

Introduction

When the opposition OVERCALL their bid takes up space in the auction. This is not the case when they DOUBLE. A double takes up no room in the auction process and so doesn't take away any of responder's bids. But don't make the mistake of thinking that this doesn't affect you. The auction is now competitive and you must factor this in to your bidding strategy.

These are the things to consider:

1. Even if you "pass" your partner has a chance to bid again (so there is no pressing imperative to bid on minimal values and no support for partner's suit).
2. When responder bids a new suit the normal rules apply
3. When responder is supporting opener's suit, bid one level higher than normal to take up the opponents' space.
4. You therefore need a bid to show a genuine HCP raise of opener's suit. This is 2NT.
5. A further bid is available – redouble (XX)

More information

When responder bids a new suit the normal rules apply. Here is a reminder of those rules:

- a) 6HCPs needed to make a bid, 9HCPs if the bid has to be at the 2-level.
- b) A change of suit is forcing, opener must bid again if 4th seat passes.
- c) A jump bid first response shows 15+ HCPs and at least 5 cards in the suit bid and is forcing to game.
- d) The 1NT pudding raise is tweaked. With only 6HCPs you may prefer to pass as partner has a chance to bid again with a strong hand. Also remember the opposition double shows the doubler has spades so a 1NT bid now may contain 4 weak spades.

When responder is supporting opener's suit, bid one level higher than normal to take up the opponents' space. You therefore need a bid to show a genuine HCP raise of opener's suit. This is 2NT. That is, to bid 2NT shows 4+card support for opener's suit and 10-12HCPs. So how do you bid "real" 2NT hands? – see below.

A further bid is available – redouble (XX). This is used in three situations:

- (1) To show a "real" 2NT hand. It's not very often that we make a "stop" 2NT first response to an opening bid. Bidding "stop" 2NT is a big jump and as such cuts out a lot of room in the auction. Usually it's more helpful to your partnership to make another suit bid first in order to discover opener's rebid. If however, you want to bid 2NT and the opposition have doubled, the way to do it is to redouble then bid 2NT on your second go.
- (2) With a hand that has 9+HCP and 3-card support for partner. First you would XX then on the next round you would make a minimum supporting bid with 9-11HCPs, and with more HCPs you would cue bid the opposition suit. (You can't cue bid on the first round as the opposition haven't shown a suit.)

- (3) With a hand that can penalty double at least two of the opposition suits and with no fit (not even 3-card fit) with partner. It may be a 4-4-4-1 hand. The “1” being partner’s suit. The hand would have 9+HCPs.

Third hand bids after a takeout double

West	North	East	South
1♠	dbl.	?	
♠ K J 9 4 ♥ A J 9 ♦ 9 3 ♣ Q 7 5 4			2NT. East has a sound raise to 3♠. 2NT is a real game try on an eight loser hand, so West can jump to 4♠ with a bit extra, bid 3♠ on a minimum or make a trial bid for game.
♠ K J 9 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ 9 8 5 4 3 ♣ J 7			2♣. Very thin values but showing the spade support whilst taking the two-level bids away from opponents. A much safer bid than it looks, as most opponents will not play penalty doubles of 2♣.
♠ J 8 ♥ A J 10 9 ♦ Q J 9 ♣ K 10 8 7			Redouble. This hand would be happy to double hearts or clubs for penalties should the opportunity arise. If partner bids 2♣ to show a minimum opener, it is worth a 2NT game try.
♠ 3 ♥ Q 8 7 5 4 3 ♦ Q 9 8 ♣ J 10 8			Pass. In years gone by, players used to bid whenever they were short in partner’s suit. Nowadays a 2♥ response would show the normal values.
♠ J 8 6 5 4 ♥ A J 10 ♦ – ♣ K Q 10 8 7			4♦. A splinter raise to 4♠ as it would be without the double. If opponents were to bid 5♦, this could help partner to judge whether to bid on or double the opponents.

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What does opener do next? The meaning of partner’s redouble won’t become clear until s/he bids again. (What you do know is your partnership have the majority of the HCPs) As opener you need to make sure your partner gets another opportunity to bid. This means if fourth hand passes you need to bid. If fourth hand bids you can pass if you have a solid opening hand – responder must bid again – but with a weak distributional hand, bid straightaway.

Similarly if fourth hand passes, opener makes a rebid and the doubler bids then any pass by responder is forcing. Responder’s pass indicates that s/he is holding the (3) type of hand described above and would like to penalty double but does not have strong enough trumps to do so.