

Negative Doubles I

After partner opens and your RHO overcalls, there are hands that are difficult to bid, e.g. 1♣ — 1♠; you hold a 4-card ♥ suit, lack support and 10+HCP. Bidding 2♥ promises a 5-card suit and 10+HCP. As this situation is much more common than a penalty double of the 1♠ contract, a double here, termed a Negative Double¹ by convention, describes your hand. Situational Requirements:

- Partner opens one of a suit, RHO makes a suit overcall and Responder doubles
- The opponents overcall may be up to 4♥
- Lack support for Opener's major
- Promises the unbid major(s)

Playing Negative Doubles provides a lot of information even when it is not used. After an overcall, absent a Negative Double by Responder, Opener assumes that Responder: (a) doesn't have a 4-card major; (b) lacks the points to make a Negative Double; or, (c) has made a forcing bid and will show a 4-card major on a subsequent round.

Required Strength

The minimum HCP values required for a Negative Double depend on the level Opener is forced to respond:

Opener Response	Minimum HCP	Forcing? ²
2-level	6 to 8	1-round
3-level	9 to 12	1-round
4-level	13 or more	1-round

Opener Rebids

If Responder makes a Negative Double and the next hand passes, you must make a rebid even with a minimum²—if you pass, the doubled bid becomes the final contract.

Points	Response	Forcing?
12-15	Cheapest Level	No
16-17	Jump	No
18+	Bid Game or cuebid	N/A

¹ You don't give up the penalty double, the sequence for a penalty double is reversed. More on this later.

² When the Overcaller is at the 2- or 3-level, and you hold a strong and long holding in Overcaller's suit, you may choose to convert the Negative X to a penalty X.

Common Negative Double Sequences:

1♣ — 1♦ — X:

Here the Negative Double shows both majors. If a fit is found, Responder passes with a minimum, invites with 10-12SP, bids game or, with significant extras, begins a slam investigation. The Negative Double give you a method to describe a hand with 5=4 in the majors but not enough values to bid twice; with 4=5 in the majors and a minimum (6-8HCP), bid one heart and pass Opener's rebid, unless it is forcing.

1♣/♦ — 1♥:

Here the Negative Double shows exactly 4 spades and a one spade bid shows 5+ spades. Both these bids are a 1-round force with a minimum to an unlimited hand.

1♥ — 1♠ — X:

Here the Negative Double shows 10+HCP and both minors, 4-4 or more.

1♣/♦ — 1♠:

The Negative Double convention allows you to describe various heart holding and strength. Less than 10HCP with 6 hearts: X and then bid 2♥ which is not forcing; or, 10+HCP with a 5+card heart suit: bid 2♥; or, 10+HCP and a 4-card heart suit: Negative Double.

Quiz 8

Assume your partner opens the bidding and RHO overcalls. Fill in your call.

	Bidding	Your Hand	Your Call		Bidding	Your Hand	Your Call
1.	1♣ - 1♦	♠ AKJ7 ♥ A963 ♦ 42 ♣ T83		2.	1♣ - 1♦	♠ Q92 ♥ AJ94 ♦ T9 ♣ JT54	
3.	1♦ - 2♣	♠ KJT2 ♥ AQ94 ♦ T52 ♣ 76		4.	1♦ - 1♠	♠ Q8 ♥ AQ9746 ♦ 864 ♣ 97	

Assume you open the bidding and the bidding proceeds as shown. What is your rebid? Extra credit: Beat The Instructor on #8.

	Bidding	Your Hand	Your Call		Bidding	Your Hand	Your Call
5.	1♣ - 1♦ - X - P ?	♠ K7 ♥ A96 ♦ QT2 ♣ KQT83		6.	1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠ - P ?	♠ KJ97 ♥ 96 ♦ AKJ42 ♣ K3	
7.	1♣ - 1♠ - X - P ?	♠ K9 ♥ 94 ♦ AQ4 ♣ AKJT96		8.	1♦ - 1♥ - X - 2♥ ?	♠ K862 ♥ ♦ QJT7643 ♣ A9	