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Bidding Basics

The opponents open, and partner has doubled

LHO (left-hand opponent) opened and your partner made a takeout double. As responder to partner's takeout double, you must describe two things: Your best/longest suit *and* your strength. If you are not sure which suit to pick (equal length), choose the major. After partner has doubled their 1♣, if the next player passes, the responder "must" take out the double. Taking out to a suit without jumping shows 0–8 HCP. Jumping (skipping a level) shows about 9–11. Taking out a double to notrump shows their suit stopped (HCP requirements shown below). Here are what the various bids would mean after: (1♣)–Dbl–(Pass)–?

Pass = Very rare. Notice the quote marks around "must" in the previous paragraph. Leaving in a takeout double would require an incredibly strong holding in the opponent's suit such as:

♣KQ10762.

Passing would make the contract 1♣ doubled. You "must" take out the double, even with zero points.

1♦/1♥/1♠ = 0–8 HCP counting useful distribution and four-plus cards in the suit; could be three if really stuck, such as:

♠762 ♥762 ♦63 ♣87642.

Bid 1♦ with:

♠762 ♥K74 ♦Q1063 ♣762,

bid 1♥ with:

♠74 ♥A8642 ♦63 ♣J754,

bid 1♠ with:

♠K762 ♥762 ♦A1074 ♣74.

1NT = 6–10 HCP, balanced, clubs stopped, no four-card major. Remove the double to 1NT with hands such as:

♠Q63 ♥762 ♦Q74 ♣A1063
 ♠K2 ♥KQ9 ♦8642 ♣J1074.

2♣ = Bidding their suit is a highly unusual move. It isn't natural – you would just pass with good clubs – so it is artificial. For simplicity (experts might have more exact parameters) let's just say it is any hand that wants to be in game, but not sure which game. Bid 2♣ with:

♠A762 ♥A762 ♦A762 ♣9,
 or

♠KQ9 ♥KQ9 ♦AJ74 ♣762.

2♦/2♥/2♠ = Invitational. Approximately 9–11 HCP counting useful distribution and four-plus cards in the suit. Bid 2♦ with:

♠A63 ♥K74 ♦QJ1063 ♣74,

bid 2♥ with:

♠A9 ♥KQ109 ♦74 ♣J8642,

bid 2♠ with:

♠108642 ♥K2 ♦A63 ♣Q74.

2NT = 11–12 HCP, balanced, clubs stopped, no four-card major. Remove the double to 2NT with:

♠KJ ♥Q74 ♦KQ102 ♣J983,

or

♠762 ♥762 ♦AQJ ♣AJ94.

3♣ = Don't make such a bid.

3♦/3♥/3♠ = Highly invitational and five-plus cards. Example of 3♥:

♠A9 ♥KJ1063 ♦9 ♣J8642.

3NT = 13-plus HCP, balanced, clubs stopped, no four-card major. Bid 3NT with either of these hands:

♠KJ9 ♥J74 ♥A1063 ♣KQJ
 ♠K2 ♥K2 ♦AQJ74 ♣J1074.

4♥/4♠ = To play – a hand good enough for game, usually with five-plus cards in the suit bid. Bid 4♥ with:

♠63 ♥KQJ1074 ♦AQ9 ♣74.

Bid 4♠ with:

♠QJ10762 ♥9 ♦AKJ9 ♣74.

After preempts

If the opponents have preempted and partner has doubled, the same ideas as above apply. Over (2♥)–Dbl–(Pass), bid 2♠ with:

♠8642 ♥762 ♦762 ♣762,

bid 2NT with:

♠762 ♥AQ9 ♦762 ♣K762.

Note that this isn't 11–12 because it is not a jump.

Bid 3♠ with:

♠KQ1063 ♥A74 ♦8642 ♣7,

bid 3NT with:

♠K2 ♥KQ10 ♦AQ1074 ♣J74,

bid 4♠ with:

♠KJ762 ♥74 ♦AQ74 ♣K2.

If partner doubles their high-level opening, remove only with very unusual shape. After (4♠)–Dbl–(Pass), pass with:

♠J74 ♥Q762 ♦K762 ♣74,

but pull to 5♥ with:

♠9 ♥A108642 ♦Q74 ♣762.

Free bids

If your RHO bids after your partner's takeout double, you are "off the hook."

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Example: (1♦)–Dbl–(1♠)–? You no longer have to take out the double, you can pass with garbage. Accordingly, you won't bid with zero. Bidding without jumping typically shows about 5–8 and the other meanings remain unchanged. If you double, after they raise, such as (1♥)–Dbl–(2♥)–Dbl, that shows about seven or more points and is not for penalty. If you double their new suit, for this series let's presume it shows that suit, is penalty-oriented, and about seven-plus points. So, after (1♦)–Dbl–(1♥):

Pass = 0–5 HCP. Examples:

♠Q762 ♥762 ♦762 ♣762
♠762 ♥A1074 ♦762 ♣J74.

Double = Penalty. Example:

♠74 ♥AQ1074 ♦K74 ♣762.

1♠ = 5–8 HCP, a “free bid.” Example:

♠J1074 ♥A9 ♦Q762 ♣762.

1NT = 6–10 HCP and stoppers in both of their suits. Example:

♠762 ♥KJ9 ♦KQ103 ♣762.

2♣ = 5–8 HCP, a “free bid.” Example:

♠74 ♥A74 ♦762 ♣A8642.

Cuebids = Strong hands. Don't get too concerned about these as there are two of them and it can be confusing.

Single jumps = 9–11 HCP, invitational.

2NT/3NT = As if RHO had passed, but both enemy suits stopped. 🚫

Bidding Basics Quiz

What is your call after (1♦)–Dbl–(Pass) with:

- 1) ♠542 ♥965 ♦7654 ♣432
- 2) ♠AQ987 ♥54 ♦765 ♣K32
- 3) ♠K2 ♥KQ2 ♦KJ9 ♣QJ752
- 4) ♠A4 ♥A43 ♦QJ10985 ♣42

What is your call after (2♥)–Dbl–(Pass) with:

- 5) ♠KQ108 ♥86 ♦A765 ♣Q54
- 6) ♠K32 ♥KQJ ♦AQ32 ♣J32

What is your call after (1♥)–Dbl–(1♠) with:

- 7) ♠A32 ♥J7654 ♦J95 ♣86
- 8) ♠KJ3 ♥KQ109 ♦QJ3 ♣876

Bidding Basics Quiz Answers

1) 1♥. Don't pass out of fright (and go minus 340 or so).

2) 2♠. Four-plus spades and about 9–11 HCP.

3) 3NT. Enough for game, and no compelling reason to try to reach clubs.

4) Pass. A rare example of a penalty leave-in.

5) 3♠. Invitational (way too much for only 2♠ which could be a zero-count).

6) 3NT. Make sure to reach game.

7) Pass. No need to bid here.

8) 2NT. Invitational with both of their suits stopped.