

THE NEGATIVE DOUBLE

WHEN? *Opening Bid of One of Suit - Overcall of a suit (up to 2♠) - Double.*
When partner opens & RHO overcalls, double is now NOT penalty, rather "negative". In essence "negative" means "take-out", but with certain restrictions to aid further bidding.

REQUIREMENTS? (a) **6 + points.**
Note that there is NO UPPER LIMIT. You cannot be too good to make a negative double. NB: You should have slightly more than six points when you are forcing partner to bid at a high level. Eg 1♣-2♠-Dbl should have at least a good eight points.

(b) **4 (+) cards in highest-ranking unbid suit.**

If you have the strength to bid your higher ranked suit (at the two-level), then double will show exactly four cards in the higher-ranked suit. If you do not have the strength (ie fail the Rule of 14) then you will have to double with at least four cards.

NB: Never forget that a new major response at the 2-level or higher always shows five+ cards (whether or not you play negative doubles).

WHAT DO YOU BID WITH A PENALTY DOUBLE OF THE OVERCALL? *Pass.*

Because you cannot now make a penalty double, you must *pass* and wait for your partner, who is bound to be short in the suit overcalled, to reopen with a double. You will then convert his take-out double into penalties by passing again. Note that as a result partner should be very keen to reopen with a double (eg 1♣-1♠-P-P-?) even with a minimum opener/with a weird shape (eg a six-card suit/ a five-five shape).

Exercise: What does double show in the following auctions? Be precise.

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| (1). 1♣-1♥-Dbl. | (5). 1♣-2♦-Dbl. | (9). 1♦-P-1♠-2♣-Dbl. |
| (2). 1♦-2♣-Dbl. | (6). 1♠-3♣-Dbl. | (10). 1♥-2♣-P-P-Dbl. |
| (3). 1♥-1♠-Dbl. | (7). 1♦-1♠-Dbl. | (11). 1♠-2♣-Dbl. |
| (4). 1NT-2♥-Dbl. | (8). 1♣-1♦-Dbl | (12). 1♥-2♦-Dbl. |

- (1). Negative. Precisely four ♠s and 6+ points. Thus: ***1♣-1♥-1♠ shows at least five ♠s** and must be explained to the opponents as such.*
- (2). Negative. Precisely four ♠s and 6+ points, or four or more ♠s and 6-8 points (ie a hand not strong enough to bid 2♠). Remember that 1♦-2♣-2♠ shows at least five ♠s (new major at the two-level).
- (3). Negative. Precisely four ♦s and 6+ points, or four or more ♦s and 6-8 points (ie a hand not strong enough to bid 2♦). 1♥-1♠-2♦ shows at least five ♦s (a corollary of negative doubles).
- (4). Penalty. Typically 8+ points and four ♥s. Negative doubles only work when partner has opened a suit.
- (5). Negative. Precisely four ♠s and 6+ points, or four or more ♠s and 6-8 points.
- (6). Penalty. Typically 8+ points and four ♣s. Negative doubles don't work when the overcall is at the 3-level.
- (7). Negative. Precisely four ♥s and 6+ points, or four or more ♥s and 6-8 points.
- (8). Negative. *Exception:* In this sequence only, the double promises exactly four-four in both majors. It is the only sequence where the double makes a statement about two unbid suits (as opposed to merely the highest-ranking).
- (9). Penalty. Typically showing 16+ points and four ♣s. Not a negative double auction at all.
- (10). Take-out. Catering to the possibility that partner has a penalty double of the 2♣ overcall. Your hand may be minimum (partner's hand is unlimited), and may have an unusual shape eg six ♥s/five ♥s & five ♦s.
- (11). Negative. Precisely four ♥s and 6+ points, or four or more ♥s and 6-8 points.
- (12). Negative. Precisely four ♠s and 6+ points, or four or more ♠s and 6-8 points.

WHAT DO YOU REPLY TO PARTNER'S NEGATIVE DOUBLE? *Pretend partner responded at the lowest level in the highest-ranking unbid suit. Rebid accordingly.*

- Thus (a) the auction 1♣-1♠-Double-Pass-? is equivalent to 1♣-P-1♥-P-?
(b) the auction 1♦-1♥-Double-Pass-? is equivalent to 1♦-P-1♠-P-?

QUIZ: Look at South's bidding on each of the following auctions. Three possible hands are given for South but only one is consistent with his bidding. Which one? What should the other hands have done differently?

1.	N	E	S	W	A.	B.	C.
	1♣	1♠	Dbl		♠ 974	♠ K987	♠ AQ1083
					♥ AJ10	♥ AQ42	♥ A64
					♦ KQ76	♦ 75	♦ 432
					♣ J93	♣ 1094	♣ 95
2.	N	E	S	W	A.	B.	C.
	1♦	1♥	Dbl		♠ A74	♠ J9742	♠ AK106
					♥ KJ6	♥ 42	♥ 53
					♦ Q76	♦ A5	♦ J9753
					♣ J643	♣ KJ94	♣ 53
3.	N	E	S	W	A.	B.	C.
	1♥	2♣	2♠		♠ J98743	♠ AQJ9	♠ AQ753
					♥ J6	♥ Q4	♥ J3
					♦ 83	♦ AJ5	♦ Q952
					♣ AJ4	♣ 8752	♣ 74
4.	N	E	S	W	A.	B.	C.
	1♥	2♦	Pass		♠ KJ74	♠ J764	♠ K73
					♥ 32	♥ J2	♥ K102
					♦ Q10962	♦ 1095	♦ 732
					♣ 87	♣ AQ32	♣ J1095
5.	N	E	S	W	A.	B.	C.
	Pass	Pass	1♠	2♦	♠ AK753	♠ AK8542	♠ AQ1043
			Pass		♥ A76	♥ Q42	♥ 53
					♦ 763	♦ 5	♦ 3
					♣ KJ	♣ K94	♣ AQJ95
6.	N	E	S	W	A.	B.	C.
	1♠	2♥	1♣	1♥	♠ 4	♠ AQ	♠ 863
			3♣		♥ K42	♥ 2	♥ 53
					♦ Q53	♦ Q1085	♦ A3
					♣ AK9752	♣ AKJ984	♣ AK9753
7.	N	E	S	W	A.	B.	C.
	Double	Pass	1♦	1♥	♠ Q4	♠ KJ74	♠ -
			2♣		♥ K42	♥ 2	♥ KQ43
					♦ QJ94	♦ KJ853	♦ AJ973
					♣ AK92	♣ AQJ	♣ A753

- A: Wrong. Would respond 2♦.

B: Correct. A 1NT would be genuine showing 6-9 points and a ♠ stopper, but double is a higher priority.

C: Wrong. Would pass, expecting partner to reopen with a take-out double (which you will pass for penalty).
- A: Wrong. Would reply 2NT - 10-12 balanced with ♥ stopper(s). An acceptable response after an overcall.

B: Wrong. Would respond 1♠, guaranteeing at least five ♠s.

C: Correct. Showing precisely four ♠s and any strength (6+).
- A: Wrong. Would double (negative), planning to bid spades next time, to show a weak hand with long spades.

B: Wrong. Would double (negative). When you keep bidding, partner will know you have precisely four ♠s.

C: Correct. Five+ ♠s and a hand that passes The Rule of 14.
- A: Correct. Much better than doubling to show the ♠s - your hand says "Defend!" and you will pass partner's reopening take-out double.

B: Wrong. Would double (negative) to show the ♠s.

C: Wrong. Would support by bidding 2♥ (single raise with three trumps often best - especially in competition).
- A: Correct. Holding three ♦s, it is likely partner passed because she has a bad hand, not because she has a penalty double of diamonds.

B: Wrong. Would double - better to reopen with double rather than 2♠ in case partner has a penalty double of 2♦.

C: Wrong. Would double - better to reopen with double rather than 3♣ in case partner has a penalty double of 2♦, & to keep things lower.
- A: Wrong. Would pass. Not strong enough to bid 3♣. You were planning to rebid 2♣. Because you can't, you should pass.

B: Correct. You would have rebid 2♦ or 3♣, and can still do (the latter).

C: Wrong. Would bid 2♠. Partner has shown five ♠ for her 1♠ response (no negative double). So support.
- A: Wrong. Would rebid 1NT. To show 15-16 bal with (preferably) a ♥ stopper.

B: Wrong. Would use the LTC to bid 3♠. The auction is equivalent to 1♦-P-1♠-P-?.

C: Correct. Just a normal 5-4 showing bid.