

Practice Session for U3ABD15: NT Overcalls and Doubles

Welcome!

Here is a description of all the hands that you could play in today's Practice Session. It includes details like the cards in each hand, how to evaluate each hand (High Card Points, Shortage Points, shape), the "correct" bidding, and lead.

This week we've given you hands to try out more types of overcall. Competitive bidding; busy, busy!

Don't feel bad if you bid the hands a bit differently, or ended up in a slightly different contract. Each week there's something new, it will take you a while to get the hang of all of it. Hopefully it will make a bit more sense with the detailed explanations given here. Yes, it's getting trickier.

We're here to help, share our enthusiasm for this great game. You will make mistakes, but we're always happy to explain or answer questions. Remember, you're playing with people who are just starting out, too. Let's have fun together!

We've published version 4 of this document to add some more explanations and simplify Double Then Bid; we know it's quite confusing! I have tried a simpler approach in the bidding commentaries! The practice hands and bidding are exactly the same.

-Ed

Recap and Intro

In the previous module, you learned how to compete when an opponent opens the bidding with one of a suit, and you have a long suit and 5- 15 HCP; you overcall by bidding your suit at the 1, 2, 3 or 4-level. In this week's module you learned how to compete with other types of hand. Oversimplifying hugely:

- With 5-15 HCP and a long suit, you overcall with your suit. For example: 1H 1S
- With 16+ HCP and a stop in the opponent suit, you overcall in NT. For example: 1H 1NT
- With 11+ HCP and support for the unbid suits, you Double For Takeout: 1H X
- With 16+ HCP and a good long suit, you Double Then Bid your suit. For example: 1H X

Notice that Double For Takeout (DTO) and Double Then Bid (DTB) both start with you doubling the opponent's bid. Your poor partner does not know which type of double it is until your second bid, so they must assume you're Doubling for Takeout (the more common usage) unless your second bid proves otherwise.

Advanced topics

Advanced topics are in green. These are included for completeness; you can ignore them for now.

This Week's Lessons – NT Overcalls and Doubles

Lesson Summary: NT Overcalls

If you have a strong hand, no long (5+) suit you can bid, and not enough support for the other three suits to Double for Takeout, you can overcall with NT as long as you have a stopper in the opponent's suit. You need 16+ HCP to overcall with 1NT. For example:

1S 1NT shows 16-18 HCP and a stopper in Spades

If you have the other requirements but are too strong to overcall with 1NT, you do NOT overcall with 1NT or 2NT or 3NT to show your strength, you **Double** first (which forces partner to bid) and then rebid NT:

- With 19-20 HCP and a stopper: Double then bid NT without a jump (1NT or 2NT)
- With 21-23 HCP and a stopper: Double then bid NT with a jump (2NT or 3NT)
- With 24+ HCP and TWO stoppers: Double then bid 3NT

If you have 11-14 HCP you can overcall with 1NT after 2 passes (in fourth seat). For example:

1C pass pass 1NT shows 11-14 HCP and a stopper in Clubs

Lesson Summary: The Takeout Double

Doubles can be used to increase the penalties when contracts go down; upping the stakes. But Doubles of one-of-a-suit opening bids are used for something else. In this lesson you learned about using a **Double** to encourage your partner to bid, usually called a **Takeout Double**.

We will look at Penalty Doubles in the next module of the course.

If the opposition opens with one of a suit and you want to compete but don't have a 5+ suit to overcall with and can't overcall with 1NT, you can make a Takeout Double if you have:

- Shortage (0-2 cards) in the opponent suit
- Opening points (12+)
- Support (at least 3 cards) in the other three suits

These requirements have the helpful acronym **S.O.S.**

If your hand includes a 5-card minor, you would usually make a Takeout Double rather than an overcall, as you're hoping for a fit in a major. If you have a 5-card major, however, you would usually overcall with your major rather than double, unless it's very weak (no Honours).

A Takeout Double is a forcing bid. It forces partner to bid their longest suit, even if they have ZERO points and a 3-card suit (they could have four in the doubled suit) they must not pass. If you make a normal (12-15 HCP) Takeout Double, you must be prepared to play in any suit your partner chooses; you won't bid again unless you're strong and their response shows they are strong.

You can use a Takeout Double immediately after an opponent opens, or after two passes. You can even use it if both opponents have bid different suits, to ask partner to choose between the two unbid suits.

You cannot use a Takeout Double over a 1NT opening because a double of 1NT has a very different meaning (described in the next module of this course).

You can also double an opponent's opening bid to show you have a strong hand that is too strong for a simple overcall. This Double Then Bid is described in the next section. Partner will treat this other type of double as a Takeout Double until you show them otherwise!

Anyway, back to the Takeout Double...

Lesson Summary: Responding to a Takeout Double

If partner doubles the opponent's suit, you must consider this a Takeout Double and must respond by bidding your longest suit – with two exceptions, described below. You cannot pass just because you've got a terrible hand!

In general, bid your longest suit, but bid a shorter major in preference to a longer minor. If your longest suit is the doubled suit, you may even have to bid a 3-card suit. **No excuses, you have to bid.**

- With 0-8 HCP, bid your longest suit at the lowest level
- With 9-12 HCP, jump in your longest suit
- With 11+ HCP and a 5-card major or 6-card minor, jump to game
- With 13+ HCP if you are unsure of the best contract, bid the doubled suit! This **CUE BID** asks partner to give you more information. It's a Game Force, so bidding will continue until game is reached.

Partner will probably pass if you don't jump, as you've shown them less than nine points, potentially ZERO! All the other bids suggest game is either likely or certain – although minor games are less likely than major games. If partner is strong enough to carry on, they will bid.

However, if you have a balanced hand, no unbid 4-card major, and a stopper in the doubled suit, you can bid NT:

- With 6-9 HCP bid 1NT
- With 10-12 HCP bid 2NT (a Game Invitation)
- With 13-15 bid 3NT

Partner may pass these bids, depending on their point count – no point raising further if Game isn't on.

Exceptions: When can you pass a Takeout Double?

- You can pass if an opponent overcalls the Double, taking it out, and you have less than 6 points and a poor shape (no long suit to excite partner).
- You can pass if you have enough length in the doubled suit to be SURE it will go down, converting the Takeout Double into a Penalty Double. This is a very rare hand, as you must also be reasonably

sure that you're not missing a better contract. So, for example, if you have stops in the opponent's suit, you could perhaps bid 1NT; if you have a biddable suit and points outside the doubled suit, you might even miss game by passing.

There is a bit of a trap there. If you pass, converting the Takeout Double into a Penalty Double, but partner's bid was actually Double Then Bid with lots of points, they probably won't get a chance to bid again and you will miss out on Game or even Slam bonuses. Still, in that situation, the doubled contract should go down by several tricks, and the penalty points soon mount up.

Lesson Summary: Doubler's Rebid

If you have a normal Takeout Double (12-15 HCP) you will typically pass your partner's response UNLESS they jump, as they have shown 0-8 points. If they jump, you should have enough information to choose the final contract.

If you have a strong Takeout Double (more than 15 points), you can raise their suit as a Game Invitation (for them to raise to Game if maximum). Or you might have a strong overcall hand – as described in *Double Then Bid*, next.

Lesson Summary: Double Then Bid

Not all doubles of an opponent's opening suit are Takeout Doubles. Yep, there is a potentially confusing second use of the Double, to tell partner you have a strong overcall, but they only learn that it isn't a Takeout Double with your SECOND bid, when you bid your suit. This is usually called **Double Then Bid**.

We have included this bid here because it looks like a Takeout Double, but it's really a form of suit overcall. Yep, confusing.

So, Double Then Bid. If you have a long suit and want to overcall, but have good points too, you don't want partner to think you have a typical, weak-kneed overcall. So instead of overcalling with your suit, you make TWO bids. You start by doubling, which looks like a Takeout Double, but once partner has bid their suit (fingers crossed) you bid YOUR suit. Partner then realises (fingers still crossed) that it wasn't a Takeout Double after all, surprise! It's a strong overcall. For example:

1H – opponent opens

DOUBLE - your partner doubles for takeout

PASS - opponent passes

2C - you bid your longest suit, as required

PASS - opponent passes

2S – surprise! Your partner did NOT make a Takeout Double; that was **Double Then Bid**

Double Then Bid shows one of three types of hand:

- 16+ HCP and a 6+ card suit
- 18+ HCP and a 5+ card suit
- 19+ HCP and any shape

Balanced But Strong? You've already met the NT version of Double Then Bid, where you are too strong to overcall with 1NT, so double and then rebid NT. What, you've forgotten already? It's on the first page, tsk.

Change of Plan? While your plan is to Double Then Bid your suit or NT, your partner responds to your Takeout Double That Wasn't. That response might be helpful enough for you to change your plan:

- If partner made a weak response (showing 0-8 HCP) your plan is unchanged, as you need more information to decide if game is possible
- If partner made a positive response (showing 9+ HCP) then you are in a Game Forcing situation, as you have at least 25 HCP – you just need to find the right game. Partner will realise that when you rebid your suit, but you might already know enough to bid game or slam, if partner has found a fit or shown a crucial stopper by bidding NT.

Lesson Summary: Responding to Double Then Bid

Once you have revealed your secret, your partner has to forget the very idea that you had a Takeout Double hand and re-evaluate! Your second bid isn't forcing, but partner now knows quite a lot about your hand, and is in a good position to choose the final contract: pass if really weak, make a Game Invitation or bid game in your suit.

If you made a positive response to the Takeout Double (that wasn't) then you are definitely in a Game Forcing situation, as you have 9+ HCP and partner has 16+ HCP – you just need to find the right game.

Lesson Summary: Overcalls Table

Now that we've covered all the overcalls you can make when the opposition opens with one of a suit, it's time for a recap:

Points	Length	Bid
8-15 [1]	5+ cards	1-level overcall
11-15 [1]	5+cards	2-level overcall (not a jump)
5-10	6+ good cards	Jump overcall
6-9	7 cards	Double jump overcall (pre-empt)
6-9	8+cards	Triple jump overcall (pre-empt)
16-18	Balanced with stopper	1NT immediate overcall (2 nd seat)
11-14	Balanced with stopper	1NT overcall after two passes (4 th seat)
12+	0-2 in doubled suit, 3+ in other suits, no 5-card major	Double (Takeout Double)
16+	6+ cards	Double then bid suit (Double Then Bid)
18+	5+ cards	Double then bid suit (Double Then Bid)
19-20	Balanced with stopper	Double then 1NT (no jump)
21-23	Balanced with stopper	Double then 2NT (jump)
24+	Balanced with stopper	Double then 3NT

Notes:

[1] May have up to 17 points with a 5-card suit, as they need a 6-card suit to Double Then Bid

NT Overcalls

North East South West

1♠ 1NT Pass Pass
Pass

	♠ KJ763	
	♥ A962	
	♦ K8	
	♣ Q5	
♠ Q98		♠ A52
♥ J4		♥ KQT8
♦ 7543		♦ QJ96
♣ K862		♣ A3
	♠ T4	
	♥ 753	
	♦ AT2	
	♣ JT974	

Board: 1 Dealer: North Lead: ♠T #H646

North has 13 points and a 5-card Spade suit, so opens 1S.

East has 16 points so wants to bid. They have enough points to overcall with a suit, but don't have a 5-card suit. They have enough points to double for takeout, but only have 2 Clubs, so can't; partner is bound to bid Clubs! They do, however, have a stop in Spades, so can overcall 1S with 1NT.

The 1NT overcall of a suit (not an overcall of 1NT with a suit!) shows 16-18 points and a stop in the overcalled suit.

South has just 5 points and 2 Spades, so can't support partner and must pass.

West has just 6 points, so can see 22-24 points, not enough to raise partner to 2NT (a game invite). They have a partial stop in Spades and no 5-card suit, so they pass.

North could in principle bid 2H to show their shape, but partner has already passed, it's safer to defend against 1NT.

1NT should make quite easily, making 1 or 2 Spade tricks, 3 Heart tricks, 1 Diamond trick and 2 Club tricks.

East South West North

1♥ 1NT Pass 2NT
Pass Pass Pass

	♠ KT4	
	♥ Q5	
	♦ 86542	
	♣ K62	
♠ Q9853		♠ 7
♥ T		♥ A98764
♦ QT93		♦ KJ7
♣ 875		♣ AJT
	♠ AJ62	
	♥ KJ32	
	♦ A	
	♣ Q943	

Board: 2 Dealer: East Lead: ♠5 #H1875

East has 13 points and a 6-card Heart suit, so opens 1H.

South has 15 points so wants to bid. They have enough points to overcall with a suit, but don't have a 5-card suit. They have enough points to double for takeout, but only one Diamond, so can't; partner is bound to bid Diamonds! They do, however, have a stop in Hearts, so can overcall 1H with 1NT - **although one point short!**

The 1NT overcall of a suit (not an overcall of 1NT with a suit!) shows 16-18 points and a stop in the overcalled suit.

West has just 4 points and only one Heart, so can't support partner's bid; they have a 5-card Spade suit, but they're too weak to bid it (2S would promise 10 points). So they pass.

North has 8 points, so can see 24-26 points, not quite enough to raise partner to 3NT (which requires 25 points), so they raise to 2NT (a game invite). This bid asks partner to bid 3NT if they've got the maximum points for their bid: 18 points.

East could in principle rebid 2H to show their 6-card suit, but partner has already passed, it's safer to defend against 2NT.

South doesn't have 18 points, so passes South's invitation to bid 3NT.

2NT is a bit tricky, as you could make 3 or 4 Spade tricks, 2 or 3 Heart tricks, 1 Diamond trick and 1 Club trick depending on finesses and the defence. So 7, 8 or 9 tricks.

South West North East

1♣ 1NT Pass Pass
Pass

	♠ QT76	
	♥ Q87432	
	♦ 72	
	♣ 2	
♠ AJ83		♠ K542

Board: 3 Dealer: South Lead: ♥4 #H2054

South has 14 points and a 5-card Club suit, so opens 1C.

West has 17 points so wants to bid. They have enough points to overcall with a suit, but don't have a 5-card suit. They have enough points to double for takeout, but only have 2 Hearts, so can't; partner is bound to bid Hearts! They do, however, have a stop in Clubs, so can overcall 1C with 1NT.

The 1NT overcall of a suit (not an overcall of 1NT with a suit!) shows 16-18 points and a stop in the overcalled suit.

♥ K5
 ♦ KJ95
 ♣ KQ9
 ♠ 9
 ♥ A96
 ♦ AQ64
 ♣ AT643

♥ JT
 ♦ T83
 ♣ J875

North has just 4 points and 1 Club, so can't support partner and must pass. (They can't bid 2H, as that would promise 10 points.)

East has just 5 points, so can see 21-23 points, not enough to raise partner to 2NT (a game invite). They have a partial stop in Clubs and no 5-card suit, so they pass.

South could rebid 2C, but partner has already passed, it's safer to defend against 1NT.

1NT should be easy, making 2 or 3 Spade tricks, 1 Heart trick, 2 or 3 Diamond tricks and 2 Club tricks

West North East South

1 ♠ 1NT Pass Pass
 Pass

♠ K752
 ♥ KQ
 ♦ K9854
 ♣ KQ
 ♠ QT986
 ♥ AJ
 ♦ AQJ
 ♣ A32
 ♠ 3
 ♥ 98532
 ♦ T6
 ♣ T8764
 ♠ AJ4
 ♥ T764
 ♦ 732
 ♣ J95

Board: 4 Dealer: West Lead: ♠3 #H1728

West has 18 points and a 5-card Spade suit, so opens 1S.

North has 16 points so wants to bid. They have enough points to overcall with their 5-card Diamond suit. They have enough points to double for takeout, but only have 2 Hearts and 2 Spades, so can't; partner is bound to bid Hearts or Spades! They do, however, have a stop in Spades, so can overcall 1S with 1NT.

They choose to overcall with 1NT; minor suit contracts earn less, and 2D would require another trick. (Their length in Spades is also less of a liability in NT.) Which bid did you choose?

The 1NT overcall of a suit (not an overcall of 1NT with a suit!) shows 16-18 points and a stop in the overcalled suit.

East has 0 points and just 1 Spade, so can't support partner and must pass. (They can't bid 2H, as that would promise 10 points.)

South has just 6 points, so can see 22-24 points, not enough to raise partner to 2NT (a game invite). They have another stop in Spades, so NT looks fine. They pass.

West could rebid 2S, but partner has already passed, it's safer to defend against 1NT. They have a good hand, 1NT might well go down.

1NT will indeed be tricky, probably making 2 Spade tricks, 1 or 2 Heart tricks, 1 Diamond trick and 2 Club tricks. (As it happens, most of the points are in West's hand, which makes it easier.)

Doubling

North East South West

1♠ Dbl Pass 2NT
 Pass 3NT Pass Pass
 Pass

♠ KQJT7
 ♥ K862
 ♦ 94
 ♣ A9

♠ A983
 ♥ 743
 ♦ KJ8
 ♣ QJT

♠ 5
 ♥ AQJT
 ♦ AQ52
 ♣ K872

♠ 642
 ♥ 95
 ♦ T763
 ♣ 6543

Board: 5 Dealer: North #146

East has 16 HCP, a single Spade, and no 5-card suit - an ideal hand to double the 1S opening for takeout.

This double **usually** promises 12 HCP, a shortage in the doubled suit, and a tolerance for any of the other three suits; a **Takeout Double**. However, partner can also double if they have a strong overcall (16+ points and a long suit); see the **Discussion** below.

The double is forcing.

West has 11 HCP and no 4-card suit other than Spades, so they can't respond with a suit. With a stop in Spades, they can bid NT. A response of 1NT would show 6-9 HCP, so they respond with 2NT, showing 10-12 HCP, a balanced hand, and a stop in the doubled suit.

East can see they have 26-28 HCP and one stop in the opponents' suit. They're strong enough to raise to 3NT, although the single stop in Spades plus their Singleton is a worry.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

If East has a good hand, they want to tell partner! A simple overcall like 1H 1S only promises 8 points and a 5-card suit, partner will probably pass with a moderate hand. So with 16+ points and a good 6-card suit, or 18+ points and a good 5-card suit, East would **DOUBLE** first, before bidding their suit. This is **Double Then Bid**, used to make a strong overcall.

So if partner doubles the opponent, you always assume it is a **Double For Takeout** and bid your longest suit as requested. When partner passes or raises your suit, you know you were right.

HOWEVER, if partner ignores your suit and bids their own, then it wasn't a takeout double, it was **Double Then Bid i.e.** a strong overcall in their suit. **Double Then Bid** promises 16+ HCP and a good 6-card suit, or 18+ HCP and a good 5-card suit. Now you must respond to that bid and forget about the take out: pass if very weak, bid game if strong enough, and so on.

Yes, it's confusing.

East South West North

1♥ Dbl Pass 2♣
 Pass 2♦ Pass 2NT
 Pass 3NT Pass Pass
 Pass

♠ 863
 ♥ QT72
 ♦ Q6
 ♣ J653

♠ J4
 ♥ 63
 ♦ 98532
 ♣ K872

♠ A972
 ♥ AK984
 ♦ 7
 ♣ T94

♠ KQT5
 ♥ J5
 ♦ AKJT4
 ♣ AQ

Board: 6 Dealer: East #2586

South has 21 HCP and a strong 5-card suit. Too strong for a simple overcall of 2D, they want to make a strong overcall by using **Double Then Bid**. They start by doubling 1H, which partner will take as a Takeout Double. (See the **Discussion** below for more on Double Then Bid.)

North responds to partner's (presumed) Takeout Double. They only have 5 HCP but are forced to bid. They have a balanced hand and a stop in the opponents' suit, but they're not quite strong enough to bid 1NT (requires 6-9 HCP). So they bid their longest suit; they have a choice between Clubs and Hearts. Normally they would bid the major, but that's been bid by the opponents, so they bid Clubs.

This 2C response promises very little; at least 3 Clubs and 0-8 HCP!

South ignores partner's response (!) and bids their long suit, 2D because their double was NOT a takeout double, it was Double Then Bid (DTB). DTB shows a strong overcall, either 16+ HCP and a good 6-card suit, or 18+ HCP and a good 5-card suit.

North can't support Diamonds with just 2 trumps, but does have a stop in the opponent's suit and 5 HCP, so bids 2NT, showing 6-9 HCP and a stop; a slight overbid.

South can see at least 27 HCP so raises to 3NT, even though a single

stop in the opponents' suit might not be enough.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

Listen very carefully, I will type this only once.

If you have a strong hand, you want partner to know! A simple overcall like 1H 1S only promises 8 points and a 5-card suit, so partner will often pass with a moderate hand. With 16+ points and a good 6-card suit, or 18+ points and a good 5-card suit, you **DOUBLE** first, then bid your suit. This is **DOUBLE THEN BID**, used to make a strong overcall.

So if partner doubles the opponent, you always assume it is a Double For Takeout and bid your longest suit as requested.

But if partner ignores your suit bid and bids their own, then it wasn't a takeout double, it was **Double Then Bid** i.e. a strong overcall in their suit.

Now you must respond to that bid and forget about the takeout double, it never happened! Typically you will pass if very weak, or bid game in partner suit if strong enough, or bid a game invitation.

Yes, it's confusing.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ 973		
	♥ 2		
	♦ T7642		
	♣ Q962		
♠ Q5		♠ AT64	
♥ AQ64		♥ 973	
♦ AK83		♦ QJ5	
♣ AJ4		♣ 753	
	♠ KJ82		
	♥ KJT85		
	♦ 9		
	♣ KT8		

Board: 7 Dealer: South #2726

West has 20 HCP, a stop in the opponents' suit, and no 5-card suit - an ideal hand to overcall with 1NT, but that only promises 16-18 points. So instead they must use Double Then Bid, to show a strong overcall - in NT. They start by doubling 1H, which partner will take as a Takeout Double. (See the [Discussion](#) for Board 6 for more on Double Then Bid.)

East responds to partner's (presumed) Takeout Double. They have 7 HCP and a balanced hand, but no stop in the opponents' suit, so they can't bid 1NT but must show their longest suit by bidding 1S.

This 1S response promises very little; at least 3 Spades and 0-8 HCP.

West ignores partner's response and bids 1NT, the second part of their Double Then Bid. This shows a stop in the doubled suit and 19-20 HCP. Notice that this is not a response to partner's 1S bid.

East can see at least 26 HCP - more than enough for 3NT.

West North East South

1♥ Dbl Pass 2♠
 Pass 3♠ Pass 4♠
 Pass Pass Pass

♠ AK76
 ♥ QJ
 ♦ AJ4
 ♣ 8732

♠ 5
 ♥ AKT86
 ♦ QT85
 ♣ QJ6

♠ 432
 ♥ 975
 ♦ 9732
 ♣ A54

♠ QJT98
 ♥ 432
 ♦ K6
 ♣ KT9

Board: 8 Dealer: West #913

North has 15 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and no 5-card suit - an ideal hand to double for takeout.

This 1-level double promises 12 HCP, a shortage in the doubled suit, and a tolerance for any of the other three suits; a **Takeout Double**.

This double is forcing.

South has 9 HCP, a balanced hand and a 5-card Spade suit, so they bid their 5-card major. They jump to show their point count.

This jump response promises 9-12 HCP, does not promise a stop in the doubled suit, and promises at least 3 trumps (although usually 4+).

North can see 24-27 HCP and probably 8+ Spades, so raises 2S to 3S to invite game - although their QJ in Hearts could be worthless. South has a good 5-card suit and the promised 9 points, just enough to raise to 4S, although it's marginal - did you make 10 tricks?

North might have jumped straight to 4S as they have a good fit and 3 more points than promised, but QJ of Hearts may be wasted (and is).

North East South West

1♦ Dbl 3♦ 4♥
 Pass Pass Pass

♠ 976
 ♥ K
 ♦ AKQJ6
 ♣ 8743

♠ KT3
 ♥ AT87
 ♦ T7
 ♣ KQ96

♠ AQ85
 ♥ J964
 ♦ 5
 ♣ AJT2

♠ J42
 ♥ Q532
 ♦ 98432
 ♣ 5

Board: 9 Dealer: North #2740

East has 12 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and no 5-card suit, so doubles for takeout.

This 1-level double promises 12 HCP, a shortage in the doubled suit, and a tolerance for any of the other three suits; a **Takeout Double**.

This double is forcing.

West has 12 HCP and a moderate 4-card major, with no stop in Diamonds so they can't bid NT. With 24+ HCP and assumed Heart support, they jump to game over South's 3D raise.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

That 3D bid really messed up the bidding for E-W. Well done South!

West's 4H bid is rather questionable. What if partner has a Double Then Bid hand, with a long suit in Clubs or Spades and no support for Hearts? You just have to hope they overrule your 4H and bid their suit; you've got good support for the other suits too!

I think West should bid 3H, not 4H. Their suit isn't long but they do have points; the fact that they've made a free bid shows that they've got points, so they should bid game.

Tricky!

East South West North

1♦ Dbl Pass 2♥
 Pass 4♥ Pass Pass
 Pass

♠ 8
 ♥ T97643
 ♦ AQ7
 ♣ Q53

♠ T75432
 ♥ J
 ♦ J53
 ♣ T97

♠ KQ6
 ♥ K8
 ♦ KT9842
 ♣ K8

♠ AJ9

Board: 10 Dealer: East #2403

South has 16 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and a 5-card suit. While they could overcall with 2C, there is a much better chance of game if there's a fit in Hearts or Spades, so they double for takeout.

This 1-level double promises 12 HCP, a shortage in the doubled suit, and a tolerance for any of the other three suits; a **Takeout Double**.

This double is forcing.

North has 8 HCP, an unbalanced hand with a weak 6-card Heart suit. They exaggerate their strength slightly (in light of their 6-card suit) by jumping to 2H.

This jump response promises 9-12 HCP, no stop in the doubled suit, and at least 3 trumps (although usually 4+).

South can see 25-28 HCP and probably 8+ Hearts, so bids 4H with

♥ AQ52
♦ 6
♣ AJ642

reasonable confidence.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

South's Singleton Diamond and finessing chances in the other three suits enhance their strength considerably (East opened, so is very likely to hold most of the missing Honours).

North's gamble on overvaluing their hand should pay off!

South West North East

1♠	Dbl	2♠	3♥
4♠	5♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			
	♠ A93		
	♥ 876		
	♦ 4		
	♣ T75432		
♠ Q		♠ T64	
♥ AKJ54		♥ QT932	
♦ A83		♦ KJ95	
♣ KQ86		♣ J	
	♠ KJ8752		
	♥		
	♦ QT762		
	♣ A9		

Board: 11 Dealer: South #2563

West has 19 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and a good 5-major suit. While they could overcall with 2H, that only promises 10-15 points. So instead they use Double Then Bid, to show a strong overcall. They start by doubling 1S, which partner will take as a Takeout Double. (See the Discussion for Board 6 for more on Double Then Bid.)

East responds to partner's (presumed) Takeout Double. They have 7 HCP and a 5-card major, so they bid 3H over the 2S intervention.

A suit response over an intervention promises 6-9 HCP and a 4-card suit. (You're no longer forced to bid after the intervention; this is called a "free bid".)

That was lucky! East has bid West's long, strong suit. West can see 25-28 HCP and 9+ Hearts, so bids 5H over the 4S intervention with reasonable confidence.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

West might be tempted to double 4S for penalties. After all, N-S can only have 15 (or less) HCP! However, their length in Hearts and the Singleton Q in Spades suggest the opponents probably have enough trumps and shortages to make 4S by cross-ruffing.

West North East South

1♦	Dbl	1♠	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ KT5		
	♥ KJ93		
	♦ K3		
	♣ AT42		
♠ A74		♠ J986	
♥ T65		♥ 2	
♦ AQJ854		♦ T762	
♣ 6		♣ K853	
	♠ Q32		
	♥ AQ874		
	♦ 9		
	♣ QJ97		

Board: 12 Dealer: West #2628

North has 14 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and no 5-card suit, so doubles for takeout.

This 1-level double promises 12 HCP, a shortage in the doubled suit, and a tolerance for any of the other three suits; a **Takeout Double**.

This double is forcing.

South has 11 HCP and a 5-card major, so bids a slightly optimistic 4H over the 1S intervention. Partner has only promised 12+ points and 3 Hearts!

North East South West

1 ♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
2 ♣	Pass	Pass	2 ♥
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	4 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ AJ9		
	♥ QJ6		
	♦ 5		
	♣ KQJ862		
♠ K8		♠ 752	
♥ AK974		♥ 8532	
♦ AJ93		♦ KQT4	
♣ A5		♣ T4	
	♠ QT643		
	♥ T		
	♦ 8762		
	♣ 973		

Board: 13 Dealer: North #2823

West has 19 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and a good 5-card suit. Too strong for a simple overcall, they want to make a strong overcall by using **Double Then Bid**. They start by doubling 1C, which partner will take as a Takeout Double. (See the [Discussion](#) for Board #6 for more on Double Then Bid.)

North is strong enough to rebid their long Club suit (they are almost certain to make 6 tricks without help from partner) so they bid 2C. This is a natural bid, but also helps make it harder for the opponents to find a fit.

North's 2C bid has taken out the Takeout Double, so East is no longer forced to bid. With just 5 HCP they pass rather than bid 2D or 2H. (A bid in this situation, when you're not forced to bid, is called a "free" bid and promises 6-9 points and a 4-card suit.)

West is happy enough that East didn't respond, as they weren't doubling for takeout, but to show a strong overcall. They continue by bidding their long suit as planned: 2H.

Phew. This bid by the doubler of their own suit indicates they had doubled to show a strong hand (Double Then Bid) and promises 16+ HCP and a 6-card suit, or 18+ HCP and a 5-card suit, or 19+ HCP with any shape. West's hand is in the third category.

East can now see at least a 4-4 fit in Hearts and 16+5 HCP; they can even add a Shortage Point for their Doubleton, making 22 points. Partner knows they have less than 6 HCP, so their 5+1 points is worth a 3H bid, a Game Invitation.

West has 19 HCP and can rely on partner to have 4-5 HCP from their bid, making 23-24. With a good fit in Hearts, 4H seems a good bet.

East South West North

1NT	Dbl	2 ♥	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			
	♠ QJ9542		
	♥ J942		
	♦ 4		
	♣ 64		
♠ T76		♠ K3	
♥ AQT83		♥ K76	
♦ 8		♦ A753	
♣ JT97		♣ K532	
	♠ A8		
	♥ 5		
	♦ KQJT962		
	♣ AQ8		

Board: 14 Dealer: East #488

South has 16 HCP, so doubles 1NT for penalties. A double of 1NT shows 16+ points.

West has a 5-card suit, so they bid 2H; this removes the double and is a much safer contract than 1NT doubled. It's a RESCUE bid, promising 0-10 points (!) and a 5-card suit.

North has just 4 points but a decent 6-card Spade suit, and shortages in Clubs and Diamonds, so decides to bid 2S. Their partner has at least 16 points, so this looks like a sensible contract, probably better than defending against 2H.

North's bid actually promises a 5-card suit and 5+ points; the extra trump makes up for the missing point!

East is happy to pass, as 3H could be very expensive if partner has minimal points! You should not treat a rescue bid as encouraging.

South doesn't like North's suit; playing in 2S with a 5+2 fit could be uncomfortable, so they bid their own solid 6-card suit, 3D. Partner probably has some Diamonds, for a better fit.

South can only see 21 HCP, so game in Diamonds is very unlikely. North can see only see 20-22 HCP and hasn't found a fit with partner, so they pass.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

If I were South I might bid 5D rather than 3D, especially if non-vulnerable. North has shown 5+ HCP (liar) and a useful Spade suit - and most of the remaining points are in East's hand, increasing the probability of the finesses in Spades and Clubs working. (Although with good defence, 5D goes down one.)

Then again, if I were North I'd bid 3S over 3D to show I have six; 4S makes quite easily!

South West North East

1♥	Dbl	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ 863		
	♥ T63		
	♦ 94		
	♣ AT954		
♠ AQT5		♠ KJ97	
♥ 9		♥ A752	
♦ KQJ72		♦ 63	
♣ Q82		♣ K76	
	♠ 42		
	♥ KQJ84		
	♦ AT85		
	♣ J3		

Board: 15 Dealer: South #2725

West has 14 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and no 5-card suit, so doubles for takeout.

This 1-level double promises 12 HCP, a shortage in the doubled suit, and a tolerance for any of the other three suits; a **Takeout Double**. Or it could be a strong hand with a long suit – see the [Discussion](#) for Board #6.

This double is forcing.

North has just 4 HCP and a decent 6-card major. They're not forced to bid as West has intervened, so their "free" bid of 2S promises 6-9 HCP and a 4-card suit – exaggerating their points because they have a 6-card major. Hmm.

West North East South

Pass	1♣	Dbl	Pass
1♥	2♣	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ QJ6		
	♥ 5		
	♦ AQ4		
	♣ KQ9763		
♠ 85		♠ AK42	
♥ J873		♥ AKT94	
♦ 63		♦ K97	
♣ AT842		♣ J	
	♠ T973		
	♥ Q62		
	♦ JT852		
	♣ 5		

Board: 16 Dealer: West #2733

East has 18 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and a good 5-card suit. Too strong for a simple overcall, they want to make a strong overcall by using **Double Then Bid**. They start by doubling 1C, which partner will take as a Takeout Double. (See the [Discussion](#) for Board #6 for more on Double Then Bid.)

West responds to partner's (presumed) Takeout Double. They have just 5 HCP and a poor 4-card major. They're forced to bid by partner's double. They can't bid 1NT despite their stop in Clubs, as they don't have 6 HCP, so they bid their 4-card suit, 2H.

This minimum level suit bid promises very little; a 3-card suit (usually 4+) and 0-8 HCP.

East has a great fit with West's Hearts – it's the suit they were going to bid! They can see at least 8 Hearts and 18-26 HCP. With so much uncertainty on the point count, they can't bid game straight away, so bid 3H as a game invitation.

This jump raise of Hearts shows a strong hand (4 card support and 16+ HCP); as opener has intervened a raise to 2H would be taken as weak (competitive only).

West has 5 HCP plus 2 points for their doubletons, making at least 23 points. More importantly, they're significantly stronger than the minimum and partner has bid strongly, so they bid a slightly optimistic game, 4H.

North East South West

Pass 1♠ Dbl Pass
 1NT Pass Pass Pass

♠ AJ72
 ♥ 83
 ♦ QT94
 ♣ 853

♠ Q5 ♠ KT986
 ♥ KT762 ♥ J5
 ♦ 53 ♦ K872
 ♣ 7642 ♣ AK

♠ 43
 ♥ AQ94
 ♦ AJ6
 ♣ QJT9

Board: 17 Dealer: North #2734

South has 14 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and no 5-card suit - an ideal hand to double for takeout.

This 1-level double promises 12 HCP, a shortage in the doubled suit, and a tolerance for any of the other three suits; a **Takeout Double**. Or it could be a strong hand with a long suit - see the [Discussion](#) for Board #6.

This double is forcing.

North has 7 HCP, a balanced hand with a 4-card Diamond suit and a stop in Spades - so they bid 1NT. 1NT is a better bid than a 4-card minor.

This 1NT response promises 6-9 HCP, a stop in the doubled suit, and no unbid 4-card major.

South can see 20-23 HCP and knows North has at most 3 Hearts, so can only pass; no chance of a fit in Hearts.

East South West North

Pass 1♦ Dbl Pass
 1♠ Pass 1NT Pass
 2♣ Pass Pass Pass

♠ J84
 ♥ Q72
 ♦ 986
 ♣ JT96

♠ K5 ♠ 9763
 ♥ AK84 ♥ T53
 ♦ AQ74 ♦ 5
 ♣ K73 ♣ Q8542

♠ AQT2
 ♥ J96
 ♦ KJT32
 ♣ A

Board: 18 Dealer: East #2812

West has 19 HCP, a balanced hand, and two stops in the opponents' suit. They're a bit too strong to just overcall with 1NT (which shows 16-18 points), they want to make a strong overcall by using **Double Then Bid**. They start by doubling 1D, which partner will take as a Takeout Double. (See the [Discussion](#) for Board #6 for more on Double Then Bid.)

This double is forcing.

East responds to partner's (presumed) Takeout Double. They have just 2 HCP, a poor 5-card minor and a poor 4-card major, but they're forced to bid by partner's double. They bid their horrible 4-card major, 1S, a majors are preferred to minors and is more economical of bidding space than 2C.

This minimum level suit bid promises very little; a 3-card suit (usually 4+) and 0-8 HCP.

West ignores partner's response (!) and rebids 1NT as planned, to show their 19-20 point count.

East bids their second suit, 2C, as a weakness takeout (with no liking for NT and less than 6 HCP). No, it isn't Stayman, as they have already bid Spades!

West passes as there's no chance of game with less than 25 HCP.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

I think East should pass rather than bid 2C; West has promised at least one stop in Diamonds, and it's much better to have the weak hand as Dummy.

Even if East bids 2C, West should bid 2NT. This will make the weaker hand Dummy, encourage a Diamond lead for a free finesse, and NT contracts score better. If they make!

What do you think?

South West North East

1 ♣ Pass Pass Dbl
 Pass 1 ♠ Pass 2 ♥
 Pass 3 ♥ Pass 4 ♥
 Pass Pass Pass

♠ T953
 ♥ 962
 ♦ 872
 ♣ 532

♠ J742
 ♥ KT5
 ♦ A64
 ♣ 874

♠ AKQ
 ♥ AQJ83
 ♦ T93
 ♣ QT

♠ 86
 ♥ 74
 ♦ KQJ5
 ♣ AKJ96

Board: 19 Dealer: South H1328

East has 18 HCP and a good 5-card Heart suit. Too strong for a simple overcall, they want to make a strong overcall by using **Double Then Bid**. They start by doubling 1C, which partner will take as a Takeout Double. (See the [Discussion](#) on Board #6 for more on Double Then Bid.)

West responds to partner's (presumed) Takeout Double. They have a balanced hand and 8 HCP, strong enough to bid 1NT (which promises 6-9 HCP) but they haven't got a stop in the doubled suit, so instead they bid their longest suit, 1S.

This 1S response promises very little; at least 3 Spades and 0-8 HCP!

East ignores partner's response (!) and bids their long suit, 2H because their double was NOT a takeout double, it was Double Then Bid (DTB). DTB shows a strong overcall, either 16+ HCP and a good 6-card suit, or 18+ HCP and a good 5-card suit.

West can now see at least a 5-3 fit in Hearts and 16+8 HCP, making 24+ points. So they probably have enough points for game, but in Hearts or in NT? They don't have four Hearts, but KTx is good support and there's a 5:3 fit, so they decide to invite game in Hearts rather than NT.

This 3H Game Invitation promises support for Hearts and around 6 HCP; it asks partner to bid game with more than the minimum 16 HCP.

East has 18 HCP, so is happy to bid game, 4H.

West North East South

1 ♠ Dbl Pass 2 ♥
 Pass 3 ♦ Pass 5 ♦
 Pass Pass Pass

♠ AKJ5
 ♥ A
 ♦ AQJ96
 ♣ Q76

♠ QT8742 ♠ 3
 ♥ QT6 ♥ KJ92
 ♦ 5 ♦ T3
 ♣ AK2 ♣ JT9843

♠ 96
 ♥ 87543
 ♦ K8742
 ♣ 5

Board: 20 Dealer: West H2724

North has 21 HCP, and a good 5-card Diamond suit. Too strong for a simple overcall, they want to make a strong overcall by using **Double Then Bid**. They start by doubling 1S, which partner will take as a Takeout Double. (See the [Discussion](#) on Board #6 for more on Double Then Bid.)

South responds to partner's (presumed) Takeout Double. They have just 3 HCP and two 5-card suits. Partner's double forces them to bid their longest suit, but which one? Even though the Diamond suit is better (with an Honour) a major contract is always better than a minor contract – so they bid 2H.

North ignores partner's response (!) and bids their long suit, 3D because their double was NOT a takeout double, it was Double Then Bid (DTB). DTB shows a strong overcall, either 16+ HCP and a good 6-card suit, or 18+ HCP and a good 5-card suit.

So South can see a minimum of 16+3 HCP i.e. 19+. The better news is that they have at least a 5-5 fit with partner's Diamonds, as well as a singleton and a doubleton – so they can add 3 Shortage Points to that rather unimpressive HCP total, making 22+.

So... is that enough for South to bid 5D, bearing in mind you usually need 27+ points for a minor game? South thought so and bid it.

Did you?

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

If you look at the hands, you can see that Declarer can make 5D easily. Indeed, they can make 6D by drawing trumps and cross-ruffing the losing Hearts, Spades, and Clubs – just losing one Club trick by throwing one away on the fifth Heart. Indeed, if you take the Spade finesse (which is likely to succeed, West ought to have an Honour in their suit), you make 7D.

So is South's 5D bid a good bid? **Not really**. North is a lot stronger than promised by their bids AND they got lucky. North could have a much weaker hand like this:

♠ QJ
 ♥ AT6
 ♦ AQJT96
 ♣ Q6

Now North has 16 HCP, a shortage in Spades, and a 6-card Diamond suit as promised – but they would lose two Spades, two Hearts and two Clubs!

So I'd say South's 5D bid was quite bad, they should have bid 4D – and even that is fairly optimistic! Of course North would raise to 5D in a heartbeat with 21 HCP, but there is no way that South could know they were that strong.

Summary

Subjects:

- NTO = No Trump Overcall (bid a NT contract over opponent's suit)
- DTO = Double for Take Out (used to make partner choose a suit)
- DTB = Double Then Bid (used to make a strong overcall)

Board	Dealer	Declarer	Bidding	Subject	Hand #	Declarer / Defender
1	N	E	1S, 1NT	NTO	646	Dec
2	E	S	1H, 1NT, 2NT	NTO	1875	Dec
3	S	W	1C, 1NT	NTO	2054	Dec
4	W	N	1S, 1NT	NTO	1728	Dec
5	N	W	1S, X, 2NT, 3NT	DTO	146	Dec
6	E	N	1H, X, 2C, 2D, 3NT	DTB	2586	Dec
7	S	W	1H, X, 1S, 1NT, 3NT	DTB	2726	Dec
8	W	S	1H, X, 2S, 3S, 4S	DTO	913	Dec
9	N	W	1D, X, 3D, 4H	DTB	2740	Dec
10	E	N	1D, X, 2H, 4H	DTO	2403	Dec
11	S	E	1S, X, 2S, 3H, 4S, 5H	DTB	2563	Dec
12	W	S	1D, X, 1S, 4H	DTO	2628	Dec
13	N	W	1C, X, 2C, 2H, 3H, 4H	DTB	2823	Dec
14	E	S	1NT, X, 2H, 2S, 3D	DTB	488	Dec
15	S	E	1H, X, 2S, 3S, 4S	DTO	2725	Dec
16	W	W	1C, X, 1H, 2C, 3H, 4H	DTB	2733	Dec
17	N	N	1S, X, 1NT	DTO	2734	Dec
18	E	E	1D, X, 1S, 1NT, 2C	DTB	2812	Dec
19	S	E	1C, X, 1S, 2H, 3H, 4H	DTB	1328	Dec
20	W	N	1S, X, 2H, 3D, 5D	DTB	2724	Dec