

Maximal Double

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A maximal double is a type of cooperative double used when your side has found a major-suit fit in a competitive auction. It distinguishes major-suit game tries from competitive bids at the 3-level. The following two hands illustrate the problem that the maximal double attempts to remedy:

♠KQJ873	You	LHO	Partner	RHO
♥93	1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
♦A53	?			
♣Q2				

You want to make a competitive 3♠ bid in accordance with the [Law of Total Tricks](#). However, you don't want to encourage partner to bid game.

♠AK873	You	LHO	Partner	RHO
♥92	1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
♦AJT9	?			
♣KJ				

With a stronger hand (15-17 points), you want to bid 3♠ as an invitation for partner to game.

How can partner know the difference? A maximal double in these auction is a game try, saying "Partner, please sign off at the 3-level with a minimum hand or bid game with a maximum."

As a corollary, bidding 3♠ in the above auctions would merely be competitive, not invitational. Partner would not be expected to bid further.

Lastly, note that the maximal double is **altertable** since opponents will otherwise naturally think that your double is for penalty.

When to Use a Maximal Double

The maximal double applies to two specific auctions:

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
1♥	2♦	2♥	3♦
Dbl			

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
Dbl			

In both auctions, your side has bid and raised 1 Major - 2 Major. Meanwhile, the opponents have bid and raised the suit **directly below yours** to the 3-level.

If the opponents bid and raise any other suit, then your other agreements apply (e.g. [Help Suit Game Tries](#) or [Short Suit Game Tries](#)).

Maximal Doubles with Overcalls

To add a twist... You can also use maximal doubles if your side **OVERCALLS** 1 Major - 2 Major. Examples:

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	1♥	2♦	2♥
3♦	Dbl		

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
3♥	Dbl		

The conditions are basically the same as when your side opens the bidding. You may want to bid your 3-level suit competitively, or make a game try. The maximal double gives you both options.

When NOT to Use a Maximal Double

Lastly, here are auctions where the maximal double doesn't apply:

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
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1♥ 2♦ 2♠ 3♦
Dbl

You and your partner haven't agreed on a major suit. Therefore double is penalty, or a **support double** if you play it.

You LHO Partner RHO
1♠ 2♣ 2♠ 3♣
Dbl

The opponents have bid and raised a suit that is not directly below yours. Double is penalty. (Note: Some partnerships prefer to play this as a maximal double too. It's up to you.)

You LHO Partner RHO
1♥ 1♠ 2♥ 2♣
Dbl

The opponents have bid and raised a suit above yours. Double is penalty. (Again, some partnerships treat this as a maximal double as well.)

You LHO Partner RHO
1♥ 2♦ 2♥ 3♣
Dbl

The opponents have not agreed to a suit. Double is penalty.

See also

[Lightner Double](#)

A lead-directing double of an enemy slam contract.

[Negative Double](#)

A conventional double used by responder after opener starts the bidding with one-of-a-suit and the next player makes a suit overcall.

[Optional Double](#)

A conventional double made after an opponent has opened the bidding with a preempt.

[Responsive Double](#)

A conventional double used when partner makes a **takeout double** and the next player raises his partner's suit.

[Snapdragon Double](#)

A conventional double by fourth seat after the first three players bid three different suits.

[SOS Redouble](#)

A conventional redouble that asks partner to bid a new suit.

[Stripe-Tailed Ape Double](#)

A double of an enemy game contract, in hopes of stopping the opponents from continuing on to slam.

[Support Double](#)

A conventional double used by opener after partner makes a suit response and the next player overcalls.

[Takeout Double](#)

A conventional double that asks partner to bid one of the unbid suits.

[Thrupp Double](#)

A double of a 3-level preempt asking partner to bid 3NT with a stopper.

About

Bridgebum began in 1999 and covers a large set of descriptions of bidding conventions, declarer play and defense, and more.

Contact

See a typo, error or just want to comment?

Latest Update

Fast Arrival by Danny Kleinman

Fast arrival is the theory that when a forcing bid is available below game, a jump to game denies, but a forcing bid implies, slam interest.

