

## GENERAL BIDDING PRINCIPLES

1) When one partner makes a single jump to game in a suit when a non-jump bid would be forcing, he implies good strength in the partnership's bid suit(s) and no controls elsewhere. Also, the jumper's hand should be at least somewhat better than has been promised up to the time of the jump. If all partner needs for slam is good suit quality in the jumper's suit(s), s/he can go on to slam.

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♣
2NT	3♠ - forcing
	4♠ - good spades and clubs

Responder might have ♠KJxx ♥xx ♦xx ♣AKQxx for the 4♠ bid. If the queen of clubs were a small card, she would bid 3♠, not 4♠, which encourages further bidding. The 4♠ bid would permit opener to bid slam with ♠AQxx ♥Axx ♦Axx ♣Jxx, while he would pass with a better hand that lacks first or second round control of an unbid suit: ♠AQxxx ♥QJx ♦AQJ ♣xx. The lesser bid does not deny good strength, however. Responder would bid just 3♠ (forcing) with ♠Jxxx ♥Kx ♦Kx ♣AQxxx, for two reasons: the spades are not strong and the hand has strength outside of clubs and spades.

Note that this principle applies only when a lesser bid would be forcing. Otherwise the jump merely describes overall strength:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦
2♥	2♠ - weak preference
	3♥/3♠ non-forcing raises
	4♥/4♠ - too good for 3♥/3♠

2) When either partner has redoubled during an auction in which both have participated, a subsequent double by either partner is a business double:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Rdbl	2♣
Pass	Pass	Dbl - business double	

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass
Pass	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl - business double			

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl - takeout double			

The last double is for takeout because North has not yet participated in the auction.

3) The bidding of three suits, including a jump, promises a singleton or void in the fourth suit, but there are two exceptions: (1) this does not apply after a Fourth Suit Artificial bid, and (2) when the last bid is a raise of partner's suit, and partner has bid and rebid just one suit, the raise *denies* a singleton or void:

Opener	Responder
1♥	1♠
1NT	3♣
3♥	4♥

The 4♥ bid denies a singleton or void in diamonds, with which a 4♦ call would be made instead. See section 4-6, Non-Jump Splinters.

4) When a notrump probe gets doubled, a redouble by the next hand does *not* show strength in the doubled suit--it asks that partner bid notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♠	Dbl	Rdbl	

North has ♠92 ♥A43 ♦AQ964 ♣J54. She redoubles to indicate that she would have bid 3NT if there had been no double. South should play the hand, so that his spade strength (Kxx?) won't be led through on the opening lead. With the major suit holdings reversed, North would pass over the double, despite the ace of spades, because she lacks a heart stopper. This redouble must be Alerted. Note that this applies only to a probable notrump probe, not to doubles of other bids, artificial or natural.

5) When an opponent redoubles a takeout double (or a double that is primarily for takeout) of a suit bid, and the suit is one that *only that opponent* has bid, a pass over the redouble is for penalties. The passer wants to defend against the redoubled contract:

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Rdbl	Pass	

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	Pass		

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	Pass		

In all three sequences, the pass over the redouble indicates a willingness to defend against the redoubled contract. Passes of all "SOS" redoubles are for penalties. Marshal Miles put it simply: "Whenever a penalty pass would not be improbable, the pass has that meaning even over a redouble."

When the suit has been bid by both opponents, however, or the redouble is made by the opponent who did *not* bid the suit, a pass over a redouble is non-committal:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass

In both sequences, East's pass does not show a willingness to defend against the redoubled bid. It merely says that she has nothing worth showing at this time.

When the double is for business (or more business than takeout), a pass over any redouble shows a willingness (or resignation) to defend:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
Dbl	Rdbl	Pass	- willing to defend

6) Immediate redoubles are not "S. O. S." They usually show a very strong hand, and tell partner not to be intimidated by the double:

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	Dbl	Rdbl

If North's double is for business, East's redouble says that he expects 2♣ to make and does not want West to run. A pass by South at this point is non-committal if the double is negative, since the redouble is made by the opponent who did not bid the suit.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl			

South has a strong hand with good clubs; the redouble is not a rescue request, although it does encourage North to bid if he has anything worth showing.

*Reopening* redoubles (after two passes) ask for a rescue, but only at low levels, and only if partner has not participated in the auction:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	Pass
Rdbl			

South wants to be rescued from 1♣ redoubled.

There is one situation when a redouble is S. O. S. even though both partners have participated in the auction: A responder to a takeout double may ask to be rescued after a minimum forced response:

South	West	North	East
1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♣

Dbl Pass Pass Rdbl

East no doubt has made a "weakness response" in clubs and wants to be rescued. She might have ♠72 ♥7632 ♦J873 ♣J76. If 2♣ had been a free bid (e.g., over a redouble by North), then the redouble would be to play.

7) When partner uses an artificial bid (e.g., unusual notrump, cue bid) to ask for a choice between two suits, and you have equal length--choose the lower ranking suit. With a doubtful unusual notrump, holding longer clubs than diamonds, it is good to know that partner will prefer clubs with equal length. The corollary is that when partner bids two suits naturally, you usually prefer the first bid suit with equal length (but there are many exceptions). Another corollary is that with 5=4 or 6=5 suits you should try to *bid* both suits rather than show them in some conventional way, as you would want to do with 4=5 or 5=6.

8) When an opposing *voluntary* bid has been raised immediately to the two or three level, all doubles are negative, not business, unless notrump has been bid by your side:

South	West	North	East
1♠	1NT	2♠	Dbl - penalty, because of the notrump bid

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♣	Dbl - takeout

In the second case East's double is for takeout, showing the red suits (Advancive Double).

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♥	1♠	2♥
Dbl			

South has too much to pass, and doesn't know what to bid: ♠32 ♥98 ♦AQJ3 ♣AKJ82. The double asks North to bid again.

However:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Dbl	Pass	1♠
2♣	2♠	Dbl - business (1♠ a forced bid)	

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♣	Pass
Pass	2♠	3♣	Dbl - business double

North's raise to 3♣ was not "immediate." See section 9-2, Competitive Doubles.

Another exception: When a takeout doubler of one major later doubles a raised bid in the other major, he is exposing a probable psych:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Dbl	1♠	Pass
2♠		Dbl - business double	

If the doubled opening had been in a minor, say 1♣, the second double would be for takeout (e.g., a very strong 3=4=5=1 hand).

9) You can't double an overcall at the one or two level for business if the suit is bid on your left, unless partner has bid notrump:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl - for takeout (5=4=1=3?)	

A double of 2♦ by South would have been for business (suit bid on the right).

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♠	Pass	Pass
	Dbl - for takeout (balancing, with partner silent)		

This is the only exception to the rule that doubles are for penalty if one's side has bid notrump.

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♠
	Dbl - for business (direct double)		

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl - business	

The last double is for business because North's partner has bid notrump. With 4-4 in the majors North could bid 2♥, having denied five hearts with the first pass. Such a major-suit balancing bid should promise four cards in the next higher suit, so this would imply four spades also.

10) Whenever your side has opened the bidding and an opponent doubles (for business) a completely artificial bid (i.e., a bid that implies absolutely nothing about that suit, which excludes notrump probes, splinter bids, and cue bids), a redouble shows at least one stopper in that suit, a notrump bid shows a double stopper, a suit bid is non-committal, and a pass implies no stopper.

If partner has bid notrump strongly, the redouble of an artificial bid is okay with only a potential stopper (e.g., Qx, Jxx). The assumption is that a person who has shown a good notrump hand probably has at least a little something in the doubled suit, making the "potential" as good as actual.

These rules do not apply to doubles of Stayman 2♣/3♣ or to 2♦/3♦ responses to Stayman after an opening notrump. Doubles of these bids require a different treatment. See section 5-3, When the Opponents Intervene vs 1NT.

The principle does not apply in these situations either:

-- When a Blackwood or Gerber bid (or response) is doubled. See section 6-6, Blackwood, and section 6-9, Gerber.

-- Double of a Fourth Suit Artificial bid. See section 4-10, Fourth Suit Artificial.

-- Double of an artificial bid during Checkback Stayman sequences. See section 4-8, Checkback Stayman by Opener, and section 4-9, Checkback Stayman by Responder.

11) Whenever a 4NT bid would be a natural raise in notrump and a suit has not been bid previously, a bid of 4♠ is an artificial notrump raise. Otherwise it is sometimes Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB), sometimes natural, as described in the notrump bidding sections.

— The 4♠ notrump raise is a weaker raise than 4NT.

Opener	Responder
1NT/2NT/3NT	4♠ - mild interest in slam 4NT - strong interest in slam

The 4♠ response to 1NT (16-18 HCP) implies 15 HCP, while 4NT implies 16 HCP. However, the 4♠ raise can be used when there is a potential grand slam. That is, a player may plan on bidding 6NT if partner bids 4NT, but 7NT if he bids 6NT.

The 4♠ notrump raise is especially valuable after a 2NT or 3NT overcall, both of which (especially 3NT) are wide-range bids. See section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls.

The conventional four-level bids do not apply when a 2NT responder rebids at the four level after opener raises to 3NT:

Opener	Responder
1♣	2NT
3NT	4♠ - Five spades, 19-20 HCP 4NT - 19-20 HCP

12) When a splinter bidder follows with a 4NT bid on his very next turn to bid, that is Exclusion Blackwood. Partner does not show the ace of the splinter suit, because the 4NT bidder is void in that suit.

13) When competing at a high level, it is a stronger action to make a forcing pass and then pull partner's double than to bid immediately. With a strong hand you won't look unethical when you pull a double that partner has made after long thought. Another reason is that you may want to bid slam if partner bids, but stop at five if he doubles. Besides, why not bid right away with the weaker hand instead of letting partner agonize over a meaningless decision?

Note that this policy does not apply to non-forcing passes. Pulling a double after a non-forcing pass is a weak action.

If the double is pulled to a new suit, that is a cue bid:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♦	3♠
4♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	5♣ - cue bid, not a suit	

North's pull of the double after his forcing pass shows interest in slam. In order to bid clubs naturally, North would have to bid clubs immediately over 4♠:

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♦	3♠
4♥	4♠	5♣ - natural, not a cue bid	

A player who doubles in the direct position instead of making a forcing pass is strongly suggesting that partner not go on. A reopening double is more optional.

14) When is a pass forcing? At least in these cases:

-- When either partner has previously made a bid that is forcing to game (but is not a game bid itself):

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2NT	3♥
Pass - forcing			

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	4♥	4♠
Pass - not forcing			

-- When either partner has made a strong (not preemptive) raise to game:

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
4♥	4♠	Pass - forcing	

-- When a bid has been made that is forcing to a limit situation.

When is a pass not forcing? At least in these cases:

-- Following a limit raise, when opener has not made a particularly strong rebid.

-- When either partner has made a game bid that may be speculative or preemptive (i.e., the bid was not preceded by any strong call from either partner):

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♠
4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠
Pass - not forcing			

-- When the passer has previously limited his hand (e.g., by a notrump bid):

South	West	North	East
1NT	2♣	2♠	4♥
Pass - not forcing			

-- A player who has shown nothing and who may have nothing cannot make a forcing pass and cannot be subjected to a forcing pass. A direct double by such a player suggests only "cards," not a particular desire that partner stop bidding, and a pass is neither forcing nor invitational:

South	West	North	East
1♥	4♣	Pass	Pass
4♥	5♣	Pass - not forcing, weak	
Dbl - shows cards			

North's "cards" cannot be too impressive, in view of his pass to 4♣, but his double is not a warning for partner to stop bidding.

South	West	North	East
1♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
5♥	Pass	Pass	5♠
Pass - not forcing			

15) Whenever first seat has opened with one of a suit, and third hand has bid a new suit, a bid by fourth hand of opener's suit is natural and non-forcing. An exception may occur when RHO bids a new suit over partner's 1NT overcall. See section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls.

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♥/Pass	1♠	2♣ - not forcing

If North had passed, the only way East could show a long club suit is by jumping to 3♣, not forcing. Bidding 2♣ and then 3♣ does not show a club suit. See section 10-12, Probing Cue Bids.

16) When an opposing takeout double has been left in, a redouble by opener is "SOS," asking for a rescue bid.

17) After a non-vulnerable limit raise, the raiser must not sell out to an opposing bid if a second raise is just one level higher than the first, unless his hand has worsened because of secondary strength in a suit bid over him.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	3♥	3♠
Pass	Pass	?	

North thought that his side could take nine tricks in a heart contract. If vulnerable, he has to pass, as he can't risk -200 against an opposing 140. If not vulnerable he must either bid 4♥ or double, as South's pass is semi-forcing. However, with, say, Kx of spades, he can judge that 4♥ would be likely to go -300, making a pass sensible.