More on doubles

Doubling as a passed hand

One of requirements for a take out double is an opening hand.

However, you can still make a take out double even after you passed the first time.

For example:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	Pass	Pass	pass
1D	x		

In this sequence partner cannot have an opening strength hand because they would have bid the first time. A double here means that partner's hand has become better when the left hand opponent bids partner's short suit. For example, they may have this hand:

KJ74
AJ96
9
JT86

You would not open the bidding with this hand but when the opponents bid 1D you have the perfect shape for a take out double. Your singleton diamond is a good feature and you are likely to have a fit with whatever suit partner chooses, making this hand worth 13 total points.

When you double as a passed hand partner will not get carried away as they know you have less than 12 HCP.

You might even double with this hand:

A965
QT85
-
Q9753

Again, a perfect shape for a take double and to compete for a part score without the risk of partner going crazy.

Doubling after both opponents have bid

When both your opponents have bid it is likely that they have the majority of HCP and if you have a good hand, your partner will have very little in the way of HCP.

You should be wary of bidding when you are in the 'sandwich position'.

If you are going to overcall in the sandwich position you should have a good hand and a really good suit.

You can also double in this position but you MUST have 4 cards in the two unbid suits.

RHO	Partner	LHO	You

1C	Pass	1H	x

In this auction you would have a hand something like this for your double:

KQ97, A73, QJ975, 2

Here most of your HCP are in the unbid suits and the hand is not really good for defending in hearts or clubs.

Compare that hand with this one:

KJ85, QJ3, AQ73, J4

Although it has more HCP the jacks and the queen in the opponent's suit are of doubtful value, except in defence.

Be especially careful bidding in the sandwich position when the opponents have not found a fit!

Doubling after RHO bids 1NT

Usually doubles of no trump bids are for penalties, except where your opponents open 1 of a suit and responder bids 1NT.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1H	Pass	1NT	x

Double here shows the same type of hand that would have doubled 1H but given both opponents have bid, you should be very cautious doubling with a poor opening hand, particularly if you are likely to force your partner to bid at the two level.

In the auction above, opener is sitting over you, meaning that some of your HCP will be worthless.

It is often better to pass.

Doubling when the opponents have found a fit

When your opponents have found a fit – they have bid and raised a suit – it is safer for you to enter the auction because your side is likely to have a fit somewhere too.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1H	Pass	2H	x

You should double with a hand like this: AJ53, 86, KQ4, AT52. You are likely to find a fit and take a part score or force the opponents to the three level. Very occasionally

partner will pass and convert the take out double to penalty when they hold three sure tricks in the opponent's suit and a sure trick in an outside suit.

Doubling when the opponents bid your suit

You have this hand: A863, 9, AK75, KJ97 and your opponents open 1D.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
		1D	?

You obviously can't double with four diamonds so you pass and the auction continues.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	Pass	1D	Pass
1H	Pass	2H	?

You can now double, showing the two unbid suits, shortage in hearts and probably length in diamonds. As the opponents have found a fit your side probably has one too!

Doubling in the 'balancing position'

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1D	Pass	Pass	?

When the opponents open the bidding one of a suit and this is followed by two passes, you can enter the auction with less HCP than would normally be the case. This is called 'balancing'.

Where an opening bid of one of a suit is followed by two passes it is likely that the HCP are evenly divided – the most your opponents can have is about 24 HCP: a maximum of 19 for opener and a maximum of 5 for responder.

When bidding in the balancing position you are also protecting partner's hand, who may not have been able to overcall, double or bid 1NT so had to pass.

How many HCP do you need to make a balancing double? You can balance with as few as 9 HCP. Think of it like you borrowed a king from your partner's hand to give you 12 HCP.

You should still have shortage in the opponents suit and at least three cards in the unbid suits.
When responding to a balancing double, partner should deduct 3 points from their hand and bid accordingly.

Your hands may be something like these:

You	**Partner**
J832	74
6	AK3
A874	KQ52
KJ75	Q962

When the opposition opens the bidding in front of partner with a 1H bid, partner is stuck for a bid and must pass even with 14 HCP. After two passes around to you, you should bid knowing that partner must have some of the missing HCP. With this good shape you can double for take out. Partner now subtracts three HCP from their hand and bids accordingly.