

Responding to a Takeout Double

Everyone knows that a takeout double asks partner to bid one of the unbid suits. That is on page two of every bridge book. Unfortunately, many people never read page three: how to respond to a takeout double. We shall try to rectify that tonight.

Let's start with a little quiz.

Quiz

The auction:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♥	Double	Pass	?

What should you bid with each of the following hands?

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|--------|--------|
| 1. ♠9853 | ♥742 | ♦10863 | ♣Q4 |
| 2. ♠Q987 | ♥42 | ♦83 | ♣Q9765 |
| 3. ♠KJ94 | ♥876 | ♦A875 | ♣42 |
| 4. ♠A982 | ♥432 | ♦KQ8 | ♣K74 |
| 5. ♠986 | ♥Q9652 | ♦864 | ♣75 |
| 6. ♠Q63 | ♥KJ9 | ♦K542 | ♣J83 |
| 7. ♠7 | ♥KQJ1087 | ♦542 | ♣853 |
| 8. ♠Q1076 | ♥43 | ♦AJ943 | ♣K6 |

If you make a takeout double of 1♥ and partner responds 1♠ do you know what he has?

Does that promise four or more spades and six or more points, as it would if he responded 1♠ to your opening 1♥? Could he have nine points? Twelve points?

Most people don't have a clue. The answer to each of the above questions is no. It is important to keep in mind that your double has *forced* partner to bid. He would, and should, bid with no points. However, different hands require different responses. If partner's 1♠ could be zero points and it also could be twelve points, how are you supposed to know what to do next? A simple (non-jump) response, such as 1♣, is a strictly limited bid.

Here is what different responses to a takeout double mean:

- Simple (non-jump) response (1♣): 0-7 points, not necessarily a four-card suit. Over 1♥-double, partner might have ♠842 ♥Q9762 ♦876 ♣92. With no four-card unbid suit, what can he do? He is too weak to respond 1NT and his hearts are not nearly good enough to make a penalty pass. Therefore, he must bid a three-card suit.

- Jump response (2♠): 8-10 points, four or more cards in the suit bid. Responder does *not* need a five-card suit to jump in response to a takeout double. Remember, the doubler has already promised the unbid suits.
- 1NT: 8-10 HCP, stoppers in opponent's suit, no four-card unbid major. 1NT is a constructive response. It should show solid values. Do not respond 1NT simply because you have no unbid four-card suit. 1NT is the last thing partner wants to hear (he is *short* in the opponent's suit.)
- Cue-bid (2♥): 11 or more points. Game is highly likely. The bidding proceeds normally after the cue-bid, with each new suit forcing for one round.
- Pass: The rarest response of all. Promises *great*, not good, trumps and promises to beat the contract. Your trumps should be strong enough to *draw* the declarer's trumps, and your penalty pass requests partner to lead a trump at trick one! A minimum trump holding would be KQJ109 or KQ1098x. Not a very common situation. **DO NOT** pass because you don't know what else to do. A pass of a takeout double is a *positive* action promising to beat the contract.

Answers

1. 1♠ Bid your cheapest four-card suit.
2. 1♠ Bid a four-card major before a longer minor.
3. 2♠ Too good for 1♠. Let your partner know you are not broke.
4. 2♥ You are very close to game. Tell partner the good news.
5. 1♠ The hand we all hate. Too weak for 1NT, hearts not good enough to pass. Bid your best unbid-suit!
6. 1NT 8-10 HCP, no spade suit, good heart stopper. This is *constructive*.
7. Pass Pretty sure 1♥ will not make!
8. 2♠ Jump with 8-10. Prefer the four-card major to the longer diamond suit.