Beginner Bridge Lesson 7

7a) Takeout Double

What should you bid with the hand below after a 1♣ opening bid?

♠ K76 ♥ KQ54 ♦ A962 ♣ J6

You have an opening hand, 13 HCP, but:

- You don't have a good 5-card suit & a SQOT of 7+ with which to overcall in a suit
- You are too weak to overcall 1NT, for which you would need 16 HCP (or a 'good' 15 HCP), **AND** a stopper in opener's club suit!

You can use **DOUBLE** (written as an "X") to ask partner to choose the best contract. This is called a "**takeout**" **double**.

The literal meaning for double is "I don't think you can make your bid'. However this is an impractical meaning for the double in many situations. If you double a suit bid, with partner not having made a positive bid, the meaning of double has evolved into something quite different. It is for 'take-out', i.e. asking partner to take out the bid.

The double of an opening suit bid shows:

- **S**upport for all three unbid suits, ideally 4 cards but 3 cards are acceptable
- **O**pening Values (no upper limit)
- **S**hortage in the opponent's suit - usually a doubleton or fewer

Note the three initial letters. The SOS acronym may help you remember the three requirements.

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

If an opponent calls after the double, you no longer have to bid
If you do bid after an opponent calls, then you are guaranteeing at least 6 HCP

7b) Penalty Double

When partner has not made a bid, the double of the opponents' opening suit bid is usually played as a takeout double. There are, however, a number of situations when a player should consider making a **penalty** double.

i) The opponents make an untimely overcall in a suit

South
♠ K 10 7 6 3
♥ Q 9 8 5
♦ A J 9
♣ 7

North	East	South	West
1♣	1♠	?	

North has opened the bidding and South has 10 HCP so the partnership has the majority of the points. South does not have support for partner's club suit. It is likely that both sides have misfits. South is sitting over East with strength in East's spade suit. A penalty double is likely to score well.

When contemplating making a low-level penalty double of a suit you need to be confident that you can defeat the opponent's contract, and that you can get a better score by doing so than by bidding and making a contract of your own. Your hand needs to satisfy three criteria.

- **Your side needs to have at least half the points**. Typically, partner will have opened the bidding (showing 12+ points) and you will have 9+ points.
- You have **no fit** for partner's suit
- You need to have at least **four <u>good</u> trumps**. Count the number of trumps in your hand, and add the number of trump honours (10 counts as an honour). If the total (SQT) is equal to or higher than the number of tricks you need to defeat the contract, then double.

In the example hand, South satisfies all three criteria. He has 10 HCP, no fit for partner's clubs, and a SQT of 7, which equals the number of tricks required to defeat 1♠. Double! If the opponents try to escape into another denomination, double again.

ii) The opponents voluntarily bid too high

South
♠ A 4 3
♥ Q J 10 8
♦ A K 4 2
♣ 7 5

East	South	West	North
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	?		

Partner has not bid, but it looks like the opponents have bid too high. You have a nasty surprise for them. You have two certain tricks in trumps. You are very likely to make at least two out of our ♠A and ♦AK, so you can expect the contract to go one or two down, even without any help from partner. You should definitely **double** at this point.

iii) The opponents have opened 1NT

When partner has not spoken, your double of opener's suit bid is for takeout.
Partner's double of an opponent's opening 1NT bid, however, is for penalties.
You need 16+ HCP to make a penalty double of an opponent's weak 1NT. With less, you should overcall in a good 5+ suit or pass with a minimum opening hand.

The double of the opponents' 1NT shows ANY hand with 16+ HCP, regardless of shape.

i)	ii)	iii)
♠ A 7 2	♠ A J 2	♠ K 2
♥ K 2	♥ K J 3	♥ A Q 8 6 3 2
♦ A K Q J 9 2	♦ A Q 2	♦ Q J 2
♣ 3 2	♣ Q 8 6 3	♣ A J

i) is the best double of the three, with a fabulous suit to run

ii) is the least promising, although the most 'no-trumpy' with no source of tricks.

Responding to partner's penalty double of an opposing 1NT opener

Usually say nothing. Let the enemy stew. The main exception is when you are very weak (0-3 HCP), where there is a risk that your opponents might make their contract, doubled! If you have a 5 card suit, it might be better to bid it rather than leave the double in.

West
♠ 6
♥ 8 5 4 3
♦ Q 7 6 4 3 2
♣ J 2

North	East	South	West
1NT	X	Pass	2♦