

NEGATIVE DOUBLES

The old-style traditional action over the opposition's intervening overcall is to double for penalty, based on a useful holding in the over-called suit. However this situation is fairly rare, and also the penalty exacted is usually insufficient.

A better method is to use the 'double' as a take out – the so called 'Negative Double' – invented in 1957. by Alvin Roth and Tobias Stone. It was originally called a 'Sputnik Double', implying the beginning of a 'space age' in bridge. This has far more frequency and is much more effective.

Example (bracketed bids show opposition bidding):

♠ 984
♥ AJ65
♦ Q942
♣ 103

As responder, after 1♣ - (1♠), playing traditional methods this is almost impossible to bid (you either 'pass', or fudge a 1NT bid). But playing Negative Doubles, you merely double to show the other suits. Nowadays the requirement for both other suits is not required (exceptions), with the emphasis on showing any unbid major.

There are a number of styles of Negative Doubles, but one common feature is that they show four+ cards in an un-bid major, and in principle, tolerance for a minor. Another advantage is that they allow the auction to stay at a comfortable low level if opener has a minimum hand with a fit for one of responder's known suits:

e.g. 1♠ – (2♣) – 2♦ is forcing (as normal)
whereas 1♠ – (2♣) – dbl – 2♦ is not forcing

This is very much a bid where it important to develop a 'feel' for the situation.

The detailed requirements are:

Responder's Action

In general responder needs to compete on most 6+ point hands, but the opponent's overcall may make it more difficult. However there are other benefits which can be gained from the overcall, in particular in some situations, responder's ability to differentiate between a four- and five-card major holding.

There are three factors to consider when responder is considering making a negative double:

'Level'

It's important to understand what is meant by 'Level'. This should be taken as '**at what level responder would have to bid, in order to show his suit(s)**'. There are different requirements depending upon what 'level' responding is doubling.

- 1-Level – responder is effectively bidding his suit(s) at the one-level
- 2-Level – responder is effectively bidding his suit(s) at the two-level
- 3-Level – responder is effectively bidding his suit(s) at the three level

Following a 1♠ overcall, then responder should assume to be at the 2-level, with the exception that with 3-card support for opener's bid (whereby he can support at the 2-level), it should be treated as if at the 1-level for 'strength' purposes.

Length

minor – (Major) – 'dbl' - 4+ cards in the other Major

minor – (minor) –

1♣ - (1♦) - dbl – 4-4 in the Majors

1♦ - (2♣) - dbl – 4 cards in at least one Major

Major – (Major) – dbl – 4-4 in the minors, or long diamonds.

Strength

1- level – 'dbl' requires **6+ points**

2- level – 'dbl' requires **8+ points** (or equivalent)

3- level – 'dbl' requires **11+ points**

Note: a 'pass' from responder is non-forcing – but see opener's responses.

In all the following situations, you need to agree the meaning of a 2NT response when partner has opened a major. It can either be 10-12 points with a stop in the opponent's overcalled suit, or a game force in opener's major (Jacoby).

I prefer Jacoby, with the exception of 1♠ – 2♥ – 2NT which should now be natural 10-12 points + heart stop(s). With all other 10-12 points and a 'stop', 'double' and then bid no-trumps over partner's response.

Level-1 Requirements

'Double' requires 6+points. In many cases responder can differentiate between a 4- and 5-card major:

minor - (minor) – i.e. 1♣ – (1♦) – 'dbl' shows both majors (but with a 5-card major, bid the major)

minor - (Major) – e.g. 1♣ – (1♥) – 'dbl' shows spades (but with 5-card spades, bid 1♠)

minor - (1♠) – e.g. 1♦ – 1♠ – 'dbl' shows hearts, and if 6/7 points also shows 3-card diamond support.

With a 'stop' in the overcall suit, you can bid a direct 1NT with 8-9 points, but 'pass' with <7 points (and later re-bid 1NT if necessary).

Examples:

a)	1♣ – (1♦)	b)	1♣ – (1♦)	c)	1♣ – (1♦)	d)	1♣ – (1♦)	e)	1♣ – (1♥)
	♠ AJ65		♠ AJ65		♠ AJ6		♠ AJ86		♠ AJ65
	♥ KJ83		♥ KJ832		♥ K853		♥ K98		♥ 98
	♦ 107		♦ 107		♦ 1087		♦ 108		♦ 1073
	♣ 964		♣ 94		♣ J96		♣ 9654		♣ Q942

a) **double** – without the overcall, you would bid 1♥. The overcall allows you to show both majors, and specifically 4-4.

b) 1♥ – similar to (a), but with a 5-card major, bid 1♥.

- c) 1♥ – you can't double with only one major, so must bid 1♥.
- d) 1♠ – rather than support partner's clubs.

In b) c) d) opener mustn't assume that you have a 5-card suit; only that you don't have both majors 4-4

- e) **double** – after a major overcall, only the other major required (may be 4-card or 5-card).

f) 1♣ – (1♦)	g) 1♣ – (1♠)	h) 1♣ – (1♦)	i) 1♣ – (1♦)	j) 1♥ – (1♠)
♠ AJ652 ♥ 98 ♦ 103 ♣ Q942	♠ 986 ♥ AJ653 ♦ 1073 ♣ Q9	♠ 98 ♥ AJ65 ♦ 1073 ♣ Q942	♠ Q83 ♥ K86 ♦ 10743 ♣ J72	♠ Q83 ♥ K86 ♦ 10743 ♣ J72

- f) 1♠ – ... now responder can positively show a 5-card suit
- g) **pass** – need 8+ points to bid at 2-level. Can only consider at 1-level if 3+ support in clubs.
- h) **double** – at the 1-level with 4 card support for opener, can also show four hearts.
- i) **pass** – without 4-hearts and insufficient points for a direct 1NT (can later re-bid 1NT if necessary)
- j) 2♥ – definitely if playing 5-card majors; possibly if playing 4-card majors.

k) 1♣ – (1♦)	l) 1♣ – (1♦)	m) 1♣ – (1♦)	n) 1♣ – (1♦)
♠ 983 ♥ Q5 ♦ Q743 ♣ KQ92	♠ AJ8 ♥ J98 ♦ Q73 ♣ 10654	♠ A75 ♥ 983 ♦ Q73 ♣ 10864	♠ 983 ♥ AJ96 ♦ K743 ♣ 96

- k) **double** – with 4-4 in the minors.
- l) 1NT – 8 points; no four-card major; stop in diamonds
- m) **pass** – despite the diamond 'stop', insufficient points for a direct 1NT. Re-bid 1NT if necessary.
- n) 1♥ – prefer bidding the 4-card major rather than 1NT

Opener's Re-bid after 1-Level 'Double'

Opener should re-bid as if partner has precisely a **4-card** suit(s), and possibly only 6 points. e.g. 1♦ – (1♥) – **dbl** – (**pass**) – responder is known to have only a 4-card heart suit.

Take care over NT re-bids – these should show a stop in the overcalled suit.

From opener, a bid of a higher ranking 'not required' suit is still a reverse.

o) 1♦ – (1♥) - dbl	p) 1♦ – (1♥) - dbl	q) 1♣ – (1♦) - dbl	r) 1♣ – (1♦) - dbl
♠ A1063 ♥ 742 ♦ AKJ85 ♣ 10	♠ AQ63 ♥ 742 ♦ AKJ85 ♣ 10	♠ A96 ♥ J642 ♦ 9 ♣ AK985	♠ AQ6 ♥ J642 ♦ 9 ♣ AK985

- o) 2♠ – partner has shown 4-spades with the double. Support as 'normal'.
- p) 3♠ – only 14 points, but with the known 4-4 spade fit and the singleton club – bid 3♠.
- q) 2♥ - partner has shown both majors and 6+ points. Choose to support hearts.
- r) 3♥ – a slightly strong hand than (q).

s) 1♣ – (1♦) - **dbl** t) 1♣ – (1♦) – **dbl** u) 1♣ – (1♠) - **dbl** v) 1♦ – (1♥) - 1♠

♠ AQ6
♥ J6
♦ AJ7
♣ K9854

♠ AQ6
♥ J64
♦ 94
♣ AK985

♠ AQ6
♥ J64
♦ 94
♣ AK985

♠ KJ4
♥ 965
♦ KJ43
♣ AK5

- s) 1NT – partner has the majors, but with no support and a diamond stop bid 1NT.
 t) 2♣ – with no support for either of partner’s majors, and no diamond stop, rebid the 5-card club suit.
 u) 2♣ – no support for partner’s hearts, re-bid 5-card club suit.
 v) 2♠ – partner is known to have a 5-card spade suit (he would double with 4-card)

w) 1♦ – (1♥) - **dbl** x) 1♣ – (1♥) – **dbl** y) 1♣ – (1♠) - **dbl**

♠ A1063
♥ 742
♦ AKJ85
♣ 10

♠ A6
♥ Q4
♦ A864
♣ AJ985

♠ Q3
♥ A6
♦ A864
♣ AK985

- w) 2♠ – this is not a reverse – merely supporting partner’s known spade suit
 x) 2♣ – insufficient point for a 2♦ reverse.
 y) 2♦ – partner hasn’t necessarily shown diamonds, so with 17 points this is worth a 2♦ reverse.

Opener’s Re-bid after 1-Level Responder ‘Pass’

Responder either has a weak hand with less than 6 points, or length and minimal strength in overcaller’s suit and less than 8 points (with 8 or more points he would bid no-trumps).

Opener will need **15+ points to re-bid.**

- with a shortage in overcaller’s suit - ‘double’
- with a ‘stop’ in overcaller’s suit consider bidding 1NT (probably need 16+ points)
- otherwise bid naturally (but partner will probably have less than 6-points)

z) 1♦ – (1♥) - **pass** aa) 1♦ – (1♥) – **pass** bb) 1♦ – (1♥) - **pass** cc) 1♣ – (1♥) - **pass**

♠ 108
♥ A9
♦ AK1074
♣ K954

♠ 108
♥ A9
♦ AK10874
♣ K95

♠ Q104
♥ AJ7
♦ K95
♣ AK107

♠ KQ84
♥ 97
♦ AK102
♣ K95

- z) **pass** – despite the shortage in overcaller’s suit, it is unlikely that partner has a hand with good hearts. Also insufficient points for a double.
 aa) 2♦ – again, partner is unlikely to have a hand wanting to double hearts, prefer a 2♦ re-bid.
 bb) 1NT – partner obviously has the hand with less than 6 points.
 cc) **double** – 15 points, and worthless shortage in opponent’s suit. Partner will pass with good hearts, or find an alternative bid. With less than 7 points and a heart stop he may be forced to bid 1NT).

Level-2 Requirements

Double requires 8+points, but with a good suit, for each card length over 4 reduce requirement by 1 point. (...so after 1♥ - (2♦) – and holding just ♠AKxxx – 7 points - you would be entitled to double. At this level there is less scope to differentiate between 4- and 5-card suit holdings.

Major - (minor) – e.g. 1♥ – 2♣ – **dbl** shows the other major.

Minor - (minor) – i.e. 1♦ – 2♣ – shows one major, but I recommend 4-3 if only 8 or 9 points. (With only one major and 10+ points you may possibly be able to re-bid no-trumps).

1♥ - (1♠) – dbl - both minors (4-4), or a single suited long diamonds (but not clubs – if opener chooses clubs give preference to bidding 2♦, otherwise you would be forced to the three level to bid the clubs).

New Suit – requires 9+ points. If the suit is displaced (e.g. 1♥ – 2♦ – now wanting to show spades) I recommend 10+ points. In addition if the suit is a major it requires a minimum of 5-cards.

A ‘pass’ from responder is **forcing**

dd)	1♥ – (2♦)	ee)	1♥ – (2♦)	ff)	1♥ – (2♦)	gg)	1♥ – (2♦)	hh)	1♥ – (2♦)
	♠ AQ873 ♥ J9 ♦ 97 ♣ K865		♠ AQ873 ♥ Q9 ♦ 97 ♣ 10865		♠ AQ83 ♥ Q9 ♦ 97 ♣ 108654		♠ KQJ872 ♥ A9 ♦ 10865 ♣ 3		♠ KQJ872 ♥ J9 ♦ 10865 ♣ 3

dd) 2♠ – 5-card suit and 10 points. No need to double.

ee) **double** - ...still a 5-card spade suit, but in order to bid the ‘displaced’ 2♠, 10 points are required.

ff) **double** – primarily because only 4-card spade suit. Also there are insufficient points of a 2♠ bid.

gg) 2♠

hh) **double** - ...whereas with only 7 points a double is suitable (reduce the 8-point requirement due to the long good suit).

ii)	1♦ – (2♣)	jj)	1♦ – (2♣)	kk)	1♦ – (2♣)	ll)	1♦ – (2♣)	mm)	1♦ – (2♣)
	♠ AQ87 ♥ K965 ♦ 97 ♣ 865		♠ A87 ♥ K965 ♦ J7 ♣ 10865		♠ K8 ♥ KQ94 ♦ 97 ♣ 108652		♠ K8 ♥ KQ94 ♦ 973 ♣ K1086		♠ K8 ♥ KQ94 ♦ Q73 ♣ 9865

ii) **double** – both majors – 9 points

jj) **double** – with 4/3 just worth the double. If partner chooses spades you’ll have to pass.

kk) **pass** – you may miss a 4-4 heart fit, but what would you re-bid if partner re-bids 2♠. Also partner is now likely to re-open with a double which you can pass

ll) **double** – ...more points than (k). If partner chooses 2♠, you can now bid 2NT (implying hearts) and a club stop.

mm) **double** – if partner bids 2♠ you can now bid 3♦ (partner will now probably hold a 5-card diamond suit).

nn)	1♥ – (1♠)	oo)	1♥ – (1♠)	pp)	1♥ – (1♠)	qq)	1♥ – (1♠)
	♠ 1073 ♥ 98 ♦ Q984 ♣ AJ52		♠ 107 ♥ K96 ♦ Q984 ♣ Q542		♠ 984 ♥ K9 ♦ Q984 ♣ A542		♠ 95 ♥ 74 ♦ AJ9763 ♣ K82

nn) **pass** – in principle at the 2-level ‘double’ requires 8+ points with no other supporting features.

oo) **double** – insufficient points, but if partner doesn’t support a minor he will probably bid hearts or no-trumps (over 1NT you can then belatedly support hearts).

pp) **double** – an awkward response – but what else.

qq) **double** – intending to re-bid diamonds over any response from opener. Opener will then know that responder doesn't have 9+ points since he did not bid 2♦ immediately.

Opener's Re-bid after 2-Level **Double**

Opener should respond as if partner has 8+ points, with no assumption regarding suit length(s).

From opener, a bid of a higher ranking 'not required' suit is still a reverse.

Over opponent's 1♠ overcall, partner is at the 2-level and has shown 8+ points (or equivalent), then you now have three NT rebids available. If you have a stop in opponent's suit, then:

1NT - 13-15 (ideally with check-back responses)

2NT - 16-17; 3NT - 18-19 (you may play 2NT and 3NT the other way round, according to normal style).

rr) 1♣ – (1♠) - dbl	ss) 1♥ – (2♣) - dbl	tt) 1♥ – (2♣) – dbl	uu) 1♦ – (2♣) - dbl
♠ Q6 ♥ A6 ♦ A864 ♣ AK985	♠ AQ76 ♥ AQ985 ♦ 862 ♣ 10	♠ AQ76 ♥ AKJ85 ♦ 862 ♣ 10	♠ AJ5 ♥ A976 ♦ AJ985 ♣ 10

rr) 2♦ – partner shown a heart suit, but without hearts opener can only repeat clubs or show his diamonds. He sufficient points for the diamond reverse.

ss) 2♠ – partner has shown spades – opener is content to support at the lowest level.

tt) 3♠ ... whereas with more points he can raise in spades.

uu) 2♥ – this is not a reverse – partner has one major - maybe hearts. If partner has a minimum 8 pts. he will be 4-3, and will pass (then playing in a 4-3 fit).

vv) 1♥ – (1♠) - dbl	ww) 1♥ – (2♣) - dbl
♠ AJ9 ♥ AJ852 ♦ 86 ♣ K104	♠ Q9 ♥ AK852 ♦ A86 ♣ K104

vv) - 1NT – three NT bids are available – choose 1NT with 13 points and stop in opponent's suit.

ww) – 2NT/3NT – stop in opponent's suit 15 points.

Opener's Re-bid after 2-Level Responder '**Pass**'

Responder either has a weak hand with less than 8 points, or length and minimal strength in overcaller's suit and less than 9 points. Opener should attempt to re-open with about 13+ points

With 13+ points and shortage in opponent's suit – **double**

Otherwise bid naturally

xx) 1♥ – (2♣) - **pass** yy) 1♥ – (2♣) - **pass** zz) 1♥ – (1♠) – pass – (2♠)

♠ A8
♥ AK983
♦ 104
♣ Q542

♠ AJ8
♥ AK852
♦ K954
♣ 104

♠ 972
♥ AQ6
♦ AQ85
♣ A74

xx) 2♥ – partner is unlikely to have a hand which wants to double 2♣, so just repeat the hearts.

yy) **double** - .. now with the club shortage, partner may have wanted to double 2♣.

zz) **pass** – partner will not have a hand wanting to double spades. Just ‘**pass**’ – if partner does have 6 or 7 points, this may well be defeated with your good defensive values.

Level-3 Requirements

There is only one situation where this applies (over simple overcalls) –

1♠ – (2♥) –

Responder now needs 11+ points for a double, with both minors (or a single suited diamond hand), otherwise similar to responses over a Level-2 situation.

aaa) 1♠ – (2♥) bbb) 1♠ – (2♥) ccc) 1♠ – (2♥) ddd) 1♠ – (2♥)

♠ K4
♥ 975
♦ AQ97
♣ K865

♠ K4
♥ 97
♦ AQJ752
♣ 1086

♠ A8
♥ AJ9
♦ Q842
♣ 10865

♠ A8
♥ AJ9
♦ K1086
♣ Q1072

aaa) **double** – 12 points, both minors. If partner repeats his spades – ‘**pass**’.

bbb) **double** - ...and rebid 3♦ over partner’s re-bid. He will know responder doesn’t have 11+ points, otherwise he would have bid 3♦ immediately.

ccc) 2NT – 10-12 in this sequence (not Jacoby). Preferable to a double.

ddd) 3NT – 13+ with stops.

AFH