

N	E	S	W
1♦	1♠	Pass	Pass

When playing negative doubles South can't double the 1♠ overcall for penalties. South should pass when holding a hand suitable for a penalty double.

The guidelines for a penalty doubling hand are:

- your side have the majority of the points, i.e. you have 9+ HCP
- you do not have primary support for partner's suit
- you have a good holding in the overcall suit – the number of cards you hold + the number of honours in the suit equals or exceeds the number of tricks you require to defeat the contract.

In the sequence above South could have a number of types of hands. It could be:

- Less than 6 points and South would have passed regardless of the overcall.
- 6-8 points but no spade stopper for 1NT response.
- 9+ points, length in spades and suitable for a penalty double.

After a sequence such as the one above, where a pass by opener would end the auction, opener should nearly always keep the bidding open with a Reopening Double in case partner passed with type c), a penalty double type of hand.

♠ 9
♥ K 8 2
♦ K Q 7 5 2
♣ A J 5 3

With short spades (two or less) and tolerance for each of the other suits (preferably 3+ in each but one could be 2 cards) opener bids 'Double'. This is like a Takeout Double. If partner has a penalty double hand he passes otherwise responds to the double with a suit.

♠ A J 2
♥ 7
♦ K J 10 9 4
♣ A J 8 2

If opener has 3+ in the overcaller's suit, partner must have passed with a weak hand (not a penalty double hand with long spades). So just pass.

To reopen with 1NT we need **17-19** (i.e. value for a jump NT rebid) and a stopper in the overcaller's suit.

♠ A 2
♥ K 9 4
♦ K Q 10 7
♣ K Q J 3

SUMMARY

- After an overcall by Left Hand Opponents followed by two passes, **opener should reopen with a double on most hands that are short in the overcaller's suit.**
- Pass with a balanced 15-16 (unless short in overcaller's suit, then double)
- Bid 1NT with balanced 17-19.
- Pass with length in overcaller's suit (3+) and a minimum hand.
- Don't rebid own suit or 2nd suit (5-4) unless extremely unbalanced hand that is not suitable for defence.