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Bridge Bidding: The Next Step · Standard American edition



CHAPTER 3

Negative Doubles

Partner opens, the opponents overcall: using the double to show your suits

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1. When the opponents get in the way

Partner opens, and the next player overcalls. Very often the overcall takes away the bid you wanted to make. With a four-card major and a modest hand, you may have no sensible way to show it. The **negative double** solves this.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	1♣	1♠	?

♠ 7 5 4
♥ K J 6 3
♦ A 8 4
♣ 10 9 3

8 points and four hearts. 2♥ would promise five hearts and more strength, and 1NT needs a spade stopper. Double.

2. The rule

When partner opens one of a suit and the next player overcalls in a suit, your **double** is for **takeout**, not for penalties. It shows the **unbid suits**, especially an **unbid major**, and about **6 or more** points (8 or more if partner must answer at the two level).

The most useful cases:

Auction	Your double shows
1♣ (1♦) X	both majors, at least four cards in each
1♣ or 1♦ (1♥) X	exactly four spades (with five, bid 1♠)
1♣ or 1♦ (1♠) X	four hearts (with five hearts and 10+, bid 2♥)
1♥ (1♠) X	the minors, or values with no good bid
1♠ (2♥) X	the minors, or values with no good bid

> In this book the negative double applies up to the level of 2♠. Some partnerships use it higher. Agree with your partner how far you play it.

♠ K J 8 5
♥ 7 3
♦ Q 6 4
♣ J 9 5 2

1♦ (1♥) ?: **7 points** and exactly four spades. **Double**.

♠ A Q 10 6 3
♥ 5 2
♦ K 4
♣ 8 7 6 3

1♦ (1♥) ?: five spades. Bid them: **1♠**.

♠ Q 5
♥ K J 10 4
♦ K 7 3
♣ 9 8 6 2

1♣ (1♥) ?: you have *their* suit, well stopped. Bid **1NT** (about 6–10 with a stopper). A double would promise spades.

3. Opener's rebid after a negative double

Opener treats the double like a bid of the suit it promises, and answers as if partner had bid it:

- With four cards in partner's major, bid it: at the cheapest level with a minimum, jump with 16–18, bid game with more.
- With a stopper in the overcalled suit and a balanced hand, bid notrump.
- Otherwise rebid your suit, or bid a second suit.

> **What if you want to punish the overcall?** If you hold length and strength in the overcaller's suit, you cannot double for penalties: that would be a negative double. Instead **pass**. When the bidding comes back to opener, opener should usually reopen with a double when short in the overcalled suit, and you can then pass for penalties.

4. Summary

After 1 of a suit and an overcall	Bid
Four cards in an unbid major, 6+	Double
Five cards in an unbid major	Bid it (at the two level: 10+)
Stopper in their suit, balanced, 6–10	1NT
Support for partner	Raise
Length and strength in their suit	Pass, and hope partner reopens with a double

5. Test yourself

1. ♠ K J 7 4
♥ Q 10 6 3
♦ 8 5
♣ K 4 2

1♣ (1♦) ? What do you bid?

2. ♠ 8 6 3
♥ A Q 7 4
♦ J 5
♣ K 10 8 3

1♦ (1♠) ? What do you bid?

3. ♠ 7 2
♥ K Q J 10 7 4
♦ A 6
♣ 9 5 3

1♦ (1♠) ? What do you bid?

4. ♠ K 10 7 5
♥ 8 4 2
♦ A 9 3
♣ Q 7 6

1♣ (1♥) ? What do you bid?

5. ♠ A 3
♥ 7 4
♦ K J 8 5 2
♣ Q 10 6 3

1♥ (1♠) ? What do you bid?

6. ♠ K 5
♥ K 10 6 3
♦ A Q 7 4
♣ 9 5 3

You opened 1♦. 1♦ (1♠) X (pass) ? What do you bid?

Answers

1. Double. Four cards in both majors.

2. Double. Four hearts and 10 points.

3. 2♥. Six good hearts and 10 points: bid them.

4. Double. Exactly four spades. 1♠ would show five.

5. Double. Both minors and 10 points, with no good natural bid.

6. 2♥. Partner has four hearts; so do you. With a minimum, bid them at the cheapest level.

Next: Chapter 4, Responding to an Overcall. Free lessons and challenge hands to play: **bridgescorer.com/learn**

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