



Deciphering the Backs of the Bidding Box Cards by Bob Gruber

Each of the cards in the Bidding Box has information on the back. Not surprisingly, the information on the back is usually directly related to the information on the front. One exception is the green PASS card. It shows the penalty for defeated contracts. There is, however, a tenuous relationship in that the penalty is if the contract is simply passed out, not doubled or redoubled.

PASS The back of this green card has 3 columns indicating the penalty for defeated contracts, both non-vulnerable and vulnerable, but not doubled or redoubled. The leftmost column, which has no header, has 13 rows numbered -1 through -13, representing the number of **undertricks**. The middle column, with a header of Roman numeral “I” to indicate non-vulnerable, is the corresponding penalty for that number of non-vulnerable undertricks. Since the non-vulnerable penalty is 50 points per trick, this column starts at 50 and goes by increments of 50, ending at 650. The rightmost column has a header of Roman numeral “II” to indicate **vulnerable**. At 100 points per trick vulnerable, this column runs from 100 to 1300 in increments of 100.

X (Dbl) Like the green PASS card, the back of this red card has 3 columns for non-vulnerable and vulnerable defeated contracts, but this time for **doubled** contracts. Again, the leftmost column lacks a header and the rows contain -1 through -13 for the number of undertricks. The middle column, headed by an “I,” shows the penalty for doubled non-vulnerable undertricks, leaving the rightmost column, headed by “II,” to show the penalty for doubled, **vulnerable** undertricks.

XX (ReDbl) The back of this blue card, like the green PASS and red “X” card, has 3 columns for non-vulnerable and vulnerable defeated contracts, but this time if the contract is both doubled and **redoubled**. The same 3 columns are present as the prior 2 entries, namely, number of undertricks, a column headed by an “I” to indicate non-vulnerable and give the penalty for non-vulnerable doubled and redoubled undertricks, and lastly, a column headed by “II” to indicate **vulnerable** and give the penalty for vulnerable doubled and redoubled undertricks.

STOP! The back of the red STOP! card indicates when it should be used—before a skip bid, i.e. a bid that skips one or more levels in the auction—and how long the left hand opponent should pause. That pause is normally 10 seconds and is not dependent upon the STOP! card remaining on the table the whole time. In other words, wait about 10 seconds even if the person immediately puts the STOP! card back in the bidding box.

ALERT The back of the blue ALERT card explains that the partner of the player who made an alertable call must alert the opponents before his/her right hand opponent calls. It further states that the alerting side is responsible for ensuring the opponents noticed the alert, and that every review of the auction must include all alerts made.

1♣

The backs of the cards for contracts ranging from 1♣ to 7NT show the scores for these contracts making under varying conditions. They all have 7 columns, but a varying number of lines, depending upon the number of overtricks that are available. The back of the 1♣ card is shown on the next page—with colored borders artificially added. The 7 columns have 3 groupings:

Group 0. The 1st group is the leftmost column by itself (with no header) and indicates whether the contract made exactly (represented by an equal sign [=]) or the number of overtricks (represented by +1 up to +6). Equal sign [=] is for the contract making with no overtricks

Group I. The next 3 columns are the 2nd group, headed loosely by an “I,” and give the scores for non-vulnerable, making contracts.

Group II. The rightmost 3 columns, headed loosely by “II,” are the 3rd group and give the scores for vulnerable, making contracts. The 3 columns in Group II are printed



in **boldface** to further indicate their **vulnerable** status.

	I			II		
	PASS	X	XX	PASS	X	XX
=	70	140	230	70	140	230
+1	90	240	430	90	340	630
+2	110	340	630	110	540	1030
+3	130	440	830	130	740	1430
+4	150	540	1030	150	940	1830
+5	170	640	1230	170	1140	2230
+6	190	740	1430	190	1340	2630

Back of the 1♣ Card — Borders Added

Groups I & II have sub headers. These sub headers indicate whether the contract was simply passed out (PASS), or was doubled (X) or redoubled (XX).

An example from the 1♣ card may help illustrate these details. Looking at the sub headers and the “+3” line, we have:

	PASS	X	XX	PASS	X	XX
+3	130	440	830	130	740	1430

- 5NT +3 is the number of overtricks; in this case, 1♣ making 4
- 130 in the next column is the score for a non-vulnerable 1♣ contract making 4
- 440 in column 3 is the score for a non-vulnerable, doubled 1♣ contract making 4
- 830 in column 4 is the score for a non-vulnerable, doubled and redoubled 1♣ making 4
- 6♣ **130** in the next column is the score for a vulnerable 1♣ contract making 4
- 740** in column 6 is the score for a vulnerable, doubled 1♣ contract making 4
- 1430** in column 7 is the score for a vulnerable, doubled and redoubled 1♣ making 4
- 7NT

Summary of Bidding Box Card Backs

Each Bidding Box card has information on its back directly related to the information on the front. Make sure you’re looking at the back of the proper card. Undertricks are on the PASS, X (Double) & XX (Redouble) cards, whichever is appropriate for the doubled status of the contract. Making contracts are on the card for that contract. For making contracts:

1. The line that starts with an equal sign (=) is for the contract making exactly, no overtricks.
2. Lines that start with +1 through +6 are for that number of **overtricks**.
3. The vulnerability determines which group of columns to use:
Columns 2-4 are for **non-vulnerable** contracts; columns 5-7 are for **vulnerable** contracts.

The snippet below illustrates this point.

	PASS	X	XX	PASS	X	XX
non-vulnerable → =	70	140	230	70	140	230
+1 →	90	240	430	90	340	630
+2	110	340	630	110	540	1030

← vulnerable

4. Knowing the line (# overtricks column) and column group (vulnerability), use the doubled status to select the specific column.
For this contract, 1 overtrick (+1 line), **non-vulnerable** (columns 2-4), doubled (specifically column 3 where the header has an X) scores 240. If the contract were **vulnerable**, doubled and redoubled (**XX**), 1 overtrick would result in a score of 630.