

## Negative Doubles

Partner opens the bidding with one of a suit and the next player overcalls in a suit. We have already seen (a) how to support partner's suit, (b) when we can bid a new suit and (c) when we can bid a different suit. What if we can do none of these?

### Troublesome hands

♠ K 7 2
♥ 5 4
♦ 9 8 3
♣ K J 9 6 2

Partner opens 1♦ and next player bids 1♥.

Pass. The hand is not strong enough to bid at the two level.

Can we do better?

♠ K Q 7 2
♥ 5 4
♦ A J 8 3
♣ T 6 2

Partner opens 1♥ and next player bids 2♣.

We have 10 high card points but cannot bid a four card suit at the two level. There is no stopper for no trumps. What do we do?

♠ 9 2
♥ K J 5
♦ J 8 7 3
♣ K 6 4 2

Partner opens 1♠ and next player bids 2♥.

With only 8 high card points, 2NT is out of the question?

What do we do

♠ 7 2
♥ K J 5 3
♦ 9 8 3
♣ A 6 4 2

Partner opens 1♦ and next player bids 1♠.

Again, we cannot bid no trumps or a suit at the two level.

What do we do?

In many cases, a double is the answer. **Negative doubles** were first used in the 1950s. They were originally called sputnik doubles – referring to the 1957 launch of the first Soviet satellite. Presumably, it was hoped that sputnik doubles would herald a new age of bridge.

### Suits Shown by Negative Doubles

Negative doubles are used in situations where partner has opened one of a suit and next player overcalled with a different suit.

In general, the suits shown are those not already bid. In particular:

Suits bid so far	Suits shown by the double
After 1♣ and a 1♦ overcall	Four cards in each of the majors
After 1♦ and a 2♣ overcall	At least 4-3 in the majors. (Some people still prefer 4-4.)
Both majors	At least four cards in each minor
A major and a minor	At least four cards in the other major. <u>This is a rock solid guarantee!</u> The double says nothing about the holding in the other minor.

## Comparison with Take Out Doubles

**Take out doubles** are made by an **opponent** of the opening bidder. They usually show tolerance for the unbid suits.

**Negative doubles** are made by the **partner** of the opening bidder. They nearly always show the unbid suits.

## Points Needed to Make a Negative Double

You take an optimistic approach and assume partner can bid one of your suits at the cheapest level. The points needed for a negative double reflect that.

	<b>Points Needed</b>
Partner can bid at the one level	6 or more HCP
Partner must bid at the two level	8 or more HCP
Partner must bid at the three level	10 or more HCP

## Examples

Start with the problem hands from above

<p>♠ K 7 2 ♥ 5 4 ♦ 9 8 3 ♣ K J 9 6 2</p>	<p>Partner opens 1♦ and next player bids 1♥. Unfortunately, there are only three spades so we cannot use the negative double. This is still a Pass.</p>
--	---

<p>♠ K Q 7 2 ♥ 5 4 ♦ A J 8 3 ♣ T 6 2</p>	<p>Partner opens 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. With four spades and ten points, we can use the negative double.</p>
--	---

<p>♠ 9 2 ♥ K J 5 ♦ J 8 7 3 ♣ K 6 4 2</p>	<p>Partner opens 1♠ and next player bids 2♥. While we have four cards in each minor, we are not strong enough to make a negative double, forcing partner to bid at the three level. We pass. However...</p>
--	---

<p>♠ 9 2 ♥ K J 5 ♦ K 8 7 3 ♣ K 6 4 2</p>	<p>Partner opens 1♠ and next player bids 2♥. ... with a slightly stronger hand (10 high card points now) and a stopper in hearts, we can now bid 2NT. However...</p>
--	--

<p>♠ K 2 ♥ 8 5 3 ♦ K J 7 3 ♣ K 6 4 2</p>	<p>Partner opens 1♠ and next player bids 2♥. ... with no heart stopper, use the negative double. Partner will know we have four cards in each minor</p>
--	---

♠ 7 2  
♥ K J 5 3  
♦ 9 8 3  
♣ A 6 4 2

Partner opens 1♦ and next player bids 1♠.

Eight high card points is enough for a negative double that forces partner to bid at the two level. Partner will know we have four hearts.

♠ 5 2  
♥ K J 8 3 2  
♦ T 4 3  
♣ A 3 2

Partner opens 1♦ and next player bids 1♠. What do you do?

Double. You have five hearts but 8 HCP is not sufficient to make a bid of 2♥.

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

Partner opens 1♦ and next player bids 1♠. What do you do?

With 11 HCP, you can make your normal 2♥ bid.

♠ T 5 2  
♥ 8 3  
♦ Q J 4 3  
♣ A J 3 2

Partner opens 1♥ and next player bids 1♠. What do you do?

Double. You have 8 HCP and four cards in both minors.

♠ K T 5 2  
♥ 8 2  
♦ T 4 3  
♣ A 9 3 2

Partner opens 1♦ and next player bids 1♥. What do you do?

Double. You have four cards in the other major and 7 HCP.

♠ K T 8 5 2  
♥ 8 2  
♦ T 4 3  
♣ A 3 2

Partner opens 1♦ and next player bids 1♥. What do you do?

Bid 1♠. You have five cards in the other major and 7 HCP.

These last two hands highlight an important principle. If partner opens one of a minor and next player bids 1♥:

- Double shows exactly four spades
- Bidding 1♠ guarantees at least five spades

### Responding to a Negative Double

Most responses to a negative double are natural but first, you need to do some number crunching. The doubler has shown a minimum number of points (6, 8 or 10) as described earlier. Add that to your own points, not forgetting shortage points where you have a fit.

26 total points are required for a major suit game while 25 HCP are required for 3NT. With game values, bid game or make a game forcing bid. Within 3 HCP of game, invite to game. Otherwise make a minimum bid.

If the opponent on your right passed (or redoubled):

**Combined Points    Action**

- Minimum            Make a minimum bid.
- Invitational        Make a jump bid.
- Game values        If there is a clear-cut game, bid it. If not, bid the opponent's suit.

If the opponent on your right bid something (maybe raised the overcall):

**Combined Points    Action**

- Minimum            Make a minimum bid at the one or two level. If that is not possible, pass.
- Invitational        Jump or bid at the three level.
- Game values        If there is a clear-cut game, bid it. If not, bid the opponent's suit.

**Examples**

♠ A 5  
♥ Q T 8 3  
♦ A Q 4 3  
♣ 7 3 2

You open 1♦ and next player bids 1♠. Partner doubles.  
What do you do?

Partner has shown four hearts and at least 8 HCP. You have 12 plus one for the doubleton. That is 21 in total, so make a minimum bid of 2♥.

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

You open 1♦ and next player bids 1♠. Partner doubles.  
What do you do?

Partner has shown four hearts and at least 8 HCP. You have 17 plus three for the singleton. That makes 28. Bid the clear-cut game of 4♥.

This last hand illustrates why it is important that the doubler has at least four hearts. Partner can bid game confidently knowing there is a 4-4 fit.

♠ 8 5 3  
♥ K 3  
♦ A Q 8 4  
♣ A J 7 2

You open 1♦ and next player bids 1♠. Partner doubles.  
What do you do?

Partner has shown four hearts and at least 8 HCP. You have 14, making 22 in total. With no heart support, make a natural, minimum bid of 2♣.

♠ T 5  
♥ A K 3  
♦ A Q J 8 6 3  
♣ A 2

You open 1♦ and next player bids 1♠. Partner doubles.  
What do you do?

Partner has shown four hearts and at least 8 HCP. You have 18, making 26 in total. That is enough for game but which game? Cue bid 2♠.

## After the Cue Bid

In all these examples, North has bid 1♠ after West's 1♦.

West	East	West	East
♠ T 5	♠ K 9 4	1♦	Double the 1♠ overcall
♥ A K 3	♥ Q T 8 6 3	2♠ (no clear-cut game)	3♥ (showing five hearts)
♦ A Q J 8 6 3	♦ 9 7	4♥	
♣ A 2	♣ K 6 3		
West	East	West	East
♠ T 5	♠ K 9 4 3	1♦	Double the 1♠ overcall
♥ A K 3	♥ Q T 8 6	2♠ (no clear-cut game)	2NT (shows a spade stopper)
♦ A Q J 8 6 3	♦ 9 7	3NT	
♣ A 2	♣ K 6 3		
West	East	West	East
♠ T 5	♠ 9 4 3	1♦	Double the 1♠ overcall
♥ A K 3	♥ Q T 8 6	2♠ (no clear-cut game)	3♣ (four card suit)
♦ A Q J 8 6 3	♦ K 7	3♦ (at least 5 diamonds)	4♦ (denies a spade stopper)
♣ A 2	♣ K 8 6 3	5♦	