

## TAKEOUT DOUBLES

A double of a natural suit opening bid or response, or of a new suit rebid by opener, is for takeout, asking partner to bid her longest suit. It implies an opening bid or better, shortness in the suit doubled, and preparedness for any response. Unlike an opening bid, you can count ruffing values for shortness in the opposing suit, so a takeout double with a singleton in that suit may be made with as little as 11 HCP. Partner will count on at least two-and-one-half defensive tricks.

For takeout doubles in reopening situations, see section 8-7, Reopening the Bidding.

The ideal distribution for a takeout double is 4-4-4-1, with a singleton in the opposing suit. A singleton is actually better than a void, because partner may pass the double. If he does, you can lead a trump. A 4-3-3-3 hand is a bad holding for a takeout double. It is usually better to pass such a hand if you lack the requirements for a notrump overcall. With extra strength, however, a double may be chanced. Double 1♣ with ♠KQ3 ♥AK3 ♦A1087 ♣432, but pass if the hand is weaker.

A double of 1♣ with good (4-4-4-1) shape can be quite light, since partner can respond at the one level. A double of 1♠, on the other hand, should be fairly sound. Vulnerability is also a factor, because light doubles are dangerous when vulnerable.

A marginal double should have four cards in any unbid major(s) and a singleton in the opposing suit. Lack of major suit length, or more cards in the opposing suit, calls for extra strength to compensate.

With length and strength in the opposing suit, just pass with an unbalanced hand or a hand too weak for a notrump overcall. You may prefer a pass even when holding values for a notrump overcall, especially when the opponents are vulnerable. They often get into trouble after this "trap pass." Section 8-8, Reopening Doubles of 1NT Responses and Rebids, shows one way that such trouble can be exploited.

Do not double an opening bid with a two-suited hand. Prefer an overcall, hoping to bid the other suit later. Some such hands qualify for a cue bid (see section 10-4, Direct Cue Bid Overcalls, and 10-6, Top-and-Bottom Cue Bids). When the opponents have bid two suits, then of course you can double with the other two suits. If they have bid a major and a minor, then the double implies four cards (or a weak five) in the unbid major. With a very good hand, however, it is all right to double--then bid the major--when the major is a good five-card suit.

A takeout double of a minor suit implies seven or more cards in the majors, but six cards are okay with extra strength. You can double 1♣ with ♠AJ3 ♥AQ7 ♦KJ1083 ♣42. With a weaker hand, just bid 1♦.

A takeout double of one major implies at least four cards in the other major. With only three-card support the doubler should have extra values in high cards (especially in that major) and a singleton in the opposing suit. A doubleton in the only unbid major would be very unusual, but sometimes there is no alternative. What else can you do but double when RHO opens 1♥ and you hold ♠AQ ♥42 ♦A10873 ♣AKJ4?

### New Suit After Doubling

A takeout double followed by a new suit bid may or may not show extra strength, depending on circumstances. Here are the possibilities:

	<u>Suit Doubled</u>	<u>Response to Double</u>	<u>Doubler's Rebid</u>
1)	A minor	The other minor	A major
2)	A minor	A major	The other minor
3)	A minor	A major	The other major
4)	A major	A minor	The other minor
5)	A major	A minor	The other major
6)	A major	The other major	A minor

Situation 1) has two variations, depending on whether the doubler's rebid is at the one or two level:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♦
1♥/1♠			

South can have a minimum if his hand is what partner expects A 5-4 holding in the majors and three-card support for diamonds. When the bidding has gone to the two level, however, the doubler should have a good suit and at least an extra king:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♣
2♥/2♠			

If South has a good suit, the expected 5-4 in the majors and three-card club support, an extra king is enough for this sequence. With a minimum, South must either overcall in the five-card major instead of doubling, or pass the 2♣ response.

Situation 2) has two variations that show the same sort of hand:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♥/1♠
Pass	2♦		

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♥/1♠
Pass	2♣		

West needs no more than a king over a minimum if she has what East will picture: four cards in the unbid major, three cards in East's major, a good five or six-card minor, and shortness in the opposing suit (i.e., a good 5-4-3-1 or 6-4-3-0 hand). Any deviation from this picture should have compensation in the form of extra high cards.

Situation 3) has two variations that are similar, except for one important difference:

South	West	North	East
1♣/1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠		

In this case the bidding is still at the one level and East can now show the unbid minor at the two level. West can have a minimum double with five spades, three hearts, and four cards in the unbid minor (as East will picture).

South	West	North	East
1♣/1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥		

Here the bidding is higher. If East wants to show the unbid minor now, he must go to the three level. Accordingly, West needs at least an extra king even with the expected hand: a 3-5-4-1 or 3-5-1-4 hand with a good five-card heart suit, three cards in spades, four cards in the unbid minor, and a singleton in opener's suit. With a weaker hand West must either pass a 1♠ response or just overcall with 1♥ instead of doubling.

Situation 4) has two variations that differ even more in strength:

South	West	North	East
1♥/1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦		

In this case West can have a minimum double if she has four cards in the unbid major, a singleton in opener's suit, two or three clubs, and five or six diamonds. She has not gone past 2♦, so she needs no more strength than a 2♦ overcall would entail (except that she has enough in high cards to justify a double).

South	West	North	East
1♥/1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣		

Here West must have a very strong hand, even with the expected four cards in the unbid major, good clubs, a few diamonds, and a singleton in opener's major. With a moderate hand (and perhaps a

singleton diamond), West could perhaps have made a top-and-bottom cue bid instead of doubling (see section 10-6).

Situation 5) has two variations that are similar, with one significant difference:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Pass	2♣/2♦
Pass	2♠		

East will picture a 5-2-3-3 hand, maybe 5-1-4-3 or 5-1-3-4, but not 6-1-3-3, with which an overcall is preferable. Obviously West has a strong hand; otherwise he would have bid 1♠ instead of doubling.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣/2♦
Pass	2♥		

In this case West could not overcall at the one level, so he might be stretching a bit for the double in a matchpoint game. In an IMP game the 2♥ bid shows a good hand, since he would presumably pass East's response with questionable strength. This sequence implies both a modest five-card heart holding and good minor suit support (else why not overcall 2♥?), so East can safely retreat to a minor suit contract if short in hearts.

Situation 6) is always strong, but one variation is very powerful:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣/2♦		

West implies three-card spade support and a very good hand. She could pass the response with a moderate double, and she needs a good hand to double without four cards in the unbid major anyway. With five spades East can rebid 2♠ with no strength at all, and can jump to 3♠ with as little as ♠Q8732 ♥652 ♦K4 ♣J76.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣/3♦		

West must have an extremely good hand, doubling with only three hearts and going to the three level all by himself. East can now bid 3♥ with five hearts and very little strength, since West almost certainly has three hearts. East should jump to 4♥ with ♠652 ♥Q8732 ♦K4 ♣J76.

## Raise After Doubling

There are four situations for a takeout doubler's raise of a suit response:

1) Raise of a forced response, when RHO passes:

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

This raise requires the equivalent of an extra ace and good distribution, and almost guarantees four-card support: ♠KQ32 ♥AJ97 ♦AQ92 ♣4. Add a couple of more points with two little clubs.

2) Free raise of a forced response:

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

This raise may be a little lighter with good four-card support, but must be full strength (i.e., extra ace, good distribution) with three-card support. Vulnerability enters into the decision here.

3) Raise of a free response when RHO passes:

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

Since East must have some strength, this raise can be made with no extra values if West has four-card support. By "no extra values" I mean a normal minimum rubber bridge sort of takeout double. A shaded duplicate sort of double calls for a pass of 1♠, even with four-card support.

4) Free raise of a free response:

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

This raise can be made after a light takeout double, provided West has four-card support. Vulnerability enters into the decision.

After a reopening takeout double, which may be quite light, raises are okay with somewhat less strength. See section 8-7, Reopening the Bidding.

### Jump Takeout After Doubling

If the doubler jumps in a new suit on the next round, he shows a powerful hand, but the jump is not forcing:

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

West has ♠A109762 ♥AQ3 ♦AK2 ♣3. This sequence strongly implies a three-card heart holding, so East can bid 3♥ (or 4♥) with a hand such as ♠3 ♥KJ876 ♦J87 ♣7632. If South had a stronger spade suit, or no heart support, he would just make a strong jump overcall in spades instead of doubling. If North had bid 1♦, making 1♥ a free bid, then West's 2♠ bid would have been forcing for one round.

### Repeat Doubles

A repeat double of the same suit at the two or three level is still for takeout, even if partner has bid a suit, provided the doubler has not bid a suit somewhere along the line and neither partner has bid notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	2♦/3♦	Pass
Pass	Dbl - takeout		

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

East has ♠QJ3 ♥AKQ3 ♦AJ874 ♣6. If he had bid 3♠ instead of repeating the double, South would expect four-card support and might bid 4♠ with little more than four spades and, say, the king of diamonds.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣
2♠	Dbl - still for takeout		

West has ♠2 ♥AKJ3 ♦KQ876 ♣Q96, the sort of hand implied by the repeat double when partner has made a suit response. If either partner has bid notrump, however, a repeat double is for business:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Pass	1NT
2♥	Dbl - business double		

If West has a big 4-1-4-4 hand, he can bid 2NT (natural) over 2♥.

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

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

When the double is at the four level, as above, partner is permitted to pass with nothing more to say. If the doubled suit is a minor, however, the doubler had better have at least four cards in any unbid major. Partner will be reluctant to pass a double of 4♣ or 4♦ when holding four cards in an unbid major.

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

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

In the first auction, where the doubler has bid a suit, the repeat double is for business. The double of a new suit is for business in the second auction, but if South had rebid 2♦ the double would have been for takeout again, with a hand such as ♠AQ108 ♥KJ5 ♦3 ♣AJ652.

### **Doubling After Passing**

A double made on the second round after passing may be for business or takeout depending on whether it is the first or second opportunity to double the last suit bid:

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

If West wanted to double diamonds for takeout, she could have doubled 1♦.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Dbl - takeout		

This is the first opportunity for West to double clubs, so it is for takeout. West has ♠A1084 ♥3 ♦AJ972 ♣AQ3 and fears that 2♣ will be passed around. This implies length/strength in diamonds,

the only possible reason for passing on the first round with a good hand. A good hand? Yes. This is not a reopening situation, so West needs good cards to come in between two bidders.

Another example:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♥		Dbl - takeout	

West has ♠AJ97 ♥3 ♦K1073 ♣AQ94. With that singleton heart he could not double or bid notrump on the first round.

When opener's suit has been raised, a reopening double is for takeout, not business, even though it is not the first opportunity for doubling that suit:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass		Dbl - takeout	

West had insufficient values for a double of 1♠. Playing East for some high cards on the bidding, he competes for the hand by doubling with ♠4 ♥J873 ♦AJ87 ♣K1093. It is unwise to double with less strength than this, since partner is allowed to pass with, say, four good spades and some outside defense.

### Bidding Notrump After Doubling

A takeout double followed by a notrump bid shows too much strength for an original notrump overcall:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass		1NT	

The 1NT bid shows a hand that was too strong (i.e., 19-20 HCP) for an original 1NT overcall. With a hand such as ♠92 ♥AJ97 ♦KQ10 ♣AQ32, West must bid 1NT over 1♦, not double.

If you make a takeout double of 1♦ with ♠A1032 ♥K874 ♦K3 ♣AQ5, you must pass a 2♣ response. A 2NT bid would show at least 19 HCP. Perhaps a 1NT overcall is better, especially at matchpoint scoring. Also see section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls.

When partner has made a jump response or a cue bid response, a minimum notrump bid does *not* show a hand too good for an original notrump overcall. The doubler must jump to show such a hand:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♦/2♥/2♠
Pass	2NT	- not good enough to overcall 1NT	
	3NT	- too good for a 1NT overcall	

If West had values for a 1NT overcall, the only reason for doubling would be good major suit length, which he would reveal at this point.

If the response to the double is 1NT, a raise to 2NT is okay with as little as 16 HCP. This does not show too much for a 1NT overcall, since the doubler may not have the stopper in opener's suit that is required for a notrump overcall.

Notrump conventions do not apply when a takeout doubler bids notrump, even if partner has not bid:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	1♥	Pass
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣ - natural bid

If the doubler has 21-22 HCP, he follows with a jump to 2NT:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♦/1♥/1♠
Pass	2NT		

But suppose the response to a double is a non-jump bid at the two level:

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

Now the doubler must bid 2NT, which really ought to require more than 19 HCP, to show a strong notrump hand, and apparently must jump to 3NT (opposite a possible bust) if he wants to show 21 HCP. A sensible compromise is to say that a non-jump 2NT rebid shows 19-21 HCP, and a single jump to 3NT shows 22 HCP or more. These bids may get you too high, but that can't be helped.

### Takeout Double by an Overcaller

An overcaller can make a takeout double on the next round, opposite a passing partner. This implies a 6-3-3-1 hand:

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

West has ♠Q97632 ♥AJ3 ♦AQ2 ♣3. She doesn't want to sell out to 2♣, and a takeout double is the logical action with support in the unbid suits and poor spades. East will count on a six-card spade suit when deciding what to bid, so don't bid this way with 5-3-3-2 distribution unless the five-card suit is very strong.

When the overcaller doubles opener's rebid of the same suit, he is making a two-way double that may be for business or takeout:

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

West may have ♠AKJ98 ♥AQ108 ♦4 ♣Q87 or ♠K108732 ♥4 ♦AQ5 ♣AQ4. East must figure out which sort of hand West has.

When opener bids a new suit, the overcaller's double is for takeout if there is an unbid suit:

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♠	Pass	Pass
2♣	Dbl - takeout		

West has ♠AQ1087 ♥AJ74 ♦A832 ♣ void, with which a first round double would be unwise in view of the void in clubs.

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	2♦	Pass
2♥	Dbl - business (no unbid suit)		

West has ♠2 ♥AQ109 ♦52 ♣K108732. He wants a heart lead against any contract played by North. Doubling 2♥ sends this message. Why not an original top-and-bottom cue bid? Perhaps the vulnerability was unfavorable.

When advancer has bid a new suit, direct doubles (of RHO) are for business if the doubled suit has not been raised.

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

You can't double a suit bid on the left at the one or two level, however, unless partner has bid notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠
Pass	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl - takeout: ♠J2 ♥53 ♦AKJ73 ♣A632		

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♥	1♠	2♣
2♠	Dbl - takeout: ♠J103 ♥AKJ32 ♦AJ32 ♣Q		

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	2♣	2♥ (transfer to spades)
3♣	Dbl - takeout: ♠K ♥AQ108 ♦KQ1076 ♣J65		

These doubles say, "Please bid again, but I have some defense if you pass." Perhaps these doubles should be called "optional" instead of "takeout" because the doubler usually has three trumps or he would have some other bid available, and the double is often passed. The doubler must be prepared for any bid, however.

See section 9-2, Competitive Doubles, for the meaning of doubles by the overcaller's partner.

### Takeout Double by the Opening Bidder

The opening bidder can make a takeout double on the second round, but when partner has bid a double is usually for business:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout			

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

If opener has redoubled and partner has not acted, a subsequent double is takeout:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	1♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout			

If North had bid 1♦ instead of passing the opening bid, South's double would be for business. There are some situations, however, when a double by the opening bidder is for takeout even if partner has bid. See section 9-2, Competitive Doubles.

## Responses to Takeout Doubles

Responses to takeout doubles will not be covered much here, since the subject is adequately treated in the bridge literature. There are a few special situations, however, that we will treat:

-- For cue bid responses see section 10-9, Cue Bids in Takeout Double Situations, and section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids.

-- The weakness response. When holding a worthless hand opposite a takeout double, it is better to avoid a response that might excite partner into making some dangerous raise. Toward this end, a bid in the lowest unbid minor is often a good slow-down action, even when holding only three cards in the suit. For instance, partner doubles a 1♠ opening and you have ♠32 ♥8743 ♦J864 ♣J53. Rather than bid 2♥ or 2♦, bid 2♣. Partner might raise a heart response, or might bid 3♣ after either a 2♥ or 2♦ response. This is not a convention--2♣ may be passed--it is just common sense.

-- Over a redouble, a jump takeout is preemptive, not strong. When partner doubles 1♥ and next had redoubles, jump to 2♠ with ♠Q10873 ♥54 ♦J8762 ♣3. With a good hand, as one might have if someone is psyching, just pass over the redouble and bid strongly later. Actually, *any* bid over a redouble tends to deny significant strength, even a cue bid or jump in notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Rdbl	2♥ - ♠8432 ♥2 ♦Q853 ♣K843
			2♠ - ♠Q9832 ♥654 ♦Q87 ♣J3
			2NT - ♠8 ♥65 ♦A9632 ♣Q10854

-- Over a raise by RHO, responsive doubles are too ill-defined. The Positive Double, a good alternative, is described in section 9-3.

## Miscellaneous Auctions

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♥ - not forcing
Pass	2♠ - forcing,		in view of East's jump
			2NT - not forcing

The 2NT bid over a jump is like the same call after a cue bid response: a hand not good enough for a 1NT overcall (♠AJ87 ♥J93 ♦AQ ♣Q1087). If West had too much for a 1NT overcall, he should bid 3NT, not 2NT.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥ - not forcing
			2NT - not forcing
			3♣/3♠ - forcing

The 3♣ and 3♠ bids are forcing because of the jump response. West needs extra values to bid over 2♥, so a pass of 3♠ (although this is a limit situation, strictly speaking) is not logical.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣/2♦ - natural, weak

East probably has four hearts, a five-card minor, and a weak hand.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass - not forcing		

The leave-in of a takeout double promises no strength outside the doubled suit, and does not promise further action if the opposition runs elsewhere.

Also see section 6-7, 4NT - Blackwood or Natural? and section 12-01, Defense Against Preemptive Openings.

## 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	

## POSITIVE DOUBLES

When partner makes a takeout double and RHO raises, your "free bid" is a bit ambiguous. Maybe you would have jumped if RHO had passed, or maybe you're just stretching to compete. For instance:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Dbl	2♣	2♦/2♥/2♠

Was South going to make the same bid (a jump) if East had passed, or is she just competing and would have responded at the one level over a pass? There's no telling. Free bids over a raise are therefore wide-range, too much so. The doubler often doesn't know whether to pass or bid on.

The "Responsive Double" convention is popular in this situation. The trouble with responsive doubles is that they are either vague as to meaning, or so restricted in meaning that they rarely come up. For instance, in the above auction a responsive double by South might be played as showing both majors, or, as some play, two of the three unbid suits. Others play that it just shows "cards," with no decent suit to bid. Whatever the meaning, it isn't used much.

The Positive Double shows a hand that would probably have jumped if RHO had not raised. It follows that a minimum suit bid is just competitive, denying that strong a hand. For reasons that will appear later, this applies only to the cheapest and dearest unbid suits, not the one in the middle. A bid in that suit remains ambiguous:

West	North	East	South
1♦	Dbl	2♦	Dbl (1)
			2♥/3♣ (2)
			2♠ (3)

- (1) Positive Double
- (2) Merely competitive
- (3) Ambiguous

If South would have jumped to 2♥ or 3♣ over a pass, she doubles. The 2♠ middle-suit bid is ambiguous. South might have bid either 1♠ or 2♠ over a pass, there's no telling. With too much for that, she can bid the standard invitational 3♠ or double "positively" and show the spades later.

So what does partner do in response to a Positive Double? If he would have passed a jump in the cheapest suit, he bids that suit. If he would have bid notrump, or the dearest unbid suit, he does so. With a good hand and four cards in the unbid major(s), he cue bids, forcing to game. With none of those messages to give, he usually bids the middle suit as an artificial mark-time bid:

West	North	East	South
1♠	Dbl	2♠	Dbl
Pass	3♣ (1)		
	3♦ (2)		
	3♥ (3)		
	3♠ (4)		
	2NT (5)		

- (1) Would have passed a jump to 3♣
- (2) A mark-time bid, "Tell me more," would not have passed 3♣
- (3) Five hearts, forcing
- (4) Four hearts, extra values, game force
- (5) Normal rebid (too strong for a 1NT overcall), forcing

When North bids 3♣, the cheapest suit, saying he would have passed a jump in that suit, South can either pass, holding that suit, or bid something else. Her bid in the middle suit is also an artificial mark-time bid. Any natural suit bid promises at least five cards. A jump in a new suit is forcing. A raise of bid in the cheapest suit is strong but not forcing. A cue bid shows four cards in any unbid major:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Dbl	2♣	Dbl
Pass	2♦	Pass	Pass (1)
			2♥(2)
			2♠(3)
			3♣ (4)
			3♦ (5)
			3♥/3♠(6)

- (1) Diamond suit, would have jumped to 2♦ over a pass, no more to say
- (2) A mark-time bid, "tell me more," no five card suit
- (3) Five spades, would have jumped over a pass, not forcing
- (4) At least 4-4 in the majors, does not promise another bid
- (5) Natural, too strong to pass, not forcing
- (6) Natural, forcing

The major-suit jumps are forcing because with a weaker hand South would have bid an ambiguous 2♥, or would have jumped invitationally in spades, instead of doubling. The 3♣ bid is not forcing to game, since 3♣ could have been bid over 2♣ with a game-going hand. If the takeout double was non-minimum, the doubler should bid four of a major, not three, which would probably be passed.

If the Positive Doubler bids notrump over doubler's mark-time bid, it means she would have jumped in *that* suit over a pass:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Dbl	2♣	Dbl
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT - would have bid 2♥ over a pass

North's 2♥ bid is artificial (would not have passed a jump to 2♦). South has a little too much for an ambiguous 2♥ response to the double, but not enough for an invitational 3♥ response over 2♣, or for a forcing 3♥ bid at this point. Other notrump bids by advancer are natural.

After a mark-time bid by either partner, a minimum bid by the other partner may be passed. Raises by either partner are limit bids that can also be passed.

If opener reraises over a Positive Double:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Dbl	2♣	Dbl
3♣			

A repeat double of the same suit by North is still for takeout. It shows extra strength, as does a "free bid." From this point on all bidding is natural. If the reraise is passed around to the Positive Doubler, a repeat double is for penalties, as are doubles of any other bid made by either opponent. After a Positive Double the opponents cannot play the hand unless they play it doubled, so one partner can pass a bid by RHO without fear that the other will also pass.

## SPECIAL DOUBLES AND REDOUBLES

### Slam Doubles

A double of a voluntarily bid slam (i.e., not a sacrifice bid against an opposing contract) asks partner to make an unusual lead. The doubler may have a void somewhere (usually in an opposing suit), or possibly a tenace--maybe just a king--over dummy's first bid suit. The doubler fears that a normal lead will allow the contract to be made.

The opening leader must sometimes guess which suit the doubler wants led. Certainly any suit bid by the defending side is not wanted. Also, an unbid suit is ruled out unless the opponents have not bid any suit other than trumps. If in doubt, lead dummy's first bid side suit. If dummy has not bid a side suit, the doubler may want the lead of a side suit bid by declarer. If there have been no side suits bid, lead from your longest holding in an unbid suit--partner may have a void there.

If the doubler has previously doubled a suit during the auction, the double calls for the lead of that suit--not for an "unusual" lead. Reason: sometimes a defender who has doubled an opposing suit is not particularly eager for the lead of that suit:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Dbl	6NT	Pass
Pass	Dbl		

West's double demands a diamond lead. If West had passed the 6NT bid, East could use judgment whether to lead a diamond or something else.

Against a notrump slam there is divided opinion about the meaning of a double when the doubler's side has bid. It would seem more useful to use the double to call for the lead of some suit other than one bid by the defending side, since that would be the normal lead.

When the opponents are in a notrump slam after dummy has shown a long suit, the double should not ask for the lead of that suit:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♥	Pass
5NT	Pass	6NT	Dbl

East has ♠QJ9876 ♥86 ♦KQ7 ♣A4. She could hardly be asking for a heart or club lead, since declarer no doubt needs those suits to bring in his contract. The double says, "Do not lead a spade," so the only thing left to lead is a diamond.

### The Surprise Double

Suppose you have ♠J5432 ♥AK64 ♦ void ♣8742. You're sitting East and the bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
5♣	Pass	Pass	?

You should double. After this surprise double, coming after strong bidding in an auction that you have not entered, partner should figure you for a void. From his hand, he ought to be able to guess that the void is in diamonds. Another:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♦
1♠	2♥	2♠	4♥
Db!			

South could not open the bidding, is sitting opposite a hand that could only raise to the two level, and yet is doubling a strongly bid game. The probable reason for the double is a diamond void, and a diamond lead should be forthcoming.

Surprise doubles are dangerous at times. In some auctions the double may not strike partner as a "surprise," and he may miss the message. In such clear-cut situations as those above, however, there should be no problem.

### The Double of Three Notrump

-- Neither defender has bid a suit:

In this situation the doubler generally wants dummy's suit led. If dummy has rebid the suit, however, and declarer does not seem to have a long suit, the lead of dummy's suit is not advisable. The declarer will no doubt go after that suit to make the contract. While the doubler probably has the suit well stopped, the best line of attack will usually lie elsewhere.

If the opponents have not bid a suit, the opening leader should lead his shortest and weakest unbid suit, preferring a major if in doubt. The doubler probably has a long solid suit, or semi-solid suit with a fast entry outside. She figures that she may not get the suit led without the double. This means that if the bidding goes 1NT on your left, 3NT on your right, you can double with ♠A97 ♥83 ♦A62 ♣KQJ108, with fair assurance that partner will lead a club.

-- Doubler has bid a suit, opening leader has not:

Lead the doubler's suit unless partner's bid was an opening bid of one in that suit at matchpoint scoring. After opening 1♥ at matchpoints with ♠43 ♥QJ983 ♦KQJ102 ♣A, you can double 3NT to

tell partner *not* to lead a heart. Knowing that you open the higher of touching suits, she will probably be able to figure that the suit you want led is diamonds.

This is contrary to standard practice, which says that the doubler is asking for the suit he has bid. In a matchpoint game, however, where the frequency of gain is more important than the amount of gain, the double for *another* suit makes more sense. Just pass if the lead of your bid suit will defeat the contract. It won't happen often that partner will lead some other suit, and just beating 3NT should be a good enough score. If the suit has been bid as an overcall or opening weak bid, then the double of 3NT asks for the lead of the bid suit, as it always does at IMP or total point scoring.

-- Opening leader has bid a suit, doubler has not. This double calls for the lead of the bid suit. If, however, the bid was a three-level preemptive call, the double calls for the lead of an unbid suit. The reason for this policy is that a preemptive bidder will normally lead his suit, so doubling for that lead is unnecessary (and may cause a runout to some good suit contract). Accordingly, the double asks that the opening leader guess doubler's strong suit and lead it.

-- Both defenders have bid a suit. Use your judgment. If in doubt, lead partner's suit.

### Special Redoubles

-- When a notrump probe gets doubled, a redouble by the next hand does *not* show strength in the doubled suit--it asks that partner bid notrump:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠	Dbl	Rdbl	

North has ♠92 ♥A43 ♦AQ964 ♣A54. He redoubles to indicate that he would have bid 3NT if there had been no double. South should play the hand, so that her spade strength (Kxx?) won't be led through on the opening lead. With the major suit holdings reversed, North would pass over the double, despite the ace of spades, because he lacks a heart stopper. This redouble must be alerted.

-- When an opponent redoubles a takeout double (or a double that is primarily for takeout) of a suit contract, and the suit is one that *only that opponent* has bid, a pass over the redouble is for penalties. The passer wants to defend against the redoubled contract:

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Rdbl	Pass	

  

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	Pass		

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	Pass		

In all three sequences, the pass over the redouble indicates a willingness to defend against the redoubled contract.

When the suit has been bid by both opponents, however, or the redouble is made by the opponent who did *not* bid the suit, a pass over a redouble is non-committal:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass

In both sequences, East's pass does not show a willingness to defend against the redoubled bid. It merely says that she has nothing worth showing at this time.

When the double is for business (or more optional than takeout), a pass over any redouble shows a willingness (or resignation) to defend:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
Dbl	Rdbl	Pass - willing to defend	

-- Immediate redoubles are not "S. O. S." They usually show a very strong hand, and tell partner not to be intimidated by the double:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	Dbl	Rdbl

If North's double is for business, East's redouble says that he expects 2♣ to make and does not want West to run. If it is a negative double, however, the redouble only shows the club ace or king in a (possibly weak) hand that cannot raise. A pass by South at this point is non-committal, since the redouble is made by the opponent who did not bid the suit.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl			

South has a strong hand with good clubs; the redouble is not a rescue request, although it does encourage North to bid if he has anything worth showing.

*Reopening* redoubles (after two passes) ask for a rescue, but only at low levels, and only if partner has not participated in the auction:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	Pass
Rdbl			

South wants to be rescued from 1♣ redoubled.

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	Pass	Pass
4♠	Dbl	Pass	Pass
Rdbl			

South is not asking to be rescued!

There is one situation when a redouble is S. O. S. even though both partners have participated in the auction: A responder to a takeout double may ask to be rescued after a minimum forced response:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Dbl	Pass	Pass	Rdbl

East no doubt has made a "weakness response" in clubs and wants to be rescued. She might have ♠72 ♥7632 ♦J873 ♣J76. If 2♣ had been a free bid (e.g., over a redouble by North), then the redouble would be to play.