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Bidding Basics

Negative doubles continued

In previous months, our opponents overcalled on the one or two level. Let's make it tougher this month. Those pesky opponents will overcall on the three level or higher – just as they do in real life.

If the overcall is on the three level, things can get tough, but double is still not penalty:

Partner	RHO	You
1♠	3♦	?

♠K Q 2 ♥J 8 6 ♦A 3 2 ♣6 5 3 2

Raise to 3♠ (just because we are learning negative doubles, don't forget what is right in front of you).

♠K 2 ♥K Q 7 6 ♦4 3 2 ♣A J 10 3

Perfect example of why we need negative doubles – nothing else fits. (You wouldn't want double to be penalty, would you?)

♠Q 7 ♥Q J 2 ♦10 8 7 ♣A Q J 10 8

Double – and hope partner bids 3NT (a good partner would). No, you don't "promise" four cards in the other major, though it would be nice to have it.

Sometimes you will be stuck. You'll have too much to pass, not enough support to raise partner, no stopper to bid three notrump and no five-card suit to conveniently bid. Think of double as meaning: "Partner, I have lots of values – at least 10–11 HCP on this level – but nothing else fits."

Opener will bid a second suit if he has one, rebid his suit with six, or bid notrump with the opponent's suit stopped. Sometimes opener will also be stuck and have no good reply to your negative double. That's why people preempt. More on opener's

decisions in future months.

How high? We should play negative doubles at all levels. I don't understand when players (or teachers or writers) decide negative doubles should be only through a certain bid, like 3♠ for example. Do they think that if an opponent overcalls 4♣ that we are likely to have a lot of clubs and thus a penalty double? Maybe it is semantics, but there should be no "penalty doubles" on high levels.

Let's look at what to do against a four-level overcall, something like:

Partner	RHO	You
1♠	4♣	?

Double doesn't show clubs (unless it is 1950 or we never heard of negative doubles). Double means "enough to bid, but not clubs/penalty." As usual, the focus is on the other major, so it is nice to have four hearts, but the great dealer in the sky (or in the Horn Lake computer office) doesn't always comply. Here are some examples:

♠J 2 ♥A Q 10 2 ♦A Q 5 4 ♣4 3 2

Double – perfect.

♠K Q J ♥A 10 8 7 ♦K 4 3 2 ♣3 2

Simply raise to 4♠.

♠A 2 ♥K J 2 ♦K Q 3 2 ♣10 8 7 6

Double – not perfect, but nothing else fits.

Opener will do the best he can over these high-level doubles, but will often leave them in. If opener has some 5–3–3–2 hand, there is really nowhere to go, so he will usually pass and expect to beat them (both defenders have opening bid strength and only four tricks will set the contract).

After a five-level overcall, for example 1♠ (5♦), think of double as "cards." Not diamonds. This high-level double is usually left in.

Next month we will discuss what to do on the rare occasions you want to make an old-fashioned penalty double.

East hands for the April Bidding Box

Bid these hands with a partner. The West hands are on page 53. The North–South players are silent unless otherwise noted. Scores on page 42–45.

Problem 1. North deals. None vul.

♠10 8 ♥A ♦9 8 7 6 ♣A K Q 10 5 3

Problem 2. East deals. N–S vul.

♠K 4 ♥K Q J 10 ♦A J 3 2 ♣A 8 2

Problem 3. South deals. E–W vul.
South opens 1♦.

♠Q J 10 4 2 ♥A 5 ♦J 3 2 ♣10 7 4

Problem 4. West deals. Both vul.

♠A K Q 7 6 2 ♥Q J 2 ♦Q 7 ♣4 3

Problem 5. North deals. N–S vul.

♠10 9 6 5 2 ♥J 7 ♦K J 9 2 ♣Q 4

Problem 6. East deals. E–W vul.

♠Q 9 ♥K 4 3 ♦A J 9 5 3 ♣A K Q

Problem 7. South deals. Both vul.

♠K 10 9 3 ♥K Q 7 5 3 ♦K 10 3 ♣K

Problem 8. West deals. None vul.

♠10 9 8 6 ♥— ♦J 10 9 8 7 5 ♣J 7 6

Newer Players

Quiz

Assume nobody is vulnerable for all problems.

What is your call after 1♠-(3♣) with:

① ♠J2 ♥K102 ♦AQJ8 ♣KJ32

② ♠Q2 ♥KQ108 ♦AK32 ♣654

What is your call after 1♥-(3♦) with:

③ ♠AQJ98 ♥K2 ♦J32 ♣A109

④ ♠AQ87 ♥4 ♦J43 ♣KQ1087

What is your call after 1♦-(4♠) with:

⑤ ♠J ♥AQ1087 ♦A32 ♣KJ32

⑥ ♠KQ109 ♥A32 ♦J76 ♣1087

What is your call after 1♠-(5♣) with:

⑦ ♠Q65 ♥A10876 ♦K82 ♣K3

⑧ ♠K2 ♥J108765 ♦K1054 ♣2

Answers

① 3NT. Don't fall into "lessonitis" – not all answers will be a negative double. This is the practical call.

② Double. Now we're talking.

③ 3♠. Shows five or more spades, forcing. Don't double when there is a more descriptive call available.

④ Double. Hopefully partner can do something intelligent.

⑤ Double. Think of this as saying: "Partner, I have a good hand. If you have a lot of shape and bid on, you'll like my dummy; if you pass, let's hope we beat it."

⑥ Pass. If you double, your partner with short spades will likely bid something – exactly what you don't want. The good news is you'll rarely have this kind of holding in the opponent's suit.

⑦ Double. Same explanation as No. 5.

⑧ Pass. Sometimes they get you. Not enough to guess to come in on this level. ♣