

Takeout and Negative Doubles

Takeout Doubles

A **takeout double** is usually a low-level double over opponents' opening bid or bids. It asks partner to bid his best of the remaining suits. The most common takeout double is after an opponent opens one of a suit.

To make a takeout double in this situation, the minimum requirements are:

- at least 12+ HCPs, more if the doubled bid is at the 2-level or above
- shortness in the opponents' suit(s) -- preferably two cards or fewer
- length in each of the unbid suits -- at least three, preferably four cards
- preferably at least four cards in an unbid major

A takeout double might also be used to show a hand that's too strong for a simple overcall. You would, for example, also make a takeout double with any of these hands:

- 16+ HCP and a good six-card suit. You would bid your suit after partner's bid.
- 18+ HCP and a good five-card suit. You would bid your suit after partner's bid.
- 19+ HCP balanced with a stopper in opener's suit. You would bid NT after partner's bid.

Note: With 16-18 HCPs, a balanced hand, and (preferably) two stoppers in opener's suit, you would overcall 1NT over an opponents' 1-level bid and 2NT over an opponents' 2-level preempt.

How do you know partner's double is a takeout double?

A double is takeout when

- opponents have bid one suit and partner is bidding for the first time.
- opponents have bid two suits and partner is bidding for the first time. (Partner may have previously passed.)
- opponents have found a fit and are stopping at a low level. (Partner may have previously passed.)
- Partner has doubled more than once below the level of game and you have not yet bid.

What should you bid if partner makes a takeout double?

- With 0-9 HCPs and no 4-card major, bid your best minor.
- With 0-9 HCPs and an unbid 4-card major, bid the major, even if it's not your best suit.
- With 10+ HCPs and a 4-card suit, jump in that suit. Always bid a major suit first.
- With 8+ HCPs, a balanced hand, and two stoppers in opponents' suit, bid NT.

Negative Doubles

A negative double is a specific type of takeout double. It's a double made by responder, usually in the first round of bidding, after partner has opened and RHO has overcalled. Typically, it shows support for both unbid suits. If one of the unbid suits is a major, it should show 4 cards in that major.

Make a negative double when you have:

- shortness in overcaller's suit -- preferably two cards or fewer
- at least three, preferably four cards, in each of the unbid suits
- at least 6+ HCPs if opener can respond at the 1-level. In the auction, 1♣ - 1♥ - X - ?, partner can bid 1♠.
- at least 10+ HCPs if opener must respond at the 2-level or above. In the auction, 1♣ - 1♠ - X - ?, partner must bid 2♥.
- a 5-card major, but not enough points to bid it at the required level

What does your negative double show?

- If neither major suit has been bid, it shows 4 cards in at least one of the majors.
- After 1♣ - 1♦, it shows 4 cards in both majors.
- If both majors have been bid, it shows at least 4 cards in both minors.

When don't you make a negative double?

- When you have normal trump support for partner's major suit opener, raise partner.
- When you have a 5-card major and enough points to bid at the required level, bid the major yourself. That's how partner knows whether you have 4 or 5 cards in that major. A negative double shows a 4-card suit; bidding the suit shows a 5-card suit.

What should you rebid as opener if partner makes a negative double?

- With 13-15 HCPs make a non-jump rebid.
- With 16-18 HCPs, make a jump rebid.
- With 19+ HCPs, cue bid the opponent's suit.

NEVER pass partner's takeout double or negative double, no matter how few points you have, unless you have length and strength in the opponents' suit and are very sure you can set their contract.