

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 the opponent's 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
♥ 9 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♠ 8 total points is not quite enough for game.

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.

Example 1

	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 a 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.

North may well 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.

Example 2

	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.

Probably, East 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 a 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.

Example 3

	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 19 hcp, jump in a new suit.
4. 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).

Example 4

	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.

Example 5 (Board 25)

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

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

1. With 16 hcp, a power double.
2. Prefer the major to the minor
3. By bidding again, shows 16+ points
4. Nine hcp plus one for the doubleton is enough for game.

Most norths will start with the ace and king of clubs. After there are an easy eleven tricks for declarer: four spades, two hearts, four diamonds and a club ruff.

Example 6 (Board 28)

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

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

1. 18 hcp is too much for a 1NT overcall so start with a power double.
2. Prefer the four card major to the five card minor
3. After the initial double, shows 18 to 20 hcp.
4. 18 plus seven is enough for game.

West having opened the bidding will have most of the missing points. By finessing clubs towards north's Ace-Jack and spades towards north's Ace-Queen, declarer should end up with ten tricks.

Example 7 (Board 29)

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

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

1. Too strong for a 1NT overcall so start with a power double.
2. The longer major
3. 1NT is feasible but better to show the other major
4. Nine total points opposite East's 16+. Some would bid 4♠.
5. East has extra values and goes to game anyway.

Even with a successful spade finesse, there are only eight tricks. Declarer will need to ruff some clubs in dummy before drawing trumps.

Example 8 (Board 34)

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

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

1. 17 hcp is fine for a 1NT overcall.
2. Transfer to spades.
3. Accept the transfer.
4. Shows exactly five spades and game invitational values (8 to 9 hcp).
5. With a maximum and spade support, bid game.

Since east has most of the outstanding points, finesse spades and clubs towards south. Lose just one heart and one diamond.

Note that 3NT will go down on a heart lead.

