

The Penalty (“Business”) Double

A “**Penalty Double**” is a bid in bridge which seeks to increase the consequences should the Opponent’s fail to fulfill their designated contract. It expresses the opinion that the Opponents have bid too much, and that to penalize them is the way to get the best possible scoring results on the hand. Recognition as to when any “Double” is meant as a “Penalty” Double, as opposed to any other “Double”, is based simply on the milieu, or bidding environment, in which the call is made. A “Double” is presented as a “Penalty Double” when any of the following bidding conditions have been met:

- a. The bidding is **at** or **above** a pre-emptive 4S level.

Example: 1S P 4S Dbl. (or) 5C Dbl.

- b. A double is presented by a Responder subsequent to a 1-NT overcall, immediately following Partner’s opening bid of one-of-a-suit.

Example: 1D 1-NT Dbl.

- c. A “Double” is made in a competitive auction where the Doubler’s Partner has already bid.

Examples: (1) 1H 1S 3H 3S
Dbl.

(2) 1-NT 2”B” Dbl. (not “Negative”)

Exception: (1) 1H 1S Dbl. (“Negative”)

- d. A “double” is presented subsequent to you or your Partner having made an earlier “Penalty” Double, or a “Penalty Pass” of any “Take-out” Double.

Example: (1) 1D 1H 2D 2H
Dbl. P 3D 3H
Dbl.

(2) 1C P 2S Dbl.
P P 3C P
P Dbl.

- e. If either you or your Partner has made a pre-emptive bid and the other “doubles”. **IT IS NOT NEGATIVE!**

Example: 3C 3H Dbl.

In addition to simply extracting a higher score in the circumstance where one thinks that the Opponent’s have bid beyond their capacity to produce the number of tricks to which their bid commits, “doubles” of certain **game-level** and **slam-level contracts** have particular meaning as to the suit which the “Doubler” is desirous of being led. If the would-be “Doubler” does **not** wish to add specificity to the suit for the opening lead, then such “doubles” must be avoided. They are as follows:

1. A double of the Opponent’s final contract of 3-NT asks for a specific lead depending upon the bidding to that point.

- a. **If no suits have been bid by either team**, Partner’s double of a 3-NT contract announces the possession of some solid suit, usually a Major.

Example: 1-NT P 3-NT Dbl. (Asks for a lead of a Heart or a Spade)

- b. **When neither you nor your Partner have bid, but multiple suits have been bid by the Opponents**, lead Dummy’s first bid suit.

Example: 1D P 1H P
2C P 3-NT Dbl. (Asks for a lead of a Diamond)

c. **If you have not overcalled, and Partner has overcalled**, lead Doubler's suit.

Example: 1D P 1H 1S
2C P 3-NT Dbl. (Asks for a Spade lead)

d. If you *have* overcalled at the 1-level and Doubler passes throughout; later doubling the Opponent's 3-NT contract:

(1) **If the Doubler has had the chance but failed to exercise the opportunity to support your overcall suit at the 2-level, the "double" requests a diversion from the normal lead of the overcall suit and, instead, requests the lead of Dummy's first bid suit.**

Example: 1C 1H 1S P
1-NT P 3-NT Dbl. (Asks for a Spade lead)

(2) **If the Doubler had no opportunity to support your suit at the two level, then the "double" requests you lead your overcall suit.**

Example: 1C 1H 3C P
3-NT P P Dbl. (Asks for a Heart lead)

e. **If Partner opens a Heart or a Spade and later doubles a 3-NT contract, lead an un-bid Minor suit! Here's why: the normal lead is to lead Partner's Major suit. If Partner feels the hand will be defeated with the normal lead, Partner "passes" thereby encouraging the normal would-be lead. The "double" is to divert you from the normal lead. Partner has a two-suiter and wants you to find the second suit.**

Example: 1S 1-NT P 3-NT
Dbl. (Asks for a Minor Suit lead)

f. **If partner opens a Club or a Diamond and later doubles a 3-NT contract, the converse is true.** There is a strong presumption to assume that Partner's Minor suit opening is either short and/or weak after the Opponents get to a 3-NT contract. The double here reassures you that it is not. Lead Partner's Minor.

Example: 1C Dbl. P 2H
P 2-NT P 3-NT
Dbl. (Asks for a Club lead)

g. **If everybody bid, consider suicide or relocation of your abode.** Then lead Dummy's first bid suit if it was bid at the 1-level, if Dummy's first bid suit was at the 2-level, then lead Partner's suit.

h. The double of a voluntarily bid suit slam, as opposed to a sacrifice, is similar to a double of 3-NT; **it asks for an unusual lead.** If Partner thinks the normal lead will defeat the slam, Partner simply does not "double." The two most common reasons to double a slam are:

- (1) The presence of a void, particularly after a pre-empt.
- (2) When a void seems remote, another possibility is that Partner has an AK or AQ in Dummy's first bid suit. Lead the 1st suit bid by Dummy