

NEGATIVE DOUBLE

One of the most valuable conventions in Bridge is the Negative Double. It has become so common that, like the Take-Out Double and Stayman, it is not even alertable. We have presented a lot of lessons on Negative Double over the years. As we learn these various conventional doubles, it is really important to be able to distinguish them from penalty doubles. Penalty doubles are tremendously important, too. You often achieve your best possible score by penalty doubling the opponents. So, all of these conventional doubles are well defined so that we can tell the difference between them and the penalty double. If you play negative doubles (you certainly should), then a double that falls into the definition of the negative double IS NOT A PENALTY DOUBLE. That is, if pard opens, opponent overcalls at a level at or below the level specified on your convention card, you double—that is a negative double, and cannot be a penalty double. If the overcall is above the level specified on your card, it is a penalty double.

One important fact to remember when using any of these conventional doubles is that they all describe a hand that IS DEFICIENT. That is, it lacks ONE of the elements, either length or strength, that it needs to bid. It DOES NOT lack both. If the hand is not deficient, just bid. Don't use any of these conventional doubles if it is not necessary. If your hand is not deficient, just bid.

Auction 1			Hand	Auction 2			Hand
Pard	Opp	You		Pard	Opp	You	
			S=A9852				S=KJ85
1C	1H	1S	H=83	1C	1D	1S	H=43
			D=K72				D=K102
			C=1073				C=J865

Your 1S bid promises 5S—you would Negative Double with only 4. So, opponents interference has allowed you to show whether you have 4 or 5 spades, which you couldn't have done if he hadn't interfered.

You are only showing 4S, because a Dbl here would also show 4H.

Neither of these hands are deficient. Both have the required strength and the required length to just bid.

Auction 3
Pard Opp You

1C 2D 2H

Hand

S=A73
H=KJ943
D=43
C=QJ8

This hand is not deficient. You have both the required # of Hearts (5+) and the required # of points (10+) to bid at the 2 level after pard has opened.

Auction 4
Pard Opp You

1D 2S Dbl

Hand

S=5
H=A9754
D=KJ4
C=10752

This hand is deficient to bid the hearts at the 3 level—it isn't strong enough. You have the length but not the strength.

Auction 5
Pard Opp You

1H 3D Dbl

Hand

S=KQ103
H=J5
D=43
C=A9842

Your hand is deficient—you lack length in spades but not strength.

Auction 6
Pard Opp You

1D 1S Dbl

Hand

S=K9754
H=K752
D=A2
C=95

This hand is one from last Saturday. Here you have to decide what message to send to pard—show 4 hearts or show spades stopped. It is NOT a penalty dbl. You have to have a plan if partner bids clubs. Your plan is to bid NT if pard chooses clubs.

Lets continue the auction on #6: Pard Opp You Opp
1D 1S Dbl P
2C 2S Dbl—What kind of dbl is that?

It is a penalty double. It doesn't fit into the definition of any of the conventional doubles that we have learned. They are all well defined and this double is none of them. **THE LIMIT ON YOUR CONVENTION CARD IN THE NEGATIVE DOUBLE SLOT DOES NOT APPLY TO PENALTY DOUBLES.** Opener should trust you and pass your penalty double—here resulting in a +800 or +1100 for you, which is better than any game you could bid.