

Takeout Doubles

If your opponent opens with a suit bid, a double by you promises:

- At least opening-bid strength (12+ pts.)
- Shortness in the suit the opponent opened.
- Support for all unbid suits. Your double forces partner to bid, so you must have at least 3-card length in any suit he will choose. Typical hands for a takeout double of an opponent's 1C opening would be:

♠KJ76 ♥AQ92 ♦KJ4 ♣65
♠Q104 ♥AK84 ♦K10432 ♣8

The exception (not covered in the book): There is one type of hand where you can double without support for all unbid suits. You can start with a double if you have a hand that has one **long** suit and **great** strength (17+ pts.) -- the type of hand where you don't want to risk having partner pass a simple overcall of your suit. Your hand and your suit should be strong enough that you could make game if partner has as little as 4-6 pts. and a fit -- a hand like ♠KJ ♥AQJ1084 ♦AK65 ♣7. To describe this hand, start with a double that forces partner to respond. Then "overrule" partner's choice by freely bidding your heart suit at your next turn.

If the opponent opens 1NT, all the suits are unbid, so a double is **not** for takeout. A double of 1NT is always for **penalty**, showing 18+ pts. **Use this double cautiously.** Even if you have a lot of high-card points, you should avoid making a penalty double unless you have a strong suit to lead.

Responding to Partner's Takeout Double

If partner doubles an opponent's suit bid, you **must** respond **unless**:

- The opponent on your right has also entered the bidding, **OR**
- You have a long, strong holding in the opponent's suit and want to "convert" partner's takeout double to a penalty double.

If the opponents have gotten in your way, responder is allowed to bid again with the 9+ points and the suit bid is not forcing.

Respond your **longest** unbid suit at the **level** that shows your point-count:

- **0-9 pts. (Note you book uses 10 points)** -- Bid your longest suit at the lowest level possible (1H - DBL - Pass - **1S, 2C** or **2D**). or if balanced then
 - **7-10 pts.** -- **Bid 1NT** if you have good stoppers in the opponent's suit.
- **10 - 12 pts.** -- **Jump** a level in your longest suit to show strength (1H - DBL - Pass - **2S, 3C** or **3D**), or if balanced then
 - **11-12 pts.** -- **Jump to 2NT** if you have stoppers in the opponent's suit, but do not have length in an unbid major.
- **12+ (good) pts.** -- **Jump to game** in your suit or no-trump.

Rebids by the Takeout Doubler

With a Minimum 12-16 points

- responder made the cheapest possible response – pass
- responder jump, pass, raise to invite or bid game, you must decide

With a Medium Hand – 17-18

- Responder made the cheapest possible response – raise one level to invite, game is still possible.
- Responder has jumped, raise to game

With a Maximum hand – 19-21

- Responder has made a cheapest possible response – jump raise
- Responder has jumped, raise to game

Negative Doubles

Negative doubles and Takeout doubles are very similar. Often people use the terms interchangeable, which is not 100% correct. Negative doubles have become popular because they solve this difficult -- and common -- bidding problem:

♠762 ♥KQ75 ♦94 ♣QJ93

Partner opens 1D and your right-hand opponent (RHO) overcalls 1S. The overcall has taken away your 1H response, so you have no way to accurately describe your strength and distribution. You can't bid 1NT (which promises a spade stopper) and you can't bid a new suit at the 2-level (which promises 10-11+ pts.).

This solution is the **negative double**. To use this convention, you and partner agree that if you open the bidding and the opponent makes a direct suit overcall, a double by responder is **NOT** for penalty. Instead, it shows:

- At least a fair response (7+ pts.) **AND**
- **4-card length** in at least one of the unbid suits -- usually the unbid **major** suit. (Some pairs agree that if the two unbid suits are majors -- for example, after 1C by partner, 1D by RHO -- a negative double promises 4 cards in **both** suits.)

In the problem above, you would double to show the values for a response and a 4-card heart suit. This tells partner that you would have responded 1H if the opponent had passed. If opener also has 4 hearts, he'll "raise" your response by bidding hearts himself. If not, he can choose another descriptive bid.

Example:

♠A973 ♥AJ ♦92 ♣KJ1062

If partner opens 1D and RHO overcalls 1H, make a **negative double**. Even though you have enough strength for a 2-level freebid, a 2C bid here will make it difficult to find a possible 4-4 spade fit. Use the double to show your 4-card spade suit, then decide which game to bid over partner's response. If partner doesn't "raise" your spades, you'll bid 3NT.

Responder's Freebids

Playing negative doubles also offers you the advantage of assigning a more specific meaning to a freebid of a new suit. After an opponent's overcall, if responder freely bids a new suit (instead of making a negative double), he promises a **5-card suit**. A new-suit freebid at the 1-level shows 7+ pts.; at the 2-level or higher, it shows 10+ pts.

♠QJ1073 ♥874 ♦A92 ♣74

If partner opens 1D and your RHO overcalls 1H, bid 1S. The overcall hasn't taken away your 1-level response, so you have **two** ways to show spades. In these situations, use the negative double to show a **4-card** suit. Use the freebid (1S) to promise a **5-card** suit (partner will know he can raise with 3-card support). **However**, if partner opens 1D and your RHO overcalls 2C, this hand isn't strong enough for a 2S freebid. In this case, you'll have to use a negative double. If partner bids 2D, you'll pass. If he bids 2H, you can correct to 2S, which shows extra length and is not forcing.

When is the negative double "off"?

You and your partner can decide at which levels of bidding you'll use negative doubles. One popular agreement is that negative doubles are "on" if the opponent makes a suit overcall through the level of 3S. If you use this agreement, negative doubles are "off" (responder's double is for penalty) if the overcall is 4C or higher.

No matter how you choose to play negative doubles, they apply only if the opponent overcalls a **suit**. Responder's double of a 1NT overcall is always for penalty.

The higher the level of the overcall, the more strength responder needs to make a negative double. If partner opens 1C and the opponent makes a jump overcall of 2S, you'll want to have a little extra playing strength (not necessarily extra points) to make a negative double, which will force partner to the 3-level.

Opener's rebids

After responder's negative double, opener must make a rebid that describes both his strength and his support for the suit partner has shown with the double. In most cases, you'll bid your hand just as if partner had made a 1-bid in that suit:

- With a **MINIMUM** opening (13-15 pts.), make your natural suit or notrump rebid at a low level. If you have 4-card support for the suit partner has shown with the double, you should always show it.
- With an **INVITATIONAL** hand (15-17 pts.), **jump one level** to show extra strength (1C by you - 1H overcall - DBL by partner - P - 2S by you).
- With a **FORCING-TO-GAME** hand (18+ pts.), **jump to game**. (Or, if you're not sure of which game to play, **cuebid** the opponent's suit to force responder to tell you more about his hand.)