

Take Out Doubles

Overcalling 1NT

Before talking about take out doubles, a brief word on the 1NT overcall. If your opponent opens one of a suit **and** you have a hand that is suitable for a 1NT opening **and** you have a stopper in the opponent's suit then you can **overcall** 1NT.

After a 1NT overcall, Stayman and transfers come into effect exactly as if it had been a 1NT opening.

Take Out Doubles

Suppose the opponent on your right opens one of a suit and you have a hand good enough for you to have opened. Your hand does not have a long, strong suit with which to overcall and your hand is not suitable for a 1NT bid. You would like to enter the auction, so what do you do?

The solution is to double. This is known as a take out double and is a request for partner to bid.

What do you need to make a take out double?

- Shortage in the opponent's suit (two cards or less)
- Tolerance for the other suits (three cards or more)
- 12 hcp or more.

Some examples.

Suppose right hand opponent opens 1♥. What do you bid?

Your Hand
♠ K Q 6 4
♥ 9 4
♦ A Q 5 2
♣ Q 9 4

You have 13 high card points . You have shortage in hearts and at least three cards in the other suits. Double.

Your Hand
♠ K T 6 4
♥ A J T
♦ A T 5 2
♣ K 4

This time, the hand is balanced with 15 high card points and a heart stopper. Bid 1NT.

Your Hand
♠ 7
♥ Q J 6 5 4
♦ A 8 6
♣ A K J 2

You cannot overcall because you do not have a five card suit (other than hearts). You cannot bid 1NT because your hand is not balanced. You cannot make a take out double because you don't have shortage in hearts and you can't tolerate spades. Despite the 15 points, pass.

Responding to Partner's Take Out Double

Count your high card points. Classify your hand as follows:

Very Weak 0 to 5 **Weak** 6 to 8 **Intermediate** 9 to 11 **Strong** 12 or more

Partner doubles and next player passes. You have a very weak hand.

Bid your best suit. There is no other option. Usually your best suit is your longest suit (not counting the opponent's suit). But...

- With a four card major and a longer minor, bid the major suit.
- With suits of equal length prefer a major to a minor.
- If your only long suit is the opponent's suit, you may have to bid a three card suit. Again, prefer a major to a minor.

Partner doubles and next player passes. You have a weak hand.

Do as you would with the very weak hand except you now have an extra option. With a balanced hand, no four card major and a stopper in the opponent's suit, bid 1NT.

Examples

Left hand opponent opens 1♥, partner doubles and next player passes What do you bid?

Your Hand
♠ J 9 5 2
♥ 8 3 2
♦ J 6 4 3
♣ 3 2

It is a pitiful hand but do not pass. Bid 1♠ preferring a major to a minor.

Your Hand
♠ 9 5 2
♥ 9 8 3 2
♦ K 4 3
♣ K 3 2

Your only long suit is the opponent's hearts. You don't have a heart stopper so cannot bid 1NT. Grit your teeth and bid 1♠.

Partner doubles and next player passes. You have an Intermediate Hand

With 9 to 11 hcp, you have game invitation values. To indicate this, you do the same as for weak hands but bid one level higher. In other words, you jump. Doubler will pass with 12 or 13 points, invite to game with 14 to 15 and bid game with 16 or more.

Examples

Left hand opponent opens 1♥, partner doubles and next player passes What do you bid?

Your Hand
♠ K Q 5 2
♥ 8 3 2
♦ A J 4 3
♣ 3 2

With 10 hcp, this is in the intermediate range. Jump to 2♠, the major rather than the minor.

Your Hand
♠ 9 5 2
♥ K Q 6 2
♦ A 4
♣ Q T 3 2

11 HCP this time. It is a balanced hand, you have stoppers in the opponent's suit and you don't have four cards in the unbid major. Bid 2NT.

Partner doubles and next player passes. You have a Strong Hand

You have values for game. Bid game immediately, if it is clear-cut. Otherwise, bid the opponent's suit. This is called a cue bid. The game is clear-cut if:

- (a) you have a five card major – partner has promised three cards in the suit. Bid game in the major.
- (b) you have a balanced hand with a stopper in the opponent's suit. Bid 3NT.

The cue bid is forcing. Partner may not pass. In fact, neither player may pass until game has been reached. Bid four card suits up the line until you find your best contract.

Examples

Left hand opponent opens 1♥, partner doubles and next player passes What do you bid?

Your Hand
♠ K J 5 3 2
♥ A 3 2
♦ A T 4 3
♣ 3

There are 12 hcp and there is a guaranteed fit in spades – partner has promised three. Add two extra points for the singleton. That makes 14 total points, enough for an immediate 4♠.

North opens 1♦. How might the bidding go?

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

- East: Double Take out.
West: 2♦ The hand has 12 HCP. It has four spades but partner has only promised three. There is no clear-cut game contract, so cue bid the opponent's suit.
East: 2♥ Start bidding suits up the line.
West: 2♠ I don't have four hearts but I do have four spades.
East: 4♠ Great!

North opens 1♦. How might the bidding go?

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

- East: Double Take out.
West: 2♦ The hand has 12 HCP. It has four spades but partner has only promised three. There is no clear-cut game contract, so cue bid the opponent's suit.
East: 2♥ Start bidding suits up the line.
West: 2♠ I don't have four hearts but I do have four spades.
East: 3♣ I can't help you there but I do have four clubs.
West: 3NT I can support clubs but I have a diamond stopper. I would sooner try for nine tricks in no trumps than eleven tricks in clubs.

What if the Opponents Keep Bidding

Let's say your left hand opponent bid 1♥ and your partner doubled. Now your right hand bids something.

- If you have a **very weak hand**, pass
- If you have a **weak hand**...
 - If the bid you would have made is available, make it
 - If that bid is unavailable, pass.
- If you have an **intermediate** hand
 - If the bid you would have made is still available, make it
 - If the bid you would have made is not available, make the lowest available bid in your chosen suit (or no trumps) provided that bid is below game
 - If neither of those options are available, pass
- if you have a **strong** hand, make the bid you would have made if your right hand opponent had passed.

What if Your Right Hand Opponent Redoubled

Let's say your left hand opponent bid 1♥ and your partner doubled. Now your right hand opponent redoubled.

Make the bid you would have made had your right hand opponent passed.

Example 1

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

West	North	East	South
	1♥	X ⁽¹⁾	Pass
1NT ⁽²⁾	Pass	Pass	Pass

- 15 hcp. Shortage in hearts and at least three cards in the other suits.
- A weak hand (6 to 8). With a good stopper in hearts, prefer no trumps to diamonds.

The conventional lead is the ♥8. Declarer does best to duck the first heart and win the second. The club finesse will lose to South but South has no more hearts to play. Most likely, South will play a spade to North's ace. If North plays another heart, declarer will make an extra heart as the seventh trick. If a spade comes back, declarer may have to rely on a finesse of the ♦J to get home.

Example 2

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

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

- 13 hcp. Shortage in hearts and tolerance for the other suits.
- With 11 hcp, this is an intermediate hand. Hence, the jump.
- Partner has 9 to 11 hcp. This is unlikely to be enough for game.

No lead looks attractive. Maybe a low diamond is best but even that gives away a trick. Even though finesses in all four suits all lose, declarer should still make nine tricks. Declarer can expect to lose one spade, two hearts and one diamond. The club loser will disappear on dummy's diamonds.

Example 3

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

West North East South

1♥

X⁽¹⁾ 2♥⁽²⁾ 2♠⁽³⁾ Pass

Pass⁽⁴⁾ Pass

- 12 hcp. Take out double.
- 6 hcp plus 1 shortage point.
- An intermediate hand, 9 to 11 hcp. Make the bid that would have been made if North had passed. There is no need to jump over North's bid.
- With 13 total points, game is unlikely.

No doubt, South will start with ace and king of hearts. If South now cashes the ♦ A too, that will give declarer an easy trick. It is better to switch to a club. There are six top tricks (four spades and two clubs). Diamonds will provide one more and a heart ruffed in dummy another. If declarer gets the diamonds right, there will be a ninth trick.

Example 4

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

West North East South

1♦ X⁽¹⁾ Pass 2♦⁽²⁾

Pass 2♠⁽³⁾ Pass 4♠⁽⁴⁾

Pass Pass Pass

- Take out double with 12 hcp.
- A strong hand (12+). South can see there is a likely game in one of the majors – but which one? Since there is uncertainty about the best game, South makes a cue bid.
- Bid spades first since clubs would be bid at the three level.
- Spades is good!

With no stand-out lead, West may try a trump. Declarer draws trumps and plays a club to force out the ace. On regaining the lead, declarer takes a club trick and starts on hearts. The jack falls on the second round so declarer takes four heart tricks. A club ruffed in dummy (or a diamond in hand) provides the tenth trick.

Example 5 (Board 25)

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

West	North	East	South
	1♦	X ⁽¹⁾	2♦ ⁽²⁾
2♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽⁴⁾	All Pass

1. Take out double with 14 hcp.
2. 5 hcp plus a doubleton and South can just about raise partner's diamonds.
3. The bid that would have been made had South passed.
4. West has shown 9 to 11 hcp. East has 14 hcp plus 3 for the singleton. That is enough for game.

♦K looks like North's best lead. When that wins, dummy will be void in diamonds. That being the case, it is a good idea to start on trumps to reduce dummy's ruffing potential. Now, declarer has a tough time. Two diamonds must be ruffed in dummy and declarer needs to lead twice towards the club king-queen. This will create two club tricks to go along with two hearts, four spades and two ruffs. A difficult hand to play.

Example 6 (Board 30)

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

West	North	East	South
		1♦	X ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Pass	3NT ⁽⁴⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. 15 hcp.
2. An intermediate hand with a double-stopper in diamonds
3. I hope partner doesn't has 10 or 11 hcp but not 9!

Luckily for declarer, the eight missing diamonds split 4-4. That gives time to set up the nine tricks. Declarer may start with the spade finesse. That loses and a diamond comes back. Next, the heart finesse and that one works. All that remains is to force out the ♣A for the ninth trick. The defence take two diamonds, a spade and a club.

Example 7 (Board 35)

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

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

1. Take out double with 14 hcp.
2. A strong hand, just! The hearts may not be great but partner has at least three. The choice of game is clear-cut.

When west sees dummy's hearts he gives a heart-felt "thank you, partner". With three club tricks, two diamonds and a spade, just four tricks are needed from hearts. The best way is to take a double-finesse. Lead a low heart towards the AJ9. That loses to the queen. Return to hand in one of the outside suits, and lead another heart. The king falls and all is well with the world!

Example 8 (Board 28)

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

West	North	East	South
1♥	X ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass ⁽³⁾	3♣ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	3NT ⁽⁵⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. Take out double.
2. A strong hand. Which is the better game? Spades or no trumps?
3. Hey! That's my suit!
4. Cheapest four card suit, denies four spades.
5. OK. No trumps it is.

West leads the ♥5. Declarer can make two heart tricks and four diamonds. The ace of spades is another but two more are still required. The spade suit looks the best bet. Lead the queen and when West covers, play the ace. Now lead the eight back and let it run. West wins with the ten but now the jack and nine of spades are winners.