

Developer Notes – Power Doubles

Doubling the Opponent's Opening Bid

A double of an opponent's opening suit bid can have two meanings

- It may be 12 to 15 hcp with shortage in the opponent's suit and tolerance for the other suits. This is a normal take out double
- It may also be 16 or more hcp without any further restrictions. This is often called a power double

Initially, doubler's partner will not know which sort of hand to expect. The assumption should be that the double is a standard take out double and make the normal response. Doubler will clarify the situation at the next turn to call. See table below.

| The response is... | Take Out doubles | Power doubles |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Weak/very weak | Doubler passes. | Doubler bids something. |
| Intermediate | Doubler passes or invites to game or bids game. | Doubler bids game if it is clear cut or bids a new suit if it is not. Partner may not pass if doubler bids a new suit. |
| Advancer bids game | Doubler passes. | Doubler passes or looks for slam. |
| Advancer cue bids | Players bid bid four card suits until a fit is found and game is bid. | Players bid bid four card suits until a fit is found and game is bid. Doubler may look for slam. |

Example of a Take Out Double

| West | East |
|-----------|-----------|
| ♠ Q J 5 2 | ♠ K T 9 4 |
| ♥ 6 2 | ♥ A Q 7 5 |
| ♦ K T 4 | ♦ 8 3 |
| ♣ Q 8 7 2 | ♣ A J 3 |

North: 1♦.

East: Double Take out.

West: 1♠ Weak (6 to 8) response with four spades.

East: Pass Anything else would indicate a power double.

Example of a Power Double

| West | East |
|-----------|-----------|
| ♠ Q J 5 2 | ♠ K T 9 4 |
| ♥ 6 2 | ♥ A K 7 5 |
| ♦ K T 4 | ♦ 8 3 |
| ♣ Q 8 7 2 | ♣ A K 3 |

North: 1♦.

East: Double A power double with 17 hcp.

West: 1♠ Weak (6 to 8) response with four spades.

East: 2♠ By not passing, East shows a power double with 16 or more total points.

West: 4♠ Bid game with 9 total points. Some might bid an invitational 3♠.

Balanced Hands

If they open one of a suit and you have a balanced hand with a stopper:

- 12 to 14 hcp Double with shortage in their suit and tolerance for the other suits
Otherwise, pass
- 15 to 17 hcp Overcall 1NT
- 18 or more Double. This is a power double.

After the power double

Almost certainly, your partner will give a weak or very weak response. If that response is a major and you have four card support:

- 16 to 19 total points: Raise partner's suit
- 20 to 22 total points: Jump in partner's suit
- 23 or more total points: Bid game in partner's suit

If partner's response was 1NT:

- 16 to 18 hcp: Invite to game
- 19 or more total points: Bid 3NT

With no support for partner:

- 18 to 20 hcp: Rebid in no trumps
- 21 to 23 hcp: Jump in no trumps
- 24 or more: Bid 3NT

Unbalanced Hands

Your opponent opens one of a suit. With 16 or more hcp, the rules about shortage and tolerance no longer apply. Make the power double. Partner will almost certainly make a weak or very weak response. Now:

- 16 to 18 hcp Bid your long suit
- 19 to 21 hcp Jump in your long suit
- 22 or more hcp Bid game in your long suit

Examples

| West | East |
|-------------|-------------|
| ♠ Q 5 2 | ♠ A K J 8 6 |
| ♥ J 6 2 | ♥ T 3 |
| ♦ 9 8 | ♦ A Q T 2 |
| ♣ K 8 7 4 2 | ♣ Q 9 |

North: 1♥.

East: Double A power double with 16 hcp.

West: 2♣ Weak (6 to 8) response.

East: 2♠ By not passing, East shows a power double with 16 or more hcp.
By not jumping, East shows a maximum of 18 hcp.

West: Pass With only 7 total points, there is not enough for game.

| West | East |
|-------------|-------------|
| ♠ Q 5 2 | ♠ A K J 8 6 |
| ♥ J 6 2 | ♥ T 3 |
| ♦ 9 8 | ♦ A K T 2 |
| ♣ K 8 7 4 2 | ♣ A 9 |

North: 1♥.

East: Double A power double with 19 hcp.

West: 2♣ Weak (6 to 8) response.

East: 3♠ By jumping, East shows a power double with 19 to 21 hcp.

West: 4♠ 7 total points is enough for game.

| West | East |
|-----------|-------------|
| ♠ Q 5 2 | ♠ A K J 8 6 |
| ♥ J 6 2 | ♥ T 3 |
| ♦ K 9 | ♦ A Q T 2 |
| ♣ Q 8 7 2 | ♣ K 9 |

North: 1♥.

East: Double A power double with 17 hcp.

West: 2♣ Weak (6 to 8) response.

East: 2♠ East shows a power double with 16 to 18 hcp.

West: 3♠ 9 total points is not quite enough for game if partner has only 16.

East: 4♠ With partner's spade support, East can upgrade to 19 total points.

| West | East |
|-----------|-------------|
| ♠ 5 2 | ♠ A K J 8 6 |
| ♥ K J 2 | ♥ T 3 |
| ♦ K 9 4 | ♦ A Q T 2 |
| ♣ Q 8 7 2 | ♣ K 9 |

North: 1♥.

East: Double A power double with 17 hcp.

West: 3♣ Intermediate (7 to 9) response.

East: 3♠ East shows a power double with 16 to 18 hcp.

West: 3NT A heart stopper and no support for spades.

| West | East |
|-----------|-------------|
| ♠ 5 2 | ♠ A K J 8 6 |
| ♥ 9 8 5 2 | ♥ T 3 |
| ♦ K J 4 | ♦ A Q T 2 |
| ♣ Q J 7 2 | ♣ K 9 |

North: 1♥.

East: Double A power double with 17 hcp.

West: 2♣ Weak (6 to 8) response.

East: 2♠ East shows a power double with 16 to 18 hcp.

West: Pass No support for spades and no stopper for no trumps. The 5-2 fit in spades is not ideal. Declarer may be put under pressure if the defence keep leading hearts but should still be able to get eight tricks.

Deal 1/5/9/13

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | North | | |
| | | ♠ K Q 9 5 4 ♥ 7 2 ♦ K J 9 8 ♣ A 2 | | |
| West | | | East | |
| ♠ A T 8 3 ♥ Q T 9 5 ♦ 6 ♣ Q 8 5 4 | | | ♠ 7 2 ♥ A K J 8 ♦ A T 5 2 ♣ K J 6 | |
| | | South | | |
| | | ♠ J 6 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ Q 7 4 3 ♣ T 9 7 3 | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | 1♠ | X ⁽¹⁾ | Pass |
| 2♥ ⁽²⁾ | Pass | 3♥ ⁽³⁾ | Pass |
| 4♥ ⁽⁴⁾ | Pass | Pass | Pass |

- 16 hcp.
- A weak hand (6 to 8). The hand is unbalanced so NT is ruled out. Prefer the major to the minor.
- By bidding again, East tells partner that the double was a power double (16+).
- 10 total points with partner's 16 is enough for game.

Most likely, North will lead the ♠K. Win that trick in dummy. Cash the ♦A and ruff a diamond. Back to the ♥A and ruff another diamond. Draw trumps and then force out the ♣A to set up two club tricks. Declarer makes one spade, four hearts, one diamond, two diamonds ruffed in dummy and two clubs. That is ten tricks. If declarer were to play clubs, before the first heart trick, an additional entry would be created in hand making possible a third diamond ruff and eleven tricks in total.

Deal 2/6/10/14

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | North | | |
| | | ♠ A Q T ♥ A J T ♦ Q J 7 5 ♣ K Q 4 | | |
| West | | | East | |
| ♠ 7 6 5 ♥ K Q 5 4 3 ♦ K 8 ♣ A 9 5 | | | ♠ J 9 8 ♥ 8 7 ♦ T 9 6 2 ♣ J 8 3 2 | |
| | | South | | |
| | | ♠ K 4 3 2 ♥ 9 6 2 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ T 7 6 | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| | | Pass | Pass |
| 1♥ | X ⁽¹⁾ | Pass | 1♠ ⁽²⁾ |
| Pass | 1NT ⁽³⁾ | Pass | 3NT ⁽⁴⁾ |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

- 19 hcp. With a power double, shortage in hearts and tolerance for the other suits is not required.
- A weak hand (6 to 8)
- Balanced, 18 to 20 hcp and a stopper in hearts.
- 7 hcp is enough for game.

East, likely will lead the ♥8 since partner bid hearts. Declarer knows that West must have the ♦K and the ♣A to have opened the bidding. Win the opening lead, play a low diamond to the ace and then a diamond back. West will take the king. If another heart comes back, declarer will make 2 hearts, 4 spades and 3 diamonds. If West plays something else, declarer will make only one heart but will be able to set up a club as a ninth trick.

Deal 3/7/11/15

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | North | |
| | ♠ 9 6 3 ♥ K 7 ♦ K Q 9 2 ♣ K J 5 2 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ A Q 8 7 ♥ T 9 4 ♦ J T 7 4 ♣ 7 3 | | ♠ K J 2 ♥ A J 8 6 3 ♦ A 6 ♣ A Q 9 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ T 5 4 ♥ Q 5 2 ♦ 8 5 3 ♣ T 8 6 4 | |

| West | North | East | South |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | | | Pass |
| Pass | 1♦ | X ⁽¹⁾ | Pass |
| 1♠ ⁽²⁾ | Pass | 3♥ ⁽³⁾ | Pass |
| 4♥ ⁽⁴⁾ | Pass | Pass | Pass |

1. Power double.
2. A weak hand, 6 to 8 hcp.
3. With 13 total points, game is unlikely.
4. With 19 hcp, jump in a new suit.
5. 7 hcp + 1 shortage point is easily enough for game.

With no great lead, South may start with a diamond. North (who opened) must surely have the ♣K and either the ♥K or the ♥Q. Win the lead and play a spade to dummy's ace. Finesse the ♣Q and cash the ♣A. Ruff a club in dummy. Play the ♥T and let it run. South will win and play a diamond to North's king. East can ruff the next diamond. Next, the ♠J, overtaking with dummy's queen. Another heart catches north's king and declarer ends up with 11 tricks (3 spades, 4 hearts, 1 diamond, 2 clubs and a club ruffed in dummy).

Deal 4/8/12/16

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | North | |
| | ♠ A Q T 4 3 ♥ J 8 ♦ A 8 7 ♣ A K 5 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ K 9 ♥ K Q 4 ♦ Q 9 5 3 2 ♣ Q 8 6 | | ♠ J 7 6 2 ♥ 7 5 3 2 ♦ 6 4 ♣ J 9 3 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ 8 5 ♥ A T 9 6 ♦ K J T ♣ T 7 4 2 | |

| West | North | East | South |
|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| 1♦ | X ⁽¹⁾ | Pass | 1♥ ⁽²⁾ |
| Pass | 1♠ ⁽³⁾ | Pass | 1NT ⁽⁴⁾ |
| Pass | 2NT ⁽⁵⁾ | Pass | 3NT ⁽⁶⁾ |

1. Power double
2. Shows a weak or very weak hand.
3. By bidding again, North shows the power double (16+ hcp).
4. I don't like spades but I am in the 6-8 range and have a diamond stopper.
5. Invite to game.
6. Accept the invitation.

West will probably lead the fourth-highest diamond. Win that in hand and play a low spade to the ten. That loses to East's Jack. Win the return and play another low spade from hand. The king falls. Declarer still has to lose another spade to East but ends up with three spades, one heart, three diamonds and two clubs. Nine tricks.

Deal 17

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | North | |
| | ♠ K 9 6 5 ♥ A K T ♦ K 7 5 4 ♣ A 8 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ 7 4 ♥ 7 6 5 2 ♦ A Q 6 ♣ K J 5 3 | | ♠ Q 8 ♥ J 8 3 ♦ J T 9 8 ♣ Q 7 4 2 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ A J T 3 2 ♥ Q 9 4 ♦ 3 2 ♣ T 9 6 | |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | 1NT ⁽¹⁾ | Pass | 2♥ ⁽²⁾ |
| Pass | 3♠ ⁽³⁾ | Pass | 4♠ ⁽⁴⁾ |
| All Pass | | | |

- 17 hcp and balanced.
- Transfer to spades.
- Super-accept.
- With North now showing an effective 20 total points, South's 8 total points is more than enough for game.

♦ J is North's obvious lead. Declarer has an easy eleven tricks losing just one diamond and one club. Thank goodness, North super-accepted. Otherwise, game would not have been reached.

Deal 18

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | North | |
| | ♠ A 5 ♥ J 8 4 2 ♦ 9 6 5 2 ♣ 8 6 4 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ J T 4 ♥ K 5 ♦ K Q T 4 ♣ A K 3 2 | | ♠ K Q 9 8 6 2 ♥ A 9 ♦ A 3 ♣ Q J 9 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ 7 3 ♥ Q T 7 6 3 ♦ J 8 7 ♣ T 7 5 | |

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| | | 1♠ | Pass |
| 2♣ ⁽¹⁾ | Pass | 3♠ ⁽²⁾ | Pass |
| 4NT ⁽³⁾ | Pass | 5♥ ⁽⁴⁾ | Pass |
| 6♠ ⁽⁵⁾ | Pass | Pass | Pass |

- A direct raise to game would be weak. Instead, "travel via Canberra".
- Showing 16 or more hcp and six spades.
- 17 total points. Slam may be on. 4NT is Blackwood.
- Two aces
- Missing one ace only.

The play is very easy. Win the opening lead, force out the ace of trumps and claim the rest of the tricks.

Deal 19

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | North | | |
| | | ♠ 9 8 7 4 ♥ 5 4 ♦ T 5 2 ♣ K J 5 4 | | |
| West | | | East | |
| ♠ A 6 3 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ A Q 3 ♣ A 9 8 2 | | | ♠ K T 5 ♥ K J 9 8 2 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ 7 6 | |
| | | South | | |
| | | ♠ Q J 2 ♥ A T 3 ♦ K J 9 4 ♣ Q T 3 | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|--------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| | | | 1♦ |
| 1NT ⁽¹⁾ | Pass | 2♦ ⁽²⁾ | Pass |
| 2♥ | Pass | Pass ⁽³⁾ | Pass |

- 15-17 hcp, balanced and a stopper in diamonds.
- Transfer to hearts.
- Only 7 hcp. That is not enough to invite to game.

As the cards lay, the ♠Q is as good a lead as any. Whatever the lead, declarer will lose just one trick in each suit with the diamond A-Q sitting over the diamond king.

Deal 20

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | North | | |
| | | ♠ A 8 7 5 ♥ 9 ♦ K Q 9 2 ♣ K Q J 3 | | |
| West | | | East | |
| ♠ 9 ♥ A Q J 6 2 ♦ J 8 6 3 ♣ A 9 7 | | | ♠ J 6 4 3 ♥ K 7 3 ♦ 7 4 ♣ 8 6 4 2 | |
| | | South | | |
| | | ♠ K Q T 2 ♥ T 8 5 4 ♦ A T 5 ♣ T 5 | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|
| 1♥ | X ⁽¹⁾ | Pass | 2♠ ⁽²⁾ |
| Pass | 4♠ ⁽³⁾ | Pass | All Pass |

- Take out double.
- In the intermediate range, 9 to 11
- 18 total points.

If West could see East's hand a heart lead would be obvious. As it is, a diamond is more likely. Declarer wins the opening lead. There are hopefully four spade tricks and four diamonds. Clubs will yield three more. Cash the king of spades and then the ace. Unfortunately, West shows out. Play one more spade, finessing the jack. Now, work on clubs. West will win the second club with the ace and maybe play back another diamond. Win in dummy with the ace. Take out the last trump. Finally, lead a small diamond back to hand to take two more diamonds and two clubs. Against best defence, it needs a lot of care to make eleven tricks.

Deal 21

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | North | | |
| | | ♠ K 4 ♥ Q 7 5 ♦ A K T 6 5 ♣ 8 6 3 | | |
| West | | | East | |
| ♠ J 7 3 ♥ J T 2 ♦ Q J 9 2 ♣ K 9 7 | | | ♠ A Q 6 ♥ A K 9 4 ♦ 8 3 ♣ A Q 4 2 | |
| | | South | | |
| | | ♠ T 9 8 5 2 ♥ 8 6 3 ♦ 7 4 ♣ J T 5 | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| | 1♦ | X ⁽¹⁾ | Pass |
| 1NT ⁽²⁾ | Pass | 3NT ⁽³⁾ | Pass |

1. With 19 hcp, a power double.
2. Weak hand, balanced with a diamond stopper
3. Partner has shown 6 to 8 hcp. That is enough for game.

North will start with a diamond. Some players will start with the ace and king; others will play the fourth highest. Having opened the bidding, North is almost certain to have the ♠K and ♥Q. With successful finesses in spades and hearts and with the clubs breaking evenly, declarer could end up with eleven or twelve tricks.

Deal 22

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | North | | |
| | | ♠ Q J 8 3 ♥ 9 6 ♦ Q J 5 ♣ K J T 5 | | |
| West | | | East | |
| ♠ A 6 4 ♥ Q J 8 5 ♦ 8 3 2 ♣ 8 3 2 | | | ♠ T 7 ♥ K T 7 4 ♦ T 7 6 4 ♣ A 9 6 | |
| | | South | | |
| | | ♠ K 9 5 2 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ A K 9 ♣ Q 7 4 | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------------------|----------|--------------------|
| | | Pass | 1NT ⁽¹⁾ |
| Pass | 2♣ ⁽²⁾ | Pass | 2♠ ⁽³⁾ |
| Pass | 4♠ ⁽⁴⁾ | All Pass | |

1. Balanced, 15 to 17 hcp.
2. Stayman
3. Four spades but not four hearts
4. Ten hcp plus a shortage point makes a combined minimum of 26 points.

Any lead from West could give away a trick. South has denied four hearts so maybe the ♥Q is best. Declarer wins and starts on trumps. West takes the ace and continues with hearts. Declarer ruffs the third heart and draws the remaining trumps. The next step is to force out the ace of clubs. One trump remains to ruff yet another heart. Declarer end up with ten tricks, losing one spade, one heart and one club.