

4: Takeout Doubles

Opener: The person who bids first; his/her partner is the **responder**. If the other pair then enters the bidding with a double, they are the **doubler** and the **advancer**.

Defensive bidding: Your side's bidding when the opponents have opened the bidding.

Eddie Kantar says "The takeout double is far and away the most powerful and flexible weapon in your armory of defensive bids." Don't be afraid to double for takeout!

Wally Orchard says "Don't let the opponents play in their comfort zone." Translation: Try to compete when it looks as if the points are more or less equally divided.

In modern bridge, a double of an opening bid, or of a one or two-level response is always asking partner to bid something. It is never intended as a penalty double. The doubler's partner (the advancer) may choose to leave the double in, thus converting it to a penalty double, but this is rare.

Should you make an overcall, a double, or just pass? A suit **overcall** at the one-level usually shows 7-17 points; at the two level about 13-17 points. In both cases, a decent 5-card suit is expected as well. A **double** in the **direct seat** (the seat to the left of the opening bidder) usually shows opening points (13+), support for the unbid suits and shortage in the opponents' suit. You should count dummy points in evaluating your hand, since you expect partner to bid a suit. Four-card support for unbid major(s) takes priority over support for minor suit(s). A 1NT overcall in the direct seat usually shows about 15-18 pts, balanced, and a stopper in the opponents' suit. **If you are too strong** for a simple overcall in a suit or 1NT, **double first** and your next bid can show your strength (see doubler's rebids, below). A **pass** suggests a hand meeting none of these requirements; it may actually be quite a strong hand.

Your right hand opponent opens 1♦. What do you bid with the following hands?

♠Q964	♥AQ86	♦2	♣AT86
♠K64	♥AK964	♦8	♣QT95
♠QJ64	♥AQ86	♦84	♣AT7
♠Q64	♥AJ86	♦2	♣QT85
♠AQ64	♥4	♦KQ87	♣KT95
♠A63	♥QJ43	♦AJ9	♣KJ6
♠AQJ64	♥KQ8	♦84	♣AQ7
♠K64	♥A	♦AJT742	♣QT5
♠KJ64	♥A86	♦KJ4	♣AK7

When you double a bid at your first turn to bid, at the one or two level, it is always for takeout and shows support for all unbid suits:

1♣ – pass – 1♥ – double Double shows 13+ pts, support for diamonds and spades.

1♠ – pass – 2♣ – double Doubler needs a bit of extra strength here. Why?

Sometimes you may have less than 13 points, but should still try to enter the bidding with a double:

1♥ – pass – pass – ? Here you are in the “**balancing**” (pass out) seat. You should “borrow” 3 points (a king) from partner’s hand and see if you are then strong enough to double.

Pass – pass – pass – 1♥ – ? You have already passed, so partner should realize that you don’t have opening strength. Double with about 10+ points and the right shape.

Pass – pass – 1♣ – pass – 1♥ – ? You have already passed. Double with about 10+ points and the right shape. You need good support for diamonds and spades to do this. Responder, who bid 1♥, originally passed and may have as little as 6 points.

After opponents open with a preempt, you need extra strength in order to double, since you will be committing to a higher level contract when partner bids.

Responding to your partner’s takeout double

Remember always that about 25+ points are needed for game. Try to figure out partner’s minimum point count and bid accordingly. If partner doubled at the one level:

0 – 8 pts: bid your best suit at the lowest level

9 – 11 pts: jump in your best suit

12+ pts: get to game in a major

6 – 10 pts, no standout suit, and a stopper: bid 1NT. With more points, bid 2 or 3NT.

Strong holding in opponent’s suit (e.g. KQJ95 or better): pass and hope for a big penalty

Weak hands: Never, ever pass! Just bid your best suit with a confident air. Opponents won’t know that your cupboard is bare!

After the sequence 1♥ – double (by partner) – pass – (you), what is your bid?

♠Q964	♥86	♦973	♣AT86
♠KQ964	♥86	♦A52	♣K86
♠QJ6	♥AQ86	♦854	♣T86
♠6432	♥642	♦T95	♣753
♠Q96	♥AQ86	♦K5	♣JT86
♠64	♥AQJT8	♦973	♣J95