

# DOUBLE TROUBLE

In the previous months, we examined Takeout, Negative, Responsive, Support, and DSI Doubles. This month, we wrap up with a few more doubles which are part of modern bidding.

## LEAD-DIRECTING DOUBLES

Whenever the opponents make an artificial bid, your double should show that suit, (typically as a request for partner to lead the suit). Here are some auctions where the double would request the lead of the artificial suit being doubled:

1NT Pass 2C(Stayman) Dbl  
1NT Pass 2D(Jacoby Transfer) Dbl  
1NT Pass 4H (Texas Transfer) Dbl  
1H-3H-4NT-5D (Blackwood response) Dbl (but don't ask any questions about the meaning of 5D)  
1D Pass 1H Pass 1S Pass 2C (Fourth suit forcing) Dbl  
1H Pass 3H Pass 3D Pass 4D (Control-Bid) Dbl

The higher the level of the lead-directing double, the less stringent the requirements for suit length/quality. Don't double a 2C Stayman response with only C AK2. (The opponents might redouble and play there.) Length and strength are needed on a low level (such as KQ109x). On the other hand, if spades have been agreed by the opponents, you might double their 5C Blackwood response with as little as C Kx – suggesting clubs as the best lead. The opponents are not likely to be able to play an 11-trick redoubled contract in a side suit.

Aside from doubles of Stayman, Transfers, Blackwood, 4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing, and control-bids, there are many other artificial bids which fit this category. Doubling an artificial 2C opening shows clubs, but you are likely to be on lead. Doubling an artificial response to 2C is a much more useful place to insert a lead-directing double. A more extensive (but by no means exhaustive) list of situations in which a lead-directing double of an artificial bid is appropriate includes these relatively common cases: Bergen Raises (such as 3C or 3D responses to a major), Drury (2C or maybe 2D by a Passed Hand after a major), Gerber (4C after notrump), New Minor Forcing (2C or 2D after a notrump rebid) and Splinter bids (jumps showing a singleton or void).

The last (Splinters) is a bit tricky. If the opponents are playing in a *suit contract*, suggesting a lead of dummy's singleton is usually not a good way to start the defense. So, after:

1S P 4D (0-1 diamond) ??,

many pairs agree that a double is *not* for a diamond lead, but instead sends a message relating to the *other two suits*. One way to play is that doubles of Splinters ask for the lead in the *highest* unbid suit (in this case, suggesting a heart lead). Failure to double might get partner to lead clubs if he is 50-50 between a club and a heart.

On the other hand, if the opponents seem likely to play in notrump, for example:

1N P 3H (0-1 heart), it's best to play the double as showing heart strength (such as KQJ97). You would want a heart lead against an eventual notrump contract. If that's not confusing enough, other pairs agree to use doubles of splinter bids (especially 1H P 3S) to suggest a sacrifice! Their double could be based on, say: Q1087542 2 AQ2 43. I leave it to experienced partnerships to sort out their exact agreements on doubles of all splinter bids.

### QUIZ:

Which of these doubles suggest a lead in the suit doubled?

- A) 2NT P 4H(Texas transfer) Double
- B) 2C P 2D (Waiting) Double
- C) 1S P 3C (weak) Double
- D) 1H P 2N (Jacoby) P 3C P 3S Double
- E) 1S P 3S P 4N P 5D P 5N P 6H Double

Answers

- A) Yes. 4H is artificial.
- B) Yes. 2D is artificial.
- C) No. This would be a takeout double since 3C is natural
- D) Yes. 3S is not showing a spade suit.
- E) Yes. 6H is king-showing, not heart-showing.

## ANTI-LEAD DIRECTING DOUBLES

One lead-directing double which is growing in popularity with the expert community is actually an “anti-lead directing double.” The thinking is that once you’ve shown a suit, partner is likely to lead it. If the opponents then cue-bid your suit, there is no need to make a redundant double (to again suggest the lead). Accordingly, doubling a suit you’ve already shown suggest **S** that partner try something else. For example, you hold:  
KQ10 AJ8762 765 3.

The bidding goes:

<u>Opener</u>	<u>You</u>	<u>Responder</u>	<u>Partner</u>
1C	1H	1NT	P
3C	P	3D	P
3H	??		

If the opponents land in 3NT (or maybe a club contract), you no longer want a heart lead. Surely, LHO has hearts under control. A spade lead now looks like a better idea. If you pass, you are saying you are content for partner to make the expected lead (your heart suit). An unusual (redundant) double here would say, “I’ve changed my mind—I’m willing for you to lead something else.” A double would have a good chance to inspire an alert partner to lead a spade. Of course, such an anti-lead double requires careful partnership discussion and agreement.

## LIGHTNER DOUBLES

This is really a subset of “Lead-Directing Doubles.” This double is made when the opponents have reached a slam and the partner of the doubler is on lead. The double requests an “unusual lead.” This could be because the doubler has a void, but it also could be that he wants the lead of dummy’s first-shown suit. It’s up to the opening leader to figure out which.

Example of a Lightner double:

	KJ53	
	AJ97	
	A43	
	82	
4	J5	
1065432	--	
J109	Q8765	
J109	A87643	

AQ10982  
KQ10  
K5  
KQ

S W N E

1S P 2N P  
4N P 5D\* P  
6S P P ??

\*\* 0 or 3 Keycards

East has an ace and can expect to set the slam if his partner finds a heart lead. The Lightner double alerts West to do something unusual. There isn't a first-shown suit by dummy in this auction, so West suspects a void and leads his long heart suit as the best shot. East ruffs and cashes the CA for down one.

### **GAME-TRY (Maximal) DOUBLES**

This double is used by opener to make a game try. This allows opener the ability to compete to the three level without inviting game. Suppose you hold:

A2 KQ10984 43 K32.

At favorable vulnerability, you open 1H and partner raises to 2H. You'd love to buy it there, but RHO bids 3D. Since your side has 9 trumps, you want to compete to the three level, so you bid 3H. But, what if partner thinks you have an invitational hand and he raises you to 4H? This is why the Game-Try (maximal) double exists. In the auction described, 3H means what you want it to mean ("Partner—I am just competing for the partscore"). If instead, you did have a game-invitational hand, such as:

AQ3 KJ987 3 AJ102,

you would double. This call says nothing about diamonds. It just says: "Partner, I have a 3 ½ heart bid. Please go to four with a maximum, but retreat to 3H with a minimum."

Anytime your side has raised an opening from 1-of-major to 2-of-a-major and Opener's RHO interferes in the suit directly under the major, then:

Double=Artificial game-invitational hand (saying nothing about the suit being doubled)

3-of-your-major=Just competing for the partscore.

This is a dangerous convention, since disaster looms if either player forgets the agreement. Be careful to note that this applies *only if the overcall is exactly one under*. If the auction goes: 1H-P-2H-P-3C, for example, double would be for penalties. There will be room (in this case, 3D) for an opener who wishes to make a game try (though such a try would say nothing about diamonds, since it is the only game try available).

There are other auctions where some experts use this convention (such as after they've overcalled and raised).

### QUIZ:

After 1S P 2S (3H), what should opener rebid with:

- F) KJ876 Q32 KQ2 K2
- G) KJ8732 32 KQ2 K2
- H) KJ876 A2 KQ32 K2
- I) KJ876 2 AKQ32 A2

Answers:

- F) Pass Don't violate the LAW of Total Tricks in a Larry Cohen article
- G) 3S This is not invitational. Same comment as F. With 9 trumps, compete to the three-level.
- H) Double. This is the way to invite game. If partner has a maximum, he will get you there.
- I) 4S.What you hope to make. No need for a convention.

### OTHER DOUBLES

Bridge literature (and history) is filled with other kinds of doubles. Many have come and gone. A prime example is "Fishbein." This convention was invented by Harry and involved bidding against preempts. Double was used as penalty and the next suit was used as an artificial takeout. This convention was so unpopular that I'm told even Fishbein didn't use Fishbein.

Some old bidding boxes have a Double Card with a "D" on it (as opposed to newer boxes which have an "X"). Wouldn't it be nice if we could use "D" to make a Penalty Double and "X" for a Takeout double? Why stop there? How about a Bidding box with a "G" for a "Game-try Double" or an "L" for a Lightner Double? Yes, I'm just kidding.

**About the Author:**

Larry Cohen, a 26-time National Champion, was one of the world's leading players when he semi-retired from tournament play to focus on teaching and writing. Many of his books and CDs have won awards from the ABTA and the IPBA. His best-seller on the LAW of Total tricks was one of the most influential books on competitive bidding theory. For two decades, he has been a monthly columnist in *The Bulletin* as well as many other bridge publications. His bridge seminars, especially bridge cruises, are a global hit—he has established himself as one of the top bridge teachers in the world. His website ([www.larryco.com](http://www.larryco.com)) contains hundreds of free articles with bridge instruction on a vast array of topics.

There are also plenty of doubles which essentially match those described in this article, but are known by different names. The terms “Card-Showing,” “Competitive,” “Cooperative,” and DSI (Used in this series) are all somewhat interchangeable. You might come across descriptions such as a “Balancing Double” or “Reopening Double,” but I’d classify those as a subset of the Takeout Double (just referring to the position at the table of the doubler). Penalty doubles are still actually part of the game, and in most cases it will be obvious (but please, not because the doubler unethically slams the red card onto the table). If the auction goes 1S-P-2S-P-4S, and you have QJ109 of spades and two aces, you’ll be pleased to know that you can still make a good old-fashioned penalty double. For the most part, penalties are extracted when one player makes a non-penalty double, but his partner leaves it in.

**WRAP-UP**

I’ve tried to cover the most common doubles in our modern game. I believe, it would be highly beneficial for students (especially of intermediate level) to study this topic. Knowing the main uses for double (Takeout, Negative, Responsive, Support, and yes, I reluctantly have to include “Penalty”) is much more important than attempting to learn the latest fancy convention just to keep up with the Joneses. Narrowing the list even further, I would say that a full understanding of Takeout Doubles (plus responses) and Negative doubles will rapidly improve the bidding of most players.

The later articles (these past few months) were aimed at more advanced players. While it’s useful to have an understanding of DSI, Game-Try, Lead-Directing and Maximal Doubles, those are not nearly as important as the doubles at the start of this series. If you missed any of them, I refer you to [www.larryco.com](http://www.larryco.com), where I have a free archive of information and lessons on just about every topic in bridge.