

Takeout Doubles

After the opponents make an opening bid of one of a suit, a takeout double is used when we have enough points to compete but our hand is not suitable for a suit overcall or a 1NT overcall. The double asks partner to choose one of the unbid suits.

SOS

There's a three-letter acronym to describe such a double — termed "take-out" because partner must remove (take out) the double by bidding something. Partner must not pass.

- **S** for support (three or more cards) in all the unbid suits.
- **O** for opening points (or more).
- **S** for shortage (fewer than three cards) in the opposing suit.

Right-hand opponent has opened 1♦. What would you do with these?

| | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| ♠ K982 | ♠ AJ983 | ♠ AKJ3 | ♠ K2 |
| ♥ AJ62 | ♥ Q62 | ♥ K762 | ♥ Q943 |
| ♦ 2 | ♦ 4 | ♦ J64 | ♦ Q42 |
| ♣ K543 | ♣ AQ62 | ♣ Q2 | ♣ AK72 |

- With the first, double. You do not quite have opening points but the shape is ideal.
- Bid 1♠ with the second. It is preferable to overcall when you have five decent cards in a major, satisfying SQOT. However, if you swap your black suits then a double would be preferable to 2♣.
- With the third, double. Strictly speaking, you do not satisfy the SOS guidelines — with one too many diamonds and one too few clubs. However, the lack of a third card in a minor is not a deal-breaker. It is very likely that partner will have four cards in at least one of the majors, so will bid the major even if also holding five clubs.
- With the fourth, pass. The lack of a third card in a major IS a deal-breaker. Here, you have no sensible choice but to make a disciplined pass. One more point and you'd bid 1NT (don't lie about your point count bidding No Trumps).

Responses to a Take-out Double

You **must** bid – even if you have **no** points at all!

Remember that partner has promised support for all unbid suits. Give preference to a major suit rather than a minor suit if possible.

| | | |
|--|-------|----------------------------|
| Bid your best suit at the lowest level | 0-8 | 4+ in your suit |
| Jump Bid | 9-12 | 4+ in your suit |
| Jump to Game | 13+ | 4+ in your suit |
| Bid 1NT | 6-9 | stopper in opponent's suit |
| Bid 2NT | 10-12 | stopper in opponent's suit |
| Bid 3NT | 13+ | stopper in opponent's suit |

Left-hand opponent opens 1♦; your partner doubles; right-hand opponent passes. What now with these?

| | | | |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| ♠ 2 | ♠ 9843 | ♠ AJ93 | ♠ KJ72 |
| ♥ Q9642 | ♥ J2 | ♥ 10 | ♥ Q943 |
| ♦ A743 | ♦ J832 | ♦ K43 | ♦ A42 |
| ♣ AQ3 | ♣ 862 | ♣ Q7542 | ♣ K2 |

- With the first, jump confidently to 4♥. You are one point short of the 13 HCP required but with a fifth heart you can upgrade. Partner has opening values and at least three hearts so an 8 card fit is assured.
- With the second, bid 1♠. You can't pass, otherwise the contract will be 1♦ doubled, making easily. Partner knows she has forced you to speak so you may have nothing.
- With the third, bid 2♠. You must jump to show your 9-12 point hand, and you should prefer the major to the longer minor.
- The fourth is a conundrum. You want to play in game, presumably 4♥ or 4♠, but do not know which. The clever solution is to bid 2♦, the opponents' suit. It is game forcing. Partner will now bid a four-card major and you'll raise to game.

When the opponents bid after the take-out double:

| | | | |
|----|------|----|---|
| N | E | S | W |
| 1♥ | dbl. | 2♣ | ? |

When opener's partner bids over the takeout double, the takeout doubler's partner no longer has to bid something and should therefore pass with a weak hand. Even so, he should take the opportunity to show a suit even with moderate values. A good rule of thumb is to regard a response in a suit as if it were supporting an opening bid in that suit. For example, 2♠ here would show 6-9 points, just as if responding to partner's 1♠ opening bid.

Protective Bidding: Doubling in the 'Cheat Seat'

| | | | |
|----|------|------|-----|
| N | E | S | W |
| 1♥ | Pass | Pass | Dbl |

When the bidding goes 1(any suit)- Pass-Pass to you, such that if you also pass the auction will be over, all normal criteria are relaxed. This is generally called Protective Bidding (or 'Cheat Seat'), in the sense that you are protecting partner who may have been stymied with a decent hand. For example, partner could have 14 points but lacking a decent 5 card suit, and if West passes the auction is over. For this reason, the minimum requirements for a takeout double are about 3 points less than those for an immediate double. The corollary is that partner needs to rein it in by 3 points when responding, otherwise the partnership is likely to overbid. Make sure you are both on the same wavelength.

Protective bidding is often referred to as 'borrowing a king' from partner. You can place the three borrowed points anywhere in your hand, provided you retain the same shape. For example, you can pretend that ♠J8742 is ♠KJ874 so can now overcall 1♠. The principle applies to other competitive situations. Click here for a handout on Protective bidding:

https://www.ng34bridge.com/files/ugd/15ed9f_d913bf38caef4092833f1a6c090bdc1a.pdf

Dealing with an Opponent's Takeout Double

When partner has opened and your right-hand opponent has doubled for takeout, you should ignore the double and make the same bid you were planning to make without the double. But the fact that your right-hand opponent has little in your partner's suit but is strong outside has important ramifications. You should be more aggressive when raising partner's suit, but more cautious when introducing a new suit, which would be a forcing bid, or when responding in No Trumps, where you should 'up' the point ranges a little. Bidding 1NT would not now be a 'Dustbin' bid, as the takeout double means that partner now has another bid. It would show a balanced hand and 8-10 HCP.

| N | E | S | W |
|----|---|---|---|
| 1♥ | X | ? | |

South A
 ♠ 6 3
 ♥ 10 8
 ♦ K Q 10 7 4
 ♣ A J 7 4
 10 HCP
 2♦

South B
 ♠ 9 3
 ♥ Q J 3 2
 ♦ K 10 8 5 3
 ♣ 9 7
 6 HCP
 3♥

South C
 ♠ J 9 6 3
 ♥ 8 3
 ♦ K 7 2
 ♣ Q 8 6 2
 6 HCP
 Pass

The rarely used Redouble XX

The general principle for responder to the opener is to ignore the takeout double. But responder now has an extra option: **redouble**. This promises at least 10 points, which means that your side have the majority of the points, but no support for partner and no good suit of your own. The partner of the takeout doubler will be weak but still has to bid something, and your partner has the option of penalising the doubling side.

| N | E | S | W |
|----|---|---|---|
| 1♣ | X | ? | |

South A
 ♠ Q J 9 7
 ♥ Q 8 7 3
 ♦ A J 10
 ♣ 6 4
 10 HCP
 XX

South B
 ♠ 10 9 5 2
 ♥ K 4 2
 ♦ K 10 8 5
 ♣ A 4
 10 HCP
 XX

South C
 ♠ K J 4 2
 ♥ A J 9
 ♦ A 8 6 3 2
 ♣ 2
 13 HCP
 XX