

WHEN THE OPPONENTS INTERVENE VS STRONG NOTRUMP

When an Opponent Makes a Natural Overcall

This includes a natural overcall that shows in addition another unspecified suit. If the natural overcall shows another specific suit, the defense is different. See section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions.

-- A double by responder is for business:

South	West	North
1NT	2♥	Dbl - business double

-- A *direct* double by opener is also for business:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♥
Dbl - business double, good hearts			

-- A *balancing* double by either partner is takeout by opener, business by responder:

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout			

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	Pass	Dbl - business double	
2♥/2♠ - four-card suit, pass or correct			

When balancing with a four-card suit, responder promises four cards in the next higher suit. This means responder must not pass 1NT with a five-card major.

All other doubles by either partner are for business.

-- A non-jump 4♣ response is natural, not Gerber or Stayman:

South	West	North
1NT	3♥	4♣ - natural, not quite forcing
4♥ - probably meant as Stayman, but maybe a void		

-- Jacoby transfer bids do not apply, but Texas transfers apply after an overcall of 3♣ or lower (i.e., when both 4♦ and 4♥ would be a jump):

South	West	North
1NT	2♣	2♦/2♥/2♠ - natural 4♦/4♥ - Texas transfer 4♣ - Gerber

South	West	North
1NT	3♦	4♥/4♠ - natural 4♦ - Stayman, ostensibly

-- The cue bid replaces Stayman, and is forcing to game:

South	West	North
1NT	2♣	3♣ - asks for a major
1NT	2♦	3♦ - asks for a major
1NT	2♥	3♥ - asks for spades
1NT	2♠	3♠ - asks for hearts

In the first auction opener bids 3♦ with neither major, 3NT with both and a minimum, 4♣ with both and a maximum. In the second auction opener bids 3NT with neither major, 4♦ with both. (Remember that 3♣ is a natural bid unless the overcall was in clubs.) The cue bid may not be meant as Stayman when responder has a big hand with first round control of the opposing suit. If that is so, she will make it clear in the later bidding:

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♠ - slam try, club void or ace	

Obviously North was not bidding 3♣ to find a major suit fit.

-- Simple free bids are not forcing, and are not even invitational at matchpoint scoring. With an invitational hand responder must generally bid 2NT at matchpoints, even with a suit-oriented hand. If space permits a jump, however, the invitation can be made that way (but major suit jumps are forcing at IMP scoring):

South	West	North
1NT	2♣	3♦/3♥/3♠ - invitational

When the overcall is at the three level, a 3♥ or 3♠ response is invitational at IMP scoring but not at matchpoints. A non-jump 4♣ response is natural, not Gerber or Stayman. Over 3♣, a 3♦ response is used for Stayman.

South	West	North
1NT	3♣	3♦ - Stayman
		3♥/3♠ - not forcing
		4♣ - Probably Stayman
		4♦/4♥ - Texas Transfer

If the overcall is 3♦ or higher, Texas does not apply, and a cue bid must be used for Stayman.

When responder raises to 2NT over an overcall, opener should show a major on his way to 3NT. A new minor suit rebid shows a maximum hand, five-card suit, and no stopper in the opposing suit.

When an Opponent Makes an Artificial Overcall

-- If the overcall shows two suits section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions, applies.

-- An artificial overcall that shows one specific suit other than the one named (e.g., a transfer overcall) is handled by using the specified suit for Stayman. All other responses have the same meaning as over a natural overcall (see above).

-- If a 2♣ overcall shows a one-suited hand with an unspecified suit ("Hamilton"), a double replaces Stayman and all bids have the same meaning as if the overcall had not occurred. Since 2♣ is forcing, you can pass with a good hand if hopeful of doubling for business on the next round:

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	Pass	2♦ - forced bid
Pass	Pass	Dbl	- business
			2♥/2♠ - four-card suit, weak

West's pass of 2♦ indicates that his suit is diamonds. If North has a good hand, he must either double 2♦ for business or make a strong bid like 2NT or a jump. A minimum reopening bid in a suit is not invitational. It tends to show a four-card suit because a five-carder would have been shown by a transfer earlier. It also implies support for the next higher suit if opener is short in responder's suit.

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	Pass	2♦ - forced bid
Pass	2♥	Dbl	- business
			2♠ - four-card suit

North has ♠KJ32 ♥76 ♦1032 ♣QJ54. South can bid 3♣ with a doubleton spade and a club suit.

When 1NT is Doubled

-- If the double is natural, not conventional, you can redouble with as little as 6 HCP. Opener must be told of the 6 HCP or more so he can double an opposing bid more easily.

Suit responses over the double are weak at the two level, invitational at the three level. All suit bids at the two or three level are natural, no Jacoby, no Stayman. Responses at the four level retain their normal conventional meanings.

South	West	North
1NT	Dbl	2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠ - natural, weak
		3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ - natural, invitational

The jumps show a hand that is distributionally strong but weak in high cards, considering the failure to redouble.

A 2NT response is artificial, implying a two-suited hand. Opener assumes that responder has a weak hand with both minors (unusual notrump), but if responder does not pass opener's minor suit bid then her next suit bid shows a strong (distributional) hand and is forcing:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Dbl	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♥	

North has a two-suited hand, distributionally strong. The 2NT response is the only way to make sure she gets a chance to show both suits.

-- If the double is conventional, showing a one-suited hand, suit unspecified, a redouble promises only 6-7 HCP, but could have more. Otherwise the double is ignored and all bids retain the same meaning as if it had not occurred. All conventions are *on*: Jacoby, Texas, Gerber, Stayman, etc. With 8-9 HCP and a four-card or longer major, it may be better to make the normal response rather than redouble, to ensure that a major suit contract is not missed.

A minimum suit bid after passing, even when not reopening, is weak:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	Pass	2♦	- weak, just reopening

South	West	North	East
1NT	Dbl	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	2♥/2♠	- just competing

North's major is a four-carder. She would have transferred on the first round with five. The balancing bid in a major promises four cards in the next higher-ranking suit.

-- If the double shows two unspecified suits (e.g., "both majors or both minors"), use the same tactics as against a one-suited conventional double.

-- If the double shows two specific suits (e.g., both majors), the countermeasure known as "Unusual over Unusual" may be used: A bid in the higher of the opposing suits shows a good hand featuring the higher "unbid" suit, usually a six-bagger, while a bid in the lower of the opposing suits shows the lower "unbid" suit. A simple new suit bid is therefore not invitational. A redouble shows "cards," at least 6 HCP:

South	West	North
1NT	Dbl*	2♠ - diamond suit, invitational 2♥ - club suit, invitational 2NT - mildly invitational 3♣/3♦ - not invitational Rdbl - 6 HCP or more

* majors

If South lacks support for the suit indicated "invitationally," he signs off by bidding North's suit. With a fit he bids 2NT (expressing doubt, probably with an unstopped major) or 3NT. Since the "invitational" suit bids are forcing, they may be used with stronger hands.

When a 2♦ Response to Stayman Gets Doubled

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Dbl		

Responder's actions are similar to opener's actions when a Stayman 2♣ bid gets doubled:

- With four diamonds headed by an honor, or better, she redoubles.
- With three diamonds to the queen or better, or four small, she passes.
- With less in diamonds, she makes her normal bid.

With 8-9 HCP and a five-card major to show, responder may choose to bid the major rather than pass or redouble. Otherwise the major could be shut out if opener bids 2NT, because responder would have to pass.

With a game-going hand or better responder can safely pass or redouble, since she can bid a five-card major at the three level (forcing) if opener bids 2NT. Opener may not pass if the double comes around, and must redouble if willing to play a 2♦ contract.

When Responder's Major Suit Rebid Gets Doubled

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥/2♠	Dbl

This is probably one of those occasions when North is deceptively bidding a non-suit. South should redouble with support that includes a stopper, pass with no stopper, bid 2NT or 3NT with a doubleton stopper or stoppers. If South passes, no bid by North in another denomination is forcing, so she must not make a minimum bid with a game-going hand:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Dbl
Pass	Pass	3♣/3♦ - signoffs	
		3♥ - invitational	
		3♠ - partial spade stop	
		Rdbl - to play	

South has denied a spade stopper with the pass. The 3♠ bid can't be natural, so it asks for a partial spade stopper, with which South bids 3NT. The 3♣ and 3♦ bids are signoffs. The 3♥ bid is unlikely, as what sort of hand could North have? Maybe ♠65432 ♥KQJ108 ♦Q3 ♣6.

When A Transfer Bid Gets Doubled

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦/2♥/2♠	Dbl

-- With a partial stopper (e.g., Qx, Jxx) or worse in the doubled suit, opener passes. Responder should play the hand, if possible, so that the doubler will be on lead. If the double gets passed around, responder can redouble to force opener to bid the indicated suit. The redouble says nothing about the opposing suit, and of course responder may be busted.

To invite game, responder can "cue bid" the doubled suit (forcing the transfer at the same time) or jump in the indicated suit. If responder merely bids the indicated suit at a minimum level, opener must pass.

-- With a single stopper or better, opener redoubles if he doesn't want to accept the transfer. He might do this with Ax(x) in the doubled suit, wanting the lead to come up to responder's hand.

-- Opener's acceptance of the transfer (with at least three-card support) is non-committal. He may have a stopper in the doubled suit.

When a Transfer Bid Gets Overcalled

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦	2♠

Opener can bid only with a good support for responder's indicated suit (hearts, in this auction). Otherwise he must pass, since responder could have a bust hand. Or he can double, if he is confident of defeating the contract with little help from responder.

A second suit is not forcing if the bid follows an opposing overcall, and a double is artificial, a game try. Bidding the suit is merely competitive, not invitational:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♥	3♣
Pass	Pass	3♦/3♥	- weak
		Dbl	- interested in game
		3♠	- not invitational

If North were to pass with a fair but not invitational hand containing six spades, or a weakish 5-5 with which he planned to pass 2♠, South would probably have to pass also. North therefore competes with a three-level bid. With an invitational hand, or a game-going two-suiter, North must double. All the double says is, "I have at least a game-invitational hand." An invitational two-suiter is not shown via Jacoby, so a new suit bid after the double is forcing to game.

Suppose the overcall comes after a double showing a one-suited hand:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Dbl	2♥	Pass
2♠	3♣	3♦/3♥/3♠	- weak
		Dbl	- interested in game

The conventional double showing a one-suited hand is usually ignored by responder, and all bids retain the same meaning as if the double had not occurred. The 2♥ bid is therefore a transfer to spades. Any three-level bid by North in this situation is merely competitive, not invitational.

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	2♦	Pass
2♥	2♠	Dbl	Pass
2NT - minimum, poor hearts, spades stopped			
3NT - maximum, poor hearts, spades stopped			
3♥ - minimum hand, heart support			
4♥ - maximum hand, heart support			
3♣/3♦ - poor hearts, no spade stopper			
Pass - short hearts, good spades			

West's 2♣ bid was "Hamilton," showing a one-suited hand. This convention is ignored (except that a double is Stayman), so 2♦ is a transfer to hearts. The 2♠ bid reveals that West's suit is spades.

North doubles (artificially) to show a hand of game-invitational strength or better. South then bids according to his hand, as shown. If North next bids a new suit, that is forcing to game (showing a two-suiter via Jacoby is a game force), but a 3♥ bid over opener's 2NT is merely invitational.

Repeating: A transferor's double on the second round is takeout, not penalty. Bidding the indicated suit instead of doubling shows a weak hand, and opener must pass.