Balancing Bids and Doubles

What?

Never let the opponents play easily at the 2-level if they've shown an 8-card fit!

Why?

- If the opponents are stopping at the 2-level, they most likely have fewer than 25-26 HCPs, in fact their point range is probably 19-24. That leaves 16-21 HCPs for your side.
- Because of the mathematics of suit distribution, if they have an 8-card fit, you probably have one as well.
- If you have an 8-card fit and about half the HCPs, you should try to either play the hand or push the opponents to bid to a higher (less makeable) level.

Who?

The player in the balancing seat – the term "balancing" refers to the player whose pass would end the auction; the player in the "pass-out seat."

How?

By

- bidding any five-card suit at the cheapest possible level.
- doubling with shortness in the opponents' suit and 3+-card support for the other 3 suits.
- bidding an unbid major with at least four cards in the suit.

Things to know

- If the opponents stop at 1 NT or two of a suit without showing a fit, it's risky to balance. The deal may be a misfit. Therefore, the best course is usually to pass. You may bid, however, with a 6-card or longer suit. You may also double a suit bid (not 1 NT) for takeout if you have at least four cards in each unbid suit and partner is able to bid at the two level.
- When your partner bids in the pass-out seat, (s)he is bidding your hand as well. Never punish partner by bidding again after partner has forced the opponents to raise the level of their bid! Remember, partner has already bid your hand.

What Do You Bid?

The bidding has gone

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♥
Pass	Pass	?	

What should East bid with each of these hands?

♠ AJ32	♠ K3	♠ 65	♠ Q87
♥ 65	♥ 732	♥ 7	♥ 72
♦ Q973	♦ Q953	♦ KQJ975	♦ KJ74
♣ Q85	♣ KQ85	♣ A982	♣ Q952

The bidding has gone

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	Pass	?	

What should East bid with each of the hands above?

Answers: 2S, Pass, 3D, DBL; Pass, Pass, 3D, Pass