

play bridge

A section designed with the newer player in mind.

A way of life

March means the departure of many of our snowbirds. Every year we have a farewell luncheon for those flocking north. We usually draw about 50 tables.

Their leaving means our games are smaller, but husband Rick and I are in our sixth season in Florida and understand that migration is a way of life.

There are two calls that are “a way of life” for me. If you could keep two calls handy in your bidding box, what would they be? Mine are the Pass and the Double cards.

Do you have your green card?

The pass is probably the most under-utilized bid in bridge. People do not like to defend, so they bid one more just to see what happens. Bad things can happen, though — the opponents can double you for a big score, you can go set when you were about to set them or you can cause them to bid one more (perhaps even at the game level) successfully.

When you face this decision, you have to ask yourself, “Do I have anything to say to my partner that hasn’t already been said?” If the answer is no, you should pass. The answer might be yes if you have an extra trump, extra high card points, or extra distribution. Then you might consider bidding. You also have to ask yourself if bidding one more will be successful. Will you make your contract? Will you go down one for a better score than letting them play? Are the opponents already too high?

What do you see?

Let’s look at this auction:

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	2♠	3♥	?

With minimum values South might compete with a six-card suit or longer or with a two-suited hand. With minimum values and 5-3-3-2, 5-4-2-2 or even 5-4-3-1 distribution, South should pass as he has already described an opener and has nothing more to say. As far as he knows, his last chance for a plus score is defending 3♥.

With maximum values, South is likely just to bid 4♠. With extra values and when game is uncertain (about 16–18 points), South should double. This is a game try that allows the partnership to compete in a partscore, to bid game or to defend a doubled contract.

After the double, the decision for the final contract will rest with North, who can look at his hand in terms of minimum or maximum and in terms of offense or defense. With ♠8 7 5 ♥Q J 4 ♦K 7 3 ♣K 8 6 3 he should defend. With ♠Q 8 6 3 ♥6 ♦J 10 4 3 ♣A 8 7 4 he should bid 4♠. With ♠8 7 5 3 ♥6 ♦Q 9 6 3 ♣K 7 3 2 he should bid 3♠.

A view from the other side

Let’s look at this same auction and put ourselves in North’s position.

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	2♠	3♥	Pass
Pass	?		

When should North bid again? I bet you already know the answer — when he has something more to say. One thing he knows is that South is likely to have a balanced



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minimum hand since he did not compete over 3♥. If North has extra distribution and believes 3♠ will be successful (either as a make or down one against their contract), he should bid.

If North is maximum and has some prospects of defense, he should double. This is not a command; it is a suggestion. It says to partner, “I believe we have more points than they do and have some chance of being successful defending 3♥. If you have a normal opening bid, we should defend. If you have opened a substandard hand or one based on distribution, feel free to bid.” All that is said in just one call.

A flexible bid

The beauty of the double is that it is the only call that shows extra values and allows you to defend or declare. There is no guarantee that all your doubles will be successful. Partner might leave it in when he should have pulled and vice versa. In the long run, however, you will find your competitive bidding judgment getting stronger. □

Notes from ACBL Accredited Teachers