

Negative (Sputnik) Doubles

In a five-card Major suit bidding system, the frequency of a Minor suit opening is, of course, increased. As a result, it is easier for the opponents to overcall, and their having done so, may obviate the Responder's bid of a 4-card suit that he/she was planning to bid. Responder may be precluded from making his/her desired call because of either a lack of holding five or more pieces of the desired suit, too few HCP's, or even both.

The **Negative Double** is a convention which copes with this situation. **A double by Responder at his/her first opportunity, opposite a one-of-a-suit opening bid by Partner subsequent to an interference overcall by Responder's RHO (Right-Hand Opponent) is a double for take-out rather than a double for penalties.** A Negative Double exhibits 6 (+) HCP's at the 1-level, 8 (+) at the 2-level, and 10 (+) at higher levels. There is no upper limit to the strength of Negative Doubles. **Negative Doubles are not alertable!**

(Example: 1)	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
<u>East Holds:</u>	1D	1S	Dbl.	
XXX				
AXXX				
XX				
QXXX				

(East's Double shows at least four Hearts and at least enough strength to have responded to opener's 1D bid had there been no interference. Responder hopes opener will be able to bid 2H. Here if instead, opener rebids 2C, Responder will pass as responder also likes Clubs.)

(Example: 2)	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
<u>East Holds:</u>	1D	1S	Dbl.	
XXX				
KJXX				
KXXX				
XX				

(Absent a 2H call from opener in this case, Responder is prepared to correct to 2D.)

(Example: 3)	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
<u>East Holds:</u>	1D	1S	Dbl.	
AX				
KQXX				
QXXXX				
AX				

(Here, Responder has a very strong hand but still requires the use of the Negative Double in that the Overcaller has made it difficult for East to bid the hand naturally. Once East finds out whether or not the opener has four Hearts, East plans to force at least to game thereafter.)

A "Double" by Responder is **not** negative if, (1) the Opponent's overcall is above the level of 3-Spades, or (2) the Opponent's overcall is a No-trump bid, a Michaels Cue-bid, or an unusual 2-No-Trump overcall. Under these conditions a double by Responder a penalty double.

Note: The use of an immediate double by Responder after an intervening overcall by the opposition as a negative or takeout double means that Responder **cannot** double the overcall for penalties. The fact, therefore, that the use of negative doubles may force the Responder to pass when otherwise he/she would have made a penalty double places a heavy obligation on the opening bidder. As a result, **Opener must make every reasonable effort to keep the bidding open if his/her left-hand opponent's overcall is passed around to him/her, especially if he/she be short in the Overcaller's suit.**