

Stamford Bridge Club

14<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Penalty Doubles

Many uses of **Double** in bridge but the most important are

**Takeout doubles** – we want partner to bid something. That bid will describe partner's hand better/further

**Penalty doubles** – we want partner to pass. We have the opposition on the run. We expect a good score from defending their contract.

Sometimes we make a takeout double and partner passes (hopefully intentionally). Partner has **converted a takeout double to penalties**.

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Let's play **Board 1**

### **Comment**

Before we have found a fit doubles are generally for takeout.

We can still extract a penalty. It may arise when a takeout double is converted to penalties by partner passing out the double.

Penalty doubles aren't common in the early stages of an auction because each player in the partnership hasn't finished describing their hand.

When high card strength and distribution are relatively unknown we need more information before making intelligent decisions. This is particularly true when a fit has not yet been found.

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So to re-iterate:

“Doubles are generally for takeout until we’ve found a fit”

There are **exceptions** to this maxim and these exceptions are **penalty doubles**.

Corollary : When we have found a fit we can double for penalties

In our later examples some hands will relate to these exceptions and some will include judgment-based penalty doubles.

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Sometimes we may want to make a penalty double because of our side’s firepower.

Let’s look at **Board 3**

### Comment

Note that in this auction we have already found a fit so subsequent doubles are for penalties

Further, when we can judge that we hold 23 hcps we should double the opponents when we decide not to bid on ourselves.

**Exception 1** : The opponents overcall in no trumps

We’ll have a look at **Board 2**

### Comment

When the opponents overcall 1N we can double for penalties. That double generally shows 10+ high card points (“hcps”). With the opener usually having 11/12+ hcps the defending side has the balance of the points.

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**Exception 2** : When the opponents bid game\*

\*but not an opening bid of game; then X is for takeout

We’ll look at **Board 4**

### Comment

Generally when the opponents bid game our doubles are for penalty.

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**Exception 3** : When partner has shown two suits we can double for penalties

So, moving on to another case, **Board 5**

### Comment

Partner has bid two suits so, if we don't bid one of them, we can double for penalties. Our 1N bid already suggested a reasonable holding in spades.

When the high cards are reasonably split between the two sides the quality of our trump holding in the opponents' suit is important. Our holding "over" the expected strength is a great bonus.

**Board 5** brings out an important point about the location of our honours. Are they "under" or "over" the opponents' advertised strength?

e.g.

Example of "under" and "over"

♠ A Q 10 8	
♠ 4 3	♠ <u>K J 9 2</u>
♠ 7 6 5	<u>OVER</u>

East's spades are **over** North's. If South leads spades East can expect to make three spade tricks.

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♠ A Q 10 8	
♠ <u>K J 9 2</u>	♠ 4 3
♠ 7 6 5	<u>UNDER</u>

West's spades are **under** North's. If South leads spades West may not make one spade trick (each time a spade is played North covers West's card).

Here's an example that brings in this consideration:

(**Talk Hand 1**)

Let's look at **Board 6**

### Comment

Don't be too greedy.

If we double a contract we should be quite sure that the opponents cannot run to another potential denomination ... unless we are content to double that too.

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**Exception 4** : When partner has made a preemptive bid we can double the opponents for penalties

... which takes us on to the penultimate  
**Board 7**

### **Comment**

When partner has closely defined his hand with a preemptive bid we can double the opponents' contract for penalties.

Before looking at the last board let's summarise our approach to penalty doubles

Generally all doubles are for takeout until we've found a fit but a takeout double can be converted to penalties by passing it out

We do have some **exceptions** to this rule and these are:

1. The opponents overcall in no trumps
2. The opponents bid game (but didn't open at the game level)
3. Partner has shown two suits already
4. Partner has opened with a preemptive bid (weak2/weak3)

We've looked at these and we can add a couple more:

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5. The opponents bid on over our game (even when we haven't confirmed a fit)
6. We double a suit bid having passed over a bid in the same suit on the previous round – an example is helpful

**(Talk Hand 2)**

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... and a few words of warning

When we make a penalty double

- Declarer may be alerted to the danger of a bad break ("over" the strength works better than "under" it)
- Penalising the opposition works better after a limited, tentative auction. Where the opponents bid very freely we cannot expect partner to provide much
- We must be careful that a double doesn't allow the opponents to remove the contract to a better place

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**Not every penalty double you make is guaranteed to be successful. Expect the odd bad result.**

And finally let's look at **Board 8**

### **Comment**

**When we make a trap pass (i.e. pass expecting partner to re-open with a double that we shall pass out for penalties) partner may disappoint us.**

**We should have a positive bid available to correct to a good contract.**

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**Next week  
(Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> September)**

### **Supervised Play**

**(featuring some examples of what we've covered today)**

**Why don't we make sufficient penalty doubles?**

- **Timidity**
- **Politeness**
- **In the situation we found ourselves our agreements don't allow us to make a penalty double**
- **In the situation we found ourselves we are not sure if a double is for penalties**

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