



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(357) Non-Takeout Doubles: Card-Showing, Maximal, Penalty, Lead+

©AiB

Level: 3-4 (6-7 of 10)

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

The most common type of double, especially at low levels, is a takeout double. However, this double gets used in a variety of different ways and this can be an extremely confusing part of bridge even for experienced players. Here we take a look at some of the times when double is NOT takeout! We will discuss the other options for the meaning of double and look at several of the cases in more detail.

Card-Showing Doubles

Card-showing doubles are doubles that show “enough values to take some action, but not sure what to do”. These doubles do not usually show extreme length in the opponent’s suit (see *Trap Pass and Low-Level Penalty Doubles*, below). Instead, these doubles show enough HCP to not want to pass and usually a relatively balanced hand that is not sure what to do next. The values of the hand tend to be convertible – useful on either offense or defense.

A common use of a card-showing double by many partnerships is in the following auction:

Example 1

1NT 2♠ X

This double does not show a large number of ♠. Most partnerships play this double as a relatively balanced hand with 8+ HCP – invitational or better values. Opener can then make a decision about whether to convert the double to penalty (leave it in) or pull this double to a game or partscore.

There are many more uses of card-showing doubles. This is generally a flexible double that is sometimes called a “*Do Something Intelligent Double*”!



Lead-Directing Doubles

Lead-directing doubles are doubles of artificial bids where it makes no sense for partner take this as a takeout double. We make these doubles to attempt to help partner get off to the best opening lead.

Defeat the Contract

Remember, when making a lead-directing double, we make sure that we can defeat the contract we are doubling. The lower the contract we double, the more defense we need to have to ensure beating the contract. This defense can be the form of a great holding in the suit we are doubling or it can be just a decent holding in the suit we are doubling with more high-card points in the outside suits.

Example 2

When we double 2♣ Stayman, we will usually have a decent 5-card ♣ suit and some outside values as well – we and partner will need to be able to take 6 tricks to beat 2♣. If we only have a 4-card ♣ suit for doubling Stayman, our suit should be very strong and we should have a significant amount of extra values outside the ♣ suit.

Some Bids We Can Double as Lead-Directing

The number of different places where making a double of an artificial bid asks partner to lead that suit is very high.

- *Stayman* – Double usually shows a good 5-card ♣ suit.
- *Transfers* (both Jacoby and Texas) – Doubling a lower-level Jacoby Transfer requires a bit more defense.
- *Ace-Asking Responses* (Blackwood, Keycard, or Gerber responses) – Doubles are all at high levels so less is needed to double these for lead direction.
- *New Minor Forcing* – Double occurs at a relatively low level so we must have more defense to double this artificial call.
- *4th Suit Forcing* - Double also occurs at a low level and we must have more defense to double this artificial call.



Maximal Doubles

When we have found a fit and the opponents compete in the bidding in the suit just below our suit, then there is no room left to make a game try. In this case we need to be creative about how we compete in the bidding.

Example 3

1♠ P 2♠ 3♥
___?

In this case, a bid of 3♠ is still strictly competitive – not inviting partner to bid again.

The way we make a try for game in this “jammed up” auction is with double. This double is called *Maximal Double*. A maximal double is our only game try in this auction.

Partner will now have to evaluate their hand – bidding 3♠ with minimum values for a raise and bidding 4♠ with maximum values for their raise. A maximal double does not promise much defense, as we do not expect partner to pass and convert this double to penalty without an exceptional hand.

Low-Level Penalty Doubles

Low-level doubles, especially at the 2-level, are rarely penalty in the modern game. These are usually takeout doubles, but there are two big exceptions:

- The first is if we have made a value-showing double (like doubling 1NT for penalty) or redouble, showing 10+ points as Responder. After this, all subsequent doubles, by either member of the partnership, are penalty.
- The second is after a trap pass. If we pass a suit that is bid in front of us (either as an opening bid or an overcall) and then we later double that suit, we are usually showing that we trap passed this suit and have a decent hand with length in the opponent’s suit – we do not think they can make it!



High-Level Penalty Doubles – Penalty Doubles & Forcing Pass

A forcing pass is a pass in the direct seat after which we know that partner will be forced to bid and not pass the hand out. Partner will either bid or double the opponents' contract for penalty – our pass is forcing, thus the name "Forcing Pass." When we have a forcing pass available to us then our double is penalty.

Now that we have this new tool of forcing pass, we need to discuss how to make use of it. Let's focus on the most common use of forcing pass - when the opponents sacrifice over our game bid.

Example 4

1♠ P 2NT* 5♥
___?

While we consider this example in detail, let's talk for a moment about our options in the direct seat, the meaning of each of our calls, and most importantly, our overall philosophy towards this auction.

We have the approach that this is our hand and if we think we can make our contract one level higher (i.e., 5♠), then we will do best to bid this. We won't construct our agreements to focus on rare times when we will get super rich doubling the opponents. Thus, the primary question we are trying to answer is "Can we make our contract at the next level?" Should we bid on?

Here is how we cast our vote in the direct seat:

- Bid – We know (strongly believe) we will make our contract at the next level.
- X – We are concerned that we will go down if we bid to the next level. We do NOT need a trump stack (lots of defense) to double; it is more about whether we can make our contract at the next level. It is common to double with "two small" in the opponents' suit because those are two quick losers.
- Pass ("Forcing Pass") – No strong feeling either way, our hand has many convertible values. It is common to make a forcing pass with a singleton in the opponents' suit.

Another way to think about these direct seat calls is:

- Bid – A vote for "Offense" (No choice for partner.)
- X – A vote for "Defense" (Partner can still overrule.)
- Pass – "I'm flexible, Offense or Defense." (Leaving it up to partner.)



General Double Ideas: Direct Seat

Let's continue our discussion with a detailed look at the meaning of our doubles in different competitive situations in theory. Our direct seat doubles tend to have very specific meanings. Let's look at the different situations and the meaning of double in each of them.

- With no known fit, a double is for takeout.
 - It is looking for a fit.
 - It shows enough values (combined with what we know about partner's hand) to compete to this level.
- With a known fit, a double is generally "card-showing".
 - Double is cooperative and shows some defense. It says that we want to either compete in the bidding in our suit or double the opponents for penalty and that we want input from partner in making this decision. We have "convertible values" – cards that are good for both offense and defense.
 - We usually do not have extra length in our fit – that would violate the Law of Total Tricks (LOTT.)
 - We do not promise a trump stack (actually we deny one), but we like to have some values in their suit. A holding like Hxx is perfect for this double.
 - If their suit is immediately under our suit, then we no longer have room to make a game try. In this situation we use double as our game try (called a maximal double.) The maximal double takes precedence over the cooperative card-showing double – it is more important for us to bid game in our own suit than to penalize the opponents.

Example 5

1♠ P 2♠ 3♣
___?

- 3♠ Competitive. To Play. Offensively oriented hand. Generally, Law of Total Tricks.
- X Cooperative. "Card-showing." Some defense and some offense.
- 3♦/3♥ Help Suit Game Tries. Offensively oriented hand with extra values.
- Pass Minimum hand with only 5-card ♠ OR a trap pass.

Example 6

1♠ P 2♠ 3♥
___?

- X General Game Try. Maximal Double.
- Pass Minimum hand with only 5-card ♠ OR a trap pass.



Conclusion

As you can see by the large number of names, different situations, values, and hand types that are promised by these non-takeout doubles, having a bidding mixup with these tools is extremely common. Double is one of the most common actions taken in competitive bidding and most partnerships have general rules for when double is takeout (or that it usually is at low levels), but there are a large number of exceptions to this rule. Spend time with your regular partners going over when double is not takeout so that you do not have a bidding disaster!