

Penalty Double of an Opening Weak 1NT

You need 16+ HCP to make a penalty double of an opponent's weak 1NT. With less, you should overcall a good 5+ suit or pass with a minimum opening hand.

Responding to partner's penalty double

Usually say nothing. Let the enemy stew!

There are two exceptions to this:

Example 1

West				
♠ 6	North	East	South	West
♥ 8 5 4 3	1NT	X	Pass	2♦
♦ Q 7 6 4 3 2				
♣ J 2				

If you (West) are very weak (0-3 HCP), 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. Here you are worried that South may have passed with a good hand, expecting make their doubled contract with overtricks. You remove partner's penalty double to a safer diamond contract.

Example 2

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

E-W are vulnerable. N-S are not vulnerable.

You (West) expect partner to be reasonably balanced with 2+ hearts. You can see that game could be on your way. Partner's double showed 16+ HCP, so if you have 9+ HCP you might want to ignore the double and bid on. Vulnerability is an important factor in your decision:

If you are vulnerable and the enemy is *not*, as here, perhaps you'd do better with the 600 points from getting game. You'd need to get them down by four to better this. On the other hand, if the enemy is vulnerable and you are not, it's hard to see how you could do better than watch them suffer, so you would leave the double in. If you make 4♥ you score 420, but if you get the opponents down by two, doubled and vulnerable then you score 500.

Note: a double of an opponents' Dustbin 1NT is usually (but not always) played as a takeout double requesting that partner bid one of the three unbid suits. Discuss this with your partner.