

'DONT' Escape from 1NT doubled

NG34Bridge

If opener's 1NT is doubled and responder has a 5+ card suit, she can bid her suit. But what if responder does not have a 5 card suit? Partner has 12-14 HCP. Doubler should have at least 16 HCP. If responder has 8HCP and no 5 card suit then it will usually turn out better to pass and leave the double in.

However, with a weak hand (0-7 HCP), responder need a safe exit rescue strategy. 1NT doubled vulnerable making four tricks incurs a penalty of -800!!

Your side may well have an 8-card fit, and even if the best you can do is to play in a 7-card fit your opponents might find it hard to make a penalty double. In fact your opponents have made another call available to you with their double: **redouble**. Many pairs give up using redouble for business and use this bid instead as part of a conventional scramble to find a fit. This idea is called a wriggle: you are wriggling from 1NT doubled into what you believe to be a safer haven. There are a number of wriggles available: one of the most popular is called the DONT Wriggle. It borrows its name from a bidding device used by the opposing side after an opening 1NT, known as the "Disturbing the Opponents' No Trump Convention", or DONT convention for short.

There are three options in responder's bidding box after partner's opening 1NT has been doubled: Pass; Redouble; bid a suit.

1) Pass to penalise doubler

With 8+ HCP it is unlikely that the best option will be for your side to declare. A **PASSING** and leaving the double in will usually be more lucrative. Redoubling for penalties would be even more lucrative, the opportunity comes up very infrequently. We need to reserve the redouble for the much more frequent instances where we need to deploy the DONT escape mechanism.

2) Take out into a 5+ card suit

When responder has a 5+ card suit the most obvious action is to bid the suit. But we need to reserve all direct suit responses for the very awkward situation where we **do not** have a five card suit and partner and responder are 'wriggling' bidding 4 card suits up the line in search of a fit (see 3 below). Responder uses the **REDOUBLE** to announce the possession of a 5+ card suit. It is a command to opener to bid 2C. Responder will then pass with 5 or more clubs, or bid 2D, 2H, or 2S. The worst scenario is to play in a 7 card fit but an 8 or 9 card fit might be found. The opponents are unlikely to redouble for penalties and may well enter the auction instead.

North		South	West	North	East
♠ J 8 6		1NT	Dbl	Redbl	P
♥ Q J 8 6 4		2♣	P	2♥	P
♦ 7 5		P	P		
♣ Q 8 6					

3) Responder has no 5 card suit but has two 4 card suits (Wriggle)

After 1NT is doubled, **A SUIT BID** by responder shows four cards in that suit and another higher ranking four card suit. This is the beginning of what is commonly known as a ‘wriggle’ involving both partners bidding their 4 card suits ‘up the line’ in search of an 8-card fit if one exists, and failing that, a 7 card (Moysian) fit. One of the main reasons why the wriggle works is that as the auction becomes more complex most opponents don’t know whether double is for takeout or penalty. One doubles for penalty and the other, not being sure, takes it out to be safe. Or since he doesn’t know whether double is for takeout or penalty he doesn’t double, bidding instead ‘to be safe’, so the ‘escape’ is accomplished:

2♣	Shows clubs and a higher 4 card suit
2♦	Shows four diamonds and a higher 4 card suit.
2♥	Shows four hearts and four spades

Here are some examples that illustrate how the ‘wriggle’ works:

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q J 6 5	♠ 10 4 3 2	1NT	Dbl	2♣	Pass
♥ A 9 5	♥ 7 6 3	2♦	Dbl	2♠	All Pass
♦ Q 5 3 2	♦ 8 7				
♣ K 5	♣ J 10 4 2				

The 8 card fit is found

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q 2	♠ 10 4 3 2	1NT	Dbl	2♥	Pass
♥ A 9 2	♥ 7 6 3 2	Dbl	All Pass		
♦ K J 6 5	♦ 8 7 3				
♣ K 5 4 2	♣ J 10				

Here East shows hearts and spades. West settles for a 7 card heart fit.

The wriggle doesn't always find the best fit as seen below. This is a worse case scenario:

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q J 6 5	♠ 10 4 3 2	1NT	Dbl	2♦	Pass
♥ A 9	♥ 5 2	Pass	All Pass		
♦ 9 5 2	♦ 8 7 6 3				
♣ K Q 6 5	♣ J 10 4				

West dare not bid 2♠ in case East has four diamonds, four hearts and a spade doubleton. They play in a poor diamond fit rather than the far better 4-4 spade fit.

4) Responder has a 4-3-3-3 shape

If responder has four clubs then they bid 2♣ and if partner bids again, pass.

With a 3-card club suit, they pretend it is a 4-card suit and bid 2♣, promising a higher ranking 4 card suit.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 6 5	♠ 10 4 3	1NT	Dbl	2♣	Pass
♥ A 9 5 2	♥ 8 7 4 3	Pass	Dbl	All Pass	
♦ K 5 2	♦ 8 7 6				
♣ K Q 6 5	♣ J 10 4				

Here West settles for what he hopes is an 8 card club fit, rather than risk 2♥ in case East has just two hearts and three spades. An 8 card heart fit is missed.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ K 5	♠ 10 4 3	1NT	Dbl	2♣	Pass
♥ A 9 5	♥ 7 4 2	Pass	All Pass		
♦ 9 5 3	♦ 8 7 6 2				
♣ K Q 6 5 2	♣ J 10 4				

This happy situation doesn't come up very often!

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ K 5 2	♠ 10 6 4 3	1NT	Dbl	2♣	Pass
♥ A 9 5 3	♥ 7 4 3	2♥	All Pass		
♦ 9 5 4	♦ 8 7 6				
♣ K Q 6	♣ J 10 4				

West has a tricky decision to make. East may have four clubs, and a 7 card club fit may be the best contract. West is aware that East may have this shape though this is unlikely. Here West risks 2♥, which will work out well unless East is 4333 with four diamonds, also unlikely. With only two hearts East will bid 2♠.

5) What if fourth seat doubles for penalties?

Opener must pass, even with 5 card suit. Responder has another bid, and the procedure is the same as if the double had been made by second seat. However now responder has additional options. Responder can redouble (relay to 2♣ by opener), showing a 5 card minor. Responder was unable to bid his minor on he first round as this would have been Stayman or Transfers.

If opener has a 5332 hand he should NOT bid his 5 card suit after the fourth seat double. Partner may have an unbalanced hand with a long minor and shortage in opener's suit, and may have been planning to redouble as the first stage of a takeout sequence into the minor. Equally, it may be that responder might have 9-10 points and is happy to leave the double in, expecting to make. Doubler's partner must have 0-2 points at most.

West	East	South	West	North	East
♠ 7 6 5	♠ 10 4 3		1NT	Pass	Pass
♥ A K 8 5 2	♥ 7	Dbl	2♥	Pass	? 😞
♦ J 5 4	♦ 8 7 6				
♣ K 6	♣ J 10 7 5 4 2				

	South	West	North	East
		1NT	Pass	Pass
	Dbl	Pass	Pass	Rdbl
	Pass	2♣	All Pass	😊

Summary

Responder's Actions:

Pass	Willing to play in 1NT doubled. Shows 8+ HCP
XX	Shows a 5+ card suit. Opener must bid 2♣ (if the opponents pass) Responder passes with 5+ clubs, otherwise bids their longest suit.
2♣	Shows clubs and a higher 4 card suit, but might be any 4333 Opener passes with 4+ clubs or bids their next 4+ suit (judgment call)
2♦	Shows four diamonds and a higher 4 card suit. Opener passes with 3+ diamonds or bids their next 4+ suit (judgment call)
2♥	Shows four hearts and four spades Opener chooses their longer suit. If equal length, chooses the better suit
2♠	Redundant.

Key points:

Any suit bid by responder denies a 5+ card suit and initiates the run-out

A redouble by responder promises a 5+ card suit and demands that opener bid 2♣.

After opening 1NT, partner is in charge!

The only time opener is permitted to bid again is in response to responder's redouble (showing a 5+ card suit) or suit bid (showing a 4 card suit and initiating a 'scramble'.

So, if the double is made by fourth seat, opener must PASS. Partner has another chance to bid. Opener must not be tempted to rescue by bidding a 5 card suit (opener might have a 5-3-3-2 balanced hand). This might occasionally work out well, but more often than not it won't. Responder may be very short in opener's 5 card suit, and may want to leave the double in for penalties. Alternatively responder may have a 6+ card club or diamond suit which could not be shown on the first round when Stayman and Transfers are operating, but can now take out the double by redoubling, asking partner to bid 2♣, after which responder can show his long minor suit.