

Newer Players

Reasoning with Robert

Competing over three-level and higher preempts



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When the opponents preempt at the three or four level, they take away an annoying amount of bidding space. You are forced to make your first call at a high level, meaning that you need more shape and/or strength to get into the bidding. You may feel the need to make a bid that is “dangerous” because it seems like passing would be a worse action.

When your RHO opens the bidding at the three level, your options are: a takeout double, a simple overcall, a jump overcall, a cuebid or bidding 3NT.

Takeout doubles

When you make a takeout double, you are forcing partner to bid at the three level (or higher) with potentially zero HCP. Now, you shouldn't expect partner to have 0 HCP. Instead, you assume (hope) that partner will have about 6–7 HCP. If you make that assumption, then you only need a hand that is a little better than you would have for coming in at the two level.

♠A 8 4 3 ♥K Q 7 4 ♦A 10 4 3 ♣4

After a 3♣ opening bid, this 13-count hand has excellent takeout double shape.

When you have a less shapely hand, then you need better values to compensate – especially when vulnerable.

♠K Q 3 ♥A Q 10 3 ♦A 10 7 6 ♣5 4

You can make a takeout double with a good 14+ HCP.

When the opponents open the bidding with 3♠, a takeout double forces partner to bid 3NT or to bid to the four level. Therefore, you need even more playing strength.

♠— ♥A 10 8 4 ♦A Q J 5 4 ♣K 8 7 4

Even though you only have 14 HCP,

you would happily make a takeout double with a void in the opponent's suit and at least four-card card support for all the unbid suits.

Overcalling

To overcall a preempt, you need a good suit and a good hand. The better and longer your suit, the more you can stretch to make a simple overcall.

♠6 ♥A Q J 6 4 3 ♦K 5 3 ♣K 5 3

After a 3♦ preempt, you can make a simple overcall of 3♥ with this hand.

A jump overcall shows both a strong suit and hand – similar to a double and bid auction.

♠A Q J 10 8 4 3 ♥A ♦5 4 ♣A Q 10

After a 3♦ preempt, jump to 4♠. This is a strong auction, “you do not preempt a preempt.”

You may choose to overcall 3NT on some very strong hands.

♠A 4 ♥A Q 10 ♦A K J 10 5 ♣K 5 4

After a 3♥ preemptive opening bid, you could simply overcall 3NT.

How high?

We generally play that a double of 4♣, 4♦ and 4♥ is takeout. The double promises at least three-card support for all the unbid suits and enough values to play at that high level. But sometimes you are dealt a hand with a lot of high-card points but not the right shape for making a takeout double. Sometimes you must make a takeout double and hope that nothing bad happens.

♠A K J 3 ♥A K Q 4 ♦6 5 4 ♣4 3

After a 4♦ preempt, make a takeout double and hope that partner does not bid 5♣.

After a 4♥ opening bid, a double

generally shows an extremely strong hand and is takeout. A 4NT overcall is a strong takeout with both minors:

♠7 ♥A 5 ♦A Q J 5 4 ♣K Q 10 9 5.

After a 4♥ opening bid, bid 4NT with this hand.

When the opponents make a preemptive opening bid of 4♠, a double is not treated as takeout. This double is generally a strong balanced hand, often called “card-showing,” with a lot of defensive values. It is frequently left in for penalty by partner. If you want to force partner to bid, then 4NT is treated as takeout, often used with either a two-suited or three-suited hand. ■

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