

Takeout Doubles & Passes

Defensive Bidding

When one of your opponents has opened the bidding, your side immediately becomes the defensive side. There are only 3 types of defensive bids:

- overcall
- takeout double
- pass

In our previous lesson we discussed overcalls, which require little from you in points (as few as 7 are ok), but you must have a 5 card suit, or longer. When you don't have a 5 card suit, then you must choose from the remaining two choices, either a takeout double or a pass.

The Meaning of Double

The literal meaning of "double" in bridge is to state your opinion that the opponents cannot fulfill their contract. If you are correct, and the offense fails to make the contract, your side will collect double the ordinary penalties. In fact, you will probably collect more than double because scoring rules have evolved in favor of the doubler.

However, if you double their contract and they do in fact fulfill it, then their side will collect double the ordinary trick count. If the trick points they make totals 100 or more, you will have doubled them into game, to their great advantage. Finally, they also will receive an extra 50 points for making a doubled contract.

Knowing when to double for penalties and when not to is a very valuable skill.

Conventional Doubles

Doubling for penalties is a bid made when the opponents have overreached themselves. There are many times when the opponents are bidding when they have not overreached. Defenders can double these ordinary bids, not because they think the other side has overreached, but just to create an additional meaning to each other. In a case like this, the double is not really for penalties. It has an artificial meaning, which we call a conventional meaning. There are probably at least 20 different kinds of conventional doubles played by experts. Today's lesson is about just one conventional double, the takeout double.

The Takeout Double

A first round double is for takeout, not for penalty. When you double the opponent's opening bid, you are asking your partner to pick the trump suit.

KJ84	7	KJ84	KJ84
	opp		you
	1♥		dbl

You can support any suit that partner has, so you want him to choose which suit is best for your side.

This defensive bid may result in your side taking the final contract. If so, you will cease being on defense. But at the time when you make this bid, you are making a defensive bid.

Requirements for Takeout Double

To make a takeout double, your hand must meet several requirements:

- opening strength, 12 or more High Card Points. (shade slightly)
- SHORTNESS in the opponent's suit.
- support for the unbid suits
- emphasize the major suits.

Presume the opponent has opened the bidding with 1 Diamond. Look at these hands that the defender may have.

KQ84 AJ75 6 A1065

Your bid is double. It is a takeout double. You have opening strength, shortness in the opponent's suit, support for the unbid suits, and good holdings in both majors.

KQ8 AJ75 65 A1065

Your bid is double. You wish you had a 4th spade, but the world is not always perfect. You still meet the general requirements for a takeout double, and you want your partner to choose the trump suit.

KQ85 AJ75 654 A7

Your bid is double. You are not as short in diamonds as you wish you were, so your support for clubs is marginal. But with such good holdings in the majors, you definitely want to show partner your hand. If partner does bid clubs, he will likely have at least 5 of them. We say that the takeout double should favor the majors. This hand demonstrates that. Responders need to stay aware.

KQ8 AJ75 654 A106

Your bid is double. We are nearing the limit of when not to double, but we still are in substantial compliance with the requirements for takeout doubles.

KQ8 AJ7 654 A1065

Your bid is double. This is about as far as we can stretch. Our support for the majors is getting marginal because we are not as short in the opponent's suit as we would like to be. Even so, don't you think you would rather double than to pass?

KQ8 A6 654 AJ964

Your bid is 2 clubs. With only two cards in one of the majors, forget about making a takeout double. But when this happens, we often meet the requirement for an overcall.

KQ875 A6 654 AJ9

Your bid is 1 spade. You meet the requirements for an overcall, but not the requirements to takeout double.

KQ875 A654 654 9

Your bid is 1 spade. You meet the requirements to overcall, but not to takeout double.

KQ875 AQ54 Q54 9

Your bid is 1 spade. A takeout double would not be farfetched, but here it is better to overcall your 5 card suit because you may still get a chance to bid hearts at your next bid.

Passing as a defensive bid

The three defensive bids are overcalls, takeout doubles, and passes. It is very common to pass when an opponent opens the bidding, most usually because you lack the values to make a bid. This type of defensive pass needs no lesson.

But sometimes you do have a pretty good hand when the opponent opens the bidding, but you will need this lesson to know that it is right to pass with a good hand.

Newer players are very reluctant to pass with good cards. *But if you don't meet the requirements to overcall, and if you don't meet the requirements to takeout double, then pass is your only choice.*

The opponent opens the auction by bidding 2 diamonds.

K8 AJ75 Q54 A1064

Your bid is pass. Nice hand, but you lack a 5 card suit needed for an overcall, and you lack the right shape to takeout. Pass is all that is left. This doesn't mean that you can't bid in the future. Maybe you will. Or maybe you won't.

8 AJ7 AJ9654 Q54

Your bid is pass. This hand is kind of a sucker hand for new players. The opponent has opened your very best suit. Many new players double. But see how wrong that is. Your partner will certainly start bidding spades, and you will regret your failure to pass.

KQ8 A8 AJ64 Q1082

Your bid is 1NT. This nice hand meets the requirement of a 1NT opening bid, so we can overcall 1NT. Note that we can stop the opener's suit. Stopping opener's suit is a necessary requirement for the 1NT overcall.

Responding to a takeout double

DON'T PASS, DON'T PASS

When partner has made a takeout double, he has asked you to select the trump suit. That is easy to do. You just need to bid your best suit.

DON'T PASS, DON'T PASS

You are not excused from bidding just because you have no points. Remember, if you pass, the opponents are going to make their 1level contract doubled and probably heap up hundreds of points. Take courage and bid.

But how high should you bid?

- 0 to 9 points, bid as cheaply as possible.
- 10 to 12 points, jump bid
- 13 points or better, bid the opener's suit

K875 J75 Q54 10643

If partner has doubled an opening bid of 1 diamond, bid 1 spade.

8752 J75 654 1065

Bid 1 spade. Do not moan and groan. Do not sigh deeply. Do not act up in anyway whatever. With no display of emotion of concern, just make your bid of 1 spade. Be casual and ooze savoir faire. NEVER express a feeling of being in trouble, especially when you really think you are.

KQ84 98 64 Q10982

Bid 1 spade. We always favor the major suits.

KQ84 A8 643 J1098

Jump to 2 spades. With 10 points, show strength AND your suit.