

# Negative Doubles

A Complete Discussion

# Almost Everyone Plays Negative Doubles

- Everyone does not play them correctly.
- I still see misunderstandings among partners.
- Leading to arguments and poor matchpoint results.
- We will look at everything negative double.
  - Point count
  - Suits
  - Other considerations

# What is a Negative Double

- The negative double is called “negative” because it is not meant for penalty.
- It is a kind of takeout double.
- A regular takeout double is made when an opponent opens the bidding.
- A negative double is **only made** when partner opens the bidding.

# How the Negative Double Works

Suppose you have this hand:

♠ 4 2

♥ K 9 7 3

♦ 10 5

♣ K J 4 3

- Partner opens the bidding with 1♦.
- You are ready to contribute 1♥.
- RHO bids 1♠.
- 2♥ requires 5 hearts and 10+ points.
- You are stuck for a bid.
- That's what the negative double is for.

# How the Negative Double Works

Suppose you have this hand:

♠ 4 2

♥ K 9 7 3

♦ 10 5

♣ K J 4 3

north	east	south	west
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1♦	1♠	dbl	
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- The negative double allows you to show support for the unbid suits.
- In this case hearts and clubs.
- Before the negative double was invented, your bid here would be pass.

# How Many Points Are Required to Use a Negative Double?

- First, you must make a judgement about your hand.
  - There are good points (aces and kings, with middle cards).
  - There are less good points (jacks and queens without middle cards).
- It depends on the level of the overcall'
  - At the one level, 6-7 points minimum.
  - At the two level, 9 points minimum.
  - At the three level, 11+ points minimum.
- There is no upper level.

# Consider This Example

Suppose you have this hand:

♠ 9 4

♥ A 10 8 7

♦ A Q 3

♣ A J 10 6

north	east	south	west
-------	------	-------	------

1♦			
----	--	--	--

	1♠		
--	----	--	--

		dbld	
--	--	------	--

- As soon as your partner opened the bidding, you knew your side has a game.
- Partner will bid a 4-card heart suit if she has one.
- You will push on to game once you hear partner's bid.

# What Distribution is Required for a Negative Double?

- A negative double shows two suits, usually the two unbid suits.
- Let me make a point about this auction:  
1♣ ... (1♦) .... ??
- A negative double here shows both majors.
- So, what would 1♥ or 1♠ show?
- Exactly the same as if the overcall had not happened.



# Consider This Example

Suppose you have this  
is the auction  
north east south west

1♣ 1♦ 1♥

Important to distinguish  
this bid from a negative  
double here.

A negative double  
would show 4-4 in the  
majors.

♠ A 2  
♥ Q 10 8 7  
♦ Q 3 2  
♣ 8 7 5 2

Or

♠ 9 4  
♥ A Q J 10 8 7  
♦ 4 3  
♣ A Q 6

# A Negative Double

Suppose you have this is  
the auction

north east south west  
1♣ 1♦ dble

Partner will know he can  
bid a either major with 4  
cards.

You would negative  
double with either of  
these hands.

♠ Q 10 7 4  
♥ K Q 7 6  
♦ 3 2  
♣ 8 7 5 2

Or

♠ A K Q 9  
♥ K Q 10 9  
♦ K 9 2  
♣ Q 6

# If the Bidding Goes Like This:

Suppose you have this  
is the auction

north east south west

1♣ 1♥ 1♠

You guarantee 5+  
spades.

If you had 4 spades,  
you would make a  
negative double.

♠ K J 10 7 4

♥ Q 7 6

♦ 3 2

♣ 8 7 5

Or

♠ A K Q 9 6 4

♥ 10 9

♦ K 9 2

♣ A 6

# If the Bidding Goes Like This:

Suppose you have this is  
the auction

north east south west

1♣ 1♥ dble

When you have exactly 4  
spades, you make a  
negative double.

Understand this concept.  
Novice bidders often don't  
quite grasp it.

♠ K J 10 7

♥ 7 6

♦ Q10 3 2

♣ 7 5 4

Or

♠ A K Q 9

♥ 10 9

♦ K J 9 2

♣ A 6 3

**This is a strict negative  
double rule.**

# After a 2-Level Overcall

Suppose you have this  
is the auction

north east south west

1♦ 2♣ dble

♠ K J 10 7

♥ A J 7 6

♦ 7 3 2

♣ 5 4

The negative double  
here shows both  
majors, at least 9  
points.

This is the perfect hand.

# After a 2-Level Overcall

Suppose you have this  
is the auction  
north east south west  
1♦ 2♣ dble

The negative double  
here shows both  
majors, at least 9  
points.

A less than perfect  
hand.

♠ A 10 7 5 2  
♥ K Q 6  
♦ 7 3 2  
♣ 5 4

If partner bids hearts,  
pass and wish him  
luck.

The hand is not good  
enough for a two  
spade bid.

# After a 2-Level Overcall

Suppose you have this is  
the auction

north east south west  
1 ♠ 2♣ dble

Remember a negative  
double shows two suits

A perfect hand

♠ A 2  
♥ K J 6 3  
♦ Q 9 7 3 2  
♣ 5 4

If partner bids hearts,  
pass and wish him luck.  
You could have bid 2♦  
here, but you should  
check to see if partner  
has 4 hearts.

# After a 2-Level Overcall

Suppose you have this  
is the auction  
north east south west  
1 ♠ 2♣ dble

Remember a negative  
double shows two suits  
An imperfect hand

♠ 2  
♥ K Q 9 6 3  
♦ K 9 7  
♣ 5 4 3 2

You would prefer to  
have 2 spades, in  
case partner rebids  
his suit.

Double anyway.



# After a 2-Level Overcall

Suppose you have this  
is the auction  
north east south west  
1 ♠ 2♣ dble

Remember a negative  
double shows two suits  
An imperfect hand

♠ K  
♥ K 9 6 5 3  
♦ Q 9 7 4 2  
♣ 3 2

You would prefer to  
have a stronger hand.  
But with 5-5 distribution,  
double anyway.  
Hope partner picks a  
red suit.

# After a 2-Level Overcall

Suppose you have this  
is the auction

north east south west

1 ♠ 2 ♣ pass

No negative double  
here.

♠ 5

♥ A 9 6

♦ Q 9 7 4

♣ K J 10 3 2

pass and hope partner  
reopens with a  
double.

# New Auction

Suppose you have this  
is the auction

north east south west

1♦ 2♥ dble

The perfect negative  
double..

♠ Q 10 8 7

♥ A 6

♦ K J 4

♣ J 10 3 2

You are prepared for  
whatever partner  
bids.

# New Auction

Suppose you have this  
is the auction  
north east south west  
1♦ 2♥ dble  
An imperfect hand.

♠ A 8 7 4

♥ 6 4 2

♦ K J 10 3

♣ 3 2

double here and if  
partner picks clubs,  
you can support  
partner's diamonds.

# New Auction

Suppose you have this  
is the auction

north east south west

1♦ 2♥ dble

An almost perfect  
negative double..

♠ J 10 8 7 5

♥ K 6

♦ K J

♣ J 10 3 2

You are prepared for  
whatever partner  
bids.

# Opener's Rebid Guidelines

- With adequate points, opener can bid game in either of the suits you showed.
- All jumps below game are invitational.
- A cuebid of the opponent's suit is forcing to game. Pick your best suit.
- Opener may have to rebid a 5 card suit or introduce a new suit with 3 cards.
- Remember, after your negative double, partner is forced to bid. She may not have a perfect hand.

# When the Overcall is No Trump

- The negative double is off
- Partner will take your double as penalty.

Opener    overcaller    responder

1(any)    1 nt    double = penalty  
(about 9+ points)

# No Trump Overcall

Suppose you have this  
is the auction  
north east south west

1♣ 1nt dble

Suggesting penalty!

Do a little math

Here you have 11

Partner at least 12

♠ A Q J 2

♥ K 10 8 7

♦ J 6 4

♣ 3 2

Of course you must  
know the range of  
their no trump  
overcall.

Usually 15-18

Vulnerability is a factor.



# FYI: With a No Trump Overcall

- A suit bid is natural and nonforcing.
- If you have any good hand double first.
- Do remember if you are vulnerable and opponents are nonvulnerable:
  - If you have a game...
  - You must set them 4.

# Final Thought

- I did not have room to examine overcalls above the two level.
- I will do that in the lesson next week.
- It will be a continuation of this lesson.