

SUPPORT DOUBLES by BARBARA SEAGRAM
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The usefulness of the support double is based on the premise that it is always wonderful to be able to know whether partner has 3 card support for your suit or 4 card support for your suit. While 3 card support is adequate, 4 card support is much better. Have a look at the philosophy and the two examples which follow:

You are **North** and you hold

HAND # 1

S AJxx
H AJxx
D xxx
C 10x

(you)

South	West	North	East
1D	pass	1H	pass
2H	pass	??	

Can you bid again?

Partner may have raised you with only 3 card support (perfectly legal, by the way, if he could not have bid NT. If he raises with 3 card support though, he will have to have 3 cards headed by an honour in that suit in order to raise)

HAND # 2

You are **North** and you hold

S xx
H AJxxx
D Jxx
C K10x

(you)

South	West	North	East
1D	pass	1H	pass
2H	pass	??	

Now you can bid again (3H) because you have 5 trumps. Thus you know you have an 8 card fit.

The reality is we cannot know with the above auctions whether or not South has 3 or 4 card support.

The following two hands are unrelated to the previous responder hands:

Let us say that you are south and you have the following hands:

either Hand A

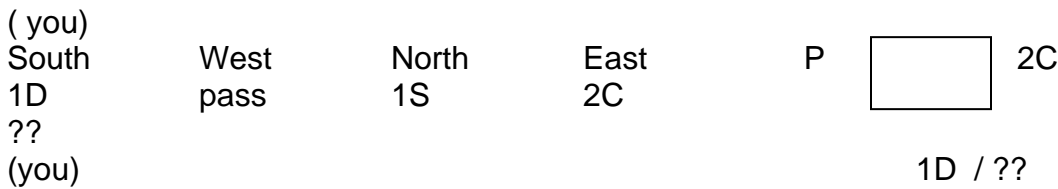
OR Hand B

(south)
S KQx
H AQJx
D 109xxx
C x

(south)
S Kxxx
H Axxx
D AQx
C xx

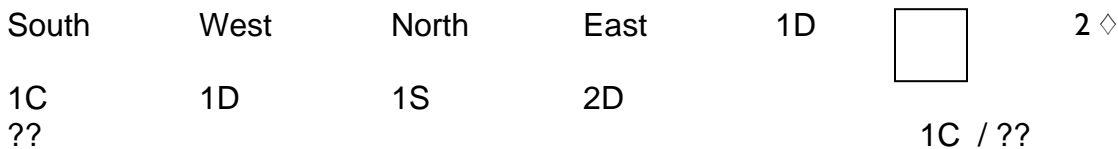
If you open 1♦ with either of these hands and hear 1♥ from partner, you would always raise to 2♥. Responder will not know whether you have 3 or 4 card support. (The raise to 2♥ by opener does NOT guarantee 4 card support... This is important for you to get straight right now.)

Now let's throw in a monkey wrench: You have the same hands as above



OR another scenario

HAND C



When partner responds 1H or 1S to your opening bid and your RHO (Right Hand Opponent) either makes an overcall or raises your LHO's overcall, now you can tell partner exactly how many trumps you have. This is by using a special convention called the

"Support Double"

In the above scenarios when the opponents enter the bidding:

If you have only 3 card support for partner's major, then you will say "DOUBLE". This says you have only 3 card support.

This is an unlimited bid. i.e. You could have just 13 points, or as much as 16 or 19.

If you have 4 card support for partner's major, you will raise her major (H 's or S 's) e.g 2S or 3 S with 16-18 etc:

If you have fewer than 3, you can bid something else, anything else that you bid, including "Pass" will guarantee fewer than 3 card support.

You have the following hand and the bidding has gone as follows:

(you)

A) South	West	North	East
1D	pass	1S	2C
??			

You (south) have

S x H KJx D AKxxxx C Kxx

On hand A) you will bid 2D now

Now you are south again

C) S KQx	H AKJx	D xxxxx	C x
D) S Kxxx	H Axxx	D AQx	C xx

(you)

South	West	North	East
1D	pass	1S	2C
??			

On hand C) you will double, showing 3 card support for partner's spades.

On hand D) you will bid 2S showing 4 card support for partner's spades.

When both of the opponents are in the bidding, it is imperative that you look to your right and assess if your RHO has bid past the 2H level. If he has, then support doubles are off as you will only play them up to and including the level of 2H by RHO.

(you)

South	West	North	East
1C	1D	1H	2D
??			

If you bid 2H or 3H or 4H , then you guarantee 4 card support (the more points you have, the higher you go!)

If you bid "Double" then you guarantee 3 card support (and partner does not know your point range). If you make any other bid, partner knows you have fewer than 3 H 's. The double merely shows how many cards you have for support, it does not show how many pts you have.

If East had raised to 3D on the above example, Support Doubles are off because it is past the 2H level.

Support Doubles are also off (cancelled) when RHO overcalls 1 NT. If you double now, this is 100% a penalty double.

AFTER YOU HAVE MADE A SUPPORT DOUBLE

After you have made your support double, you are now able to bid naturally as you have already told partner that you have 3 card support for her major.

S Axx H AQx D KJ10xxx C x

(you)			
North	East	South	West
1D	Pass	1H	2C
Dbl	Pass	2H	pass
3D *			

*This shows a 6 card \diamond suit and your Dbl already said you have 3 card support for partner's suit. Partner can now decide whether to play in \diamond or in \heartsuit .

WHAT TO DO AS RESPONDER WHEN PARTNER MAKES A SUPPORT DOUBLE ?

		(you)	
North	East	South	West
1D	pass	1H	2C
Dbl	pass	??	

When you have a 5 card or 6 card major:

You now know that you have an eight card or 9 card fit in the major. Revalue your hand (when partner has supported your suit, always add a point for the fifth card in the suit that has been supported and 2 points for each remaining card. No matter how you counted your points the first time around, you must revalue always after partner supports your suit).

Responder must:

- Bid 2H with 6-9 points
- Bid 3H with 10-12 points (preferably 11-12)
- Bid 4H with 13 + points

When you have only a 4 card major and know that partner only has 3 card support:

(you)			
North	East	South	West
1D	pass	1H	1S
Dbl	pass	??	

Getting out of your major in these cases is only because your \heartsuit suit is crummy and you only have 4 of them. You know that opener has 4 diamonds at least. If he only had three diamonds, then for sure he would have 4-4 in the majors.

You hold			
E) S AJxx	H Qxxx	D xxx	C xx
F) S xx	H Qxxx	D Jxxx	C Axx

With E) you should now bid 1 NT

With F) you should now bid 2D

IF RHO MAKES A TAKEOUT DOUBLE (TOD) INSTEAD OF OVERCALLING A SUIT

If RHO makes a TOD, You will now bid Redouble to show 3 card support and just as before, you will raise partner's major in order to show 4 card support.

Any other bid that you will now make other than Redouble or a raise of partner's suit (at any level) will now show 2 or fewer in partner's major.

Acknowledgements:

Some of the material for this handout are courtesy of Eddie Kantar, with his permission.