

NEGATIVE DOUBLES

ABOUT THE DEALS

You will always be in the South position. Either you or partner may open the bidding.

The first page (or two) of each Deal shows only your hand. The initial bidding is given and you are asked to decide what you would bid, then click the word **BID** up in the bidding table. (Strictly speaking a Negative Double is a **CALL**, not a bid, so the term is used loosely here.) The next page will then appear telling you what you should have bid and continuing the auction. On the final page of each Deal partner's hand will be shown.

NEGATIVE DOUBLE SUMMARY

Back in the 1950s the Roth-Stone pair introduced a convention called Sputnik, later changed to Negative Double. It is basically a Takeout Double, but applied by the partner of the opening bidder after the next opponent has overcalled. An example will clarify those messy words.

Suppose you hold this hand and partner opens 1♦.
With 8 points and a 4-card Major suit you will obviously respond 1♥.

♠ 9 8 3	♥ K Q 9 5	♦ 8 4	♣ K 6 5 3
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	pass	1♥

But what if your Right Hand Opponent overcalls 1♠?

♠ 9 8 3	♥ K Q 9 5	♦ 8 4	♣ K 6 5 3
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♠	??

You have a problem.

You cannot bid ♥s (or ♣s) at the 2-level with only 8 points.

You cannot bid 1NT with no ♠ stopper.

You cannot support partner's ♦s with only a doubleton.

You hate to pass with this good a hand.

So you make a Negative Double which says:

"Partner, I would have bid 1♥ if it hadn't been for that stinking overcall."

It is necessary that you and partner agree on when a double is a Negative Double, and when it is a Penalty Double. There is no universal agreement on this but a good suggestion is to play it the same as you do for Takeout Doubles. In other words if your upper limit for Takeout Doubles is 3♠, use the same upper limit for your Negative Doubles. Many pairs these days play that doubles of game bids are for Penalty, doubles of partscores are Negative.

But just because you use Negative Doubles up to the 3♠ level certainly doesn't mean you should do so with a hand like the example above. If you are going to force partner to bid at a higher level you naturally need a stronger hand.

STRENGTH REQUIREMENTS FOR NEGATIVE DOUBLE

6+ points*	Double a 1-level overcall
10+ points*	Double a 2-level overcall
12+ points*	Double a 3-level overcall

*Since Negative Doubles are forcing there is no upper limit to strength.

Actually there is one situation when Negative Doubles are not forcing. If Opener wants to convert the double to a Penalty Double he may pass. Typically this would be a hand which is strong in the overcaller's suit and weak in the suits partner's Negative Double has suggested. It's like the partner of a Takeout Doubler passing for penalties.

A double is a Negative Double only if Partner opens 1 of a suit and the next opponent overcalls in a suit.

Notice particularly that if there is a 1NT overcall an immediate double would **NOT** be Negative, it would be for penalties.

Notice also that if Partner has opened 1NT and RHO overcalls a suit we say that Negative Doubles do not apply. This is not universally agreed, some would say that Negative Doubles apply in this case. We will take our usual method of avoiding any controversy by making sure there are no 1NT examples included!

Now let's get to the interesting parts - the kind of hands where you would use a Negative Double. As with much of the material on competitive bidding the guidelines used vary from partnership to partnership. However, you will not go wrong by agreeing with your partner to use these.

DISTRIBUTIONAL GUIDELINES FOR A NEGATIVE DOUBLE

If there is 1 unbid Major	Double promises at least 4 cards in the other Major
If there are 2 unbid Majors	Double promises at least 4 cards in ONE Major
Exception to above. If the bidding starts 1♣ - 1♦	Double promises at least 4 cards in BOTH Majors
If both Majors have been bid	Double promises at least 4 cards in both Minors

Now a few examples to applying the guidelines.

♠ 7 4 ♥ A J 9 5 ♦ 6 5 ♣ Q 8 6 5 3

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♦ 1♠ double

With 8 points and 4 ♥s a Negative Double at the 1-level is fine.

♠ 7 4 ♥ A Q 9 5 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A 8 6 5 3

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♠ 2♦ double

You need at least 10 points for a Negative Double at the 2-level.

♠ Q 8 7 4 ♥ A Q 9 5 ♦ 6 5 ♣ 9 8 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♦ double

After this specific auction you need at least 4 of both Majors.

♠ Q 8 7 4 ♥ A Q 5 ♦ 6 5 ♣ 9 8 6 3

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♦ 1♠

Compare this with the previous example.

You can't double without both Majors so you just bid your 4-card Major.

♠ A J 7 ♥ A Q 5 3 ♦ 9 8 6 5 ♣ 6 3

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♦ 2♣ double

Double only promises 4+ cards in one Major with this auction.

However, you need some extra strength because of the 2-level.

It is also best to have some ♦s for a back-up if needed.

♠ A 8 7 4 ♥ A Q 5 ♦ 9 6 5 ♣ 9 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♥ double

Although you could bid ♠s at the 1-level you should still double.

But look at the next example.

♠ A 9 8 7 4 ♥ A Q 5 ♦ 9 6 ♣ 9 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♥ 1♠

This hand is very similar to the last, but here you bid 1♠.

In this way you differentiate between a 5-card and 4-card ♠ suit.

It would be worth your while to study these two examples.

♠ 4 ♥ A 10 9 8 5 ♦ A 9 6 4 ♣ Q 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 2♠ double

You may double with a 5-card Major if you aren't strong enough to bid the suit at the level you find yourself.

Opener's Second Bid:

Since the 1-of-a-suit Opener has 13-21 points it is convenient to consider his strength as:

- Minimum: 13-15
- Medium: 16-18
- Maximum: 19-21

Opener should make an attempt to bid a suit indicated by the Negative Doubler, particularly if he has a 4-card Major.

If opener has a Minimum (13-15) hand, he makes a minimum rebid.

♠ A 3 ♥ K J 6 5 ♦ 9 6 4 ♣ K Q 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♠ double

pass 2♥

You are not Reversing, you are merely supporting partner's ♥.

♠ A J 9 3 ♥ 6 5 ♦ K 6 4 ♣ K Q 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♠ double

pass 1NT

You cannot support ♥s, but with ♠s stopped you can bid 1NT.

♠ 9 5 ♥ 6 5 ♦ Q 6 4 ♣ A K Q 7 6 4

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♠ double

pass 2♣

Or you can rebid your original suit.

If Opener has an Medium hand, (16-18 points), he should make a jump rebid.

♠ A 3 ♥ K J 6 5 ♦ A 6 4 ♣ K Q 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♠ double

pass 3♥

The jump shows 4 ♥ and 16-18 points.

♠ A Q 10 3 ♥ K 7 ♦ K 10 4 ♣ K Q 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♠ double

pass 2NT

The jump to 2NT shows ♠ stoppers and 16-18 points.

When Opener has a Maximum hand, (19-21 points), he cue-bids the overcalled suit or bids game.

♠ A 3 ♥ K Q 6 5 ♦ A 6 4 ♣ A K 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♠ double
pass 2♠

The cue-bid is forcing to game. It does not guarantee support for partner, your next bid will clear that up.

Further bidding by Responder and Opener is natural.

20 examples will be worth more than another 1000 words.

Deal 1