

NEGATIVE DOUBLES

BRIDGE MINI LESSONS



BEGINNING	IMPROVING	INTERMEDIATE LEVEL	ADVANCED	EXPERT
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WHAT IS A NEGATIVE DOUBLE

- Made by a Responder
- Partner opens a suit, opposition overcalls a suit, Responder doubles

A negative double can only be made by RESPONDER

WHAT DOES A NEGATIVE DOUBLE SHOW?

- 4-card⁺ suit in the unbid Major/s
- 6⁺ HCP (no upper limit)

A negative double shows a 4-card suit in an unbid Major

EXAMPLES

Partner is West and opens 1C, North overcalls a suit

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1C	(1H)	X	X shows a 4-card Spade suit & 6 ⁺ HCP
1C	(1S)	X	X shows a 4-card Heart suit & 6 ⁺ HCP
1C	(1D)	X	X shows <u>both</u> a 4-card Heart suit & a 4-card Spade suit

Partner is West and opens 1 of a suit, North overcalls a suit

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1D	(1H)	X	X shows a 4-card Spade suit & 6 ⁺ HCP
1D	(1S)	X	X shows a 4-card Heart suit & 6 ⁺ HCP
1H	(2C)	X	X shows a 4-card Spade suit & 6 ⁺ HCP (or 8+HCP – see FAQ's)

WHY NOT JUST BID THE MAJOR?

- Opener will often know if Responder's Major is a 4-card or 5-card⁺ suit
- Allows a Major to be shown without going to the 2-level
- Gives a cheap, initial means of exploring for a Major fit, even if responder has a big hand

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1D	(1H)	X	Responder has a 4-card Spade suit <u>exactly</u> (4 of the unbid Major)
1D	(1H)	<u>1S</u>	Responder has a 5 ⁺ card Spade suit (otherwise would have X'd)

This is clear cut. Opener knows straight away if the spade suit is a 4-card or 5⁺card⁺ holding.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1H	(2C)	X	Responder has a 4-card Spade suit & 6+ HCP (8+ HCP if prefer – see FAQ).
1S	(2D)	X	Responder has a 4-card Heart suit & 6+ HCP (8+ HCP if prefer- see FAQ)

OR Responder has a 5-card Major but not the points to bid at the 2-level. This is better than Passing & is good information. Opener knows it is either one or the other & assumes a 4-card to begin with.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1D	(1S)	X	4-card Heart holding (OR 5+card Heart s but can't bid at 2-level)
1D	(1S)	<u>2H</u>	5+card Heart holding & 10+ points

NB. Responder's 2H first response bid always shows a 5-card holding, unlike the other suits.

COMPARE THE BIDDING ON THESE HANDS – NEGATIVE X SOLVES SOME PROBLEMS

Partner opens 1D - Opposition overcalls 2C

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPP.</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>
1D	(2C)	♠ 9432 ♥ QJ63 ♦ AJ ♣ 765 8HCP

NOT USING Negative Double

Responder must PASS

- Cannot bid 2S without 10+HCP
- Cannot bid 2H without 5-Hearts & 10+ HCP
- Cannot bid 1NT without a Club stopper

USING Negative Double

Responder can X to show both Majors

Partner opens 1D – Opposition overcalls 1H

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>THEM</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>
1D	(1H)	♠ 9432 ♥ QJ63 ♦ AJ ♣ 765 8HCP

NOT USING Negative Double

Responder bids 1S

- Partner Does not know if this is a 4-card spade suit or 5-card+

USING Negative Double

Responder X's to show a 4-card spade suit

- If Responder has 5+ spades then bid 1S

Partner opens 1D – Opposition overcalls 1S

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>THEM</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>
1D	(1S)	♠ A8732 ♥ KQ32 ♦ AKQ ♣ 6 18HCP

NOT USING Negative Double

Responder can't bid 2H as doesn't have a 5-card suit

- Settling for 3NT's could be a disaster

USING Negative Double

Responder X's first to show a 4-card Heart suit then bids on accordingly

- First priority is to find a Major fit if possible

REFERENCES

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Seagram, Barbara. 2020. *Barbara's Bridge Tips*. Master Point Press: Toronto.

FAQ's

IF POINTS ARE UNLIMITED WHY IS IT CALLED "NEGATIVE DOUBLE"?

- *Negative* might be a bit misleading - name has nothing to do with strength/points.
- Originally *Negative Doubles* were called *Sputnik*. In a certain era this was not so acceptable.
- Back then Penalty doubles were known as "*Positive Doubles* so *Negative* was adopted just to distinguish between the two.
- Negative X's do not have an upper limit & can be very strong.



DOES THE QUALITY OF THE 4-CARD MAJOR HAVE TO BE GOOD?

- No. As in finding any fit, length matters. The idea of the X is to seek a Major fit first. See *HAND's 10 and 11* below though.

DOES MY NEGATIVE DOUBLE FORCE PARTNER (OPENER) TO REBID?

- Yes, if there is no intervening bid.
- No, if there is an intervening bid BUT partner is strongly advised to think carefully before being too quick to PASS.

SHOULD I HAVE MORE THAN 6 HCP TO X OPPONENT'S TWO LEVEL OVERCALL? Example 1D (2C) X

- Experts suggest a partnership agreement. Some say 6+HCP is fine.
- Dick & Seagram say 8+ HCP & 10HCP over a 3-level overcall.
- Marty Bergen says 8+ over a two-level minor, 9+ over a two-level Major & 10+HCP over a three-level or higher.

IS IT NECESSARY TO HOLD BOTH UNBID MAJORS OVER A TWO-LEVEL OVERCALL?

- No. Experienced players commonly use a Negative X to show just one of the unbid Majors at the 2-level.
- Improving players might wish to stick with showing both unbid Majors.
- Authors suggest a partnership agreement.

DO I HAVE TO BE SHORT IN THEIR SUIT OR HAVE THE OTHER UNBID SUIT AS WELL, LIKE IN A CLASSIC T/O X?

- No. Responder only has to have a 4-card suit in the unbid Major.

CAN I USE A NEGATIVE DOUBLE OVER A 3-LEVEL PREEMPTIVE OVERCALL?

- Yes. Make sure your partnership agrees.

CAN NEGATIVE X BE USED TO SHOW BOTH THE UNBID MINORS?

- Yes. Newer players might want to concentrate on the 4-card Majors though.

WHAT DOES THE SYSTEM CARD MEAN "*Negative Doubles through*"?

- On the LHS near the bottom, write your negative X agreement.
- "*Through*" means "at what point is the negative X for Penalty instead?"
- Eg. If Opponent bids **3S** does your **X** show an unbid Major suit or is it Penalty?

PRACTICE HANDS – NEGATIVE DOUBLES

You are Responder with the following hands – what is your call?

Partner opens 1C – They overcall 1S.

HAND 1 Responder 7 HCP	HAND 2 Responder 14HCP	HAND 3 Responder 8HCP	HAND 4 Responder 12HCP
♠ 92	♠ A5	♠ 65	♠ 102
♥ QJ63	♥ QJ74	♥ QJ1073	♥ AKJ63
♦ A104	♦ Q1032	♦ K83	♦ Q7
♣ 7654	♣ AJ3	♣ Q97	♣ Q943

HAND 1

X. If RHO had passed you would have said 1H. You can't bid 2H. X is the same as saying 1H.

HAND 2

X. Any other call will not best describe your hand. Your first job is to see if partner has a fit for Hearts, then show strength later.

HAND 3

X. You do not have the points to bid 2H (need 10+). Opener will assume 4-card hearts for now but that's OK. That is better than passing.

HAND 4

2H. Best to show your 5-card Heart suit & 10+ HCP's. This is more descriptive and the opposition's Overcall has not interfered with your natural bidding - no need for a negative X.

Partner opens 1D – They overcall 1H

HAND 5 Responder 7HCP	HAND 6 Responder 7HCP	HAND 7 Responder 15HCP
♠ Q863	♠ A10952	♠ A1095
♥ 85	♥ 854	♥ A7
♦ J754	♦ 76	♦ AQJ3
♣ A92	♣ K63	♣ 863

HAND 5

X. This promises exactly 4 spades. If you had 5-spades you would bid 1S.

HAND 6

1S. This shows a 5⁺-card Spade suit. If you had a 4-card Spade suit you would have X'd.

HAND 7

X. Your hand is game-going but the correct thing is to look for that Major fit first. Let partner know you have 4 spades. If no fit, nothing lost, then can look at NT's or D'S.

Partner opens 1C – They overcall 1D

HAND 8 Responder 7HCP	HAND 9 Responder 13HCP	HAND 10 Responder 8HCP	HAND 11 Responder 13HCP
♠ Q653	♠ QJ74	♠ KQ76	♠ AQ932
♥ AJ84	♥ KQ65	♥ 109754	♥ KQ65
♦ 865	♦ AJ	♦ 42	♦ 7
♣ 53	♣ 765	♣ K7	♣ Q84

HAND 8

X. The negative double at the one level guarantees 4-cards in both unbid Majors.

HAND 9

X. As per HAND 8, shows 4-4 in the unbid Majors.

HAND 10

X is fine. You do have a 5-card major but it is very poor & you will be unlikely to get a chance to show Spades later because they are higher ranking.

HAND 11

1S. Show the Spades first, then the Hearts just as you normally would. If 5-5 in both Majors you would do the same, 1S then Hearts.

Partner opens 1D – They overcall 1S

HAND 12 Responder	HAND 13 Responder	HAND 14 Responder
♠ A5	♠ KJ	♠ A3
♥ K1086	♥ KJ854	♥ KQ72
♦ 95	♦ 64	♦ 1083
♣ J8763	♣ 10753	♣ A872

HANDS 12, 13 and 14 are all **X** to show Hearts. The negative X on all these hands denies the values for a 2H Response – either not enough points or not enough Heart length. This still gives Opener good information. Opener should assume a 4-card Major to begin with.

Hands from

Ross Dick, *Better Bidding For Improving Players*. QLD Bridge Association

Max Hardy, *Standard Bidding for the 21st Century*, Vivisphere Publishing, New York.