

Dealing with Overcalls: Part 2

The Negative Double

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1 The Situation: Partner opens 1 of a suit. RHO overcalls.

1.1 Double by responder is “negative.”

1.1.1 If partner opened a major, it denies three-card support.

1.1.2 The primary purpose is to show **four cards in the other major(s)**.

1.1.3 If both bid suits are majors, double shows four cards in both minors.

1.1.4 If both bid suits are minors, it shows four cards in one or both majors.

1.1.5 There is **no upper limit** to the strength.

Opener	Opp	Responder	Shows	HCP
1♣	1♠	Dbl	4 hearts	6+
1♣	1♥	Dbl	4 spades	6+
1♣	1♦	Dbl	4 hearts & 4 spades*	6+
1♥	1♠	Dbl	4 clubs & 4 diamonds	6+
1♠	2♣	Dbl	4 hearts	8+
1♠	2♦	Dbl	4 hearts	8+
1♠	2♥	Dbl	4 clubs & 4 diamonds	8+
1♦	2♣	Dbl	4 spades*	8+
Any suit	1NT	Dbl	Penalty	6/8+
1♣	1♥	1♠	5 spades	6+
1♣	1♠	2♥	5 hearts	10+
1♠	2♥	3♦	4 diamonds	12+

* Some people reverse the meaning of these two.

1.2 Exceptions:

1.2.1 Not applicable to overcalls in notrump or conventional overcalls.

1.2.2 Usually limited to an overcall of 3♠ or thereabouts.

1.2.3 With extra length you can stretch a bit to meet the HCP requirements.

2 Can opener pass the double? Yes, the Rule of 9 will be covered at a later date.

Next week: When should responder pass after an overcall?

After an Overcall in a Suit

On each of these hands, the auction has begun:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	1♠	?

As South, evaluate your hand and decide what to do. Only your side is vulnerable.

1. ♠74 ♥AJ74 ♦Q1096 ♣Q83
2. ♠742 ♥AJ743 ♦65 ♣K63
3. ♠65 ♥AKJ ♦J7654 ♣875
4. ♠653 ♥J1095 ♦4 ♣AK754
5. ♠AQJ ♥7643 ♦Q98 ♣842
6. ♠63 ♥A92 ♦AQ5 ♣K9874
7. ♠A5 ♥AK75 ♦9654 ♣AQ5
8. ♠7 ♥AJ98 ♦Q109643 ♣83
9. ♠7 ♥AJ98 ♦AQ⁺863 ♣K3
10. ♠7 ♥AJ98 ♦J7632 ♣AK3
11. ♠7653 ♥AK ♦KJ75 ♣842
12. ♠6 ♥KQJ108765 ♦42 ♣54
13. ♠KQ1087 ♥J653 ♦K32 ♣3
14. ♠863 ♥9 ♦KQJ9765 ♣84
15. ♠A7 ♥AKQJ3 ♦872 ♣K82
16. ♠KJ7 ♥K9 ♦65432 ♣AQ10
17. ♠753 ♥AQ ♦8765 ♣J1086

Answers:

1. ♠74 ♥AJ74 ♦Q1096 ♣Q83
Double. This is as perfect a negative double as you are ever likely to pick up. Enjoy it while you can — most hands are more gray than black and white.
2. ♠742 ♥AJ743 ♦65 ♣K63
Double. This is a typical imperfect negative double. You want to show your hearts while it is easy to do so. Of course, partner won't know about your fifth heart. Not having diamonds is not a problem, because a negative double never guarantees the unbid minor.

3. ♠65 ♥AKJ ♦J7654 ♣875

Double. A very imperfect negative double. Every other action, however, is even less appealing. Once partner opens, you'd like to compete. If opener rebids a four-card heart suit, he won't hate your ♥AKJ.

4. ♠653 ♥J1095 ♦4 ♣AK754

Double. You expect to support partner's clubs, but first tell him about your four-card major. If you don't find a heart fit, you're ready, willing and able to support clubs later.

5. ♠AQJ ♥7643 ♦Q98 ♣842

Bid 1NT. Your bid denies four hearts, but with three spade stoppers and a totally flat hand, concealing this major is sensible.

6. ♠63 ♥A92 ♦AQ5 ♣K9874

Cuebid 2♠. This promises a good hand in support of clubs.

7. ♠A5 ♥AK75 ♦9654 ♣AQ5

Double. A negative double does not deny a strong hand. You have all the time in the world.

8. ♠7 ♥AJ98 ♦Q109643 ♣83

Double. If North rebids 1NT, you'll correct to diamonds. A negative double followed by a new suit shows a long suit but a weak hand.

9. ♠7 ♥AJ98 ♦AQ10863 ♣K3

Bid 2♦. If you double 1♠, any subsequent diamond bid would show a weak hand such as #8. You intend to bid hearts at your next turn.

10. ♠7 ♥AJ98 ♦J7632 ♣AK3

Double. You're on your way to game, but you don't need to show this diamond suit.

11. ♠7653 ♥AK ♦KJ75 ♣842

Bid 2♦. Responding in an unbid minor at the two level does not promise a five-card suit.



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12. ♠6 ♥KQJ108765 ♦42 ♣54

Bid 4♥ with this perfect preempt. If you are intimidated by the vulnerability, take some vitamins.

13. ♠KQ1087 ♥J653 ♦K32 ♣3

Pass. My right-hand opponent wants to play in spades? Sounds good to me. Letting the opponent off the hook with a negative double would be appropriate only during "Be Generous to Opponents" Week. You hope partner reopens with a double, and you'll be delighted to pass.

14. ♠863 ♥9 ♦KQJ9765 ♣84

Bid 3♦. After RHO overcalls, your jump-shift is weak. This bid is not Alertable. Make it difficult for your opponents to find their heart fit.

15. ♠A7 ♥AKQJ3 ♦872 ♣K82

Bid 2♥. You are strong enough to jump-shift, but 3♥ would be preemptive. This hand has a big future — all the more reason to go slowly.

16. ♠KJ7 ♥K9 ♦65432 ♣AQ10

Bid 3NT. These diamonds are not worth talking about.

17. ♠753 ♥AQ ♦8765 ♣J1086

Bid 2♣. You don't need five-card support to raise opener's minor suit. Throw your two cents in now. □