

Responding to Takeout Doubles

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♥	D'ble	Pass	?

First thing's first: unless you want to be defending a contract of 1♥ doubled, you have to bid something. And partner must recognise that you may have no points at all when you bid! (If RHO happens to bid over the double, you are released from the obligation to bid!)

Here is the scheme of suit responses to a takeout double of 1-suit:

0 – 7 HCP	bid a new suit at the minimum level
8 - 11 HCP	make a jump bid in a new suit
12+ HCP	bid a game contract, or if uncertain about where to play game, cue-bid (in this auction, a bid of 2♥)

If you don't have interest in an unbid major, and you do have a stopper in their suit (in this auction hearts), you can make a notrump bid:

6-9 HCP	1NT
10-12 HCP	2NT
13+ HCP	3NT

Don't make a notrump bid with fewer than 6 HCP. Bid a suit instead, *even if you have to bid a 3-card suit!*

Examples (after partner has doubled 1♥)

- 1) ♠ J642 ♥ 1084 ♦ A1093 ♣ 43
 - 1♠ Bid the major in preference to a minor, even when a weaker suit.
- 2) ♠ 875 ♥ J1043 ♦ Q42 ♣ 943
 - 1♠ It's unpleasant, but the alternative of bidding 1NT totally misleads partner about the strength of your hand. Partner needs to recognise that your spades could be 'suspect'.

- 3) ♠ J642 ♥ 1084 ♦ AQ109 ♣ K3
 - 2♠ Tell partner about your 8-11 HCP by jumping. If you are put off by jumping in such a feeble suit, think of this bid as *supporting your partner's spades*.
- 4) ♠ 875 ♥ AJ103 ♦ Q42 ♣ 943

1NT 6-9 HCP, hearts stopped
- 5) ♠ QJ642 ♥ 1084 ♦ AQ103 ♣ A3
 - 4♠ Surely the right final contract!
- 6) ♠ K42 ♥ 1084 ♦ AQ103 ♣ AJ2
 - 2♥ We must have a game somewhere, but where? 3NT? 4♠? 5♦? Partner's next bid (which is forcing on you) might help you decide.
- 7) ♠ 42 ♥ QJ9864 ♦ K3 ♣ J42

Pass! This is the rare hand where you convert partner's takeout double to a penalty situation. A contract of 1♥ doubled is not going to be pleasant for declarer. You should always have good heart spots for this bid – note the 9 and 8: they are valuable cards. Note also that partner should lead a trump, if he has one!

Takeout doubler's next bid

If the takeout doubler has the "classic" shape, then his next bid will probably be either pass, or supporting the suit partner has shown, if there are some game chances, or in a competitive scenario.

If the takeout doubler has the "too strong to overcall" hand (see previous lesson), then his next move is to name his suit, assuming this is not the suit that partner has taken out to. This unambiguously shows the strong hand type, and partner can react according to his hand.