

DOUBLE TROUBLE

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Agenda

- 1. Double disasters
- 2. Our Agreements- Penalty Doubles
- 3. Our Agreements- Other Doubles

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What I am concentrating on today is my agreements with my regular partners. Where there is a different popular agreement, I will usually mention it.

I am not advocating that you copy my agreements verbatim. Indeed, I would rather you didn't.



What matters for serious partnerships is:

- **You have an agreement, and**
- **You both remember what it is.**

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Let's start by looking at some hands. All teams scoring (imps).

Two questions on these:

1. What does double mean?
2. Your bid?

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1. EW Vul.	South	West	North	East
♠ QJ10	1NT	2♥	Dble	Pass
♥ J8	?			
♦ 8742				
♣ AKJ6				

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- **Hand 1** ♠QJ10, ♥J8, ♦8742, ♣AKJ6

They overcalled 1NT with 2♥, and partner doubled. One of the few agreements which I had in a scratch partnership was that double here was take out.

*I did not have the agreement that 2NT was 2P2P (two places to play).
I risked 2♠.*

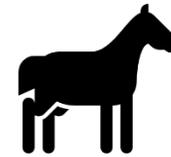
Partner held: ♠Axx, ♥AK, ♦KJ10, ♣109xxx.

He bid 3NT. We made ten tricks for 430.

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- At another table, double was interpreted as penalty. Minus 670 later, they had an agreement.

- Stable door, etc.



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2.NS vul.	South	West	North	East
♠KQ5		1NT	Pass	Pass
♥8	Dble	Pass	Pass	2♣*
♦AQ42	?			
♣AKQJ6				*Natural

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- **Hand 2.** ♠KQ5, ♥8, ♦AQ42, ♣AKQJ6

We doubled LHO's 1NT and RHO removed to 2♣.

Nearly all experts will tell you the wisdom of playing a take out double of the first run-out from 1NT doubled. I will ratify that the results are lucrative.

However, this presents a problem with Hand 2. I can't tell what the right answer was. I know that the wrong answer was Pass.

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East was fooling around with ♠xxx, ♥Jxxx, ♦xxxx, ♣xx. Partner didn't think he should balance with ♣10xxx and a five count. Result, plus 250 for a vulnerable game.



Part of the problem was that NS agreed that a take-out double in this situation should promise three or more cards in each unbid suit.

If that is your agreement, then you ought to either :

- allow exceptions for very strong hands, or
- play the pass as forcing.

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3.Game All	South	West	North	East
♠ 10963		4♥	Dble	Pass
♥ 74	?			
♦ K92				
♣ QJ64				

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- **Hand 3** ♠ 10963, ♥ 74, ♦ K92, ♣ QJ64

A 4H opener was doubled by partner (Scottish Cup SF 2015).

At both tables, and when the hand was given to assorted experts later, South bid 4♠.

This converted plus 800 to minus 800.



This was a missed opportunity for +15 imps.

- Do I hear you say, “is 1600 not 17 imps?”

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- No, the missed opportunity was by North; not passing with a flat 18 count. If you play take out doubles, as most do over a 4♥ opener, you cannot double with a flat 18 count.
- If partner cannot balance, just take your undertricks.
- **If you make a take out double it is likely that partner will take it out.**

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4.EW Vul.	South	West	North	East
♠ 64	Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
♥ AQ103	Dble	Pass	2♣	Pass
♦ Q62	Pass	2♠	Dble	Pass
♣ 10965	?			

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- **Hand 4:** ♠64, ♥AQ103, ♦Q62, ♣10965

You were about to play in 2♣ when West belatedly supported spades.

- North doubled, thinking he was just showing a good hand for the auction so far.
- South thought they had an agreement that if the auction stopped in a partial, and the opponents balanced, double was penalty. The situation was analogous to 1♠-Pass-2♠- Pass-Pass- 3X-Double.

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Result-Minus 670.



- The difference however was East's earlier 1♠ bid. Now both vulnerable opponents have bid spades. Can partner really have a penalty double when we have two of them?
- If South had bid 3♣, he would have recorded plus 130.
- Yet another example of partners being on a different page.

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5. Game All	South	West	North	East
♠AQJ973				2♥
♥Q	2♠	3♥	Dble	Pass
♦KJ84	?			
♣76				

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- **Hand 5:** ♠AQJ973, ♥Q, ♦KJ84, ♣76

We overcall a 2♥ opener and West competes to 3♥. Partner doubles.

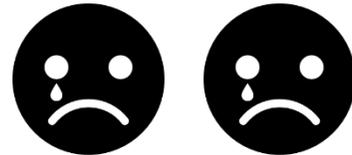
- This double is probably in the “undiscussed” category for a lot of partnerships.
- *North had intended his double as a game try in spades.*
- *South interpreted double as penalty.*

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Result= +1, minus 930.



• *Even worse 4♠ was a make (+620).*



• *Even, even, worse, team mates had saved in 5♥ Doubled (-200).*



• Using my partnership's defaults, neither would be right, as an undiscussed double would be take out.

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- The total imps lost on these five boards was 66. That's a lot of imps for five boards!
- If you are averse to scores like minus 930, 670, 800 etc. at teams, you should have an agreement along the following lines:

Doubles below 4♠ are take-out except in the following defined situations:

- 1. Defined penalty doubles.**
- 2. Defined others, e.g. lead directing.**

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Penalty doubles

1. Double of their 1NT opener, whatever the range. We have tried alternatives but concluded that doubling a Strong No Trump for penalties is better than being fixed with flat 20 counts, or by offbeat 1NT openers.
2. The third double by the partnership, e.g. 1 NT- Dble-2♣-Dble (t/o)-2♦- Dble is penalty.
3. We have made a penalty redouble, e.g. 1NT- Double (spades and another)- Rdbl- 2♣-Dble is penalty.

(NB 1 suit-Dble- Rdbl is not universally played for penalties- and is not alertable in Scotland).

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Penalty Doubles (continued)

4. We have made a penalty suggestion of a non-natural bid, 1♠-2NT (Minors)- Dble-3♣-Dble is penalty.
5. We are in a game forcing auction. Playing 2 over 1, 1♠-Pass-2♦-2♥- Double is suggesting a penalty. In a Forcing Pass situation, our double is better described as regressive (does not want to bid on) rather than as pure penalty.
6. They have run from a passed-for-penalty take out double. 1♥-1♠-P-P-Dble-P-P-2♣-Double is penalty.

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Penalty Doubles (continued)

- 7. We play what some regard as the old-fashioned penalty double after 1X-Dble-1Y. Apparently, people used to psyche a lot. Nowadays 1Y is rarely an out-and-out psyche, but it is often the suit you should be competing in or leading against No Trump. I have rarely felt the need for a responsive take out double in this auction.
- 8. If partner opens a pre-empt, e.g. 2♠-3♥ - Double is for penalty.
- 9. If previously passing opponents have balanced after we have stopped in a partial. Be careful with this one. You must have trump tricks, and no fit for partner. However, if somebody is silly enough to wander into a non-fit auction, they ought to pay a price. Example 1♠-P-1N-P-2♣-P-2♠-3♦-Dble.

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Others Neither Penalty nor Take Out Doubles

10. Support Doubles: Opener's second round double shows three card support for partner. *If playing a weak No Trump, many play this double as a strong no trump with no/unsuitable stopper.*

11. Game Try double: We play that they only apply if there is no space to make another game try. 1♠-Pass-2♠-3♥-Double is Game Try.

If the overcall had been 3♣ or 3♦, double would be penalty. Responder doesn't have to pass with extra spade length or an offensive orientated hand.

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- **Others Neither Penalty nor Take Out Doubles (contd.)**
- 12. Doubles of artificial bids show that suit. This applies to e.g. transfers, non-natural bids over our 1NT. If the artificial bid is a weak raise, double is take out of their anchor suit. If it is a UCB, Double is normally Ax or Kx, maybe a third card not strong enough to raise.
- 13. Specialised doubles of non-natural openers, e.g. Multi, Strong Club.
- 14. Lead directing doubles, e.g. Lightner double asking for an unusual lead v. a slam (often with a void), double suggesting lead dummy's suit v. a slow 3NT.

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Other Doubles (continued)

15. Double on the first round above 4♥ are DSI (Do Something Intelligent) also known as “optional” or “cards” in some circles. Don’t try this with partners who are incapable of DSI.



Don’t double a 4♠ opener if you have a hand which cannot stand partner removing to a six card suit or if 5/5 (bids 4NT).

16. “Action Doubles” after our own pre-empt, e.g. 4♠-5♣-Pass-Pass-Dble. suggests bidding 5♠. Double shows extra offence but with one defensive trick, usually the spade Ace.

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I think I have exhausted our list, but there may be some I have missed.

Our Default:

- **If partner doubles a partial and it is not otherwise agreed, I will treat it as take out.**
- **As I said at the start, I am not suggesting that other serious partnerships adopt our agreements. What I am suggesting is that they have agreements.**