

## 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' (sometimes referred to as a 'Sputnik Double' – it was invented in 1957!). This has far more frequency and is much more effective.

(Note – there are a number of styles in the use of Negative Doubles. The style presented below is the easiest practical approach, but not necessarily the best approach – this can be more complicated. **The emphasis is on showing the unbid major.** This is very much a bid where it important to develop a 'feel' for the situation).

Example (simple)     ♠ 1072  
                             ♥ AJ94  
                             ♦ Q765  
                             ♣ 95

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 (but the emphasis is on the major).

The detailed requirements are:

### Responder's Action

General – in line with normal suit bids, if doubling at the one-level, you require 6+ points; if doubling at the two-level you require 9+ points

1. If the overcall does not prevent you from making the bid that you would normally make – then bid it (with a couple of exceptions – see 4 and 5).  
However, **if you have a choice of bidding spades after 1♣/♦ – 1♥, then bid 1♠ with 5-card, and double with 4-card.**
2. **If the overcall prevents you from making the bid you would otherwise have made, and you have a five+ card major, you can only bid at the two-level with 9+ points (e.g. 1♦ - 1♠(overcall) - 2♥).**
3. **If the overcall prevents you from making the bid you would otherwise have made, then with four of the other major and sufficient points - DOUBLE** (6+ points if you are at the one-level; 9+ points at the two-level). The ideal take-out situation is to have two four-card unbid suits – and partner will bid on this basis. Without the four-card minor you can correct later.
4. With 4-4 in the majors, after a sequence 1♣ - 1♦ (overcall), it is best to double rather than bid 1♥ (which is what you would do without the 1♦ overcall).
5. A 1NT bid (8-9 points) should contain a partial stop in the overcalled suit. With 4-7 points see (8) below.
6. After 1♥ - 1♠ (overcall) – a double must show 4-4 in the minors and 6+ points.
7. If playing a strong 2NT (e.g. Jacoby), this should still apply over the overcall, so with a balanced 10-11 points – double (see 18).

8. Otherwise pass (even with a hand which you may wish to double the overcall for penalties). Partner should double with a shortage in the overcalled suit. If in fact you have minimal stops in the overcalled-suit and say 4-6 points, you can subsequently bid 1NT.
9. **Negative doubles should be played up to and including 2♠ overcall** (above this doubles are for penalty). (More experienced players play possibly up to 4♥)

Examples:

(after 1♦ - 1♠ (overcall))

a)	♠ 54 ♥ K842 ♦ J76 ♣ K652	b)	♠ 54 ♥ AK43 ♦ QJ32 ♣ K62	c)	♠ 54 ♥ K5432 ♦ 632 ♣ KQ5	d)	♠ 54 ♥ AK432 ♦ A83 ♣ 652	e)	♠ 8754 ♥ AK63 ♦ Q32 ♣ 52
----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------

- a) Double – you would have bid 1♥ without the overcall, and have been prevented from doing so with the overcall. You're still at the one-level so with 7 points – double.
- b) Double – as (a) but a much stronger hand. You can show your extra strength on your next bid.
- c) Double – you cannot bid 2♥ (this would require 9+ points), but you would have bid 1♥ without the overcall – and sufficient points to double.
- d) 2♥ - five card suit and more points than (c). You have the necessary 9+ for the bid at the two-level.
- e) Double – showing the four-card heart suit. If partner bids 2♣ you can convert to 2♥.

(after 1♥ - 1♠ (overcall))

f)	♠ K983 ♥ K7 ♦ Q652 ♣ 732	g)	♠ 986 ♥ K7 ♦ Q632 ♣ K732	h)	♠ KJ32 ♥ K7 ♦ Q652 ♣ Q73	i)	♠ AQ1074 ♥ 76 ♦ 632 ♣ Q43	j)	♠ 96 ♥ A987 ♦ AK64 ♣ A76
----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------	----	------------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------

- f) 1NT
- g) Double – 4-4 in the minors.
- h) Double. You can't bid 2NT directly (this would be Jacoby). So double first, and bid 2NT on your next bid.
- i) Pass. If partner doubles (see below) you can then pass.
- j) 2NT - Jacoby

### Opener's Rebids

(after partner's pass)

10. **With 14+ you should bid. With a shortage in the overcalled suit then double** – (partner may have passed with a hand wanting to make a penalty double. He will then readily pass your double). Otherwise make your 'natural bid', bearing in mind that partner could have very little.

Examples: (after 1♥ - 2♣ (overcall) – pass)

k)	♠ A87 ♥ AKJ63 ♦ 63 ♣ K87	l)	♠ A87 ♥ AKJ63 ♦ K87 ♣ 63	m)	♠ A87 ♥ AJ963 ♦ 63 ♣ K87
----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------

- k) 2♥ - just about worth the bid. Partner is unlikely to have a hand wanting to double 2♣, nor will he have many points, but you need to be competitive.
- l) Double – there is a possibility that partner has clubs. If not, he can correct (2♦ or 2♥), which would then be passed.
- m) Pass – partner is unlikely to have a hand wanting to penalise 2♣, so has very few points, and you're too weak to compete.

(after partner's double) – bid as if he had responded in the unbid major:

11. **With 4+ of the unbid major give support in this major** (jump support on 15+ points). Sometimes you may have to support with a good three card suit – but partner will expect four.

12. With less than 4 of the unbid major and 4+ of the unbid minor give support in this minor.

Examples: (after 1♦ - 1♠ (overcall) – double)

n)	♠ 543 ♥ AQ42 ♦ AKJ76 ♣ 10	o)	♠ K843 ♥ 43 ♦ AQ1092 ♣ K6	p)	♠ KQ54 ♥ 54 ♦ AQ832 ♣ AJ	q)	♠ 54 ♥ 85 ♦ AQ832 ♣ AK76
----	------------------------------------	----	------------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------

- n) 3♥ - partner has shown hearts with his double. With the singleton and the fit you are just worth a jump bid (the equivalent of 16 points).
- o) 2♦ - if partner had bid 1♥ (without the overcall), you would have bid your spades. But this is the overcalled suit. You are not strong enough for 1NT, so settle for 2♦
- p) 1NT – similar to (o) but stronger.
- q) 2♣ - partner possibly has four clubs. If not, he should correct to 2♦.

### Responder's Rebids

(after original pass and opener has doubled) – you must bid unless you have length/strength in the overcalled suit.

- 13. With the overcall suit and sufficient length, leave the double in for penalties (i.e. the hand that would have doubled for penalty in the traditional approach).
- 14. With an 8 count and a 6-card minor (i.e. not enough points to originally double or bid at the 2-level), jump to 3-minor.
- 15. Otherwise bid any 5-card suit – partner will then know you are weak and will bid accordingly.
- 16. As a last resort with a poor hand you may have to bid a 4-card suit or bid 1NT (partner will know you probably don't have a stop in the overcalled suit – you didn't bid 1NT on your first bid).

(after original double and support suit bid by opener)

- 17. If your original double contained a five-card major and partner has given preference to your supposed minor – you can bid the major if no viable alternative.
- 18. Bid as natural, except that with a balanced 10-11 points and a stop in the opponent's suit, bid 2NT (you couldn't bid it originally – it would have been Jacoby).

*AFH*