

DOUBLES (PART – 1)

One of the most fascinating things about bridge is development of newer and newer systems over the years. Particularly in last two decades, the expert bidding has undergone a major upheaval. The Competitive bidding is one of the most important aspect of bridge. The necessity of accuracy in competitive bidding on the tournament scene has given birth to hundreds of gadgets and convention.

The most important attribute of a good bridge player is his ability to handle himself well in the competitive bidding. Competitive bidding distinguishes the consistent winner from others irrespective of the form of scoring. Accurate competitive bidding requires considerable judgement and experience because when everyone at the table is bidding it becomes a real battle.

There are many tools available for competing while bidding. One of the most invaluable tools today is DOUBLE. The important feature of all doubles is that they don't take away any bidding room!! Every bridge player uses the call of double but meaning can be different depending on the situation and also the partnership understanding. The DOUBLE has so many meanings in bridge now-a-days that it would take a lifetime for any one to really understand all of them. The following are some of the doubles, I have come across:

- Take Out Double
- Negative Double
- Support Double (Redouble)
- Belated Takeout Double
- Competitive Double
- Cooperative Double or Optional Double
- Responsive Double
- Penalty Double
- Fisher Double
- Lead Directing Double
- Lightner Double
- Maximal Double
- Maximum Overcall Double
- Parking Lot Double (Redouble)
- Snap Dragon Double
- Stripe Tailed Ape Double
- Incredible Double
- Negative Slam Double
- Thrump Double
- Rosenkranz Double (Redouble)
- Double of Artificial Bids
- Double of Game Tries
- Don't Lead my suit Double
- Double of Transfer bids
- D.S.I.P. (Do Something Intelligent Partner) Double
- Double of Strong One NT Opening Bids
- Equal Level Conversion Double

The above list may be exhaustive but not complete. We would discuss some of these (not all) doubles on this page from next month. We will start with Take Out Double next month.

Every partnership should discuss the meaning of double in various situations. It will definitely improve their competitive bidding.

(Contributed by Sudhir Aggarwal)

DOUBLES (PART – 2)

Take Out Double

A Double is called take out double after an opponent has opened the bidding and overcalling side doubles for the purpose of take out. Take out Double (TOD) asks partner to select the unbid suit he prefers the most. Take out double promises either support for all the unbid suits (minimum three cards) or a balanced or single suiter hand too strong for initial overcall. Also it promises some amount of defensive strength. Many times you have to choose between overcalling a suit or take out double. This requires considerable judgement. Therefore, take out doubles if used with caution and good partnership understanding can give excellent results against opponents opening bids.

Requirements for Take Out Double

There are two main requirements for TOD : Strength and Distribution.

Distribution: The ideal distribution for TOD is 5-4-4-0 or 4-4-4-1 with the shortness in the opener's suit. Also if you double one major, you should usually have four card support for the other major. As always you can't be dealt with such perfect hands. If your partner insists on such requirements, you will rarely be able to use this valuable competitive weapon. However as your support for unbid suits decreases, the compensating assets in your hand must increase.

Strength: The strength requirement for a take out depends on two factors : one is the level at which you are forcing your partner to bid and second is your distribution. Minimum requirement is 11 HCP if partner can respond at one level. When you double 1S or higher bid, partner has to respond at the two level, you should have slightly more strength. As the level increases, additional values are required. Accordingly TOD can be divided into two categories: Low Power TOD and High Power TOD.

In low power TOD, doubler announces that he has values of an opening bid and support for all the unbid suits. Once the double is made all the further decisions are left to the doubler's partner. The doubler should rarely bid again unless forced by the partner. In High power TOD, doubler should have atleast 17+ HCP with support for all unbid suits or a good suit of his own which he will bid after partner's response. The doubler may have hand too strong for initial notrump overcall (i.e. 19-21 HCP) or literally a game in hand. Depending upon type of the hand he holds, the doubler will choose his rebid.

Responding to Take Out Double

Responding to take out double is not very complicated. The responder's hand can be divided into three categories: simple response, constructive/invitational response or forcing response. The following is the simple structure:

- A new suit non-jump response shows 0-8 HCP and the suit responder prefers. With no convenient bid responder sometimes may be forced to make this bid with only 3-cards.
- 1NT response shows 7-10 HCP and stopper in opponent's suit. Jump to 2NT shows 10-12 HCP where as 3NT is to play.
- Jump in new suit shows invitational hand 9-12 HCP and a strong preference for this suit.
- Cue bid shows a GF hand. (I have seen people using the cue bid without much high card values when having both 4-card majors and then passing the partner's bid. I don't recommend this kind of strategies at all). Cue is the strongest response available to take out doubler's partner. Cue bid promises the values for an opening bid. Once you make a cue bid, you can't pass minimum responses by take out doubler. Generally cue bid should be used when other calls can't describe the hand.
- A jump cue bid shows a GF hand but denies stopper in opponent's suit and asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper.

In case RHO intervenes after partner has made a TOD, most of the responses remain same. Except double of a new suit bid by RHO is for penalties. This means you were about to bid the suit RHO has bid. In case RHO raises the partner's suit, double should be played as responsive double. Responsive double is like a take out double by responder, shows sufficient values and asks his partner to pick the suit. The same principle applies in case RHO jump raises his partner's (opener's) suit.

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Doubles Part - 2 (contd..)

The scheme of responses just described is the most popular treatment of responding to take out double. With the popularity of transfers increasing day by day (I have seen now many partnerships in India are also using transfers particularly in competition) I would highly recommend transfers after your partner makes a take out double of an opening bid of 1C/D/H/S and RHO passes.

This convention uses cue-bids and single jump responses by the doubler's partner as transfer bids. This convention makes it easier for a player who has a hand worth a game invitation or a game force to respond to partner's take out double. This convention is used only after One Level take out double. The complete structure of responses and rebids is as follows:

Responses after Partner's Take Out Double

- After partner's take out double, responder's non-jump bid in any suit is natural. This bid shows no interest in game and is generally limited to 8HCP. The one notrump response is also natural and shows 7-9/10 HCP and a stopper in opener's suit.
- The non-jump cue bid of opener's suit and a single jump in a new suit (except the jump in suit below opener's suit) is a transfer to the next higher unbid suit. This shows atleast game invitational hand.
- The jump in suit below opener's suit is an artificial bid (transfer cue bid). It denies a four-card major suit, denies a good minor suit worth bidding and requests doubler to bid notrump with a stopper in opener's suit. (This bid is like the jump cue bid of simple structure).
- A jump cue-bid by the responder is also artificial and shows one of the two hands: either a hand worth a preempt in the suit just above the opener's suit or a hand worth a slam try in one of the other unbid suits.

Take out doubler's rebid

- After a transfer bid, doubler makes the minimum bid in responder's suit if he wants to decline game invitation. After doubler's sign-off, responder's raise of the suit shown is forcing to game where as bid of a new suit is forcing for one round.
- After a transfer bid, doubler's bid of a new suit, no trump rebid or jump in responder's suit are all forcing to game. New suit bid shows single suiter hands stronger than simple overcall. Jump to game denies slam interest.
- Cue bid of opener's suit by doubler, after transfer, shows either a hand worth a slam try or a hand in which he is interested in notrump game but has only a partial stopper in opener's suit.

The structure after take out double of 1C/H opening is:

<p>(1C) – Dbl – (Pass) – ? 1D/H/S = natural, 0-8 hcp 1N = Natural, 7-9 HCP 2C/D/H = transfer to D/H/S, 9-11 HCP 2S = Denies 4-card major, GF, asks stopper in C 2N = Natural, 10-12 HCP 3C = weak long diamonds or slammish in H/S 3D = Slammish hand, good suit 3H/S = Weak hand, long suit 3N = To play</p>	<p>(1H) – Dbl – (Pass) – ? 1S/2C/D = natural, 0-8 hcp 1N = Natural, 7-9 HCP 2H/S/3C = transfer to S/C/D, 9-11 HCP 2N = Natural, 10-12 HCP 3D = Denies 4-card major, GF, asks stopper in H 3H = weak long spades or slammish in C/D 3S = Slammish hand, good suit 3N = To play 4C/D = Weak hand, long suit</p>
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Examples

<p>♠ Qx ♥ AJxx ♦ xx ♣ KQxxx</p>	<p>After (1S) – Dbl - (Pass)- you bid 2S as transfer to 3C and then bid 3H. You can show both your suits & HCP.</p>	<p>♠ Axxx ♥ x ♦ AKQTxx ♣ xx</p>	<p>After (1S) – Dbl - (Pass)- you bid 3S as transfer to 4C and then bid 4D to show good suit and slam interest.</p>	<p>♠ Axxxxx ♥ Qx ♦ xxx ♣ xx</p>	<p>After (1H) – Dbl - (Pass)- you bid 3H as puppet to 3S and then pass 3S bid by take out doubler.</p>
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For serious partnerships I would recommend transfer structure. It has many advantages without any loss. Next month we would discuss Negative Double – a close cousin of Take out double.

(Contributed by Sudhir Aggarwal)

DOUBLES (PART – 4)

Support Double and Redouble

When you open the bidding and there is no interference, most of the time you can reach your optimum contract. However interference by the opponents in your auction often create trouble in the efforts of finding optimum contract. At the same time, if you are willing to give up ability to make low-level penalty doubles, the intervention provides an otherwise unavailable call which helps the opening side. The most common example of course is the Negative Double which we discussed last month.

Similar weapon is the Support Double (or redouble) - a device used by some partnerships to allow opener to show support for responder's suit notwithstanding an intervening overcall and to differentiate between good and mediocre support is called support double. The support double does not seek to penalize the overcaller but merely says that opener wishes to raise responder's suit to the two level with a holding of only three trumps. When using support double a direct raise to two of responder's suit promises four card support.

Holding a hand with which opener would like to make a penalty double, he is forced either to bid notrump, or to pass hoping that responder will reopen with a take out double which he can pass for penalties.

Requirements of Support Double

The basic support double applies when you open the bidding and your partner bids a suit at one level. Your opponent (RHO) makes an overcall or a take out double. With support double you can raise partner in two ways. The direct raise promises 4-card support. You can raise to 2-level or 3 or 4 or splinter as your hand demands. If you have 3-card support, you can show by doubling in which case you don't limit the values of your hand. Support redouble also functions the same way. That means if the opponent had made a take out double, opener can redouble to show 3-card support.

It is possible to play support double in every possible auction where responder has shown only 4-card suit in response to opening bid. Also generally support doubles are played only upto two of responder's suit. However it is upto your partnership agreement if you like to play support double through the three level too. Support doubles don't apply to three level unless specifically discussed and agreed.

Is it always necessary to double holding three cards for responder's major? Decide for your partnership as what would you like to do. My answer is definite – NO. With minimum opening bid of 11-12 HCP and three worthless trumps, there is a merit in passing.

Responses and rebids after Support Double

After opener has made a support double or redouble, the responder must make a sensible decision depending upon strength of his hand. He can also explore further and take opener's help in making the decision. The meaning of some of responder's rebids can be as explained below:

- 1NT and 3NT to play and 2NT invitational. Ofcourse generally shows only 4-cards in the suit shown and stoppers in the opponent's suit.
- 2 of opener's minor suit is to play and 3 of opener's minor is invitational. If opener rebids 2NT (after 1NT or 2minor by responder), he shows a 18-19 HCP hand and 3-card support for the responder's suit.
- Two of unbid minor is non-forcing. This shows a good 5-card minor and also denies any interest in playing in the 4-3 fit.
- Jump bid of three of responder's own major suit – invitational hand, opener to make final decision.
- 3S (if responder's major suit was hearts), 4C, 4D and 4H (if responder's major suit was Spades) are splinter bids. These bid show 5+ cards in the major suit, shortness in the bid suit and slam interest.
- Cue bid of opponent's suit, is forcing to game. This bid is generally used to find the best contract. Responder will generally have 4-cards in his major suit and may be exploring for 3NT or can be a slam auction. Opener definitely should show stopper in opponents suit if he has.

There are many more sequences which are required to be discussed for a good partnership understanding. Unfortunately most of us don't discuss any thing more than just asking – whether we are playing support double or not and we leave rest to our judgement at the bridge table.

(Contributed by Sudhir Aggarwal)

DOUBLES (PART – 5)

Responsive Double

The Responsive Double is somewhat similar to Negative Double. The purpose of both the doubles is to compete. Negative Double is used by partner of Opening bidder after opponents intervene where as Responsive Double is used by partner of Takeout doubler that is the intervening side.

Actually responsive double is a take out double after your RHO raises his partner's opening bid after your partner has intervened with a Takeout Double. The purpose of responsive double is to allow partnership to find the best contract when responder doesn't have a reasonable biddable suit.

Requirements of Responsive Double

When your partner makes a Takeout Double and RHO raises, you may be interested in competing. If you have a suit to bid, you can bid it. Sometimes, you have a hand worth bidding but no clear cut choice. Here the responsive double comes into action. The responsive double is made on a hand of average strength of 7+-11 HCP depending upon the level. The responsive double tells takeout doubler that the partnership has enough strength to play in a part score and asks the doubler to choose the best contract.

- The responsive double applies only when RHO raises opener's suit. If RHO bids a new suit, the double should generally be for penalty.
- When the opening bid is in a major suit, the responsive double shows support for both minors. If the opening bid is in a minor, the responsive double shows support for both the majors.
- The responsive double is a limited bid and doesn't create a game forcing auction. Therefore with a game forcing hand, takeout doubler's partner should use appropriate bids like cue bid or NT.
- A responsive double over an opponent's jump raise (preemptive bid), which requires a bid at four level is optional double. If your RHO has jump raised his partner's opening bid in a minor suit to three level, you can also use another convention called BEKKEVOLD covered in July 2004 bulletin.

The responsive double can also be used when your partner overcalls instead of a takeout double and RHO raises his partner's suit. The following are some of the requirements or guidelines:

- The responsive double again applies only when RHO raises opener's suit. If RHO bids a new suit, then the double can be used as a Snap Dragon Double.
- This responsive double generally imply 5-5 or at least 5-4 in the other two suits.
- The responsive double tends to deny support for partner's suit.

.When you have 5-5 in unbid suits you may have a fit but no guarantee. Therefore, be careful.

Competitive Double

The Competitive Double is basically a take out double in competition. It asks partner to select the best suit for the partnership. When the opponents have bid and raised a suit the double is used for further competing by a player who has the necessary values but doesn't know what action to take.

A double of opponents' raised suit is competitive when partner has bid, the doubler has bid on the previous round, but their side neither has bid notrump nor established a fit. The competitive double can be used by the opening side or intervening side and by both partners. e.g.

- 1C-1H-1S-2H-DbI - 1D-1H-1S-2H-P-P-DbI - 1D-1H-1S-2C-2S-P-P-DbI
- 1C-1S-DbI (negative)-2S-P-P-DbI (competitive) - 1C-P-1H-1S-P-2S-DbI

In responding to competitive double, generally the same principles apply as in take out double. Most of the bids are non-forcing or invitational. Cue-bid of the opponents suit is the only forcing bid. The partner of doubler should take into account passing and converting the double into penalty if a fit is not found or he thinks notrump contract is not the right one and he has decent holding in trump suit.

(Contributed by Sudhir Aggarwal)

DOUBLES (PART – 6)

Snapdragon Double

Snapdragon Double is a popular convention but utility and effectiveness is doubtful. Snapdragon double is used by the intervening side and shows the fourth suit and mild support for the partner's suit (generally doubleton). This is how it works:

Your LHO opens 1C and partner overcalls 1D. RHO bids 1S and you hold: S-xxx, H-AKxxx, D-Qx, C-xxx. Playing Snapdragon you double which shows decent 5-cards in the fourth suit (heart) and mild support for partner's Diamond suit. Perfect convention when the hand comes. This clearly tells partner that you have enough values to compete and partner can decide where to play.

One important question here is upto which level you play this convention. I would make a simple guideline – try restricting it to one level or max two level provided partner's suit can be bid at two level if he doesn't have support for your fourth suit. The following are some of the auctions in which you can play this convention:

- 1C-1D-1S-Dbl - 1C-1H-1S-Dbl - 1C-1S-2D-Dbl - 1C-1D-1H-Dbl (here dbl can show 4Sonly)
- 1D-1H-1S-Dbl - 1D-1S-2C-Dbl - 1D-1H-2C-Dbl - 1H-1S-2C-Dbl

Rosencranz Double (Redouble)

Rosencranz Double is a convention used to allow partner of a player who has overcalled to indicate whether his raise of partner's suit is made with a top honour in partner's suit. This information may be vital in defense if the opening side finally buys the contract. This is how it works:

Your LHO opens 1D and partner overcalls 1H. RHO bids 1S and you hold: S-Qxxx, H-Kxx, D-Jx, C-Kxxx or S-Kxxx, H-Jxx, D-Qx, C-Kxxx. Playing Rosencranz double you double with first hand to show a top honour and bid 2H with second hand to show raise without any of the top three honours. Perfect convention when the hand comes. This definitely helps in bidding as well as defense.

If RHO raises his partner's suit, then also you can double to show raise with an honour. In case RHO doubles (negative double), you can use Rosencranz Redouble for the same purpose:

However there is one problem with this convention. You might have already noticed that given auction was similar in both the above conventions - Snapdragon and Rosencranz. This means you can't play both conventions. You have to decide which one you would like to play. My vote clearly goes for Rosencranz. Similarly if you play Rosencranz double after RHO raises opener's suit, you can't play Responsive double (discussed last month). As you can play only one of them, I suggest you play Responsive Double.

Striped Tailed Ape Double

This double is a Creative and Fanciful. The only purpose this double has is to prevent the opponents to bid a Slam (little or grand) which you think they are going to bid and is cold. You double so that opponents misjudge the auction. In case they know what they are doing and redouble to expose your psyche, you show your true colours and run to your long suit.

Let us discuss with an example:

Your partner deals and opens 3H, your RHO bids 4S showing a good hand. You hold nothing but 4-card heart support and a Q and J some where. You think that opponents are cold for slam and may be grand. You can jam the auction as many of us would do by bidding 5H or 6H. However if you are more creative you stage a drama of taking out your sword and double the opponent's contract. If opponents trust you and stay out of their cold slam, you will have a great result and a story to tell for years to come. If it back fires means opponents redouble, you run to 5H which is doubled and goes plenty down where as opponents were not making the slam, your partner needs to have a good sense of humour and short memory to forget this result.

Therefore, if you want to try this creative weapon : you must be sure that opponents are cold for slam and will bid it. Also you have a safe spot to run and as usual your judgement must be perfect.

(Contributed by Sudhir Aggarwal)