

Competitive Bidding I—Takeout Double (September 13, 2021)

The focus of today's lesson is on the **takeout double**. When an opponent opens the bidding, your partner (or you) has three options: pass, make a takeout double, or overcall at some level.

When an opponent has opened the bidding, many times you hold a hand as good as the opener's hand. If he had not opened the bidding, you would have done so. You announce this fact to your partner by making a **takeout double**. If the responder passes, you (the advancer) **absolutely must bid** no matter how weak you may be. **The one time you can pass is if you happen to hold a large number of the opponent's suit. You convert the takeout double to a penalty double.**

For Example: Your partner has made a takeout double of the opponent's opening bid of 1C. If you hold a hand similar to the one below, **PASS** and rack up your reward!

54 K5 J75 KQ10932

The minimum requirements for a takeout double are:

- A minimum of 12/13 high card points (HCP)
- At least three-card support for all of the unbid suits

Example 1. KQxx x Axxx KQxx

Your right hand opponent (RHO) has opened one heart. The above hand is a classic takeout double. You have 14 HCP as well as four-card support for the other three suits. Your hand will make a reasonable dummy for any suit bid by your partner.

Instead of holding the minimum requirements for a takeout double, you may hold a strong hand.

Example 2. KQxxx A Axxx KQx

Your RHO has opened one heart. Although this hand is much stronger than example one, you should still begin by making a takeout double. At some point you bid your spade suit. This hand is much too strong to simply make an overcall of one spade. By first making a takeout double and then bidding your suit at some level, you are telling your partner that you hold a powerful hand (17+ points). You (as the advancer) can pass or bid according to your hand.

CAUTION: When you have forced your partner to bid by making a takeout double, never jump to any contract which you cannot reasonably make in your own hand. Your partner may have had to make a bid with zero points!

TIP: Be wary of leading the suit bid by your partner. You forced him to make a bid by making a takeout double. He may not have anything in the suit he bid.

Responding to Partner's Takeout Double

When your partner makes a takeout double, it is crucial that you know the proper responses to make. Suppose the bidding is:

West	North	East	South
(1D)	Dbl	(P)	???

Your partner is asking you to bid. How do you respond? Make a minimum suit response with 0-8 HCP.

*You hold the following hand: K1043 Q4 1043 J764

With this hand, you should respond 1S. You are lucky to have a useful hand; but, you are not strong enough to do more than bid at the one level. Notice that you would have bid 1S with: 10843 Q4 1043 J764.

Bidding 1S doesn't promise values since partner has forced you to bid.

*You hold the following hand: K103 Q4 Q1043 J754

Bid 1NT with a relatively balanced hand and 7-10 HCP, plus a stopper in the enemy suit. Although 7-10 HCP is recommended here, the exact strength is a matter of style, and expert opinions vary. The conservative view is to use the bid for 7-10 or 8-10. Others recommend 6-9 or even 5-10. As with many bidding situations, you and partner should discuss the meaning of a 1NT response.

*You hold the following hand: K103 QJ743 1043 A3

You should not bid 1H. You are much too strong. You should jump to 2H, a bid that is invitational. Partner can pass if he has a minimum takeout double. If he has 13 HCP and you have 10, that's not enough points for game. If he has extra for his takeout double, he can bid again. Note: If you held the same hand but only four hearts, you still should jump to 2H which promises at least four hearts and 9-11 HCP.

*You hold the following hand: A3 J53 KQ104 J1074

With this hand you should bid 2NT. You are promising 11 to 12 HCP and at least one stopper in the enemy's suit. This hand is too strong for 1NT and you don't have a four-card or longer major to bid. Always try to play notrump instead of a minor suit when you have a hand this strong. Two notrump shows your strength and approximate pattern and allows your partner to make an informed decision on where to place the final contract.

*You hold the following hand: A6 QJ53 KQ74 J1043

Whenever you hold 12+ HCP and your partner has made a takeout double, your side has game. The way to send this message to your partner is by **cuebidding** the opener's suit. Should you play in 3NT or 4H? If partner has a four-card heart suit, you would want to play in 4H. If partner has only three-card heart support, then you want to play in 3NT. Since you are not sure, cuebid 2D. If partner rebids 2H, you can raise to 4H. If partner bids something else, you can bid 3NT.

*You hold the following hand: KJ10874 9 54 Q1094

Jump to the three-level with a long suit with good playing strength but **less than game values**. With the above hand you should bid 3S. Your hand has too much potential for as simple 1S bid; but, it doesn't qualify for a 2S bid with only 6 HCP. Bidding one more than a single jump shows you have a long suit and some useful points. Partner can evaluate his hand to decide whether to continue to 4S.

PRACTICE HANDS

In the next six hands, suppose LHO opens 1C and your partner makes a takeout double. Responder passes. What is your bid? (1C) Dbl (P) ???

*Your Hand: xxx KQx 9xxx xxx

Answer: Bid 1D. Your suit is weak; but, you are forced to bid. Diamonds is the only four-card suit you have.

*Your Hand: xx Qxxx 10xx AKxx

Answer: Bid 2H. It is true the your hearts are only four cards long and not very strong, but bidding 1H does not show the strength of your hand. Partner usually has four-card heart support. Even though you have a double club stopper, you want to show the four card heart suit. If you did not have a four-card major, then 1N is your bid.

*Your Hand: xx Kxx KQJ10x xxx

Answer: Bid 2D. You don't have a four-card major to bid. You don't have a club stopper. That leaves bidding diamonds. Jumping to 2D promises diamonds and 9-11 HCP, which is a good description of your hand.

*Your Hand: Jxxx xx Jxxxx xx

Answer: Because you are so weak, here it is probably better to respond 1D rather than 1S. Players will disagree; but, the key may be safety in numbers. Your partner should have at least 3 diamonds for his takeout double.

*Your Hand: QJx Jxx KJx KJxx

Answer: Bid 2NT. You hold 12 HCP and a double stop in clubs. If you had held a four-card major, then a cuebid of 2C is the proper bid.

*Your Hand: Axx QJ10x AQJxx x

Answer: Bid 2C. A cuebid of two clubs is the only absolutely forcing bid available to you.

When your partner has doubled the opening bid and the responder takes action, you are NO longer obligated to respond. A bid by you at this point is voluntary and denotes some measure of strength. It is called a **Free Bid**. In our next lesson, we will focus on when to make a free bid. Also, we will begin to look at rebids by the doubler.

Let's look at a complete hand.

973	Neither side is vulnerable
85	Dealer: South
Q85	
J8643	
10	J842
AKJ2	Q10963
AJ74	K10
Q1052	K7
AKQ65	
74	
9632	
A9	

	S	W	N	E
Bidding of the hand:	1S	X	P	3H
	P	4H	P	P
	P			

Contract: 4H by East

Opening Lead: Ace of spades

Analysis of the Hand:

East is the **Master Hand**. Losers: S = 4 (one unavoidable; 3 avoidable)
 H = 0
 D = 0
 C = 1

Declarer's Plan of Action: East has 4 spade losers. One must be lost to the ace of spades; but, the other three can be ruffed in the dummy. **KEY: Declarer must not draw trumps immediately!**

South leads the ace of spades and continues with another spade which declarer ruffs small in the dummy. Declarer leads a small diamond to his king and leads another spade and ruffs high with the king of hearts. Declarer leads the the jack of trumps to his queen and leads his final spade which he trumps with the ace of hearts. Declarer plays the ace of diamonds and trumps a diamond to get to his hand. He pulls the remaining trumps and exits with a club. Four hearts making five should be the normal result on this hand.

Assignment:

On the above hand, what if South shifts to a trump at trick two? How does this tactic change declarer's original plan of action?

What if South leads a heart at trick one instead of his ace of spades?

What if N/S bids four spades? Do you bid five hearts or double (penalty) four spades.

Next Week: We will continue to look at the takeout double, focusing on your possible rebid(s) after your partner has responded to your takeout double.

The following hand appeared in the **Roanoke Times**, Saturday, September 4, 2021.

South held: K863 Q4 xxx KQxx N/S vulnerable

Bidding:	North	East	South	West
	1H	(2D)	Dbl	(3D)
	P	(P)	?	

N/S holds minimum of 22 HCP. South has no wasted points in the diamond suit. South should double again. North should pass. South already has shown spades/clubs and values with his first double. Opening Lead: Queen of hearts.

South's first double is a **Negative Double**.

South's second double is a **Penalty Double**.

Look back at the lesson on August 2nd for other examples of penalty doubles of low-level contracts.