



LESSON 17 – STUDENT NOTES

MORE ON THE USE OF THE DOUBLE CARD (X)

PART 1: A NEGATIVE X

- A **Negative X** is a form of **Takeout X**
- It is used by **Responder** after an **Opening Suit bid by partner** and when **Responder's Right Hand Opponent (RHO)** has **overcalled a suit** and stolen your bidding space. It shows **length in the unbid suits**.
- It shows **4 cards in the unbid Major** and a hand of any **responding strength (6+ HCP)**

e.g.

West	North	East
1♦	1♠	X
		♠ 763
		♥ QT98
		♦ J8
		♣ KQ95

East is worth a bid but doesn't have the 10 HCP needed for a 2-over-1 response. The **Negative X** shows 4 hearts in a hand where you would have responded 1♥ had there been no overcall.

4 or 5 card spade suit?

Playing the **Negative X**, you can show precisely four cards in spades over a 1♥ overcall. With a 5+ spade suit you would bid 1♠. Your partner now knows if you have 4 or 5 cards in spades!

e.g.

West	North	East
1♣	1♥	X
		♠ A984
		♥ 95
		♦ AJ94
		♣ 762

Remember - to make a **Negative X** you need:

- 6+ HCP after a 1 level overcall
- 8+ HCP after a 2 level overcall
- 10+ HCP after a 3 level overcall

After a **Non-Jump Overcall**, a **Negative X** promises:

1 ♣	(1♠) - X	4+ cards in ♥
1 ♣	(1♦) - X	both Majors , at least 4:4
1 ♠	(2♥) - X	both minors , at least 4:4

OPENER'S RESPONSE TO PARTNER'S NEGATIVE DOUBLE

a)	West	North	East	South
	1 ♣	1♠	X (4 cards in ♥ & maybe ♦ too)	Pass
	2 ♥			
	♠ A9			
	♥ K754			
	♦ J2			
	♣ AQ853			

West bids his 4-card **heart** suit. This is NOT bidding a reverse: he is simply supporting partner's known suit.

b)	West	North	East	South
	1 ♥	1♠	X (4+ cards in both minors)	Pass
	2 ♣			
	♠ J95			
	♥ AK643			
	♦ 7			
	♣ A1082			

West bids his second suit. This does not *guarantee* 5 hearts. Again, Opener is supporting responder's known minor.

c)	West	North	East	South
	1♥ 1NT	1♠ All Pass	X (4+ cards in both minors)	Pass
	♠ KJ7 ♥ KQT62 ♦ Q53 ♣ A8			

Over a 1♠ overcall the **Negative X** shows support for both unbid suits. West with no second suit was planning to rebid 1NT - he still can! He rebids 1NT just as he would without the interference *because he holds 'stops' in spades!*

A 1NT rebid shows 15-17 HCP but after a suit overcall, it **MUST** also show **stoppers** in the overcall suit.

SUMMARY: NEGATIVE X

A **Negative X** is used by **Responder** after **Partner** has made an **Opening** bid and **Responder's RHO has bid a suit overcall**.

Responder's bidding space has been 'stolen' by the Opponents' overcall!

The **Negative X** can be used by Responder who is unable to make his suit bid after the opponent's overcall. It **shows length** in the **unbid suits**.

(NB if Opener had bid a major, and the opponents overcalled a minor, responder's negative **X** **denies 4 cards in opener's major but promises 4 cards in the unbid major**)

PART 2

A PENALTY X

DOUBLING A 1 NO TRUMP OPENING BID

- **X** of a **NT Opening Bid** made by the Opponents is **ALWAYS** for **Penalties!**
- However, a **X** of a **1NT response** bid by an opponent **showing a weak 6-9 HCP** hand is not for Penalties but for **Takeout**.
- To **X** a 1NT Opening Bid you need 16+ HCP
- Your side needs the majority of the points to **X** NT bids made later in the auction

Note: Don't **X** simply because you have 16+ HCP **Evaluate your hand:**

- Is it flat, no good suit, with no intermediates?

♠ A J 7 6
♥ K J 2
♦ K J 3
♣ K 4 2 **PASS!**

- Does it have a couple of good suits with touching honours?

♠ A J T 3
♥ Q J T
♦ K Q 9 4
♣ A 7 **X!**

Remember: Because any **X** of a 1NT Opening bid shows 16+ HCP a suit overcall (say 2♠) shows a maximum of 15 HCP. With 16+ HCP you would **X** first to show your strength, even with a 5-card suit. You may be able to bid your suit later.

Escaping the opponent's **X** of partner's opening 1NT holding a weak hand

To escape from **1NTX** responder can use a simple 'wriggle' technique.

If responder holds a 5+ card suit he can **XX** (redouble) to show this. This is an instruction to Opener to bid 2♣ which responder will pass if his 5+card suit is clubs or correct to his 5+ card suit. Note, this is to play and opener must pass

recognizing that partner has a weak hand but hopes playing in a suit will give the partnership a better result than playing in 1NTX!

If advancer makes an intervening bid, Opener should now pass! Your side has escaped 1NTX!

Where responder does not hold a 5+ card suit but has 2 x 4 card suits, after 1NTX he bids his lower ranking suit first. If opener has 3+ cards in this suit he should pass. If opener has only 2 cards in the suit, opener bids the next suit up by rank. If this is responder's second 4 card suit he will pass. i.e. the partnership is seeking to escape 1NTX by finding a 4:3 minimum suit fit.

X SACRIFICE CONTRACTS FOR PENALTIES

- A **Sacrifice Bid** is when the opponents bid solely on trump strength. For example, if opponents make a pre-emptive bid and bid onto game on the *'level of the fit.'*
- At game level, they need more than a trump fit to make their contract.
- If your side has the strength for game you must **X for Penalties**, or **Bid on!**

e.g.

N	E	S	W
1♥	1♠	2♣	4♠
?			

North must **X for Penalties!**

4♠ by West looks like a **Sacrifice Bid** because;

North has opened the bidding	- 12 - 19 HCP
East has overcalled	- 8+ HCP
South responds at the two level	- 9+ HCP

North will know their partnership has the **majority** of the points.

It looks like West has raised to game on the *'level of the fit'*.

Therefore, **X for Penalties!** Five out of six times the **Penalty X** will succeed. i.e. E/W will go down, and N/S will get a better positive score for each doubled undertrick! Especially if E/W are vulnerable!

e.g. a **non-vulnerable** undertrick = -50 but if it's **X** = -100

while a **vulnerable** undertrick = -100 but if it's **X** = -200

As a general rule it's good to sacrifice when your side is **non vulnerable** and the opponents are **vulnerable**!

SUMMARY: PENALTY **X**

To **X** a weak 1NT Opening Bid: you need 16+ HCP

To **X** an Opponent's Sacrifice Bid: your side has the strength for Game

We hope you now can see that the **X** card is a very useful tool giving information without taking up bidding space.

You learned about the **Takeout X** in lesson 14 to show an opening hand that is unable to overcall but has shortage in the opponents bid suit and support for all other suits.

When partner has opened with 1 of a suit, the opponents have overcalled a suit, you have no 'fit' with partner's suit but do have 4 cards in the unbid suits. The **Negative X** can allow you to show your suit holding without taking up bidding space!

Then we have the **Penalty X** which you can use after the opponents open 1NT when you hold a good 16+ HCP hand or, when you think the opponents have bid too high and won't be able to make their contract! You want to punish them by maximising your score!

The key for your bridge partnership is to be able to identify what the **X card means in each context and bid accordingly in response!**