

Passing is an Option in Bridge

Bridge is a Bidder's Game

- Aggressive bidders play winning bridge.
- A wise person once said that “Sometimes the most powerful thing you can say is nothing at all.”
- On some occasions, at least, this may be true in bridge.
- When you make a bid, you promise certain things about your hand. If you cannot deliver those things it is best to be silent. Use the pass card!

Consider This Hand

You are about to open the bidding, but your RHO bids 1♦.

♠ K J 4 2

♥ A 2 (14 points)

♦ K 10 5

♣ K 8 6 3

- When an opponent opens the bidding, there are two ways for you to get into the auction.
- A takeout double
- Or an overcall.
- This hand does not fit either of those ways.
- You must pass.

Suppose the Auction Goes Like This:

North	East	South	West
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
1nt		dbld	
♠ K J 4 2			
♥ A 2		(14 points)	
♦ K 10 5			
♣ K 8 6 3			

- Your double after passing shows this hand.
- You expect the opponents are minimum.
- You have the two unbid suits and opening strength.

Let's Change the Auction a Little

North	East	South	West
1♠	pass	2♥	pass
2nt	pass		

♠ K J 4 2

♥ A 2 (14 points)

♦ K 10 5

♣ K 8 6 3

- Now you are glad you passed.
- If they are playing standard, they have a minimum of 22 points.
- Partner has a max of 4 points.
- If they are playing 2/1, partner has zero.

Consider This Situation

North	East	South	West
1♥	pass	2♥	pass
pass	2♠		

♠ J 8 7 5 4

♥ A 9 5 2

♦ 2 (12 points)

♣ A K 3

- You might have overcalled that weak spade suit.
- But now you know they have a minimum count.
- Partner has some points.
- West will know you have something like this and you are bidding his points as well as your own.

Consider This Situation

North	East	South	West
1♥	pass	2♥	pass
pass	dble		

♠ J 8 7
♥ A 9 5 2
♦ Q 9 7 (14 points)
♣ A K 3

- You would have opened this hand 1♣, in the first seat.
- But when RHO opens you must pass.
- When the opponents show a minimum, you know partner has some points.
- Use a less than perfect takeout double.

Use the Pass Card After You Preempt

- When you preempt at any level, you have described your hand.
- Good suit and little, if any, defensive values.
- Partner is boss.
- Unless partner makes a forcing bid, you will pass for the remainder of the auction.

You Preempt With This Hand

North East South West
2♥ 3♦ dble pass

♠ 8 7 2

♥ K Q J 9 5 2

♦ 2 (6 points)

♣ 10 8 3

- You look at your hand and say, “I have no defensive value.”
- You want to bid 3♥.
- Resist the urge.
- Partner knows your hand.
- She’s in charge.

Another Example

North	East	South	West
3♥	3♠	4♥	4♠
♠ 7 2			
♥ K Q 9 8 5 3 2			
♦ Q J 2			(8 points)
♣ 3			

- You make a reasonable 3-level preempt.
- Partner raised your suit and opponents bid higher.
- Don't even think about bidding 5♥.
- Partner knows your hand.
- Any further bidding is up to her.
- Perhaps your preempt has pushed them into a contract they cannot make.

Third-Seat Openings

- We all know that you can open light after two passes.
- You surely should do so with the right hand.
- Three reasons to open light in the third seat:
 - To fight for your share of a partscore.
 - To use up the opponent's bidding space.
 - To give partner a guide for the opening lead.
- If your hand won't do two of these things, you probably should pull out the pass card.

3rd Seat Example 1

North East South West
pass pass ??

♠ A 7 2
♥ K 8 5
♦ Q 6 4 2 (11 points)
♣ Q 5 3

- You have 11 points.
- Should you open 1♦?
- Probably not.
- You want a share of a part score, but...
- You are not using up opponents' bidding space.
- You have no particular desire for a diamond lead.
- Pass is best.

3rd Seat Example 2

North East South West
pass pass ??

♠ 7 2

♥ A K Q 5

♦ 6 4 2 (11 points)

♣ Q 10 5 3

- You have 11 points.
- You should open 1♥.
- You definitely want a heart lead.
- Your bid uses up a fair bit of the opponent's bidding spade.
- It would be even better if your suit was spades.

3rd Seat Example 3

North East South West
pass pass ??

♠ A 7 2

♥ Q 5 3

♦ K Q 10 2 (11 points)

♣ 8 5 3

- You have 11 points.
- You should open 1♦.
- You want partner to lead a diamond.
- You can pass partner's 1-level bid.

3rd Seat Example 4

North East South West
pass pass ??

♠ A 2

♥ Q 5 3

♦ K Q 10 2 (11 points)

♣ 8 7 5 3

- You have 11 points.
- Should you open 1♦?
- Maybe, but it is questionable.
- You want partner to lead a diamond.
- If partner bids a spade, you'll have to bid 1nt.
- That might be a difficult contract.

4th Seat Use the Rule of 15

North East South West
pass pass pass ??

♠ Q 9 8 6 4

♥ A K 3

♦ J 2 (10 points)

♣ 9 5 3

- If your points and your spades = 15 or more, open in 4th seat
- This hand has 10 hcp + 5 spades.
- Open 1♠.

4th Seat Use the Rule of 15

North East South West
pass pass pass ??

♠ 8 6 4

♥ A K 3

♦ Q 2 (12 points)

♣ K 9 7 5 3

- This hand makes the rule of 15, but opening 1♣ is dangerous.
- You would open this hand in 1st, 2nd or 3rd seats.
- But it is questionable in 4th seat.
- You should be thinking about your rebid.

4th Seat Use the Rule of 15

North East South West
pass pass pass ??

♠ 8 6 4

♥ A K 3

♦ Q 2 (12 points)

♣ K 9 7 5 3

- This hand makes the rule of 15, but opening 1♣ is dangerous.
- You would open this hand in 1st, 2nd or 3rd seats.
- But it is questionable in 4th seat.
- You should be thinking about your rebid.

In Competitive Bidding

North East South West

1♥ pass 2♥ 2♠

♠ 8 6 4

♥ A K 9 8 3

♦ Q 2 (12 points)

♣ K 9 5

- You have an adequate 1st seat opening, but it is minimum.
- Leave 3♥ up to partner who has somewhere between 6 and 10 points.
- This is especially true if you are vulnerable.
- You must trust partner.

In Competitive Bidding

North East South West

1♥ pass 2♥ 2♠

♠ 6

♥ A K 9 8 5 3

♦ Q 2 (15 points)

♣ A Q 9 5

- Here you have a much better hand.
 - An extra heart
 - A nice 4-card side suit
 - 15 points
- Show your hand with extra values by bidding 3♣.

Final Thoughts

- Bridge is a bidder's game.
- You must be willing to take a reasonable risk and push the opponents in a competitive bidding situation.
- Nevertheless, using the pass card is an option.
- Judging when to use it and when to push on is a skill good bridge players develop.
- Vulnerability is always a factor.