

## COMPETITIVE DOUBLES

Competitive doubles are doubles at the two or three level that might be taken for business doubles, but actually have a more useful meaning. They are left in more often than takeout doubles, hence the different name. A competitive doubler must therefore be prepared for a leave-in of the double. Don't double with poor defensive potential. Similar doubles at the four level are primarily for business.

### Advancive Doubles

Responses to overcalls are "advances," and overcaller's partner is the "advancer." Doubles by advancer of a suit bid by RHO are "Advancive Doubles," also known as Advanced Responsive Doubles. It is wrong to call them Responsive Doubles, which are responses to a takeout double.

-- After opener's suit is raised to the two or three level

When partner overcalls and next hand raises opener, a business double would be very rare. Accordingly, we give the double a different meaning: "Advancive."

There are three situations: 1) one unbid major, 2) both majors unbid, and 3) both minors unbid.

1) When there is one unbid major:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♣/3♣	Dbl

This double shows a hand with both unbid suits, nominally 5-5, a tolerance for partner's suit in case he must rebid it, and enough strength to make a disaster unlikely. It denies three spades, so a later spade raise implies a good doubleton.

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	2♠	Dbl

East could have ♠8 ♥AQ973 ♦Q10842 ♣Q8.

This double can also be based on a five-card major and support for partner's minor instead of the unbid minor: ♠83 ♥AQ973 ♦Q8 ♣KQ84. If West bids 3♦, East has enough to bid 4♣. This sort of double is even more handy when the overcall is in diamonds, since advancer can return to diamonds at the three level if overcaller bids clubs.

2) When both majors are unbid:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	2♦	Dbl
1♣	1♦	2♣	Dbl

This double may be made with as little as 4-4 in the majors, provided advancer can support overcaller's suit at the three level. If overcaller bids a major in response to the double, advancer's retreat to the minor implies

only four cards in the major. Over a club raise (not a diamond raise), transfer advances may be used; see section 11-1, Transfer Advances .

3) When both minors are unbid, an Advancive double implies 5-5 in the minors but could have long diamonds only:

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	2♥	Dbl

East has ♠102 ♥3 ♦AJ876 ♣KJ984, too good a hand to pass but a doubtful spade raise. If the majors were reversed a pass would be right, because an Advancive double implies at least a doubleton or singleton high honor in partner's suit. Another possible hand for East: ♠Q4 ♥532 ♦AJ10832 ♣K6 Bidding 3♦ would deny spade support, but a spade raise doesn't look right. If West bids clubs, East can bid the diamonds. With a 2=3=2=6 hand, advancer must guess whether to raise spades or bid the clubs, since a double might result in an unwanted jump in diamonds by the overcaller.

-- After a new suit response by RHO

A double of the new suit is not a very useful call, so we use it as an Advancive double, with this particular one having the name of Snapdragon. There are four situations: 1) overcall in a major, unbid suit a major; 2) overcall in a major, unbid suit a minor; 3) overcall in a minor, unbid suit a major; and 4) overcall in a minor, unbid suit a minor. This double implies indecision whether to bid the fourth suit or raise.

1) Overcall in a major, unbid suit a major:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♦	Dbl

East has at least five hearts and a tolerance for spades: ♠Q2 ♥AJ7632 ♦42 ♣763. Rather than guess whether to bid 2♥ or 2♠, he makes an Advancive double to show this sort of hand. This example is about as weak as one can go, but the maximum is somewhat higher, anything short of cue bid strength. A 2♥ bid here would imply no tolerance for spades. The double denies three spades, so a later spade bid implies a good doubleton.

2) Overcall in a major, unbid suit a minor:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♥	Dbl

East has a tolerance for spades and a good diamond suit of at least six cards. As with 1), bidding the fourth suit would tend to deny a tolerance for partner's major. The double denies three spades.

3) Overcall in a minor, unbid suit a major:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♠	Dbl

West probably has five hearts and diamond support: ♠43 ♥AJ972 ♦QJ3 ♣432. The double does not deny good support for diamonds, nor does it imply six hearts. A heart bid would show six hearts, but would not deny diamond support.

4) Overcall in a minor, unbid suit a minor:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♦	2♥	Dbl

East implies six clubs and a tolerance for diamonds; West can take his pick. Here too, a 3♣ bid would imply no tolerance for diamonds.

### Competitive Doubles by Overcaller

When opener "reraises" his raised suit, or bids a new suit after being raised, an overcaller who has been raised may wish to try for game or merely want to compete further.

1) After an overcall in a major suit:

Overcaller's double is a game try if opener's rebid of a raised suit is in the suit just below the overcall suit:

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
3♥	Dbl - game try ("Maximal Double")		
	3♠ - competitive, not invitational		

If there is room between opener's rebid and the overcall suit, a new suit bid is a game try and a double is for business:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♣	2♠
3♣	Dbl - business		
	3♦/3♥ - game try, forcing		
	3♠ - competitive, not invitational		

Neither 3♦ nor 3♥ necessarily shows a suit. With a choice of two suits, as in this sequence, overcaller bids the suit in which a fit would be helpful (e.g., KJx). When there is only one suit available for the game try, the new-suit bid implies nothing about the suit:

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
3♦	3♥ - game try, forcing		

West may have any sort of holding for his 3♥ bid, which is a completely artificial (and Alertable) game try. West could really have a heart suit, of course, so East should bid 4♥ with a good raise and longer hearts than spades.

If opener's new suit bid is of lower rank than his first suit, overcaller can cue bid the first suit as a game try to avoid bidding a worthless suit, and a new-suit bid is natural and forcing:

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
3♣		Dbl - business	
		3♦ - game try	
		3♥ - second suit, forcing	
		3♠ - not invitational	

When opener's rebid is of higher rank than the overcall suit, or his suit has not been raised, a double is primarily for business:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
3♠		Dbl - business	

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	Pass	2♠
3♥		Dbl - business	

2) After an overcall in minor suit:

Game is less likely when the overcall suit is a minor, so the competitive double of a reraise carries a slightly different message: "I have too much to pass but don't know whether to bid or defend --what do you think?"

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♣	2♥	3♣
3♥		Dbl - optional double	
		4♣ - not invitational	

For the double, West has ♠AK2 ♥K4 ♦J2 ♣A98765. He wants to compete further, but doesn't want to miss a good penalty (and possibly incur one) by unilaterally bidding 4♣. East can pass or bid 4♣, as he sees fit. He might even bid 5♣ with something like ♠Q83 ♥A75 ♦86 ♣J10432, although strictly speaking this is not a game try double.

### Competitive Doubles by Opener

There are four situations for a competitive double by opener when an opposing overcall has been raised:

1) A major suit opening has been raised, and the opposing raise is in the suit just below opener's. A double here simply means opener wants to know if responder is minimum or maximum--a game try double:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
		Dbl - game try in spades	
		3♠ - not invitational	

The double serves to distinguish a merely competitive bid from a serious move toward game.

2) A major suit opening has been raised, and the opposing raise is in a suit other than the one ranking just below opener's:

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♣	2♥	3♣
Dbl - competitive double, for takeout			
3♦ - game try: ♠AK10 ♥AJ873 ♦A87 ♣65			
3♥ - just competing, not invitational			

The double implies that opener's suit has only four cards, and that he has support for the unbid suits (e.g., ♠K87 ♥AK87 ♦K8765 ♣3), but has no serious interest in game. Responder could have five spades or four diamonds, three hearts, and a minimum hand that could not compete further if opener passes. To make a game try, opener must bid a new suit, forcing, even when lacking four cards in the suit.

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
Dbl - ♠7 ♥KJ87 ♦AJ98 ♣AQ87			

A new suit bid would be a forcing game try, so South doubles to show a desire to compete with this sort of hand.

When the opposing suit is spades, a double at the three level is still a game try, but opener is well prepared to defend:

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

South hopes North can bid 4♥ but is quite willing to defend against 3♠. North will usually make a four level bid with a maximum raise, pass with a minimum. If in doubt, he passes with three-card support, bids with four, because the double implies a four-card suit.

3) A minor suit has been raised. In this case a double of any raised overcall is primarily for takeout:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♣	2♠
Dbl - ♠A ♥J873 ♦Q765 ♣AKQ3			

Unlike the double of a next-lower-ranking-suit following a major suit raise, this double is for takeout. A new suit would be forcing, but would imply a two-suited hand. The double is preferable when holding good support for both unbid suits. It promises four cards in a single unbid major, and at least 4-3 or 3-4 in spades-hearts when both majors are unbid. In the auction above, West could have four, or even five, hearts.

4) Responder has bid a new suit at the one level:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♠	2♦
Dbl - ♠AJ ♥KJ10 ♦J32 ♣AK1073			

South feels that the hand belongs to her side, but has no suitable bid. The only answer is a competitive double, asking partner to bid again.

When an overcall has not been raised, a direct double is for business, while a reopening double is "competitive":

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♥
Dbl - business			

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♥	1♠	Pass
2♣	2♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout: ♠KQ ♥65 ♦AKJ32 ♣K1087			

Reopening doubles at the three level are more penalty-oriented. Also, if the original response was 1NT or higher, but not a raise, all doubles are penalty-oriented.

### Competitive Doubles by Responder

Responder can also make a competitive double of an opposing raised overcall, or of an unraised overcall in the pass-out position:

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl - ♠42 ♥Q87 ♦A642 ♣K873	

North has too much to pass, so competes with a double that implies three-card support for opener, good defense, and good support for both unbid suits. With a hand weaker in high cards but better distribution (e.g., 1=3=4=5), an "unusual" 2NT is the right reopening bid.

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♠	2♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl - ♠AK832 ♥Q843 ♦3 ♣J42	

North has just the sort of hand implied by his double.

Reopening doubles of an unraised overcall are competitive doubles at the one or two level, business at the three level:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl - competitive double	

North might have ♠K8732 ♥97 ♦AK83 ♣J2 or ♠AKJ2 ♥J76 ♦J92 ♣873.

When the original response was 1NT or higher, and not a raise, all doubles are penalty-oriented.

### Business Doubles

In situations other than those described above, doubles are for business:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	2♠	Pass
Pass	3♣	Dbl - business (3♣ not a raise)	

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♣	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	3♣
Dbl - business (3♣ a delayed raise)			

If East had bid 3♣ immediately over 2♦, a double would be a competitive double. Similarly:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♣	Pass
Pass	2♠	3♣	Dbl - business

East's raise to 3♣ was not "immediate."

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♠
2♣	2♠	Dbl - business (1♠ a forced bid)	

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	Pass	2♣	Pass
Pass	2♠	Dbl - business	

This double is business for two reasons: 1) the spade bid being raised was a forced bid, not a voluntary bid, and 2) the raise to 2♠ was not "immediate."

When the opponents have bid a suit three times, a double by responder is always for business:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	2♣	2♦
2♥/3♣	3♦	Dbl - business	

Another way to put this is that a double is for business when opener has bid twice before the double (presumably describing his hand sufficiently).

When a bidder has denied the strength required to play at a higher contract than the doubled contract, then a double must be for business:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	2♦	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl - business			

South did not have quite enough to double 2♥ for business.

After a 1NT response, a double by either partner is for business.

When either partner has redoubled during an auction in which both have participated, subsequent doubles are for business:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	Dbl	Rdbl
2♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl - business double

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass
Pass	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl - business double			

However:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	1♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout (North has not previously acted)			

Doubles of back-in overcalls made after a single raise are usually competitive in the reopening position, for penalty in the direct position.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl - competitive, only four hearts			

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	3♣	Dbl - business	