

RESPONDING TO PARTNER'S TAKE-OUT DOUBLE

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1H	Dbl	Pass	?

East has been asked to bid one of the three remaining suits but sometimes an alternative course of action may be preferable.

a) S 74	H KQJ1064	D J4	C 872
b) S 432	H 5432	D 432	C 432
c) S 874	H KJ95	D 1083	C K93

With a) he will make a rare penalty pass. He is making a positive decision to choose hearts as the trump suit because his hearts are long and very strong.

He wants to draw trumps, just as declarer usually would and thus West must lead a trump if he has one.

With b) East is fixed but he must certainly not pass! 2C is probably the lesser of the evils because if West (who must be very strong if South is only worth a one-level opening bid and North cannot respond) thinks he has found a major suit fit he might get too excited.

Neither should he pass with c). This time 1NT (showing 5-9 HCP is the answer. Note that East needs less HCP to bid no trumps opposite a take-out double than opposite an overcall because a double promises more points.

Bidding no trumps opposite a double requires the same point count as opposite an opening bid, but very sound guards are necessary in opener's suit as West's most likely heart holding is a singleton.

Most of the time East will bid a suit as requested and if he has a choice of bids he will usually prefer the major.

d) S Q732	H A1085	D 73	C 764
e) S K732	H 94	D 93	C 86542
f) S K732	H 94	D 93	C K9542
g) S Q732	H 8643	D A74	C K3
h) S AJ5	H 9842	D QJ3	C AK6
i) S KOJ10974	H 864	D 7	C K86
j) S K1065	H 96	D AJ8	C AK94

With d) he will bid 1S, not 1NT. The search for the 4-4 major suit fit is just as important if opponents open the bidding first.

Similarly with e) he will prefer 1S to 2C. He is not strong enough to volunteer a second bid if East/West compete in the red suits, therefore he chooses the bid that is most likely helpful to West.

However, with f) he will bid 2C, the difference being that he intends to compete with 2S over an opponent's 2D or 2H. Compare the similar problem you face as responder with four spades and five clubs in an uncontested auction.

If you are strong enough for a responder's reverse you bid naturally starting with your longer suit.

If you are only worth one bid you must introduce the major. East's range for bidding his suit as cheaply as possible is inevitably wide - between nil and eight points.

If he is stronger than this he must take more aggressive action, otherwise game may be missed.

With g) he should jump to 2S, showing 9-11 points (or equivalent playing strength).

Holding h) he intends to play in game but needs help in deciding the final denomination. He thus cue bids 2H, which is forcing to suit agreement.

With i) East can envisage no likely alternative to 4S - even if spades are not West's strongest suit - therefore he immediately jumps to this contract.

With j) 4S is probably going to be the final resting place, but an immediate 4S is far too unilateral.

Therefore East should temporize with a 2H cue bid and bid spades on the next round.

The final contract here could be 4S, 5C, 5D, or even slam and East won't help the search by leaping to 4S. As always a space consuming leap should be used only to strongly discourage partner from seeking an alternative denomination.

THE FREE BID

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1H	Dbl	1S	?

How does North's intervening bid affect East? He is no longer obliged to bid with a poor hand, indeed if he does choose to bid it is called a free bid and he should have a hand that would have justified responding to an opening bid.

Therefore bids that would have shown 0-8 points without North's 1S now show 6-8 points, or corresponding playing strength.

Note that double is for penalties.

Also, 1NT would stress possession of heart guards, the suit which is presumably West's shortage. East does not need a spade guard as this is deemed to be one of West's suits. What if North chooses to raise South's suit rather than introduce a suit of his own?

You are certainly unlikely to get very rich by doubling a contract at the two or three level if opponent's have found a fit and are freely raising their chosen suit. Therefore we look for an alternative use for East's double in these auctions.

RESPONSIVE DOUBLES

i)	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	1S	Dbl	2S	Dbl
ii)	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	1H	Dbl	3H	Dbl

In each case East is responding to West's double with a double of his own. Hence the name *responsive double*. The idea is that when an opponent voluntarily raises his partner's suit to the two or three level you abandon penalty doubles, and double instead for take-out.

East's double in auction i) could show hand a) below. He wishes to compete to the three level but doesn't wish to unilaterally pick the suit. Therefore he passes the buck back to West.

Similarly East could have hand b) for auction ii). Without responsive doubles he would have had to chance 3S, taking the risks of playing in a 4-3 spade fit with a 5-4 fit available in a minor suit.

a)	S 82	H KJ4	D KJ43	C J987
b)	S Q852	H 3	D KJ43	C A876

COMPETITIVE DOUBLES

We now return to bidding after partner has made an overcall, because the responsive double by no means exhausts the competitive auctions when it is more efficient to use the double for take-out.

i)	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	1H	1S	2H	Dbl
ii)	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	1H	1S	3H	Dbl

In auctions i) and ii) North has voluntarily raised South's suit, again making it clear that the prospect of being doubled doesn't concern him.

Therefore East doubles for take-out, known as the competitive double.

With i) he probably has tolerance for spades and both minor suits, for example hand a) below

a)	S J7	H 1084	D KQ83	C KJ63
b)	S KJ65	H 108	D KJ52	C 1064
c)	S KJ65	H 108	D KJ52	C A64

Note that when the opponent's raise is at the two level East can easily distinguish between hands b), when he wants to compete in spades, and c), when he wants to make a genuine game try.

With b) he would have bid a preemptive 3S; with c) an unassuming cuebid of 3H shows a constructive raise to 3S. Auction ii) is different in that East has fewer bids available. The main priority is to distinguish between b) and c), rather than ask partner to choose a minor suit, therefore he bids 3S with b) and doubles with c).

iii)	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	1H	1S	2C	Dbl

In auction iii) it might make sense to play East's double for penalties if North's 2C can be passed, but there is no point whatsoever in doubling a forcing bid for penalties. If 2C is forcing, East's double is competitive, suggesting a willingness to compete in spades or diamonds. Perhaps he has hand d)

d)	S Q8	H 942	D AQJ82	C 763
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Note that, for all their merit, responsive and competitive doubles are not considered part of basic Acol, and, therefore are alertable.

THE PROTECTIVE TAKE-OUT DOUBLE

a)	S K1074	H AJ75	D 4	C J853
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In the protective position i.e. in fourth position after opener has bid followed by two passes, the double promises roughly three points less than the bid in the immediate position. We add an "imaginary extra king" to our hand then make our bid. It follows that if East is going to protect with three points less than normal, West needs three more points to make a constructive move.

	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	1D	Pass	Pass	Dbl
	Pass	?		

b)	S 852	H KQ3	D KJ32	C Q74
c)	S AJ53	H 864	D J32	C K74
d)	S AJ53	H A64	D 932	C K74
e)	S 96	H K64	D AQ974	C K62
f)	S K85	H AQ3	D 8653	C AQ5

With b) West should bid 1NT, showing 8-12 points. If your instinct tells you that he should find a stronger bid, imagine playing in no trumps with a) as dummy. You would be delighted to emerge with seven tricks.

Holding c) he should simply bid 1S (0-11 points). Again he will be happy to make seven tricks if East has a).

Hand d) is minimum for a non-forcing jump to 2S showing 12-14 points.

With e) West will happily pass, expecting a juicy penalty. Such a penalty pass is always more attractive if your trumps are after declarer's as you expect the finesses to be unkind to him.

Finally, with f) West, must announce that his hand is as strong as it could be, bearing in mind his pass of 1D. He therefore cue bids 2D, the enemy suit, which is forcing to suit agreement.