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Bidding Basics

Free bids

In the previous months we discussed how to take out partner's takeout double. In all cases, the player on our right passed. In other words, it went:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1x	Dbl	Pass	?

We discussed the "chart" and that we "had to" take out the double even with zero points. But that all changes if our RHO does something other than pass. We are "off the hook." Consider the difference between these two auctions:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♥	Dbl	Pass	?

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♥	Dbl	2♥	?

What if our hand is:

♠7 6 5 4 ♥4 3 2 ♦4 3 2 ♣7 5 2?

In the first auction, we can't pass; if we did, the contract would be 1♥ doubled, making with overtricks. So, we'd take out the double to 1♠ (0-8 HCP). But, on the second auction, *we don't have to bid*. They are in 2♥ (not doubled). We can comfortably pass.

What if we do volunteer a bid after partner doubles and RHO acts? We surely wouldn't bid with zero, nor 1 or 2 HCP. Not even 3 or 4 (unless we had exceptional shape). So, we define a "free bid" (meaning we bid freely, because we could have passed) as 5-8 HCP. We still jump with 9 or more. So, here is the schedule of meanings with examples if RHO makes a call other than Pass:

• **Pass** = Says nothing – could be zero points – just a hand that has nothing to say

• **Suit Bid** (non-jump) = Natural (four or more cards) 5-8 total points

• **Jump-bid** = As defined in previous months

• **Notrump** = As defined in previous months – with their suit(s) stopped

So, after 1♦-Dbl-1♠, pass with:

♠J 5 4 2 ♥Q 7 6 5 ♦4 3 2 ♣9 2.

Bid 2♥ (a free bid, but not a jump) with:

♠9 7 ♥A Q J 5 ♦10 7 4 3 2 ♣8 3.

Jump to 3♥ (showing 9-12) with:

♠9 5 4 ♥A Q J 9 8 ♦J 3 ♣K 3 2.

Bid 1NT (6-10, stoppers) with:

♠K 2 ♥7 6 5 ♦A J 9 8 ♣7 6 5 2.

So, really, the main new thing to learn here is that after RHO's bid, we can pass with nothing, so bidding promises at least 5 points. We also have another call available to us – namely a double.

After 1♥-Dbl-2♥, what would it mean if we doubled? It isn't likely we'd have a lot of hearts and want to double for penalties, so a double just shows some points but nothing clear to bid (it is technically called a "responsive double"). For example, after 1♥-Dbl-2♥, we could double with:

♠K 3 2 ♥3 2 ♦A 7 6 5 ♣J 8 7 6,

to say, "Partner, I've got some values and want to compete for the contract, but you choose the suit." A responsive double shows about 7 or more points; the higher the level, the more that is

required.

What if our RHO's call isn't a raise? For example, 1♥-Dbl-1♠? Now, what does a double mean? I confess – I'd rather not go there. Some partnerships still play it as responsive ("partner – do something"), but others play it as penalty for spades. What should you do? I suggest not making such a call unless you have a regular partnership and have agreed on one of the two (diametrically opposite) ways.

Also, our RHO might redouble (1♥-Dbl-Redbl). The redoubles shows 10 or more points. Our side could be in trouble, so we no longer are promising values if we bid freely. We can pass with nothing special to say (pass doesn't mean we want to defend against 1♥ redoubled!) such as:

♠x x ♥J x x x x ♦x x x ♣x x x.

We can "run" without promising values. For example, after 1♥-Dbl-Redbl, escape to 1♠ with:

♠10 x x x x ♥x x x x ♦x x ♣x x.

If we pass, partner might pick a minor when it comes back to him. ▶▶

Bidding Basics *(continued)*

QUIZ

What is your call after 2♥-Dbl-4♥ with:

① ♠A 3 2 ♥J 3 2 ♦7 6 5 ♣Q 6 4 2

② ♠A 10 8 7 6 ♥2 ♦A 10 7 6 ♣Q 3 2

③ ♠A J 2 ♥3 2 ♦K 10 7 6 ♣K 8 7 5

What is your call after 1♠-Dbl-1NT with:

④ ♠Q 7 6 5 ♥Q 8 5 4 ♦4 3 2 ♣3 2

⑤ ♠A 10 3 ♥Q 8 6 5 3 ♦3 ♣10 8 7 6

⑥ ♠A 6 5 4 ♥Q 10 7 6 5 ♦2 ♣K 10 2

What is your call after 1♦-Dbl-1♥ with:

⑦ ♠J 8 7 5 ♥Q 3 2 ♦J 3 2 ♣6 5 4

⑧ ♠A 10 8 7 ♥5 4 ♦K 10 7 6 ♣6 5 4

ANSWERS

① Pass. Not enough to come in at this level.

② 4♠. Nice hand, nice suit – you have plenty of offense and a reason to come in.

③ Double. A “responsive” double showing “cards” (not hearts or penalty).

④ Pass. Same explanation as No. 1.

⑤ 2♥. Enough reason to make a free bid.

⑥ 3♥. Too much for only 2♥ (but not enough to insist on game).

⑦ Pass. Same explanation as No. 1.

⑧ 1♠. Same explanation as No. 5.