

Fifth Chair



Negative Doubles

I. RATIONALE FOR NEGATIVE DOUBLES If you are not playing Negative Doubles, and the Auction proceeds: 1D 1S Dbl, the double here is a penalty double. This in effect dares the opponents to make their contract of 1 spade, suggesting that they cannot make it. Since the opportunity to double the opponents for penalties at this low a level comes up so seldom, the word "double" can be used to have a different meaning. Thus, the Negative Double was invented.

Imagine that you pick up this hand: xxx Axxx xx Axxx

Partner opens with 1D and your right hand opponent overcalls 1S.

Your choices:....Pass or preferable, playing Negative Doubles, you Double. The double will show partner that you have enough points to respond to partner's Opening Bid, and in most instances, BOTH of the unbid suits.

II. DEFINITION OF A NEGATIVE DOUBLE The Negative Double therefore is simply a TAKE-OUT DOUBLE for the two unbid suits, by the partner of the opening bid. The normal Take-Out Double occurs after opponents open the bidding. The Negative Double is made after opponents have made an overcall. Thus, if your partnership plays Negative Doubles, your Double is for Take-Out when partner has opened with a suit and the player on your right has overcalled in a suit.

III THE NEED FOR NEGATIVE DOUBLES The convention is called the Negative Double because it is not designed to penalize the opponents.

It is used when you lack support for partner's major suit, when partner has opened a minor suit, OR when you are unable to make a natural bid. It is an attempt to compete for the contract by seeking your side's best "fit" in a suit or no trump.

Consider this hand, and the beauty of showing partner two 4 card suits, by making a negative double, a bid which does not take away any bidding space.

Partner opens 1C Right hand opponent bids 1D

Your hand is: Axxx Kxxx xxx xx Double by you here shows BOTH unbid majors.....all in one breath, AND now partner can pick one of them.

Without the Negative Double, many hands become difficult and even impossible to bid sensibly after the opposition interferes. This is especially so because of the strict requirements for a 2 level response, which shows (10+ pts, and a 5 card suit).

When partner opened with 1D, you were about to respond 1H & right hand opponent overcalled 2C, now what? You are too weak to respond at the 2 level as

A) this would show 10 pts, and

B) this would also show a 5 card suit.

Therefore you would have to pass using Standard methods. A good fit in either major could be lost. Playing negative doubles you will say "Double" & now partner will bid again. He/She will know that you generally have both of the unbid suits and if she has one of those, she will bid it.

The Negative Double is especially useful when the opponents make a pre-emptive jump overcall.

1D 2S Your bid? Your hand is xx KJxx xxx AQxx

You cannot bid 3H or 3C, because when you bid a suit at the 3 level following an overcall, you promise a 5 card or longer suit.

IV. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MAKING A NEGATIVE DOUBLE: The exact requirements for negative doubles vary from partnership to partnership. Here are suggested guidelines to familiarize you with negative doubles.

a) Inability to support partner's suit

b) Insufficient length and/or points to bid your own suit (Following an overcall you need 10 points and a 5 card suit to bid at the 2 level)

c) Point Count i) At least 6HCP if partner can rebid at the 2 level

ii) At least 10 HCP if partner is required to rebid at the 3 level (example: Bidding has proceeded 1D by partner 2S by opponent, so a negative double forces partner to bid at the 3 level.

d) Suits: i) At the one level, 4-4 in the majors, if the major suits haven't been bid (although, if you use the negative double at the 2 Level of bidding, you could be 4 - 3 in the majors, OR you have the ability to bid if partner chooses the incorrect major suit (for example you should have an opening hand if you do not have the both the other suits. ii) 4 cards in the unbid major if only one major suit has been bid.

NOTE: Although you must ALWAYS have the unbid major, you do NOT have to have the unbid minor. If you do not have the unbid minor, then you must either have the ability to bid NT, if partner chooses the unbid minor, or have a fit with partner in his/her first bid suit.

For example: The bidding has proceeded: 1D 2C

Your hand is Axxx xx KQxxx Qx

You "double". If partner now chose to bid Hearts, because he/she has 4 of these, you can now bid 3 diamonds, showing a hand that has spades and diamonds, not spades and hearts.

REMINDER: Finally, a negative double can also be used when you lack either the required points, or suit length to bid at the 2 level or higher. When partner's suit is overcalled, you need 10 HCP PLUS a five card suit to bid freely at the 2 level. Therefore, you use the negative double in this situation:

The bidding has proceeded: 1D 1S

Your hand is xx AKxxx Jxx xxx Because you lack the necessary 10 points needed to bid 2H, you must make a negative double.

If you have the following hand, you would also make a negative double, as you lack the 5 card suit necessary to bid freely at the 2 level.

The bidding as above: your hand is xx AKxx Axx xxxx.

V. INFERENCE BASED UPON NEGATIVE DOUBLES:

If the auction proceeds: 1D 1H and you now bid 1S, this bid guarantees 5 spades, because if you have only 4 spades, you would use the negative double.

VI. REBIDS BY THE OPENING BIDDER:

The Opening Bidder will, for her rebid, pick one of the suits that you have indicated that you have. She will bid this suit if she has 4 of them. If she has only one of them, she will pick the unbid major suit, rather than the unbid minor suit.

If she lacks support for both of your suits, then she will bid N.T. (with stoppers in the opponents' suits) or she will simply rebid her own suit with none of the above.

If she has 13-15 pts, she will bid the above as cheaply as possible.

If she has 16-18 pts, she can jump in one of the unbid suits.

If she has 19+ pts, she can bid game in the known 4-4 major fit or 3 NT.

VI. TRAP PASS NOTE: Playing Negative Doubles, the Opening Bidder MUST, (at least 99% of the time) reopen the bidding, if his partner, the responder, fails to respond over the opponents overcall, especially if he has a singleton in the suit overcalled, he must seriously consider reopening the bidding with a double. The reason, his partner has the opponents' suit, and wants to pass after partner reopens with the double.

Example: The opening bidder holds: x AQxx Ajxxx Qxx.

You open 1 D. The next bidder bids 1 S.

Partner holding: AQ1087 x xxx AJxx is forced to pass, as a double here will be a negative double. This is called a trap pass. You hope that partner reopens with a double, so the opponents will have to play this contract in 1S Doubled, or they will run to something else, which you can also double for penalties.

Partner (opening bidder) will now Double, in case you have the TRAP PASS. This is called a re-opening Takeout Double) & you as responder will now pass the Takeout Double converting it to a penalty double.

--Negative Doubles QUIZ next--

Negative Doubles QUIZ

1. The bidding has proceeded: 1C 1S What do you bid over the 1 Spade overcall, with the following hands:

a) Ax AKxx xxxx Jxx

b) Ax AKxxx xxx Jxx

c) xx AKxxx xxx xxx

d) AQx Axx Kxx xxx

2. The bidding has proceeded: 1C 1D What do you bid over the 1 Diamond overcall, with these hands:

a) Kxxx Qxxx Ax xxx

b) Kxx Qxxx Axx xxx

c) AKxxx K10xx xx xx

d) K10xx AKxxx xx xx

3. The bidding has proceeded: 1S 2C What do you bid over the 2 Club overcall, with the following hands:

a) xx AKxxx xxx xxx

b) xx AKxx AKxx xxx

c) xx AKxxx Kxx xxx

d) KJx Kxx AQx xxx

e) Kx Axx Kxxx Axxx

f) x Axx xxxx AQ1098

4. The bidding has proceeded: 1C 1S Double Pass; What is opener's rebid now, holding the following hands:

a) Kxx AKxx Qxx Qxx

b) xxx AKxx Ax KQxx

c) AQx xx AKx KQJxx

5. The bidding has proceeded: 1C 2H Pass Pass

What is opener's bid now?

a) Axx x KJxx AKxxx

Answers

1 a Double, only have 4 hearts

b 2H

c Double

d 3NT

2 a Double

b 1H (negative double over 1D shows 2 four card majors

c Double

d Double

3 a Double

b Double

c 2H

d 3C

e 3NT

f Pass

4 a 2H

b 3H

c 3NT

5 Double