

TAKEOUT DOUBLES

A double of a natural suit opening bid or response, or of a new suit rebid by opener, is for takeout, asking partner to bid her longest suit. It implies an opening bid or better, shortness in the suit doubled, and preparedness for any response. Unlike an opening bid, you can count ruffing values for shortness in the opposing suit, so a takeout double with a singleton in that suit may be made with as little as 11 HCP. Partner will count on at least two-and-one-half defensive tricks.

For takeout doubles in reopening situations, see section 8-7, Reopening the Bidding.

The ideal distribution for a takeout double is 4-4-4-1, with a singleton in the opposing suit. A singleton is actually better than a void, because partner may pass the double. If he does, you can lead a trump. A 4-3-3-3 hand is a bad holding for a takeout double. It is usually better to pass such a hand if you lack the requirements for a notrump overcall. With extra strength, however, a double may be chanced. Double 1♣ with ♠KQ3 ♥AK3 ♦A1087 ♣432, but pass if the hand is weaker.

A double of 1♣ with good (4-4-4-1) shape can be quite light, since partner can respond at the one level. A double of 1♠, on the other hand, should be fairly sound. Vulnerability is also a factor, because light doubles are dangerous when vulnerable.

A marginal double should have four cards in any unbid major(s) and a singleton in the opposing suit. Lack of major suit length, or more cards in the opposing suit, calls for extra strength to compensate.

With length and strength in the opposing suit, just pass with an unbalanced hand or a hand too weak for a notrump overcall. You may prefer a pass even when holding values for a notrump overcall, especially when the opponents are vulnerable. They often get into trouble after this "trap pass." Section 8-8, Reopening Doubles of 1NT Responses and Rebids, shows one way that such trouble can be exploited.

Do not double an opening bid with a two-suited hand. Prefer an overcall, hoping to bid the other suit later. Some such hands qualify for a cue bid (see section 10-4, Direct Cue Bid Overcalls, and 10-6, Top-and-Bottom Cue Bids). When the opponents have bid two suits, then of course you can double with the other two suits. If they have bid a major and a minor, then the double implies four cards (or a weak five) in the unbid major. With a very good hand, however, it is all right to double--then bid the major--when the major is a good five-card suit.

A takeout double of a minor suit implies seven or more cards in the majors, but six cards are okay with extra strength. You can double 1♣ with ♠AJ3 ♥AQ7 ♦KJ1083 ♣42. With a weaker hand, just bid 1♦.

A takeout double of one major implies at least four cards in the other major. With only three-card support the doubler should have extra values in high cards (especially in that major) and a singleton in the opposing suit. A doubleton in the only unbid major would be very unusual, but sometimes there is no alternative. What else can you do but double when RHO opens 1♥ and you hold ♠AQ ♥42 ♦A10873 ♣AKJ4?

New Suit After Doubling

A takeout double followed by a new suit bid may or may not show extra strength, depending on circumstances. Here are the possibilities:

	<u>Suit Doubled</u>	<u>Response to Double</u>	<u>Doubler's Rebid</u>
1)	A minor	The other minor	A major
2)	A minor	A major	The other minor
3)	A minor	A major	The other major
4)	A major	A minor	The other minor
5)	A major	A minor	The other major
6)	A major	The other major	A minor

Situation 1) has two variations, depending on whether the doubler's rebid is at the one or two level:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♦
1♥/1♠			

South can have a minimum if his hand is what partner expects A 5-4 holding in the majors and three-card support for diamonds. When the bidding has gone to the two level, however, the doubler should have a good suit and at least an extra king:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♣
2♥/2♠			

If South has a good suit, the expected 5-4 in the majors and three-card club support, an extra king is enough for this sequence. With a minimum, South must either overcall in the five-card major instead of doubling, or pass the 2♣ response.

Situation 2) has two variations that show the same sort of hand:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♥/1♠
Pass	2♦		

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♥/1♠
Pass	2♣		

West needs no more than a king over a minimum if she has what East will picture: four cards in the unbid major, three cards in East's major, a good five or six-card minor, and shortness in the opposing suit (i.e., a good 5-4-3-1 or 6-4-3-0 hand). Any deviation from this picture should have compensation in the form of extra high cards.

Situation 3) has two variations that are similar, except for one important difference:

South	West	North	East
1♣/1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠		

In this case the bidding is still at the one level and East can now show the unbid minor at the two level. West can have a minimum double with five spades, three hearts, and four cards in the unbid minor (as East will picture).

South	West	North	East
1♣/1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥		

Here the bidding is higher. If East wants to show the unbid minor now, he must go to the three level. Accordingly, West needs at least an extra king even with the expected hand: a 3-5-4-1 or 3-5-1-4 hand with a good five-card heart suit, three cards in spades, four cards in the unbid minor, and a singleton in opener's suit. With a weaker hand West must either pass a 1♠ response or just overcall with 1♥ instead of doubling.

Situation 4) has two variations that differ even more in strength:

South	West	North	East
1♥/1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦		

In this case West can have a minimum double if she has four cards in the unbid major, a singleton in opener's suit, two or three clubs, and five or six diamonds. She has not gone past 2♦, so she needs no more strength than a 2♦ overcall would entail (except that she has enough in high cards to justify a double).

South	West	North	East
1♥/1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣		

Here West must have a very strong hand, even with the expected four cards in the unbid major, good clubs, a few diamonds, and a singleton in opener's major. With a moderate hand (and perhaps a

singleton diamond), West could perhaps have made a top-and-bottom cue bid instead of doubling (see section 10-6).

Situation 5) has two variations that are similar, with one significant difference:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Pass	2♣/2♦
Pass	2♠		

East will picture a 5-2-3-3 hand, maybe 5-1-4-3 or 5-1-3-4, but not 6-1-3-3, with which an overcall is preferable. Obviously West has a strong hand; otherwise he would have bid 1♠ instead of doubling.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣/2♦
Pass	2♥		

In this case West could not overcall at the one level, so he might be stretching a bit for the double in a matchpoint game. In an IMP game the 2♥ bid shows a good hand, since he would presumably pass East's response with questionable strength. This sequence implies both a modest five-card heart holding and good minor suit support (else why not overcall 2♥?), so East can safely retreat to a minor suit contract if short in hearts.

Situation 6) is always strong, but one variation is very powerful:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣/2♦		

West implies three-card spade support and a very good hand. She could pass the response with a moderate double, and she needs a good hand to double without four cards in the unbid major anyway. With five spades East can rebid 2♠ with no strength at all, and can jump to 3♠ with as little as ♠Q8732 ♥652 ♦K4 ♣J76.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣/3♦		

West must have an extremely good hand, doubling with only three hearts and going to the three level all by himself. East can now bid 3♥ with five hearts and very little strength, since West almost certainly has three hearts. East should jump to 4♥ with ♠652 ♥Q8732 ♦K4 ♣J76.

Raise After Doubling

There are four situations for a takeout doubler's raise of a suit response:

1) Raise of a forced response, when RHO passes:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠		

This raise requires the equivalent of an extra ace and good distribution, and almost guarantees four-card support: ♠KQ32 ♥AJ97 ♦AQ92 ♣4. Add a couple of more points with two little clubs.

2) Free raise of a forced response:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♥
2♣	2♥		

This raise may be a little lighter with good four-card support, but must be full strength (i.e., extra ace, good distribution) with three-card support. Vulnerability enters into the decision here.

3) Raise of a free response when RHO passes:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	1♦	1♠
Pass	2♠		

Since East must have some strength, this raise can be made with no extra values if West has four-card support. By "no extra values" I mean a normal minimum rubber bridge sort of takeout double. A shaded duplicate sort of double calls for a pass of 1♠, even with four-card support.

4) Free raise of a free response:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	1♥	1♠
2♥	2♠		

This raise can be made after a light takeout double, provided West has four-card support. Vulnerability enters into the decision.

After a reopening takeout double, which may be quite light, raises are okay with somewhat less strength. See section 8-7, Reopening the Bidding.

Jump Takeout After Doubling

If the doubler jumps in a new suit on the next round, he shows a powerful hand, but the jump is not forcing:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♠		

West has ♠A109762 ♥AQ3 ♦AK2 ♣3. This sequence strongly implies a three-card heart holding, so East can bid 3♥ (or 4♥) with a hand such as ♠3 ♥KJ876 ♦J87 ♣7632. If South had a stronger spade suit, or no heart support, he would just make a strong jump overcall in spades instead of doubling. If North had bid 1♦, making 1♥ a free bid, then West's 2♠ bid would have been forcing for one round.

Repeat Doubles

A repeat double of the same suit at the two or three level is still for takeout, even if partner has bid a suit, provided the doubler has not bid a suit somewhere along the line and neither partner has bid notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	2♦/3♦	Pass
Pass	Dbl - takeout		

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	2♣	Dbl
Pass	2♠	3♣	Dbl - takeout

East has ♠QJ3 ♥AKQ3 ♦AJ874 ♣6. If he had bid 3♠ instead of repeating the double, South would expect four-card support and might bid 4♠ with little more than four spades and, say, the king of diamonds.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣
2♠	Dbl - still for takeout		

West has ♠2 ♥AKJ3 ♦KQ876 ♣Q96, the sort of hand implied by the repeat double when partner has made a suit response. If either partner has bid notrump, however, a repeat double is for business:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Pass	1NT
2♥	Dbl - business double		

If West has a big 4-1-4-4 hand, he can bid 2NT (natural) over 2♥.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	Pass
2♥	Dbl - business double		

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣
4♠	Dbl - primarily for business		

When the double is at the four level, as above, partner is permitted to pass with nothing more to say. If the doubled suit is a minor, however, the doubler had better have at least four cards in any unbid major. Partner will be reluctant to pass a double of 4♣ or 4♦ when holding four cards in an unbid major.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♥
2♣	2♠	3♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl - business		

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	1♥	Pass
2♣	Dbl - business		

In the first auction, where the doubler has bid a suit, the repeat double is for business. The double of a new suit is for business in the second auction, but if South had rebid 2♦ the double would have been for takeout again, with a hand such as ♠AQ108 ♥KJ5 ♦3 ♣AJ652.

Doubling After Passing

A double made on the second round after passing may be for business or takeout depending on whether it is the first or second opportunity to double the last suit bid:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Dbl - business		

If West wanted to double diamonds for takeout, she could have doubled 1♦.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Dbl - takeout		

This is the first opportunity for West to double clubs, so it is for takeout. West has ♠A1084 ♥3 ♦AJ972 ♣AQ3 and fears that 2♣ will be passed around. This implies length/strength in diamonds,

the only possible reason for passing on the first round with a good hand. A good hand? Yes. This is not a reopening situation, so West needs good cards to come in between two bidders.

Another example:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♥		Dbl - takeout	

West has ♠AJ97 ♥3 ♦K1073 ♣AQ94. With that singleton heart he could not double or bid notrump on the first round.

When opener's suit has been raised, a reopening double is for takeout, not business, even though it is not the first opportunity for doubling that suit:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass		Dbl - takeout	

West had insufficient values for a double of 1♠. Playing East for some high cards on the bidding, he competes for the hand by doubling with ♠4 ♥J873 ♦AJ87 ♣K1093. It is unwise to double with less strength than this, since partner is allowed to pass with, say, four good spades and some outside defense.

Bidding Notrump After Doubling

A takeout double followed by a notrump bid shows too much strength for an original notrump overcall:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass		1NT	

The 1NT bid shows a hand that was too strong (i.e., 19-20 HCP) for an original 1NT overcall. With a hand such as ♠92 ♥AJ97 ♦KQ10 ♣AQ32, West must bid 1NT over 1♦, not double.

If you make a takeout double of 1♦ with ♠A1032 ♥K874 ♦K3 ♣AQ5, you must pass a 2♣ response. A 2NT bid would show at least 19 HCP. Perhaps a 1NT overcall is better, especially at matchpoint scoring. Also see section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls.

When partner has made a jump response or a cue bid response, a minimum notrump bid does *not* show a hand too good for an original notrump overcall. The doubler must jump to show such a hand:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♦/2♥/2♠
Pass	2NT	- not good enough to overcall 1NT	
	3NT	- too good for a 1NT overcall	

If West had values for a 1NT overcall, the only reason for doubling would be good major suit length, which he would reveal at this point.

If the response to the double is 1NT, a raise to 2NT is okay with as little as 16 HCP. This does not show too much for a 1NT overcall, since the doubler may not have the stopper in opener's suit that is required for a notrump overcall.

Notrump conventions do not apply when a takeout doubler bids notrump, even if partner has not bid:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	1♥	Pass
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣ - natural bid

If the doubler has 21-22 HCP, he follows with a jump to 2NT:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♦/1♥/1♠
Pass	2NT		

But suppose the response to a double is a non-jump bid at the two level:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	?		

Now the doubler must bid 2NT, which really ought to require more than 19 HCP, to show a strong notrump hand, and apparently must jump to 3NT (opposite a possible bust) if he wants to show 21 HCP. A sensible compromise is to say that a non-jump 2NT rebid shows 19-21 HCP, and a single jump to 3NT shows 22 HCP or more. These bids may get you too high, but that can't be helped.

Takeout Double by an Overcaller

An overcaller can make a takeout double on the next round, opposite a passing partner. This implies a 6-3-3-1 hand:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl - takeout		

West has ♠Q97632 ♥AJ3 ♦AQ2 ♣3. She doesn't want to sell out to 2♣, and a takeout double is the logical action with support in the unbid suits and poor spades. East will count on a six-card spade suit when deciding what to bid, so don't bid this way with 5-3-3-2 distribution unless the five-card suit is very strong.

When the overcaller doubles opener's rebid of the same suit, he is making a two-way double that may be for business or takeout:

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	Pass	Pass
2♥	Dbl		

West may have ♠AKJ98 ♥AQ108 ♦4 ♣Q87 or ♠K108732 ♥4 ♦AQ5 ♣AQ4. East must figure out which sort of hand West has.

When opener bids a new suit, the overcaller's double is for takeout if there is an unbid suit:

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♠	Pass	Pass
2♣	Dbl - takeout		

West has ♠AQ1087 ♥AJ74 ♦A832 ♣ void, with which a first round double would be unwise in view of the void in clubs.

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♣	2♦	Pass
2♥	Dbl - business (no unbid suit)		

West has ♠2 ♥AQ109 ♦52 ♣K108732. He wants a heart lead against any contract played by North. Doubling 2♥ sends this message. Why not an original top-and-bottom cue bid? Perhaps the vulnerability was unfavorable.

When advancer has bid a new suit, direct doubles (of RHO) are for business if the doubled suit has not been raised.

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠
2♣	Dbl - business		

You can't double a suit bid on the left at the one or two level, however, unless partner has bid notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♥	1♠
Pass	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl - takeout: ♠J2 ♥53 ♦AKJ73 ♣A632		

South	West	North	East
1♦	1♥	1♠	2♣
2♠	Dbl - takeout: ♠J103 ♥AKJ32 ♦AJ32 ♣Q		

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	2♣	2♥ (transfer to spades)
3♣	Dbl - takeout: ♠K ♥AQ108 ♦KQ1076 ♣J65		

These doubles say, "Please bid again, but I have some defense if you pass." Perhaps these doubles should be called "optional" instead of "takeout" because the doubler usually has three trumps or he would have some other bid available, and the double is often passed. The doubler must be prepared for any bid, however.

See section 9-2, Competitive Doubles, for the meaning of doubles by the overcaller's partner.

Takeout Double by the Opening Bidder

The opening bidder can make a takeout double on the second round, but when partner has bid a double is usually for business:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout			

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♥
Dbl - business			

If opener has redoubled and partner has not acted, a subsequent double is takeout:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	1♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout			

If North had bid 1♦ instead of passing the opening bid, South's double would be for business. There are some situations, however, when a double by the opening bidder is for takeout even if partner has bid. See section 9-2, Competitive Doubles.

Responses to Takeout Doubles

Responses to takeout doubles will not be covered much here, since the subject is adequately treated in the bridge literature. There are a few special situations, however, that we will treat:

-- For cue bid responses see section 10-9, Cue Bids in Takeout Double Situations, and section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids.

-- The weakness response. When holding a worthless hand opposite a takeout double, it is better to avoid a response that might excite partner into making some dangerous raise. Toward this end, a bid in the lowest unbid minor is often a good slow-down action, even when holding only three cards in the suit. For instance, partner doubles a 1♠ opening and you have ♠32 ♥8743 ♦J864 ♣J53. Rather than bid 2♥ or 2♦, bid 2♣. Partner might raise a heart response, or might bid 3♣ after either a 2♥ or 2♦ response. This is not a convention--2♣ may be passed--it is just common sense.

-- Over a redouble, a jump takeout is preemptive, not strong. When partner doubles 1♥ and next had redoubles, jump to 2♠ with ♠Q10873 ♥54 ♦J8762 ♣3. With a good hand, as one might have if someone is psyching, just pass over the redouble and bid strongly later. Actually, *any* bid over a redouble tends to deny significant strength, even a cue bid or jump in notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Rdbl	2♥ - ♠8432 ♥2 ♦Q853 ♣K843
			2♠ - ♠Q9832 ♥654 ♦Q87 ♣J3
			2NT - ♠8 ♥65 ♦A9632 ♣Q10854

-- Over a raise by RHO, responsive doubles are too ill-defined. The Positive Double, a good alternative, is described in section 9-3.

Miscellaneous Auctions

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♥ - not forcing
Pass	2♠ - forcing,		in view of East's jump
			2NT - not forcing

The 2NT bid over a jump is like the same call after a cue bid response: a hand not good enough for a 1NT overcall (♠AJ87 ♥J93 ♦AQ ♣Q1087). If West had too much for a 1NT overcall, he should bid 3NT, not 2NT.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥ - not forcing
			2NT - not forcing
			3♣/3♠ - forcing

The 3♣ and 3♠ bids are forcing because of the jump response. West needs extra values to bid over 2♥, so a pass of 3♠ (although this is a limit situation, strictly speaking) is not logical.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣/2♦ - natural, weak

East probably has four hearts, a five-card minor, and a weak hand.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass - not forcing		

The leave-in of a takeout double promises no strength outside the doubled suit, and does not promise further action if the opposition runs elsewhere.

Also see section 6-7, 4NT - Blackwood or Natural? and section 12-01, Defense Against Preemptive Openings.