

Support Doubles

Basic Guidelines

by Mike Savage

When you open the bidding and your partner makes a one-level response and the next hand overcalls at the one or two-level, sometimes you will want to raise partner's suit with three-card support. Other times you will have four-card support. Support Doubles were created so opener can tell responder which he has - three or four-card support. Playing them, after there's a simple overcall *an immediate raise of partner's suit always shows four-card support.*

If you are playing Support Doubles and you make an immediate raise to two over the opponent's overcall, you show four-card support. If you double, you show three-card support. If your opponent doubles, instead of overcalling, a *redouble* by you is used in many partnerships to show three-card support and a raise to show four-card support. However if your right-hand opponent overcalls **1NT**, it's better to play the double for penalties. When you make a Support Double, you could have a big hand or just a minimum opener but with a hand that you want to show that you have 3-card support. On the next round of bidding you can show any extra strength or length that you might have.

Most partnerships play Support Doubles thru **2H** and some expert pairs only play them when their partner has responded **1H** or **1S** (not over **1D**). If you decide to play Support Doubles, you need to use good bidding judgment as to when to use them – and when not to. Sometimes it makes more sense *not* to make a Support Double even though you *have* 3-card support. A classic example might be: **S:** AQ10 **H:** xxx **D:** A10x **C:** KJ10x. After having opened **1C** and your partner having responded **1H** and there is a **1S** overcall, rebidding **1NT** is a much better description of your hand than making a support double to show three small hearts.

However if your partnership has decided to play “Seppuku” Support Doubles (you always double with 3-card support), when opener does not make a Support Double when he could have and that always denies 3-card support, it would seem fair to alert his “Pass” (or any *other* bid) and if asked, say, “denies 3-card support”. If you *do* make a Support Double or Redouble, it's always an alert. Examples follow:

1C-P-1H-1S Dbl with: **S:** x x **H:** K Q x **D:** A x x x **C:** A 10 x x

Planning to pass on your next turn unless forced.

1C-P-1H-1S Dbl with: **S:** x x **H:** A K x **D:** A x x **C:** A Q J x x

Planning to cue-bid spades next if partner hasn't bid no-trump.

1D-P-1H-1S Dbl with: **S:** x **H:** K J x **D:** A x x **C:** A Q J 10 x x

Tentatively planning to jump in clubs on your next turn.

1C-P-1S-2D Dbl with: **S:** A Q x **H:** Q x x x **D:** x x **C:** K Q 10 x

Planning to pass next unless partner forces - or invites game in spades.

1C-1H-1S-2H Dbl with: **S:** K Q x **H:** x x **D:** K x x **C:** A J 10 x x

Even when partner has shown a 5-card suit, a raise shows a 4-card fit

Planning to pass next but will accept a game invitation in spades.

1H-P-1S-Dbl Rdbl with: **S:** A J x **H:** K Q x x x **D:** A x x **C:** x x

Planning to compete in spades to the 3-level or accept game invitation

1D-P-1H-1S-2D with: **S:** A x **H:** x x x **D:** K Q J 10 x x **C:** K x (don't make a Support Double)

Planning to compete to 3D or to bid no-trump later if forced to by partner.