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Doubles – All Around the Table

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General Overview of Doubles

Double is probably the most useful call in all of bridge, other than pass. The modern way to think about a double is very different than it was years ago. The modern way to think about doubles is flexible: “I have enough values to take some action, but I’m not sure what other action to take!”

The Basic Types of Doubles

Each of the players can make a basic type of double.

- *Takeout Double (Interferer – The first opponent to enter the auction.)*
 - Values to get into the auction (about 12+ points – depending on level of double and shape of the hand), but still looking for a fit (or the best fit).
 - Compare a takeout double to an overcall that may not promise as many values but suggests a place to play – a primary suit.
- *Negative Double (Responder)*
 - Values to compete in the bidding (6+ points – more values depending on level of double), but still looking for a fit OR a “better fit” – Major suit fit over a minor suit fit.
 - Usually two places to play – Responder has a plan for how to handle the auction.
- *Responsive Double (Advancer – Partner of the Interferer.)*
 - Values to compete in the bidding (6+ points – more values depending on level of double), but still looking for a fit OR a “better fit” – Major suit fit over a minor suit fit.
 - Usually two places to play – Advancer has a plan for how to handle the auction.
 - Most players use Takeout, Negative, and Responsive Doubles through 4♥ interference.
- *Takeout Double or Support Double (Opener)*
 - Takeout Double by Opener
 - Extra Values (not a completely minimum opening bid) with shortness in the opponents’ suit. Opener wants to compete in the bidding, but does not know where. Not usually a highly distributional hand.
 - Support Double* by Opener
 - A conventional bid showing exactly 3-card support for Responder’s Major suit (if we had 4-card support we would raise directly). Helps find a 5-3 fit before the opponents take away our bidding space. Does not promise extra values at a low level.

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Doubles and Fits

Doubles mean different things in different situations. Here are two of the most important situations:

- *When we have not found a fit.*
 - A double is generally a takeout double (asking partner to bid) at low levels. It says, “I want to compete, but I need input from you as to where to play.”
- *When we have found a fit!*
 - After we have found a fit, we have the option of just bidding our suit to compete. Thus, a double becomes less “takeout” and more of a “card-showing” double. Cooperative.
 - Maximal Double when no space for game try.
 - When we have found a fit and the opponents bid our side suit, we do not double for penalty at a low level. Leave them there and hope partner reopens with a double.

General Competitive Bidding Philosophies – Get in to the Auction Early

- *In and Out of the Auction* -- With weak or distributional hands we want to get in to the auction and out of the auction as quickly as possible. Thus, if we bid slowly (i.e. make an overcall and then later reopen with a double) then we must have an extremely strong hand – since we are violating this idea by “going slow”. Even stronger hands are shown by suppressing a long suit and “doubling and bidding”.
- *Protect Partner* - Do not give partner a chance to make a mistake. With a highly distributional hand do not make a low-level double. Also, if you are too short in trump for it to be wise for partner to pass your double (if you know the opponents are protected by the LOTT) then do not make a low-level double.
- *Balancing* - When we are in the passout seat (balancing seat) and our side has not bid yet, then we generally bid three of partner’s points for him (and he subtracts those from his hand if he ends up bidding again). This is true for making a takeout double as well. With shortness in the opponent’s suit and about 10 HCP we strive to compete in the bidding (even with a good 9 HCP with the proper shape and a decent hand for both offense and defense).

High Level Doubles (Forcing Pass)

Another time where doubles are an extremely useful tool is when we need to make “high level” decisions. Specifically, when we have shown good hands (like in a 2/1 GF auction or when we have strongly bid a game) and the opponents are bidding over us. This sounds as if the opponents are sacrificing. In this situation, we are not going to “pass the hand out” – we will either double the opponents or bid one level higher.

Example

1♠ P 2NT* 5♥
___?

In this situation, we have the following options:

- Bid – Vote for Offense.
- Double – Vote for Defense (often 2 losers in opponents’ suit).
- Pass (“Forcing Pass”) – Let partner decide. Can be used for a slam try (“Pass and Pull”)