

## Responding to partner's takeout double

When bridge was first played, it was a gambling game. The word Double! was used to increase the stakes. But players quickly discovered that doubling an opening bid for penalties was unproductive, opponents just bid another contract. So the very first bridge convention was invented – the takeout double. It is used so often nowadays that one tends to forget that it is a convention and any convention has some rules regarding its use.

♠ K Q 7 3      Holding this hand, you hear your right hand opponent open 1♣. What you  
♥ K O 8 2      want to say to partner is ' I have the values for an opening bid, with support  
♦ K O 6 4      for the other three suits. If we have a fit in spades, hearts or diamonds, we  
♣ 2              should be able to make a part score, perhaps even a game. Please will you  
tell me about your hand?' Isn't it wonderful that Double! can say all that in just one word!

## Responding to partner's double

- Most importantly, you must bid! You may not pass just because you have nothing to say. To pass shows a hand with very, very, good cards in opener's suit, say ♣K Q J 10 9 8.
- You must decide which suit to bid, preferring a major to a minor.
- You must show the strength of your hand, making a stronger response with 8+ points.
- You may only bid in no trumps with stoppers in the suit opened, since partner has said they are short in that suit.

I gave some of my more advanced students the following hands, what would you do with them? The bidding goes 1♣ from opener, double from partner, pass from the next hand. Your bid?

♠ J 5 2
♥ 9 5
♦ 10 7 3
♣ J 9 8 6 4

Barbara bid 1♦ without pulling a lot of faces and heaving sighs. Once you know what to do, it should not take you ages to screw up your courage and make the bid.

♠ J 5 2
♥ 10 9 5 4
♦ J 10 7 3
♣ 9 8 3

Marion knew to bid 1♥, preferring the major suit to the minor. Janice, with 17 points and four hearts, raised to 2♥ just in case game might still be making. 2♥ made nine tricks as Janice had ♠A Q 7 3 ♥K Q J 8 ♦K Q 4 2 ♣2

♠ Q J 10 9 2
♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ 7 3
♣ 9 8

Liz bid 1♠, wondering if she should have chosen 2♠ with a good suit. 2♠ would not be wrong but the hand is a bit weak on high cards. Liz can bid 2♥ if she gets another chance.

♠ Q J 10 9 2
♥ A 10 6
♦ 6 4
♣ 9 8 3

John was right when he responded 2♠. It's a good suit even if its only seven points. He was promptly raised to 4♠ when partner held ♠A K 7 3 ♥K Q 8 2 ♦Q 8 5 3 ♣2 and there were just three tricks in the minors to lose.

♠ 10 9 2
♥ A 10 6
♦ Q 10 4
♣ K J 10 9

Peter responded 1NT when partner doubled the 1♣ opening. With two club stoppers and ten points, this is a sound 1NT bid.

♠ K J 10 9
♥ K J 10 8
♦ A J 6
♣ 9 8

This hand baffled them all. Should they bid 4♥ or 4♠? The answer is neither. Ask partner for more information by bidding 2♣, the opponent's suit. This is called an **unassuming cue bid** and asks partner to show his suits up the line – since you cannot possibly want to play in 2♣. In fact the bidding became quite complicated after that:

West	North	East	South
1♣	double	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	3♥	pass	4♥

2♣ is forcing on partner until our side makes a limit bid. 2♦ showed four cards, as did 2♥.

North's raise to 3♥ could have been passed as it showed a minimum double, but South had that bit extra to go on to 4♥. North held ♠A 7 3 ♥A Q 8 2 ♦Q 10 5 4 2 ♣2.

This cue bid can be used on any strong responding hand of 12+ points when responder is in doubt about the final contract, say holding one major, when 3NT is a possible alternative.

#### Summary of responses when partner doubles the opening bid

Opener	Responder	Typical hand	Points shown
1♥	1♠	♠ Q 8 3 2 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ 8 7 ♣ Q J 5 4	0-7 Can be three if hearts only suit held
1♥	2♠	♠ K Q 7 3 ♥ 10 4 2 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ Q J 5 4	8-10 Bit weaker if 5-card suit
1♥	3♠	♠ K Q J 7 3 ♥ 10 4 2 ♦ 5 ♣ Q J 5 4	8-12 More shape
1♣	2♣	♠ K J 9 7 ♥ J 10 8 ♦ Q 7 ♣ A J 10 8	11+ Both majors or one major and NT hand
1♥	Pass	♠ 8 ♥ A Q J 10 9 8 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ Q 9 5	8+ Asks for trump lead
1♥	2NT	♠ 10 8 ♥ K J 9 2 ♦ Q J 10 3 ♣ K Q 5	1NT is 8-11 2NT is 12-13 3NT is 14+