

## NEGATIVE DOUBLES

The old-style traditional action over the opposition's intervening overcall is to double for penalty, based on a useful holding in the over-called suit. However this situation is fairly rare, and also the penalty exacted is usually insufficient.

A better method is to use the double as a take out – the so called 'Negative Double' (sometimes referred to as a 'Sputnik Double' – invented in 1957 by Alvin Roth and Tobias Stone). This has far more frequency and is much more effective.

Example (bracketed bids show opposition bidding):

♠ 984  
♥ AJ65  
♦ Q942  
♣ 103

after 1♣ (partner) - (1♠); playing traditional methods this is almost impossible to bid (you either pass, or fudge a 1NT bid). But playing Negative Doubles, you merely double to show the other suits (but the emphasis is on the major).

There are a number of styles of Negative Doubles, but one common feature is that they show four cards in an un-bid major, and in principle, tolerance for a minor. Another advantage is that they allow the auction to stay at a comfortable low level if opener has a minimum hand with a fit for one of responder's suits:

e.g.            1♠ – (2♣) – 2♦ is forcing  
whereas        1♠ – (2♣) – dbl – 2♦ is not forcing

This is very much a bid where it important to develop a 'feel' for the situation.

The detailed requirements are:

### Responder's Action

General – at the one-level you require the same minimum strength as a one-level response - 6+ points, and at the two-level you require the values for a two level response – 9+ points.

- 1. If the overcall does not prevent you from making the bid that you would normally make – then:**
  - a. With a five card major, bid the major.
  - b. With a four card major, in principle, prefer a double (but see 7 below).
- 2. If the overcall prevents you from making the bid you would otherwise have made, then with four or more of the other major and sufficient points - DOUBLE** (6+ points if you are at the one-level; 9+ points at the two-level). The ideal take-out situation is to have two 4-card unbid suits – and partner will bid on this basis. However, without the 4-card minor you can correct later.

To illustrate that even with modest values you can still reach the same (correct) contract, with or without opponent's overcall, consider:

(South)        ♠ Q863  
                  ♥ 75  
                  ♦ 864  
                  ♣ AK97

With no opposition bidding, a typical auction would be:

(North) 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 3♣

With an opposition intervening bid of 2♦, and using negative doubles, the auction would be:

(North) 1♥ - (2♦) - dbl - 3♣

3. **Even though the overcall prevents you from making the bid you would otherwise have made, and you have a 5+ card major, you can still only bid at the two-level with 9+ points** (e.g. 1♦ - (1♠ overcall) - 2♥).
4. After a sequence 1♣ - (1♦ overcall), a double requires 4-4 in the majors, and is preferred to a 1♥ bid.
5. After a sequence 1♦ - (2♣ overcall), a double requires at least one 4-card major.
6. After a sequence 1♥ - (1♠ overcall), a double ideally requires 4-4 in the minors, but can be done on a single long minor (and insufficient points to bid at the 2-level).
7. **If partner's preference to your assumed minor suit would cause a re-bid problem, then bid a 4-card major instead of doubling** (see examples (k) and (m)).
8. A 1NT bid (7-9 points) should contain a partial stop in the overcalled suit. (With 5-6 points, pass, and if partner re-opens with a double, you then bid 1NT).
9. If playing a strong 2NT (e.g. Jacoby), this should still apply over the overcall, so with a balanced 10-11 points – double, and then bid 2NT (example (h)).
10. Otherwise pass (even with a hand which you may wish to double the overcall for penalties).
11. Negative doubles should be played up to and including 4♥ overcall – you need to cope with pre-emptive and weak-jump overcalls. (Whilst developing these techniques, you may prefer to use only up to overcalls of 2♠).

Examples:

(after 1♦ - (1♠ overcall))

a)	♠ 82 ♥ K752 ♦ Q94 ♣ Q1083	b)	♠ 82 ♥ AK52 ♦ QJ94 ♣ K83	c)	♠ 82 ♥ K8532 ♦ 943 ♣ KJ8	d)	♠ 82 ♥ AK532 ♦ A94 ♣ 1083	e)	♠ 8752 ♥ AK53 ♦ Q94 ♣ 83
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- a) Double – you would have bid 1♥ without the overcall, but have been prevented from doing so with the overcall. You're still at the one-level, so with 7 points – double.
- b) Double – as (a) but a much stronger hand. You can show your extra strength on your next bid.
- c) Double – whatever opener responds, bid 2♥, showing a 5-card suit and less than 9 points (otherwise you would have bid 2♥ initially).
- d) 2♥ - 5-card suit and more points than (c). You have the necessary 9+ for the bid at the two-level.
- e) Double – showing the 4-card heart suit. If opener bids 2♣ you can convert to 2♦.

(after 1♥ - (1♠ overcall))

f)	♠ K983 ♥ K7 ♦ Q652 ♣ 732	g)	♠ 983 ♥ K7 ♦ Q652 ♣ K732	h)	♠ KJ32 ♥ K7 ♦ Q652 ♣ Q73	i)	♠ AQ1074 ♥ 76 ♦ 632 ♣ Q43	j)	♠ 96 ♥ A987 ♦ AQ64 ♣ A76
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- f) 1NT - an immediate 1NT shows the upper end of the 6-9 point range.
- g) Double – 4-4 in the minors.
- h) Double. You can't bid 2NT directly (this would be Jacoby). So double first, and bid 2NT on your next bid.
- i) Pass. If opener doubles (see below), you can then pass.
- j) 2NT – Jacoby.

(after 1♦ - (1♠) overcall	1♣ - (1♥)	1♦ - (2♣)	1♦ - (2♣)
k) ♠ 75 ♥ KQ72 ♦ J4 ♣ AK873	l) ♠ Q65 ♥ K72 ♦ J843 ♣ 1094	m) ♠ K842 ♥ AJ65 ♦ 103 ♣ Q94	n) ♠ 9842 ♥ AJ65 ♦ 103 ♣ Q94

- k) 2♣ - you could double with four hearts, but the 'responder reverse' of 2♣ followed by 2♥ is far more descriptive of the strength and shape of the hand.
- l) Pass. If opener doubles (see below), then bid 1NT showing the lower end of the 6-9 points range.
- m) Double - both majors
- n) Pass – both majors, but insufficient points to take action at the 2-level.

(after 1♣ - (1♥ overcall))

o) ♠ K983 ♥ 972 ♦ Q6 ♣ K732	p) ♠ K983 ♥ 972 ♦ Q63 ♣ K73	q) ♠ K983 ♥ K72 ♦ Q6 ♣ 10873
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- o) 1♠. If you were to double, and partner with four diamonds, bids 2♦, you don't have a realistic re-bid.
- p) Double. Similar to (k), but if partner now bids 2♦, you now pass (albeit playing in a 4-3 fit).
- q) 1♠. If you were to double, and partner with four diamonds bids 2♦, what would you rebid? A possible alternative bid is 1NT, but you may well miss a 4-4 spade fit (particularly if playing 5-card majors with a short club).

## Opener's Rebids

(after responder's **double**)

The basic principle is that you respond as if partner had bid a 4-card major at the lowest level, i.e. in the sequence 1♦ - (1♠) – dbl – (pass) - ?, bid as if the auction had started 1♦ - (pass) - 1♥ - (pass) - ?

11. **With 4+ of the unbid major give support in this major.** Jump support on 16+ point – e.g. 1♦ - (1♠) - dbl - 3♥. Responder should then pass with 6 or 7 points, and raise to game with 8+ points.

If opener had originally opened 1♥ or 1♠, and responder's rebid (after his double) is 2NT, this would show 10 or 11 points, (he couldn't bid 2NT originally – Jacoby or Baron). See (h) above.

12. With less than 4-card of the unbid major, and 4+card of the unbid minor give support in that minor.

Examples: (after 1♦ - (1♠ overcall) – dbl)

r) ♠ 742 ♥ AQ63 ♦ AKJ85 ♣ 10	s) ♠ K742 ♥ 63 ♦ AQ832 ♣ K5	t) ♠ KQ74 ♥ 63 ♦ AQ832 ♣ AJ	u) ♠ 74 ♥ 63 ♦ AQ832 ♣ AK54	v) ♠ 7 ♥ AQ63 ♦ AK8532 ♣ A4
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- r) 3♥ - partner has shown hearts with his double. With the singleton and the fit you are just worth a jump bid (the equivalent of 16 points).
- s) 2♦ - if partner had bid 1♥ (without the overcall), you would have bid your spades. But this is the overcalled suit. You are not strong enough for 1NT, so settle for 2♦.
- t) 1NT – similar to (p) but stronger.
- u) 2♣ - partner possibly has four clubs. If not, he should correct to 2♦.
- v) Auction: 1♦ - (1♠) - dbl - (2♠) - ?. Bid 4♥, knowing that partner has four hearts.

(after responder's pass)

13. With 14+ you should bid. With a shortage in the overcalled suit - **double** - responder may have passed with a hand wanting to make a penalty double. He will then readily pass your double.

Otherwise make your 'natural bid', bearing in mind that partner will probably have less than 6 points.

Examples: (after 1♥ - (2♣ overcall) – pass)

w)	♠ A8	x)	♠ A87	y)	♠ A87
	♥ AKJ83		♥ AKJ83		♥ AJ863
	♦ 104		♦ K104		♦ 104
	♣ K954		♣ 54		♣ K54

- w) 2♥ - just worth the bid. Partner is unlikely to have a hand wanting to double 2♣, nor will he have many points, but you need to be competitive.
- x) Double – there is a possibility that partner has clubs. If not, he can correct (2♦ or 2♥), which would then be passed.
- y) Pass – partner is unlikely to have a hand wanting to penalise 2♣, so has very few points, and you're too weak to compete.

### Responder's Rebids

(after original pass and opener has doubled) – you must bid unless you have length/strength in the overcalled suit.

- 14. With the overcall suit and sufficient length, leave the double in for penalties (i.e. the hand that would have doubled for penalty in the traditional approach).
- 15. With an 8 count and a 6-card minor (i.e. not enough points to originally double or bid at the 2-level), jump to 3 minor.
- 16. Otherwise bid any 5-card suit – partner will then know you are weak and will bid accordingly.
- 17. As a last resort with a poor hand < 6 points, you may have to bid a 4-card suit, or bid 1NT (with a stop in the overcalled suit).

Examples: (after 1♣ - (1♠ overcall) – pass – dbl)

z)	♠ AQJ74	aa)	♠ Q742	bb)	♠ 7432	cc)	♠ 743	dd)	♠ KJ42
	♥ Q52		♥ 52		♥ AJ532		♥ 653		♥ 532
	♦ 98		♦ AQ9832		♦ 98		♦ Q983		♦ 983
	♣ 765		♣ 7		♣ 65		♣ 765		♣ 765

- z) Pass - converting opener's point-showing double to a penalty double.
- aa) 3♦ - not strong enough for 2♦ initially, but now competitive.

bb) 2♥ - not strong enough to double originally.

cc) 2♦ - no other bid, but surely the opposition will re-enter the auction.

dd) 1NT – too weak to bid 1NT originally.

AFH