

Conventional Wisdom



Filling out the convention card — part 11

Anyone who has played tournament bridge for even a short period of time knows that many low-level doubles are commonly played as something other than penalty. Why? It's because the opportunities to really nail the opponents with a penalty double at a low level are rare. Therefore, more practical uses for the double have been developed.

After Overcall

If partner opens (say) 1♥, and right-hand opponent overcalls 2♣, what does a double by you mean? If this is a penalty double, check the **RED** box and Alert the opponents. The Alert is required because this is an unusual treatment in duplicate bridge.

Most pairs play that the double in this situation shows length in the unbid suits, a treatment commonly referred to as a negative double. Negative doubles are popular for a good reason: the opportunities to use them are frequent. Check the Negative box if you play this way, and indicate in the space next to it (labeled "thru") the highest level you play negative doubles.

Responsive

The negative double concept can be applied to many other situations. Another common one is this: LHO opens the bidding, partner doubles and RHO raises his partner's suit, *e.g.*, (1♦)–Dbl–(2♦). What would a double mean? Many pairs have agreed to play this as showing a hand with values, but without clear direction. This type of double is called a responsive double. In the example auction, for example, what would you do with a hand such as:

♠Q 9 2 ♥K 4 3 ♦10 5 ♣A 7 6 4 2?

The responsive double is useful in this case. Another situation for the responsive double would be this: LHO opens, partner overcalls and RHO raises opener's suit, *e.g.*, (1♦)–1♠–(2♦). Some play that a double here would be responsive showing the other major (hearts) and some values.

As with negative doubles, indicate how high you play responsive doubles on the "thru" line.

Maximal

Say you open 1♠ and partner raises to 2♠. With a hand that has game interest, you could make a game try by bidding a suit at the three level to ask partner for her input. Depending on whether the game try shows length or shortness, she could look at her holding in that suit to gauge game prospects. For example, you could bid 3♥ next to ask partner if she has a useful holding in hearts.

If the opponents interfere, however, you may not have space to make a game try. Say the auction is this:

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥

If you wanted to make a game try here, you're out of luck — there's no room. That's why some pairs define a double here to show a hand with game interest. This type of double is called a maximal double. Check the box if you play this.

SPECIAL DOUBLES

After Overcall: Penalty _____

Negative thru _____

Responsive thru _____ Maximal

Support: Dbl. thru _____ Redbl.

Card-showing Min. Offshape T/O



*The 24-part Conventional Wisdom series
is available online at www.acbl.org/play/conventionwisdom.html.*