

# Take-Out Doubles

*by Dave Riseborough*

The take-out double shows an opening strength hand and it says: “I can support any suit you like to call: I have shortage in the opened suit.”

The ideal shape is a 5-4-4-0 or 4-4-4-1, the singleton or void being in the opened suit.

With things seldom being ideal, a 4-4-3-2 or even a 5-4-3-1 shape is acceptable as long as the shortage is in the opened suit.

If the opened suit is a major, you should have at least four cards in the other major.

## What If?

What if you have an opening-strength hand and three or four cards in their suit? You pass!

As always, prepare your bid while the opponents are thinking about their bid so that when you have their suit with an opening-strength hand you can pass without hesitation!

If in that situation your partner makes a take-out double, you might pass for penalties or bid no-trumps.

The take-out double is a valuable tool in your bidding arsenal as long as you use the above guidelines.

\*

## Responses to Take-Out Doubles

What about responses to a take-out double?

Your partner has said, “I have an opening strength hand, a shortage in the opened suit and I can support any suit you like to call”.

First, let’s consider what to do when the opponent on your right passes or redoubles.

**You have to bid**, even if you have no points. As with a normal response to an opening bid, you bid your suits up, preferring a 4-card suit to a 3-card suit. Remember you are supporting a suit which your partner “has bid”!

For example, if the bidding goes: 1H – X (partner) – No bid – you have to bid.

With 0-5 points, you bid your best suit at the lowest possible level: this tells your partner, if you had opened the bidding I would have passed!

The corollary to that is that if you have 6+ points and you would have responded to an opening bid from partner, you should now bid at one level higher than necessary.

Let's look at some examples.

The opening bid is 1H; your partner has doubled implying spades (remember, if the opened suit is a major, the doubler should have at least four cards in the other major); and RHO has passed.

(a) You hold: S 9632      H J64 D A1073      C 98    Your response would be 1S

(b) You hold: S 9632      H J64 D A1073      C K8    Your response would be 2S

(c) You hold: S K632      H J64 D A1073      C K8    Your response would be 3S.

Remember, you are responding to the double as if partner had opened 1S.

### **Opponents' Bids?**

But what if your RHO had bid 2H?

With hand (a) you should pass;

With hand (b) you should bid 2S;

With hand (c) you should bid 3S.

And what if you hold cards in your opponents' suit?

Holding a 4-3-3-3 hand with four of the opponents' suit, bid your lowest available 3-card suit, if you have 0-5 points or 6-9 with no points in their suit.

With 6-8 points mainly in their suit you *may* think of 1NT.

With 9+ points and their suit try passing now. This is a sign of strength. You are converting your partner's take-out double into a penalty double.

For example: 1C – X – Pass – ?

You hold:    S KQx    H xx    D KQJ    C xxxxx

Or            S Kx    H QJx    D Qxx    C J109xx

Try passing. The stronger partner is the more the opponents are going down.