

Bidding Basics

The opponents open and we double



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A double of the opponent's opening bid is takeout and shows one of two types of hands:

1) At least an opening bid (counting useful distribution) and support (at least three) for the other three suits. Usually in the 12–17 HCP range.

OR

2) Any hand with 18-plus points (counting useful distribution). In this case, the doubler intends to not only double, but to voluntarily make a second call later.

As an example of each type above, a double of 1♦ could be made with either of these hands:

♠A Q 9 ♥K J 6 3 ♦7 4 ♣K 10 6 3

♠A ♥K Q 9 ♦7 6 2 ♣A K Q 10 7 4

With the first example, the doubler likely won't bid again. With the latter example, the doubler will presumably bid clubs at his next turn. Don't double a 1♠ opening – pass instead – with:

♠A 7 4 ♥6 3 ♦A 7 6 2 ♣K Q 7 4

While this hand is an opening bid, it does not have 18-plus points and doesn't satisfy the requirement of three-card support for the other suits.

Examples after the opponents open 1♦:

♠K Q 7 4 ♥J 10 6 3 ♦9 ♣A J 7 4

Double. A dead minimum, but note that whatever suit partner bids, you will put this hand down as dummy where your singleton is worth enough to consider this an opening bid.

♠Q 9 ♥A Q 7 4 ♦7 6 2 ♣K J 7 4

Pass. Enough to open, but no support for the other three suits.

♠A Q 7 6 2 ♥A 9 ♦7 6 2 ♣7 6 2

1♠. You can overcall the five-card major since it is only the one level.

♠K J 9 ♥K 2 ♦K 6 3 ♣Q 8 6 4 2

Pass. No support for the other three suits and not good enough for a two-level overcall.

♠K J 9 ♥K 2 ♦K 7 4 ♣A K Q 7 4

Double. Too much to overcall. You don't need the other three suits when you have 18-plus. Likely you will bid notrump at the next turn, showing more than a 1NT overcall and diamonds stopped.

Versus preempts

If the opening bid is a preempt, the same parameters apply, but if your hand is borderline, discretion should be used. The most important feature of a borderline takeout double is shortness – fewer than three cards – in the opponent's suit. So, double their 2♥ opening with:

♠K 10 6 3 ♥9 ♦A J 7 4 ♣A 10 7 4

but not with

♠K J 9 ♥J 6 3 ♦K Q 7 ♣K 6 4 3

You have an opening bid, but not a hand that wants to get involved at this level.

Examples after their 2♥ opening:

♠K Q J 10 3 ♥J 7 6 ♦A 9 ♣A K Q

Double. Too much to overcall. This is an 18-plus double; support for all three unbid suits is not needed.

♠A Q 9 ♥K J 9 ♦A 10 7 4 ♣K 7 4

2NT. Yes, it meets the definition of a takeout double, but 2NT (strength of a 1NT opener and hearts stopped) is a better description.

♠A Q 6 3 ♥9 ♦K 10 7 4 ♣K 10 7 4

Double. A minimum, but perfect shape.

Balancing seat

In the balancing seat, all of the above parameters are lowered by approximately a king. After (1♣)–Pass–(Pass), double with:

♠K 7 6 2 ♥K Q 6 3 ♦Q 10 2 ♣7 4

Both opponents have bid

If the opponents have each bid, double is still for takeout. If they open and raise, a double shows roughly an opening bid and at least three cards in the other suits. After (1♥)–Pass–(2♥), double with either of these hands:

♠A Q 7 4 ♥6 3 ♦K 10 7 4 ♣Q J 9

♠K 6 3 ♥9 ♦A 10 7 6 2 ♣A J 7 4

If the opponents have responded 1NT, double is takeout of the suit opened. After (1♠)–Pass–(1NT), double with:

♠9 ♥K J 7 4 ♦K 10 7 4 ♣A Q 7 4

♠7 4 ♥A Q J 9 ♦A K Q 9 ♣K 7 4

If the opponents have bid two suits, double typically shows four-plus cards in the other two suits and opening bid strength. After (1♦)–Pass–(1♥), double with:

♠A K Q 9 ♥7 4 ♦7 6 2 ♣A J 7 4

♠J 10 7 4 ♥K 2 ♦A 9 ♣A Q 7 6 2

Doubles of high-level openings

There is no such thing as a pure penalty double. The higher they bid, the less likely you are to have length/strength in their suit. A double of 4♠ shows something like:

♠A 9 ♥A Q 7 4 ♦K Q 7 4 ♣A 7 4

Double their 5♦ opening with:

♠A K Q 9 ♥A Q J 9 ♦7 4 ♣A K 2

Over such high-level doubles, your partner will usually just pass and hope

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to set them; he would need lots of shape to try to play at the five level!

Next month – we will explore what partner should do after your takeout double. ♣

Bidding Basics Quiz

What is your call after a 1♣ opening on your right?

- 1) ♠Q1087 ♥A2 ♦Q1087 ♣AJ3
2) ♠J98765 ♥AK2 ♦A2 ♣AK

What is your call after (1♥)–Pass–(2♥)?

- 3) ♠KQ32 ♥J2 ♦A64 ♣K654
4) ♠54 ♥AQ62 ♦AKJ ♣J982

What is your call after a 1♦ opening on your left followed by two passes?

- 5) ♠A876 ♥K1065 ♦2 ♣Q987
6) ♠A87 ♥KQ1054 ♦86 ♣432

What is your call after a 4♥ opening on your right?

- 7) ♠AQ76 ♥32 ♦AK2 ♣KQ76
8) ♠86 ♥AQ108 ♦A32 ♣A432

Bidding Basics Quiz Answers

1) Pass. If you double and partner bids hearts, you are stuck.

2) Double and then bid spades (too much to overcall 1♠).

3) Double. Get in there!

4) Pass. Nice hand, but no suitable action. With luck, partner will balance with a double. Not only would 2NT not be natural – it's for the minors – it is

also suicidal.

5) Double. In balancing seat, add 3 points – you have plenty.

6) 1♥. Not the right hand for a takeout double, but definitely for an overcall.

7) Double. Cards/takeout – good hand.

8) Pass. Partner is not a mind-reader and would take a double out; exactly what you wouldn't want.