

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN DIFFERENT DOUBLES

by Maritha Pottenger

The way to keep your doubles straight at the bridge table is who doubles when.

NEGATIVE DOUBLES can only be made by **RESPONDER**. Partner opens bidding; RHO overcalls; you double. That is Negative. Negative Doubles show TWO places to play. (Occasionally, they show a single long suit and not enough points to bid at the level that would be required.) If both majors have been bid, you promise at least 4-4 in minors. If both minors have been bid at the one level, you promise both majors (4-4) If both minors have been bid & you are at the two level, you guarantee one major and a second place to play. If a major and a minor have been bid, you guarantee 4 cards in other major and (usually) a second place to play. Examples: 1C-1D-*: you are 4-4 in majors. If you are 5-4, bid 5-card major and hope to get 4-card one in later. 1H-1S-*: you are 4-4 OR LONGER in the minors. 1C-1H-*: you have EXACTLY 4 spades. With 5 spades, just bid one spade. You have a second place to play which could be diamonds, clubs, or no trump.

RESPONSIVE DOUBLES can only be made by **ADVANCER**. Advancer is partner of person who has made a take-out double OR made an overcall, with the opponents opening and raising the SAME SUIT. When partner made an overcall, you show 5-5 (sometimes 4-5 or 5-4) in the two, unbid suits. When partner made a take-out double, you show 4-4 in two unbid suits—usually minors when there is only one unbid major. (Assumption is you would BID major if you had it.) So, 1H-*-2H* Your double is responsive and you should be 4-4 in the minors. If you had 4 spades, you would have bit them. 1C-*-2C-* Your double is responsive and you should be 4-4 in majors. You want partner to pick major as she MIGHT be only 4-3 or 3-4 and you want 8 card (NOT 7 card) fit. 1C-1S-2C-* You are 5-5 in hearts and diamonds. (The reason you should be 5-5 is partner already has 5 spades, so is unlikely to have more than 3 cards in a second suit.)

SUPPORT DOUBLES can only be made by **OPENER**. You open, LHO passes; partner bids one of a major (only guarantees 4). RHO overcalls (below 2S). Your double is a SUPPORT DOUBLE—promising EXACTLY 3 cards in partner's major. (If you had 4 cards, you would raise directly.) Example: 1C-P-1H-1S-* Your double shows exactly 3-card heart support.

PENALTY DOUBLES: are usually made at 3 level and above, but there are exceptions. (See handout on penalty doubles.)

DSIP DOUBLES: are usually made at the 3-level and above. They occur in competitive auctions when you are unsure what is the right action. They tell partner: “**Do Something Intelligent, Partner.**” Partner will pass for penalties or bid on, depending on her hand.

LEAD-DIRECTING DOUBLES are made of artificial bids (Stayman inquiries, Transfers; Splinter bids, answers to Blackwood, cue-bidding controls for slams, etc.) They request the lead of the suit being bid.

MAXIMAL COMPETITIVE DOUBLES generally occur at the 3 level. They are GAME TRIES when in a competitive auction where the opponents are bidding the suit DIRECTLY BELOW your suit, so there is no room for a Help Suit Game Try. Thus, bidding on is purely competitive and the double is a game try (for partner to sign off at 3 or go to game, depending on her hand). Example: 1S-2H-2S-3H-* The double by you is a game try. Partner bids either 3S or 4S. An immediate 3S by you is a sign-off.