Discussion Notes for Maximal Overcall Doubles

In some competitive auctions, there is a need to distinguish between a simple raise and an invitational call. A **Maximal Overcall Double** is used to show a hand that is interested in game. The doubler's partner makes the final decision by passing, retreating to the trump suit at the minimum level, or jumping to game.

Here are examples:

Opener	Opp	Responder	Opp
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
?			

Opener	Opp	Resp	Opp
1♥	P	2♥	3♦
?			

A rebid of 3♠ or 3♥ may not convey Opener's intent without agreement. Using the Maximal Overcall Double (MOD), the 3♠ or 3♥ call is just to play, while a Double shows game interest.

Consider the following hand: ♠A Q J 9 8 7 ♥3 ♦K J 2 ♣8 6 4

In the first example, you want to bid 3♠ to compete for the part score (not invitational).

Change that hand to ♠A Q J 9 8 7 ♥K 3 ♦A J 2 ♣6 4 and a Double is in order.

Notes:

The Maximal Overcall Double applies when one of a major is raised to the two-level and the opponent interferes. It is made by opener or overcaller who first bid 1♥ or 1♠. The double of the opponent's 3-level bid is a game try.

It is not used when the partnership suit is a minor.

It applies when there is no room to make a normal game try, such as by a cue-bid.

The MOD is alertable.

Responder re-evaluates her hand after the MOD and places the contract.

Here are two more examples of possible auctions:

Opener	Pard	Responder	You
(1♠)	2♥	(2♠)	?

3♥ is merely competitive

DBL shows game interest

Opener	Pard	Resp	You
(1♥)	1♠	(3♥)	?

3♠ is merely competitive

DBL shows game interest

Doubles that are now considered standard: (no alert required)

1. Takeout Double – made when RHO opens the bidding
2. Negative Double – made when partner opens the bidding and RHO overcalls
3. Support Double – made when you open the bidding, partner bids, and RHO bids or doubles

General rule:

Almost all doubles at the 1- or 2-level should **not** be for penalty.

Partnerships should discuss the level to which conventional doubles apply. Assume that a low-level double is not for penalty unless you have a specific agreement to the contrary.