

Double Trouble – Week 1

The Take Out Double

Suppose the opponent on your right opens one of a suit and you have a strong hand. 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?

There are two types of hands. You need either:

- Shortage in the opponent's suit (two cards or less)
- Tolerance for the other suits (three cards or more)
- 13 points or more. Count high card points plus points for shortage in the opponent's suit: 1 for a doubleton, 2 for a singleton and 3 for a void.

Or:

- 16+ high card points. This is sometimes called a power double.

You should not make a take out double if:

- You have less than 16 high card points and can make a normal overcall.
- You have a balanced hand with 16 to 18 high card points and a stopper in the opponent's suit. Bid 1NT instead.

How will partner know if you have a regular take out double (13-15) or a power double (16+)?

With the regular double, you will pass if partner makes a minimum bid.
With a power double, you will bid again.

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 plus one for a doubleton in the opponent's suit. You have shortage in their suit and at least three cards in the other suits. Double and pass partner's minimum response.

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

You have 17 high card points. You cannot bid 1NT because your hand is not balanced and you have no heart stopper. Double. This is the power double and you plan to bid spades at your next turn.

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

This time, the hand is balanced with 17 high card points and a heart stopper. Bid 1NT.

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

You cannot overcall because you do not have a five card suit. You cannot bid 1NT because you only have 15 high card points. You cannot make a take out double because you don't have shortage in hearts and you can't tolerate clubs. Despite the 15 points, pass.

Responding to Partner's Take Out Double

Count your points. If you have a five card suit, you can count shortage points. Classify your hand as follows:

Very Weak	0-5
Weak	6-9
Intermediate	10-12
Strong	13 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 redoubles. What now?

Do exactly as you would if next player had passed.

Partner doubles and next player bids a suit. What now?

With a very weak hand, pass.

With a weak hand do as before but prefer to pass rather than bidding at the three level. Your 1NT promises a stopper in opener's suit but not in responder's suit if that is different.

You have one extra option. If the opponents have bid two different suits and you have equal length (four or more) in the other two suits, double. This is a *responsive double* and tells partner to pick the suit.

Examples

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

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

You are off the hook! Pass.

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

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

You have four cards in the two unbid suits. Make a responsive double.

Deal 1

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

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

1. With 20 HCP, east doubles. The hand is too strong to overcall.
2. Bid the major rather than the minor.
3. Some norths may repeat their excellent heart suit.
4. Even if north bids 2♥, east still jumps in spades. 4♠ is tempting but East needs a trick from partner.

5. The king of spades will surely provide the trick partner needs.

No doubt north will start with hearts. East ruffs the third round of hearts and draws trumps. Next, diamonds winners can be established and declarer will make ten tricks.

Deal 2

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

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

1. Ideal hand for a take out double.
2. With the only four card suit being the opponent's suit, north has to bid a three card suit. Prefer the major to a minor.
3. Some easts may repeat the good heart suit. If so, south with only 14 HCP should pass.

If east bids 2♥, it should fail – losing two spades, a diamond and three clubs.

North will probably make 1♠ but not 2♠. After ruffing the third heart, there are three club tricks, a diamond and two more spade tricks.

Deal 3

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

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

1. Take out double.
2. Responsive double showing four hearts and four spades.
3. Better than 1NT with both opponents showing majors.
4. 16 points and partners 6+ is enough to compete.

Declarer has three spade tricks and three aces. Two more should come from diamond ruffs. Declarer should win the probable club lead, take the diamond ace and ruff a diamond. Then, go back to dummy with a heart and ruff another diamond. Depending on how hearts are played there may be nine or even ten tricks.

Deal 4

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

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

1. 17 HCP, balanced with a spade stopper. Perfect for a 1NT overcall.
2. Transfer to diamonds.
3. Transfer accepted.

Since east is known to have most of the defensive points, declarer would like to play hearts from dummy towards the ace.

West will probably lead a spade. Declarer should win the second spade. Then cash the top two clubs and ruff a club in dummy. Now, a heart finesse will restrict the defence to one heart trick. Depending on how diamonds play out, declarer may make nine or ten tricks.