

## Support, Lead-Directing, and Maximal Doubles

A **support double** shows exactly 3-card support for partner's suit. It's made by the opening bidder after responder has bid a suit and RHO has made a non-jump bid. (Note: If RHO doubles after responder's bid, the support double becomes a **support redouble** - again showing exactly 3-card support for partner's suit.) A support double or redouble says nothing about opener's point count; it doesn't promise extra strength or suggest a minimum opener. It simply says, "partner, I have exactly 3 cards in your suit." The purpose of the support double is to help opener and responder accurately determine the number of possible trump they hold: with 4-card support, opener raises partner's suit after opponent's bid; with 3-card support, opener makes a support double. Support doubles and redoubles are usually played through 2♥, but that can be adjusted by *partnership agreement*. Both are alertable bids. The following auctions provide examples of support doubles/redoubles:

N	E	S	W
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
X			

N	E	S	W
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♥
X			

N	E	S	W
1♦	X	1♠	2♣
X			

N	E	S	W
1♦	Pass	1♠	X
XX			

Things to know:

- You don't **have** to make a support double if you have a bid that's more descriptive of your hand, but if you play support doubles and fail to make one when it's available, partner will always assume you **don't** have 3 cards in her suit.
- If you do make a support double, partner might be forced to rebid a 4-card suit. Don't assume partner has 5 cards in the suit just because he rebids it.
- Be sure your partnership can tolerate playing in a 4-3 fit at the level you're forcing partner to bid at. Be leery of making a support double with a sub-minimum or 3<sup>rd</sup> seat opener, especially if you're vulnerable or if both opponents are bidding.
- Most people only play support doubles over a major suit bid by partner; some people, by *partnership agreement*, always play support doubles, even if partner responds 1♦ over 1♣. But I wouldn't make a support double in that situation with a biddable 4-card major.

A **lead-directing double** is a double **directly over** an artificial bid by an opponent. This double tells partner that you have length and strength in the (artificial) suit bid and would like him to lead it when the final contract is reached. To make a lead-directing double, you should typically have

- a 5-card suit headed by at least three of the top five honors or a 6-card suit headed by at least two of the top four honors
- a reasonable expectation that your partner will be on lead

The three most common situations for lead-directing doubles are:

- LHO opens 1NT, partner passes and RHO bids 2♣ (Stayman) or 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ (transfers) -- all artificial bids. A double asks partner to lead the bid suit.
- Opponents are bidding a keycard-asking sequence. After 4NT, from LHO, RHO bids 5♣, 5♦, 5♥ or 5♠. All are artificial bids showing some number of keycards. A double asks partner to lead the bid suit.
- An opponent makes a new-minor forcing or 4<sup>th</sup>-suit forcing bid. Both those bids are artificial. A double asks partner to lead the bid suit.

Note: The double of an opponent's artificial bid should **never** be mistaken for a takeout double! In some situations, however, with length in the suit partner has doubled, you might choose to compete in the auction by bidding that suit.

A **maximal** double is used in competitive auctions (both sides are bidding) to distinguish between game tries and competitive bids. For example:

Your hand is:

♠KQJ873, ♥93, ♦A5, ♣QJ2

The bidding has gone:

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
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1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
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You want to compete to the 3-level, but with your minimal opener, you don't want partner to think it's a game try. So, you make a **maximal double**, which asks partner to sign off at the 3-level unless she has undisclosed values, such as shortness in opponents' suit or extra length in your suit.

With a hand of 15-17 points (for example, ♠AKJ873, ♥94, ♦A5, ♣KQ2), you'd bid 3♠ yourself, asking partner to bid game with a maximum raise.

## Quick Quiz

1. You are North. The bidding has gone:

N	E	S	W
	1♣	X	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
?			

What kind of double is partner's bid? What do you bid with ♠10987, ♥KJ98, ♦A32, ♣109?

2. You are North. The bidding has gone:

N	E	S	W
1♣	1♥	X	2♥

What kind of double is partner's bid? What do you bid with ♠KQ73, ♥83, ♦AQ65, ♣K1032?

3. You are North. The bidding has gone:

N	E	S	W
1♦	1♠	1NT	2♠
3♣	3♣	X	Pass

What kind of double is partner's bid? What do you bid with ♠7, ♥K9, ♦AJ653, ♣KQ732?

4. You are North. The bidding has gone:

N	E	S	W
		1♥	2♦
2♥	3♦	X	Pass

What kind of double is partner's bid? What do you bid with ♠J73, ♥K983, ♦65, ♣QJ32?

5. You are North. The bidding has gone:

N	E	S	W
		1♦	Pass
1♠	2♣	X	Pass

What kind of double is partner's bid? What do you bid with ♠QJ73, ♥83, ♦A7632, ♣1032?

6. You are North. The bidding has gone:

N	E	S	W
		Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	X	2♠

What kind of double is partner's bid? What do you bid with ♠J75, ♥K9, ♦QJ6, ♣QJ1093?

## Answer Sheet

1. This is a strong takeout double. Bid 4♠.
2. This is a negative double. Bid 2♠.
3. This is a penalty double. Pass.
4. This is a maximal double. Bid 3♥.
5. This is a support double. Bid 2♦.
6. This is a lead-directing double. Pass.