

Keeping Up With Conventions

Handling Opponents' Doubles & Preempts — by David Lindop 

This series of articles looks at how to fill out the standard convention card. Previous articles can be found by visiting the *Better Bridge News* section at www.AudreyGrant.com.

We're getting near the end of this series of articles. This month we'll take a look at a variety of topics on the back (left) side of the convention card.

When an Opponent Doubles

Partner opens 1♦ and the opponent on your right doubles. What do you respond with this hand?

♠ K 10 3
♥ 9 4
♦ K 9 2
♣ A Q J 7 5

If you would respond 2♣, your partnership agreement is to simply ignore the double and make your normal response. After all, the double hasn't taken up any of your bidding room. That's fine, but most partnerships change the meaning of responder's bids after an opponent makes a takeout double. That's dealt with on this section on the card:

OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE			
New Suit Forcing:	1 level	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 level <input type="checkbox"/>
Jump Shift:	Forcing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>
Redouble implies	no fit	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2NT Over	Limit+	Limit	Weak
Majors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	_____		

This section only applies if partner opens 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠ and the next player doubles. If partner's 1NT opening bid is doubled, for example, the meaning of responder's calls is handled in the section on NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS.

Why is it common to change the meaning of responder's bids after a takeout double? It centers on the fact that responder has a new call available after the double: the redouble.

The Redouble

The standard agreement is that a redouble shows about 10 or more high-card points. It essentially says, "This is our hand, partner." You might redouble with the intention of doubling the opponents for penalty in whichever contract they choose; you might be planning to show a good suit of your own; or you might be planning to support partner.

With this agreement, you would redouble with this hand. Suppose you are South and the auction continued:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	Double	Redouble
2♣	Pass	Pass	?

You could now double for penalty. You would also double for penalty if the opponents bid notrump.

Suppose the auction went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	Double	Redouble
Pass	Pass	1♥	?

You could now bid 2♣. This would be *forcing*, showing the same type of hand that you would have responded 2♣ if there had been no double.

What if the auction went this way:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	Double	Redouble
Pass	Pass	1♠	?

You don't have quite enough in spades to double, so you could bid 2♣ as before. Alternatively, you could pass and see if partner wants to double 1♠. You might then choose to defend for penalty, especially if the opponents are vulnerable.

The point is that your pass in this situation would be *forcing*. Your redouble announced that the deal belonged to your side, so the partnership will either bid to its best contract or double the opponents if they get overboard.

The real impact of the redouble, however, is how it colors the meaning of responder's other bids.

Responder's New Suit

What call do you make with this hand if partner opens 1♦ and the next player doubles?

♠ J 8 5
♥ 9 4
♦ 7 3
♣ K Q J 7 5 3

If your right-hand opponent had passed, you would have to respond 1NT since you don't have enough strength to bid a new suit at the two level. A new suit response would be forcing and you might get too high. After the double, however, you can respond 2♣. This is no longer forcing because you would have started with a redouble with enough strength to bid a new suit at the two level.

Strangely enough, although it is common to agree that a new suit at the two level is non forcing after an opponent's takeout double, a new suit at the one level is usually treated as forcing. Why? Suppose partner opens the bidding 1♦, the next player doubles, and you have this hand:

♠ 7 3
♥ A J 7 5
♦ A J 9 5
♣ 7 4 3

You have enough to redouble but the auction may become awkward if the opponents bid spades. You don't want to introduce a four-card heart suit at the two level or higher but also don't want to miss a heart fit if you have one. You may have a heart fit despite the takeout double since the doubler doesn't always have four cards in an unbid suit. It's more effective to make a forcing response of 1♥, planning to show the diamond support next if partner doesn't like hearts ... exactly what you would have done without the double.

So, you would typically mark the convention card like this:

New Suit Forcing: 1 level 2 level

This indicates that after a takeout double a new suit at the one level is still forcing but a new suit at the two level is non forcing.

The Jump Shift

You will rarely hold a hand strong enough to make a standard jump shift—about 17 or more points—when partner opens one of a suit and the next player doubles. If you do, you can always start with a redouble. So, most partnerships would treat a jump in a new suit by responder as non forcing after a takeout double.

Suppose partner opens 1♦, the next player doubles, and you have this hand. You could respond 1♠, forcing—a new suit at the one level. However, some players prefer to jump to 2♠ with this type of hand, as a weak, preemptive response. If that's your style, you would check the "Weak" box beside Jump Shift. If you would hold a more invitational hand for a jump to 2♠, you would check the "Inv." box; if a jump to 2♠ would still be forcing, you would check the "Forcing" box.

Preemptive Jump Raises

Suppose partner opens 1♥, the next player doubles and this is your hand. What call do you make? Nobody could quarrel with a simple raise to 2♥, but the modern style is to make a weak jump raise to 3♥ with this hand. This preemptive bid is designed to make it more difficult for the opponents to compete to their best spot while being reasonably safe since your side must have at least a nine-card fit.

This is such a standard treatment that you don't need to mark it on the convention card. Again, it comes back to availability of the redouble. With the values for a limit raise to 3♥, you could start with a redouble.

Dormer/Jordan/Truscott 2NT

But should you redouble with a fit for partner? Suppose partner's 1♥ opening bid is doubled and you have this hand.

With 10 high-card points you have enough to redouble, but what will you do if the auction continues:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	Double	Redouble
2♠	Pass	3♠	?

You don't want to double the opponents for penalty when you have such a good fit for partner, but to show the fit you would have to bid 4♥ which might be too much.

To get around this dilemma, many partnerships use a jump to 2NT to show the values for a limit raise of partner's suit after a takeout double. Partner can return to three of the agreed suit with a minimum, or bid game with enough strength to accept an invitational raise.

This convention goes by a variety of names: Dormer, Jordan, or Truscott. If you agree to use this convention, you would mark the convention card like this:

Redouble implies no fit

2NT Over	Limit+	Limit	Weak
Majors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

By checking both boxes in the column under "Limit" you indicate that 2NT shows a limit raise after a double if partner opens either a major suit or a minor suit. Notice that you would also check the box beside "Redouble implies no fit" because you would usually bid 2NT with a fit. You might redouble with three-card support since a limit raise typically implies four-card support.

If you would bid 2NT over a double with 13 or more points and support—planning to continue to game anyway if partner rebids three of the suit—you would check the boxes under "Limit+" indicating that 2NT shows the strength for a limit raise or better.

Some partnerships prefer to keep the jump to the three level as the limit raise and to use 2NT to show a preemptive raise—typically after a minor-suit opening only. They would check the box(es) in the third column.

When an Opponent Preempts

Suppose you have this hand and the opponent on your right opens with a weak 2♥ bid. What call do you make?

Practically everyone would make a takeout double with this hand. What if the opening bid were 3♥? A takeout double would still be the standout choice. What if your right-hand opponent opens 4♥? Now we're getting into a grey area. Would a double be for takeout or for penalty? Perhaps you would double anyway, not caring whether partner leaves the double in or takes it out. But what if the opening bid were 4♠? You'd certainly like to double for penalty, but that wouldn't work well if your partner thinks your double is for takeout and bids 5♥.

The agreement on whether a double is for penalty or takeout is put in this section of the card:

VS Opening Preempts Double Is

Takeout thru _____ Penalty

Conv. Takeout: _____

Lebensohl 2NT Response

Other: _____

The standard agreement is that a double of an opening preemptive suit bid below the game level—up to 4♦—is for takeout; a double of 4♥ is optional ... partner can leave it in or take it out; a double of 4♠ or higher is for penalty. If that's your partnership style, you would fill out the card something like this:

Takeout thru 4H Penalty

Some partnerships prefer using a double for takeout through 4♠ or higher. If that's your agreement, you would mark the card appropriately.

Since it is standard to use a double for takeout through at least the three level, you would check the "Penalty" box if you prefer to use the double of a weak two-bid or three-bid for penalty. You would also have to Alert the opponents.