

How To Express Doubt In The Auction - II Opener's Rebid

Competitive Auctions

Unlike non-competitive auctions, whenever the opponents interfere, we have additional tools available to us. We no longer have the binary choice of bid or pass, we can now also double (or redouble). This is good news, because our list of things we might have doubt about has also expanded:

- What strain should we be playing in?
- What level should we be playing at?
- Should we be declaring or defending?

This list gets pretty involved pretty fast when you start thinking about all of the various permutations, mostly because the answers to some of the questions determine the answers to the others. For instance, "what strain should we be playing in?" If we know that and know we have a fit, then we are more likely to want to declare rather than defend. If we don't know that then we are far more likely to want to defend if we don't have a fit and declare if we do and would really like partner to tell us.

Let's look at a couple of auctions just to get our toes wet.

1.

West	North	East	South
1H	1S	2H	2S
?			

In this auction opener can:

- Pass - I would rather defend than declare
- Double - I would like to do something, but don't know what
- Raise to 3H - I would rather declare than defend
- Bid something else below 3H - I heard the auction and am interested in being in game

So double expresses doubt about declaring or defending and bidding something else below 3H expresses doubt about level. Pass and bidding 3H do not express doubt.

2.

West	North	East	South
1H	2C	2H	X
?			

Now, opener has the basic options of:

- Pass - I would rather defend than declare
- Redouble - I would like to do something but I don't know what
- Bid 3H - I would rather declare than defend
- Bid something else - I am would rather declare and am interested in game

Essentially, redouble replaces the double as the way to express doubt

3.

West	North	East	South
1C	P	1S	2H
?			

For those of you who play them, this is a “support double” situation. But even if you don’t, we can kind of recreate that convention from first principles if we look at the auction through the doubt prism.

Opener has the basic options of:

- Pass - I don’t know what I’d like to do, and I am uncertain that we should do something
- Double - I would like to do something, but don’t know what
- Bid 2S - I would rather declare than defend and we have a fit
- Bid 3H - We should be in game, but I don’t know which one
- Bid something else - I would rather declare than defend

In this scenario, both pass and double express doubt. Pass suggests doubt about acting at all, whereas double says we should do something, but don’t know what.

If opener doesn’t know what to do, then it’s a virtual certainty that they don’t have a fit for responder in spades. Doubling suggests acting is right, so generally opener isn’t highly interested in defending and therefore often has a partial fit for responder. Say 3 card support. After all if they had long clubs they could just rebid 3C.

This seems a little scattershot, so let’s see if we can put these pieces together in a way that helps organize some themes that we have seen.

If we have a known fit:

- X (or XX) expresses doubt about what to do, but that we should be doing something
- Pass expresses doubt that we should be doing anything
- Bidding expresses certainty that we should be declaring

If we don’t have a known fit:

- X (or XX) expresses doubt about what to do, but that we should be doing something
- Pass expresses doubt that we should be doing anything
- Bidding expresses certainty that we should be declaring

Hey wait, those are actually the same! Maybe this isn’t going to be a nightmare after all.