doubles, or
"action" doubles

(3) If all of this seems too difficult for your partnership, then forget the whole thing and simply play all doubles (that you can't define as TAKEOUT) for PENALTY!

(4) If you like the idea of "two-way" doubles, this is how you go about approaching them:

(a) Decide whether your side is in a FORCING PASS situation.

(b) If the answer is YES, your DOUBLE is PENALTY and your pass invites an opinion from partner. In most cases, you will respect his opinion and PASS if he then DOUBLES, but if you remove his DOUBLE (at the five-level or higher), you are showing a STRONGER hand than if you had made the same bid without passing (if there IS an agreed trump suit) or a MORE FLEXIBLE hand than if you had made the same bid without passing (if there is NO agreed trump suit).

(c) If you are NOT in a FORCING PASS situation, DOUBLE is "two-way"! - "transferable values" style.

(d) Same as (c) applies in REOPENING position if NOT in a FORCING PASS situation.