



Types of Doubles

by Bob Gruber

At the onset of bridge, when the only meaning of the term “Double” was to increase the penalties if a contract was defeated, there was no confusion as to its intent. Now, however, the large variety of doubles that are similar in nature, yet different, often present a problem to the beginning bridge player. Perhaps, some of the confusion can be alleviated by assembling some of these doubles in a table.

Our terminology is: Opener & Responder are one partnership; Intervenor & Advancer are the other.

Type of Double	Ideal Holding / Situation for Making the Double
Penalty Double (aka Business Double)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the opponents make a bid, you don't think they can make, you may “Double” at your turn to call (you may have a trump stack, know cards are unfavorably placed for declarer or simply have a preponderance of points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increases the penalty if the contract fails ○ opponents receive additional points if the contract makes • At the 1 or 2 level, doubles are often used for something other than penalty • You only double the opponents' contract • You double only when it is your turn to call • A double does not end the auction—3 consecutive passes are still needed
Classic Takeout Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made by the non-opening side in an attempt to enter the bidding • Partner is expected to take the double out into one of the unbid suits or NT • Neither doubler (Intervenor) nor doubler's partner (Advancer) have made a prior bid (prior passes are OK); see, however, <i>Negative Double</i> • The opposing partnership has bid one or two suits (notrump is not a suit) • It is doubler's (Intervenor's) 1st or 2nd turn to bid • Doubler (Intervenor) should have a hand of 13 or more total points • Doubler should hold 3-card or longer support for all unbid suits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the doubler has 18+ points and a long suit (at least 5 cards long), support for all unbid suits is not necessary
Balancing Double, aka a Reopening Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made in the pass out seat (by either side); since a pass would end the auction, this double re-opens the bidding • Usually made at a low level when the opponents are in a contract that will probably be easy to make, often because they've found a fit • Doubler <u>may</u> hold slightly fewer values than normal, about a King lighter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Doubler's partner should mentally subtract about 3 points in deciding what (i.e. how high) to bid after a balancing double
Negative Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A takeout double made by the opening side <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After partner opens and the next player overcalls in another suit (through, say, 3♠, but subject to partnership agreement), Responder's double is a negative double meant for takeout • Shows 4+ cards in all unbid major suits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In particular, 1♣-1♦-Dbl shows exactly 4-4 in the majors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After 1♣-1♦, a 1♥ or 1♠ response can be made on a 4-card suit • If no unbid major, suggests at least 4 cards in each minor • After 1♣ or 1♦ opening and a 1♥ overcall, a negative double shows exactly 4 spades and a 1♠ response promises at least 5 spades



Type of Double	Ideal Holding / Situation for Making the Double
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative double at the 1-level promises: 6+ total points; at the 2-level, 8+ total points; at the 3-level, 10+ total points Without the strength to bid a 5+card suit at the required level, Responder starts with a negative double, planning to bid the suit the next round Playing negative doubles precludes responder making an immediate penalty double unless the interference is above the negative double level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you wish to make a penalty double, you must pass and wait for partner to reopen the bidding with a double, which you will then pass
Opener's Takeout Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you open the bidding, the opponents intervene (at a low level), and partner passes, your double of a partscore contract would be for takeout When playing negative doubles, if your Left Hand Opponent (LHO) overcalls a suit followed by 2 passes, you should reopen with a double when short in the opponent's suit even with a minimum opening bid; you do so in case partner had a normal penalty double of the opponent's bid
Overcaller's Takeout Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you've overcalled (presumably on a 5+ card suit) and the bidding dies at a low level, if you have support for the unbid suits, you probably should double back in (rather than rebidding a 5-card suit) with the possible exception of a very strong 5-card suit and very weak holdings in the unbid suits; then you may rebid your 5-card suit rather than sell out at a low level
Cooperative Double (aka Competitive & Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These doubles typically occur in the 2nd round or later of the bidding They tend to be a bit penalty oriented at the 3 and 4 level, but still generally express doubt whether to defend or bid –or– what to bid At the 2 level they show a desire not to sell out cheaply unless partner has a trump stack, in which case, he/she will pass for penalty
Delayed Takeout Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the opponents open and you have opening bid values, but lack support for an unbid suit and also lack a good suit to bid yourself, you pass. If the opponents subsequently bid your short suit and the bidding comes to you still at a low level, you may now double for takeout into one of the unbid suits. (This delayed takeout double implies you have some length in the suit originally opened by the opponents)
Doubling a Conventional Bid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without specific agreements otherwise, the double of an opponent's conventional (i.e. artificial) suit bid is penalty-oriented, showing strength in the bid suit. If the opponents are likely to play the eventual contract, the double is lead directing
Lead-directing Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As noted above, doubling artificial bids (such as Stayman 2♣, or Jacoby Transfer, or ace-asking responses) tends to be lead directing as well as strength showing The Lightner Double of a voluntarily bid slam, asks for an unusual opening lead, not a trump, not a suit bid by the defenders. Typically, doubler has a void and opening leader is expected to work out where it is The double of a freely bid 3NT by the partner of the opening leader calls for an unusual lead, which often turns out to be dummy's first bid suit



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Redouble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 1 of a suit and double by Intervenor, Responder's redouble shows 10+ points and interest in doubling the opponents for penalty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responder <u>usually</u> lacks a fit for opener's suit ○ Opener usually passes to allow Responder to describe his hand, but may bid with a weak distributional hand not suitable for defending ○ Responder's new suit after redoubling is forcing
Responder Bids Rather Than Redoubling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bid of a new suit at the 1 level shows 6+ points (and may, in fact, have 10+) and is forcing • A bid of a new suit at the 2 level is non-forcing and shows a 5+ card suit with < 10 points • A jump in a new suit is weak and non-forcing. Shows a good 6+ card suit with < 10 points • A jump raise to the 3 level in opener's suit shows 4+ card support and is weak (preemptive) • A jump to 2NT shows 4+ card support for opener's suit and 10+ points (known as Jordan 2NT)
SOS Redouble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When your side has been doubled for penalty in a low-level suit contract, you can agree that redouble asks partner to seek a better contract
Maximal Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a competitive auction, normally, if the partnership has found a fit, double of an opponent's bid is for penalty. Playing maximal doubles, in one particular situation, double is, instead, a game try, freeing a bid of three (3) of the agreed upon suit to be to play rather than a game try. The particular situation is when the opponent's suit is immediately below your suit and there is no suit to bid (at that level) as a game try.
Support Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If partner's response to your opening bid is overcalled (or doubled), a double (or redouble) by you shows exactly 3-card support. With 4-card support, you raise Responder's suit. This treatment allows partner to know whether you have 3-card or 4-card support. • As with Negative Doubles, the level through which Support Doubles apply must be discussed and agreed upon



Type of Double	Examples
Penalty Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Opener bids 1NT (say 15-17 HCP) and the Intervenor makes a natural overcall in a suit, in the absence of a specific agreement otherwise, Responder's double is for penalty (showing 9+ HCP) • If partner opens at the 2 level or higher and the next opponent overcalls, double is for penalty • In the absence of a conventional defense to a 1NT opening, a <u>direct</u> double is for penalty • The negative double takes precedence over the penalty double through the level you play negative doubles; beyond that level, double is for penalty • If the partnership has found a fit, double of an opponent's bid is for penalty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exception: You're playing Maximal Doubles • If there is only 1 unbid suit, double is for penalty
Classic Takeout Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doubles of opening preempts through 4♥ are typically for takeout • The higher the level, the more points Intervenor needs to double <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The higher the level, the easier it is for Advancer to convert the double to penalties
Balancing Double, aka a Reopening Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an auction such as 1♦-P-P-?, 1NT shows a balanced 10-14/15 HCP, lack of a suit to bid and some semblance of a stopper. Lacking a stopper and with support for all unbid suits, double with 10+ HCP, even with 3 or 4 cards in the opponent's suit.
Negative Double	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1♣-1♦-Dbl shows exactly 4-4 in the majors, no exceptions • 1♣/1♦-1♥- Dbl shows a 4-card ♠ suit and support for the other minor or a retreat to partner's minor (a 1♠ response promises at least 5 spades)