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Bidding Basics

Taking out doubles to a suit

In the previous months, we discussed the requirements to make a takeout double. Now, we will switch seats and respond to our partner's takeout double. Let's assume it was a direct-seat double. For example, 1♦-Dbl-Pass.

Let me start by pointing out the major mistake new players make in responding to a takeout double. They don't realize the very important difference between the following two auctions:

1	West	Partner	East	You
	Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥

2	West	Partner	East	You
	1♦	Dbl	Pass	1♥

Make sure you understand the night-and-day difference between the 1♥ bids above. In No. 1, your partner opened the bidding. In No. 2, your partner made a takeout double. In both auctions, your 1♥ call shows four or more hearts. That's where the similarities end. The first 1♥ bid shows 6 or more points. The second one shows 0-8! After the first one, the opener must bid again. The 1♥ response is forcing. It is unlimited. The second one is very limited. In fact, the doubler won't bid again (unless he has the big double, 18 or more total points).

When your partner opens 1♦, if you have garbage, you simply pass. You wouldn't respond to partner's opening bid with zero. You would just leave partner in 1♦ unless you had 6 or more points - enough to respond. Not so when partner makes a takeout double. You don't have the luxury of passing with garbage. If you do, the

opponents will be in 1♦ doubled, likely making with overtricks. So, with:

♠8 6 5 ♥9 8 7 4 ♦6 5 2 ♣4 3 2,

you would just pass when partner opened 1♦. But on No. 2, you would have to take out the double to 1♥.

Put another way, when you take out partner's double, you are not only choosing the suit (or notrump), but *also showing your strength*. All of the bids you make in response to the double have a point range, and it starts at zero. The more you have, the more you bid. I have seen Life Masters "jump to 1♥" (that's sarcasm) with 14 points when their partner has made a takeout double. They end up in 1♥ making five and don't realize what they've done wrong.

Here is how you properly take out a takeout double:

With a minimum (0-8 HCP) you simply choose a suit without jumping. Which suit? Your longest suit. If it is a tie, prefer the major. So, after 1♦-Dbl-Pass, every hand below falls into the 0-8 category:

♠K 10 8 7 ♥6 5 ♦J 7 6 ♣10 7 6 2,
take out the double to 1♠;

♠4 3 2 ♥6 5 ♦4 3 2 ♣J 7 6 3 2,
take out the double to 2♣ (don't confuse this with "two over one"; on this auction, you didn't want to go to the two level, but you had no alternative).

♠5 4 3 2 ♥4 3 2 ♦4 3 2 ♣4 3 2,
take out the double to 1♠ (try not to look like you are suffering).

With more than 0-8, you need to let partner know. With 9-12 HCP, you must jump (skip one level). So, after 1♣-Dbl-Pass, every hand below falls into the 9-12 category:

♠K 2 ♥K Q 10 8 ♦Q 7 6 2 ♣4 3 2,

take out the double by jumping to 2♥. Prefer the major to the minor. Make sure to jump, or partner will place you with 0-8.

♠J 8 7 6 4 ♥A K 2 ♦2 ♣J 10 8 3,
take out the double to 2♠. No, you aren't promising a five-card suit.

♠A 2 ♥A 2 ♦Q 10 8 7 6 ♣6 4 3 2,
take out the double by jumping to 2♦ to show your values.

Your jump is not forcing. Partner can (and should) pass with no game interest. In future months, we will examine the doubler's follow-up actions.

Don't get too hung up on what exactly "9" or "12" mean on the endpoints of the range. With a lousy 9, I wouldn't jump. (I'd respond only 2♣ to partner's double of 1♠ if I had:

♠8 4 3 2 ♥Q 2 ♦Q J 2 ♣K J 4 2.)

With a good 12, I'd be afraid to make only a single jump. (I'd want to bid more than 2♠ after 1♦-Dbl with:

♠A 10 8 7 6 ♥J 10 9 8 ♦A J 10 ♣2.)

That hand is 10 HCP, but who is to say what is 12 total points anyway? I like the five-card suit. I like the J-10-9-8 in hearts. I like the ♦10 with the ♦A J. I like the singleton. This is probably more than 12 "total points" depending on how you count (there is no exact right way). I would bid more than 2♠ - maybe 3♠, maybe even four!

With more than 9-12, you have to do even more than jump. With 13 or more opposite your partner's opening bid, you want to be in game. So, either bid game or cuebid.

After 1♦-Dbl-Pass, every hand below falls into the 13 or more category:

♠A Q 10 8 7 ♥K 10 2 ♦J 8 7 ♣A 2,

Newer Players

jump to game (4♠) – anything less and you will likely find yourself in a partscore, making lots of overtricks; ♠A 2 ♥K Q J 9 8 7 ♦8 7 6 2 ♣2, jump to game (4♥). With this great six-card suit and a singleton, this hand surely evaluates to 13 or more total points. Imagine inviting and partner passes with something normal like:

♠K 8 7 6 ♥A 5 4 2 ♦J 5 ♣A J 4.

Laydown for 11 tricks; you are the one who needs to get the partnership to game.

♠K 8 7 6 ♥A J 7 6 ♦A 2 ♣Q 10 2

Cuebid 2♦. You could guess which game to bid, but imagine that jumping to 4♥ would be silly opposite a perfectly normal takeout double like:

♠Q J 10 5 ♥8 5 4 ♦K 3 ♣A K J 5.

This cuebid in response to partner's double isn't something all new players will know – so be careful if you make such a bid with your partner. We will explore more on this down the road.

Next month, I will present a chart. I hate charts. Nobody wants to study and memorize them. Instead, I will use words to describe what is in that chart. Perhaps the logic behind the chart will help you to understand it when you see it next month.

What about taking out the double to notrump? We will cover that next month and then present the dreaded “chart.”

Quiz

What is your call after 1♥–Dbl–Pass with:

① ♠4 3 ♥8 7 6 2 ♦10 7 6 5 ♣J 4 3

② ♠K 6 ♥A 3 2 ♦K 10 6 5 4 ♣10 9 7

③ ♠A Q 8 7 6 ♥A K 4 2 ♦4 3 ♣3 2

What is your call after 1♣–Dbl–Pass with:

④ ♠K 6 5 4 ♥3 2 ♦K 10 8 7 ♣6 5 4

⑤ ♠A 2 ♥A 10 8 7 ♦K 10 5 4 ♣8 3 2

⑥ ♠Q 7 6 5 ♥A Q 6 5 ♦A ♣Q 10 8 2

What is your call after 1♠–Dbl–Pass with:

⑦ ♠Q 8 7 6 ♥4 3 ♦3 2 ♣8 7 6 5 4

⑧ ♠A 4 3 2 ♥K Q J 8 ♦J 10 5 ♣3 2

Answers

① 2♦. Choose your longest suit. You are showing 0–8, so you are within range. Don't pass in fright.

② 3♦. Make sure to jump to show more than 0–8. This bid is not forcing; partner can (and often will) pass.

③ 4♠. Be sure to reach game (a cuebid is also a possible call).

④ 1♠. Prefer to show the major.

⑤ 2♥. Too much for only 1♥.

⑥ 2♣. Cuebid (partner has to bid again) and try to explore for the correct game.

⑦ 2♣. We will discuss taking out the double to notrump next month (Spoiler: this hand isn't strong enough).

⑧ 3♥. Make sure to bid more than 2♥ which would be only 0–8. This jump is 9–12, invitational and doesn't promise five cards in hearts. 🙄