

DEFENSE AGAINST THREE-SUITED CONVENTIONS

This defense is designed for use against a 2♣ or 2♦ opening that shows a 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 hand with 12-15 HCP or so (e.g., Roman Two Clubs), a distinct overbid that should be punished regularly. The following assumes a 2♦ opening, but the defense against a 2♣ opening follows the same lines.

-- A double of 2♦ shows diamonds, and denies the ability to bid 3♦. It is the equivalent of a 2♦ overcall. If you have enough to bid 3♦, do so, but be a little conservative because the suit is likely to break badly.

-- A notrump overcall is natural, based on a long minor (which had better be pretty solid, because it might not break well).

-- Other overcalls are natural, but remember that no suit will be breaking evenly.

-- With other hands, even if strong, just pass. The 2♦ bid is practically forcing, so you can act on the next round. The opponents will often bid themselves into trouble if you don't let them off the hook by bidding with a good hand. Let them play the misfit hands instead of you. If the opening does get passed around, as when third seat has a weak hand and great length in the suit, fourth seat should prefer to balance with 2NT rather than a suit bid (because no suit will break well), or double for business when long in diamonds. This can't be a two-way double, long or short in diamonds, because diamonds could be one of opener's suits. If so, partner will be short also, will assume you have doubled on length, and will pass the double. Defending against a 6-4 fit in trumps is not likely to be profitable.

-- A double of a response to the opening is a two-way double: either strong and long in the suit, or very short:

South	West	North	East
2♦	Pass	2♥	Dbl

North's 2♥ bid is a signoff if South has hearts. Lacking hearts, North must bid the next higher denomination. West will be able to tell by South's action which sort of double East has, because South will bid if short in hearts. If East has strong hearts, the double doesn't require great strength, since North's minimum suit bid denies a good hand. All he needs is good hearts and some non-finessable outside strength (a finessable honor in one of opener's suits is worth less in this position).

If East has a singleton or void in hearts with support for the other suits, he must have a very good hand to double. If West must bid (as when South passes the double and West can't leave it in), no suit is going to break evenly.

South	West	North	East
2♦	Pass	3♣	Dbl - two-way double
3♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl - business

Any suit East-West might bid now would break very badly, so this second double is not optional.

-- If the opponents have found an immediate fit on the first round they probably have eight or more trumps (second round "fits" may be 4-3) so a double is for takeout, a notrump bid natural:

South	West	North	East
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl - takeout		
	2NT - natural, not unusual		

Despite North's probable weakness, the takeout double requires a very good hand because no suit is going to break evenly. West's 2NT bid shows 16 HCP or more in a hand that probably lacks support for one of the other three suits.

After passing a good 4-4-4-1 hand yourself, you can pass and then double anything:

South	West	North	East
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Dbl - two-way double		

West is either very long or very short in spades. This is a very bad sequence for the opponents, since South is probably bidding a four-card suit for which North may have no support. It is very likely that they have no fit and will go down a bundle. Be sure to lead trumps against a contract in one of opener's suits, to reduce any cross-ruff potential.

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

South is short in spades. West probably is sitting over all three of South's suits, with spade shortness himself. He hopes East has a spade stack, as is probable.

Reopening doubles of opener's takeout of a signoff response are also two-way: either very short or very long in the suit:

South	West	North	East
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl - two-way double

East could have ♠QJ98 ♥KJ4 ♦A2 ♣KQJ3 or ♠2 ♥KQ83 ♦AK32 ♣QJ103. West will know which by looking at his own spades. With a singleton or doubleton spade, he will usually pass and lead spades. With three or more spades he can pass or bid, as he thinks best, playing East for a hand of the second type.

When the response to the opening bid shows a good hand (e.g., 2NT or jump in a suit), it is very unwise to enter the bidding.