



COMPETITIVE BIDDING AFTER A 1NT OPENING BID

HELVIC – A “WRIGGLE” AFTER 1NT IS DOUBLED

“wriggling” after the opening 1NT is doubled

Whenever the respective merits of the weak no trump and the strong no trump are discussed, the one real weakness of the 12-14 point 1NT opening bid is bound to be raised: sometimes it is doubled and the penalty can be severe.

Regular partnerships may wish to consider a way of escaping from this – there are several variations on a theme, but the attempt to escape is generally known as a “wriggle”.

The idea is simple: rather than stay in 1NT doubled and concede a large penalty, you try to escape to an alternative contract. Perhaps the opponents will bid something, letting you off the hook.

The advantages of running from 1NT doubled are two-fold:

- You may be able to escape to a contract which either makes or only fails by a trick or so, giving the enemy an insufficient penalty
- The enemy may not be able to extract a penalty from whatever you run to, either because they are unsure that they are in a position to penalise the new contract or because they have not discussed what doubles (and other bids) mean after you start running.

A moving target is rather more difficult to hit

There are several ways of playing a wriggle, but the recommended method is known as **Helvic**.

This method allows the partner of the opening 1NT bidder to escape and show any single-suited or two-suited hand. **Note that, with a bad, “flat” hand you must choose either to describe it as either a 1-suiter or invent a second suit and treat it as a two-suiter.**

With a decent hand, where you expect partner to make 1NT, you put the pressure on the opponents by effectively making the contract 1NT redoubled. If they do not fancy this (perhaps the doubler’s partner has a rotten hand) then they will themselves be likely to concede a penalty when they try to run.

Over 1NT - dble:

redouble requests opener to bid 2♣

And then after

	1NT	dble	redbl	pass
	2♣	pass (or dble)		
responder bids		pass	=	♣
		2♦	=	♦
		2♥	=	♥
		2♠	=	♠

Redouble shows a 1-suited hand. Responder passes (when opener bids 2♣) or bids his suit.

Over 1NT - dble:

a suit bid shows at least 4-4 in two (touching) suits

2♣	=	♣ + ♦
2♦	=	♦ + ♥
2♥	=	♥ + ♠
2♠	=	♠ + ♣

Note that, when responder holds a flat 4-3-3-3 hand with little hope that 1NT doubled will succeed, he probably does best to describe it as a 2-suited hand and bid accordingly. Quite often he will avoid a double if opener chooses one of the suits that he shows.

A suit bid shows two touching suits (the suit bid + the next suit up)

Over 1NT - dble:

a pass shows at least 4-4 in two non-touching suits (or a decent hand happy for partner to play in 1NT redoubled).

After responder's pass, opener must redouble. Then, after

1NT	dble	pass	pass
redouble	pass		

pass = happy with 1NTxx

2♣ = ♣ + ♥

2♦ = ♦ + ♠

A suit bid after a pass (and opener's redouble) shows two non-touching suits (the lower suit is bid)

Here is an example of this method in action:

♠ J 7 4

♥ A Q 8 7

♦ K J 8 7

♣ Q 6



♠ 9 2

♥ J 6 3 2

♦ Q 5 2

♣ K 5 3 2

West	North	East	South
1NT	dbld	pass	pass
redbl	pass	2♣	pass
		2♥	

East does not fancy 1NT so he passes, forcing partner to redouble.

Now East's 2♣ bid shows clubs and hearts.

Although 1NT is a poor contract, 2♥ is favourite to make, and opponents who are quick on the trigger may double this!