

Penalty Doubles (August 2, 2021)

Although the focus of today's lesson is on penalty doubles of low level contracts, I want to begin by providing a brief summary of the various types of doubles. Any one of these doubles could be the focus of a subsequent lesson, if there is sufficient interest.

TakeOut Double

Used when an opponent opens the bidding before you; thus, preventing you from bidding what you would have opened had he not bid. Usually, you hold one of two types of hands:

- A minimum of 12 HCP and at least three-card support for the unbid suits.
- A strong hand in which you first double; and, then bid some degree of NT or your suit. Note: your hand is too strong to simply overcall at the cheapest level.

Negative Double

Used when your partner opens the bidding; and, the next opponent overcalls. His bid makes it difficult for you to make the bid you would have made had he not bid. (Please refer to your Convention Card.)

Example: 1D (1S) X

Your Hand: xxx KQJxx xx Jxx

A negative double by you tells your partner that you have four plus hearts; but, not enough values to bid at the two level. If the opponent had not bid, you would have responded 1H with the above hand.

Responsive Double

An opponent has opened the bidding and your partner has either doubled or overcalled. The next hand (the responder) has raised his partner's suit. A double by you (the advancer) is a responsive double. (Please refer to your Convention Card.)

Example a: (1C) X (2C) X Your double is a responsive double showing support for the unbid suits.

Example b: (1C) 1D (2C) X Your bid is a responsive double showing H/S and values.

Support Double/Redouble

Your partner has opened the bidding and you have bid a suit. An opponent either doubles or overcalls in a suit. If your partner redoubles or doubles, he is promising exactly three-card support for your suit. (Please refer to your Convention Card.)

Example a. 1C (P) 1H (X)
XX = 3 hearts

Example b. 1C (P) 1H (1S)
X = 3 hearts

Note: Only the opener makes a support double/redouble.

Maximal Double

An opponent has opened the hand with a suit. Your partner overcalls. The responder may bid or not. You raise your partner's suit at the cheapest level. The opponent rebids his suit at the three level.

If your partner **doubles**, he is telling you that he is at the top of his range for his overcall (please refer to "Simple Overcall" section of your Convention Card.) Your partner is asking you to bid 3 or 4 of the suit depending on how good was your simple raise (which normally would show three-card support and 7-10 HCP).

Example a. (1C) 1S (P) 2S
(3C) X = Maximal Double

Example b. (1C) 1S (2C) 2S
(3C) X = Maximal Double

Balancing (Reopening) Doubles

You are in the PASSOUT position. The opponents have stopped in a low-level contract. Your side has about half the points in the deck. A balancing double by you is asking your partner to bid his/her best suit or notrump, if appropriate. (See Balancing Doubles from the Memorial Day lesson (May 31st) in which I have provided several examples of the types of hands in which you would make a balancing (reopening) double.

NOTE: You want to try to get the opponents at least to the three level, if possible. Usually, two level contracts make; but, three level ones may get set.

For example: KQ7
 Q64
 J96
 10953

105	A842
J1052	K973
K852	73
QJ7	AK4

J963
A8
AQ104
863

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

W	N	E	S
(P)	P	(1C)	P
(1H)	P	(2H)	X
(P)	2S	All Pass	

Two hearts should make for plus140. Your contract of one spade was down one for minus 50 (nonvulnerable) or minus 100 (vulnerable). On this hand N/S got 90% score on the hand.

Lead Directing Doubles

The Lead Directing Double is one form of a penalty double. The most common example of this type of double is of an **artificial bid** by an opponent (See February 1, 2021 Lesson). When your partner doubles such a bid, he is asking for the LEAD of that suit should you be the opening leader.

For example: (1NT) P (2C) X (2C = Stayman)

Your partner is asking you to lead a club.

His hand: xx
 Ax
 Jxx
 KJ10xxx

For example: (1NT) P 2D* X (2D* = Transfer to hearts)

Your partner is asking you to lead a diamond.

His hand: xxx
xxx
KQ109x
Ax

Penalty Doubles

The penalty double is used when you think that your side can **SET** the opponents in their contract. Be very careful if they are vulnerable! The following are examples of penalty doubles of **low-level contracts**.

1. The classic example of the penalty double in action is when the opponent opens one of a suit. Your partner makes a takeout double. If you hold length in the opponent's suit, you can convert the takeout double to a penalty double by passing.

a) (1H) X (P) P

Your hand: Axx K109xx x Qxx

b) (1C) X (P) P

Your hand: Jxx Qxx x AQxxxx

2. If your partner has opened anything and the next player **overcalls 1NT**, a double by you is 100% for penalty. It is part of the “**Hello**” system used when an opponent opens with a weak notrump.

For example: 1C (1NT) X (P)

Your hand: Qxx AQx J10x Kxxx

3. If an opponent opens with a **weak-two bid** (2D/2H/2S) and your partner doubles for takeout, you can convert it to a penalty double by passing. Refer to the lesson on Lebensohl—Part II (July 5) and the lesson on preemptive bidding (April 5).
4. You have opened with a **weak-two bid** (2D/2H/2S) and an opponent has made a takeout double of your bid. If your partner passes initially and the advancer bids any suit, a **double** now by your partner is 100% for penalty.

Example: 2H (X) P (2S/3C/3D)
 P (P) X = Penalty Double

If your partner bids any suit, he is showing support for your suit and his bid is **lead direct**. NOTE: if the opponents pass, don't forget to rebid your suit!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Example: 2H (X) 2S/3C/3D (P)
 3H

5. Your partner has opened with one notrump. An opponent, who is playing either DONT, Capelletti, Meckwell, etc., makes a bid in his system. A double by you is for penalty (refer to the Lebensohl—Part I lesson on June 28).

For example: 1NT (2C*) P (2D**) * = One-suited hand
 P (2H) X ** = Forced bid

Your double is an example of using Delayed Lebensohl, i.e., let the opponents find their landing spot. It is a 100% penalty double.

6. Please refer to the **Special Doubles** section on your Convention Card. If a double is made above the levels as specified on your Convention Card, then it is always a penalty double.

For example: Let's say on your Convention Card that you specify Negative Doubles through 3D, Responsive Doubles through 3D, and Support Doubles through 3D.

The bidding has proceeded as follows: (2S) X (3S) X

Because you are playing Responsive Doubles through the level of 3D, a double of the 3S bid is for penalty.

J7653
QJ3
KJ
1074

842	AKQ109
AK	1094
Q432	986
Q962	J3

Void
87652
A1075
AK85

N/S set the contract one trick for a score of 92% on the hand

7. The bidding has proceeded as follows: 1H (2NT*) X (3C)
P (P) X (P)
?

*2NT = Unusual NT showing 5/5 in the minors.

Your hand: Q1094 KQJ1095 105 A

You open with 1H. The next hand makes a bid of 2NT which shows 5/5 in the minors. When your partner doubles this bid, he is showing the ability to double for penalty at least one of the minor suits. When he doubles 3C, it is a penalty double.

In this hand, E/W is vulnerable and N/S is nonvulnerable. You have to decide whether to pull the double, or not. I would take my chances and leave it in.

NOTE: The above hand appeared in the **Roanoke Times**.

8. Your partner opens 2D (Flannery) showing 4S/5H and 11-15 HCP. The next player overcalls. If your partner doubles, it is for penalty.

Aside from the above examples, how do you know when a double is for penalty? The following hands are an assortment of penalty doubles of low level contracts.

Example 1.	Q73	Bidding:	E	S	W	N
	108742		1D	(1S)	2D	(P)
	108		P	(3C)	P	(3S)
	1092		X = Penalty Double			

A82	K6	
Q96	KJ3	
6543	KQJ8	N/S vulnerable; E/W nonvul,
A43	7652	

J10954	3 spades, X, off 1 for +200
A4	
A7	
KQJ9	

Example 2.	K97542	Bidding:	S	W	N	E
	52		1H	(P)	1S	(2C)
	K1052		P	(P)	X = Pen.	
	K					

AJ6	Q108	E/W vulnerable; N/S nonvul.
976	A103	
QJ764	8	
43	QJ10972	

3
KQJ84
A93
A865

N/S got a score of plus 500 for setting 2C doubled.

Example 3.	10		S	W	N	E
	KQ532		Bidding: 1D	(1S)	2H	(2S)
	AJ5		P	P	X = Pen.	
	K943					

E/W Vulnerable
N/S Nonvulnerable

Q8654	J93
A96	J1087
2	Q9876
Q1065	8

AK72
4
K1043
AJ72

N/S scored plus 800 on the hand by setting E/W three tricks.

Example 4.	A6		Both sides vulnerable.				
	J97			S	W	N	E
	10973		Bidding: 1S	(P)	1N	(2D)	
	K863		P	(P)	X = Pen.		

J975	43
Q10853	62
Q6	AKJ82
J5	A742

KQ1082
AK2
84
Q109

N/S scored plus 500 for setting 2D two tricks.

Next Week: The Techniques of Slam Bidding

Last Week's Assignment: How do you plan the play of the following hand?

962
105
73
AKJ964

Contract: 3N

Opening Lead: Q of spades

QJ1073
KJ64
984
2

64
Q92
K1065
Q873

AK5
A873
AQJ2
105

Analysis: Win the queen of spades because you don't want a heart switch. You have 6 total tricks (2S, 1H, 1D, 2C). What can defeat the hand? If East holds four clubs to the queen and holds up when you play the 10 of clubs. His holdup will defeat the contract. Way to go defense! But, if you lead the 10 of clubs and overtake with the jack of clubs, the situation works out much better. You are in dummy to take the diamond finesse. When it works, you can get back to dummy with the A of clubs. Cash the king of clubs. Finesse the diamond a second time to bring home the contract. NOTE; The devastating holdup play by the defender.

