

DEFENSE AGAINST PREEMPTIVE OPENINGS

Against Opening Three Bids

-- Doubles are primarily for takeout, but may be left in if the doubler's partner has no clear-cut bid. With a bad hand and no suit to bid, it is usually better to pass and hope the doubler can beat the contract rather than bid a three-card major or a very weak four-card minor.

Don't double a three-level opening with strength that is merely suitable for a takeout double at the one level. A takeout double made directly over an opening three bid shows more than three defensive tricks, perhaps 15 HCP minimum, even with 4-4-4-1 distribution. With less, just pass. If you're fixed, stay fixed. The requirements can be shaded, however, in the reopening position. Also, a double of 3♣ can be lighter than a double of 3♠, which asks partner to bid at a higher level.

-- A cue bid overcall implies a two-suited hand. If the cue bid is of a major suit, it implies the other major plus a minor. If the cue bid is of a minor, it implies both majors or spades and a minor. With hearts and a minor it is usually better to just bid the hearts, because a spade response could require you to bid at the five level:

North	East
3♦	4♦ with ♠AJ976 ♥K107654 ♦3 ♣A
	4♦ with ♠KQ974 ♥A3 ♦4 ♣AQ976
	3♥ with ♠A3 ♥KQ974 ♦4 ♣AQ976

A cue bid with the third hand is too risky, because you would have to bid 5♣ if partner says 4♠. The hand is not that strong. With an extremely strong hand, however, there is too much danger of the simple overcall's being passed. With ♠K4 ♥AKJ87 ♦6 ♣AKQ73, over a 3♦ preempt bid 4♦, then 5♣ (showing heart-clubs) if partner says 4♠.

-- Doubles of major suit responses to a preemptive three bid are for business, exposing a probable psych. The same principle applies for a "cue bid" of the major response:

South	West	North	East
3♦	Pass	3♠	Dbl shows a 3♠ overcall
			4♠ shows a 4♠ overcall

If you can bid 4♠, do so, because the double of 3♠ implies an inability to bid 4♠, although the double is unlimited with a two-suited hand. With a strong two-suiter in the unbid suits, East must cue bid 4♦.

The same principle applies when RHO bids a new major over partner's double:

South	West	North	East
3♥	Dbl	3♠	?

The 3♠ bid is psychic more often than not. If East was going to bid 3♠ willingly, he doubles. Except for doubling, both partners should bid as if the 3♠ bid had not occurred. This means that a double of 3♠ is a

limited call: "That's what I wanted to bid." If East was going to bid 4♠, he now bids 4♠, natural, not a cue bid, and not forcing. If he wants to make a forcing cue bid, he must bid 4♥.

Also see section 8-4, Notrump Overcalls.

Against Opening Four or Five Bids

-- If the opening is artificial, some sort of transfer bid (as with NAMYATS, wherein a 4♣ opening shows hearts, a 4♦ opening shows spades), use the defense described in section 12-5, Defense Against Transfer Bids.

-- If the opening is natural:

North East

4♠ Dbl shows a *good* opening bid. Mostly a business double, but East can stand a takeout if West thinks he can make five or six of a suit. East should *pass*, not double, with ♠KQ108 ♥4 ♦A763 ♣A853.

4♠ 4NT is for takeout, with emphasis on the minors. Does not deny heart support, however. The 4NT bidder could have hearts and diamonds, planning to bid 5♦ if partner says 5♣. The 4NT bid does not promise club length, but strongly implies diamond length, so West should not get too excited with a long club suit.

4♥ Dbl shows a *good* opening bid, probably with adequate trump support for spades (J10x or better). A marginal double should have at least four spades.

4♥ 4NT is for takeout with emphasis on the minors. Might have some spade support, but definitely shows length in both minors.

4♣/4♦ 4NT is a natural bid, not a takeout, probably based on a long solid holding in the unbid minor. At IMP scoring, however, this is Blackwood.

5♣/5♦ Dbl Primarily for takeout

See section 6-7, 4NT - Blackwood or Natural?

Advancing Partner's Game Overcalls

-- If the game bid was a jump, takeouts are cue bids, except that 5♥ or 5♠ over 5♣ or 5♦ is natural (but 6♣ over 5♦ is a cue bid, trying for a grand slam).

-- If the game bid was non-jump, all suit takeouts are natural.