

TAKE OUT DOUBLES

What Is A Take-Out Double

When you start to learn bridge, you are somewhat restricted in the types of hand that you can describe in the Overall Position. The available descriptions are primarily:

- 5-card suit Overcall – 12-16 points
- 6-card good suit Jump Overcall – 16+ points
- 1NT – 15-17 points, balanced with stop in opponent's suit
- 7-card weakish suit - pre-emptive jump

However this still leaves many hands which you cannot readily handle. The take-out double addresses many of these other issues. However, even then there remain some hands (e.g. strong two-suited hands) which are only ideally handled by more advanced techniques – but the take out double still acts as a stop-gap until more experienced. (Also if and when you adopt 'weak jump overcalls', this slightly changes the concept of take-out doubles).

The primary message of the take-out double is 'PARTNER - PLEASE BID'.

The typical hands described by the take-out double are:

12-20 points with a **shortage in the suit opened, and 3+ cards in each of the other suits**. This is called the *classic doubling shape*. At the lower point ranges (up to 16 points) it is advisable to have four cards in one major. At the higher point ranges you can be more flexible, and you can double on two-suited hands (not ideal – better methods available with experience).

18-19 points balanced(ish) with a **stop in the opponent's suit**, double first, preparing to bid 1NT over partner's bid (remember, a direct 1NT is 15-17 points with a stop).

16-18 points with a **good 5-card suit** (too strong for a simple overcall, but not strong enough (6-cards) for a jump overcall. Over partner's response just bid the suit.

With more experience you can also consider:

19+ points with a **good 6-card suit** (too strong for a jump overcall). Over partner's response, jump-bid in your suit, or cue-bid the opponent's suit.

Exercises:

If right-hand opponent opens 1♣, what action should be taken on these hands?

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|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| a) | ♠ KQ62
♥ 632
♦ A4
♣ K842 | b) | ♠ K7
♥ AKJ85
♦ Q74
♣ 842 | c) | ♠ AQ2
♥ Q963
♦ A8432
♣ 2 | d) | ♠ K762
♥ A2
♦ AJ3
♣ KJ82 |
| e) | ♠ K762
♥ AK
♦ AQJ3
♣ 865 | f) | ♠ K762
♥ AJ84
♦ AQ
♣ K65 | g) | ♠ KJ84
♥ AQ632
♦ K73
♣ 2 | h) | ♠ KJ8
♥ AQ632
♦ K732
♣ 2 |

- | | | | |
|----|--------|----|---------|
| i) | ♠ KQJ4 | j) | ♠ AQ3 |
| | ♥ AQ43 | | ♥ AKQ63 |
| | ♦ A7 | | ♦ Q7 |
| | ♣ 742 | | ♣ 932 |

- a) **PASS** - with less than 16 points, the *classic shape* is required. It would be suitable for a take-out double of 1♦
- b) 1♥ - not the desired shape for a take-out double – just a simple overcall.
- c) Double - (take-out). Classic shape
- d) 1NT. - 15-17 points, stop in opponent's suit. If there is a choice between 1NT and a take-out double, choose 1NT (if for example opponent had opened 1♥, it is suitable for either double or 1NT, but choose 1NT). (but see ex. (f))
- e) Double - (take-out). Not suitable for 1NT – no ♣ stop. The extra points compensate for the shortage in hearts (which partner may well bid).
- f) Double - (take-out). Points and stop in suit, suitable for 1NT, but with 4-4 in *majors* choose take-out double. If you bid 1NT, the bidding invariably goes *pass-pass-pass*. By doubling, raise any major bid from partner to the two level.
- g) Double - (take-out). You could overcall 1♥, but double is better with both majors.
- h) 1♥ - better than double, giving emphasis to the major.
- i) Double - (take-out). Not the classic shape (only 2 diamonds), but with two good majors, 16+ points, and a doubleton in the other take-out suit, a take-out double is acceptable.
- j) Double - partner will assume a take-out, but over his bid, bid hearts, to show a strong hand, unsuitable for a simple or jump (6 cards) overcall.

If right-hand opponent opens 1♠, what action should be taken on these hands?

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|----|---------|----|---------|----|----------|----|--------|
| k) | ♠ KQ6 | l) | ♠ K42 | m) | ♠ 92 | n) | ♠ K76 |
| | ♥ 6 | | ♥ AKJ85 | | ♥ KQ | | ♥ AJ2 |
| | ♦ AJ42 | | ♦ AQ4 | | ♦ AKQJ84 | | ♦ AJ3 |
| | ♣ Q8642 | | ♣ 84 | | ♣ A52 | | ♣ 8742 |
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- | | | | | | | | |
|----|----------|----|---------|----|---------|----|--------|
| o) | ♠ 6 | p) | ♠ 6 | q) | ♠ AKJ54 | r) | ♠ KJ8 |
| | ♥ AQJ105 | | ♥ A1074 | | ♥ AQ6 | | ♥ AQ6 |
| | ♦ A973 | | ♦ AQJ73 | | ♦ 7 | | ♦ KQ3 |
| | ♣ Q65 | | ♣ Q65 | | ♣ J872 | | ♣ AJ98 |

- k) **PASS** - minimum and not the classic shape. When you double one major with less than 16 points, the expectancy is that you hold four cards in the other. (Don't overcall 2♣).
- l) Double - too strong for 2♥, not suitable for 3♥. Remove response from partner to 2♥.
- m) Double - even too strong for a strong jump overcall. If partner responds 2♣, jump to 3♦. Over 2♥, either bid 3♦ or 3♠ (the opposition suit) – don't jump to 4♦ by-passing 3NT.
- n) **PASS** - not the classic shape.
- o) 2♥ - classic shape for double, but with 5 cards in the other major and below 15 points, choose the major bid (double would imply only 4 hearts if in the minimum range).
- p) Double - rather than the diamond overcall. It is important to show the 4 card heart suit.
- q) **PASS** - not shape-suitable for 1NT. Hope they will bid higher.
- r) Double - too strong for 1NT. Start with a double, and show the distribution later. In this case re-bid no-trumps over partner's response showing 18,19 points.

Protective Seat

A player is said to be in the protective seat if a 'pass' would finish the auction e.g. 1♦ - pass - pass - ? In this position a good rule-of-thumb is to 'borrow a king' i.e. imagine an extra three points in your hand. So in this position you could double on say a 9 point hand with the *classic* shape.

Responding To Take-Out Doubles

Unless your right hand opponent bids, you are usually forced to make a bid irrespective of your point count. The only real exception is where you have 5 or more cards in opener's suit, with probably at least two honour cards. It would be acceptable to pass on this type of hand.

In responding, it is important to include distribution points for shortages, since it can be assumed that you have some kind of fit with partner. I would suggest 4 for a void, 2 for a singleton, 1 for a doubleton.

0-9 points, and two or three suits with 4+ cards:

With a choice of suits, it is preferable to bid a major rather than a minor (at the same level). With two suits of the same rank and equal length, bid the stronger.

6-9 points, 1½ stops in opponent's suit:

Bid 1NT . (Some 5 point hands can be fudged, with two stops in the opponent's suit)

10-12 points

Invite game by jumping in a suit

13+ points

Bid the opponent's suit (forcing partner to make a choice), or jump to game.

Examples:

After the auction 1♦ - double - pass, what do you bid on:

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|----|--------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| a) | ♠ 10874
♥ 876
♦ 10432
♣ 104 | b) | ♠ K1087
♥ 76
♦ 104
♣ J9876 | c) | ♠ KQ874
♥ K763
♦ 1043
♣ 4 | d) | ♠ AJ87
♥ AQ54
♦ 10432
♣ 4 |
| e) | ♠ 975
♥ 653
♦ AJ103
♣ 763 | f) | ♠ K76
♥ 864
♦ 76532
♣ 73 | g) | ♠ 84
♥ 973
♦ KJ1064
♣ J32 | | |

- a) 1♠ - you must respond, so choose your best suit at the cheapest level.
- b) 1♠ - favour the major at the one level, rather than the minor at the two level
- c) 2♠ - (jump bid) - remember to include distribution points - 8 points, plus 2 for the singleton.

- d) 2♦ - the hand is worth 11 points plus 2 for the singleton (=13 points). Enough for game, but which one. Partner must bid again. Whichever major he bids, raise to game. If he bids NTs, notionally showing a stop in the enemy suit, once again bid the opponent's suit.
- e) 1NT - only 5 points, but upgrade to 6 points with two stops in the opponent's suit.
- f) 1♠ - diamonds not good enough to pass. With two 3 card suits it is usually better to bid the cheaper, but with both majors bid the stronger (this may help partner if he has to lead). With a very poor hand, where the choice is between a three card minor and a three card major, bid the minor – this is more likely to dampen partner's enthusiasm.
- g) **PASS** - just good enough cards in the opponent's suit. However 1NT is acceptable.

After the auction 1♠ - double – pass, what do you bid on:

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|----|---------|----|---------|
| h) | ♠ J8432 | i) | ♠ A1097 |
| | ♥ 764 | | ♥ 105 |
| | ♦ 108 | | ♦ KJ43 |
| | ♣ K104 | | ♣ 763 |

- h) 2♣ - there is a temptation to pass, but the spade suit is not good enough. Partner wants you to bid so the best you can do is 2♣. It is not ideal. With J10432 of spades, I would probably bend the rules and pass the double.
- i) 1NT - rather than responding 2♦ showing 0-9, 1NT emphasises the good stops in the opponent's suit.

Partner's Response.

If partner has a less than 15 points, he can pass your bid (assuming 0-9 points). If he has 16+ points he can raise your suit if suitable, and leave the final decision to you. There are more refined responses, but these require some experience.

Other Take-Out Double Situations

(Traditionally a double is for **penalty** if it is:

- a double of a no-trump bid
- at the three level or higher (except for three level pre-empts)
- the double arose after the partner of the doubler has already made a bid)
- double of an overcall – (but the negative double is now becoming standard).

It follows that a double is for **take out** if it is *a double of a suit bid at the one or two level and partner has either passed or not yet had a chance to bid.*

Whilst the above does somewhat simplify the situation, it is a pragmatic approach for intermediate players, and should be adhered to.

- e.g. –
- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1♦, dbl | - take out |
| 1♣, pass, 1♥, dbl | - take out |
| 2♥, dbl | - take out (whether the 2♥ is weak or strong) |
| 3♥, dbl | - take out |
| 1♥, pass, 3♥, dbl | - take out |
| Pass, 1♥, pass, 2♥, dbl | - take out (partner has done no more than pass) |