

Negative Doubles

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Last Revised November 19, 2020

<http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaBidding/NegativeDoubles.pdf>

From Section 29.3 of Two Over One Fourth Edition

Suits Shown

Negative doubles are takeout doubles when partner gets overcalled. They are so important that they are summarized here.

Negative doubles occur after partner opens 1NT and is overcalled especially at the three-level, but they also occur when partner gets overcalled after he opens a suit.

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
		1♣	1♠			1♣	1♠
2♦				2♥			

Bidding the suit in competition shows five cards and 10+ HCP. Therefore, a negative double shows the lack of both conditions and the lack of just one. Also, in competition, a new suit at the three-level is forcing to game.

If a player does not make a negative double at his first chance, he typically does not have one. Therefore, West's double below is penalty since 1NT denies the ability to make a negative double.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	1♥
1NT	P	P	2♥
dbl			

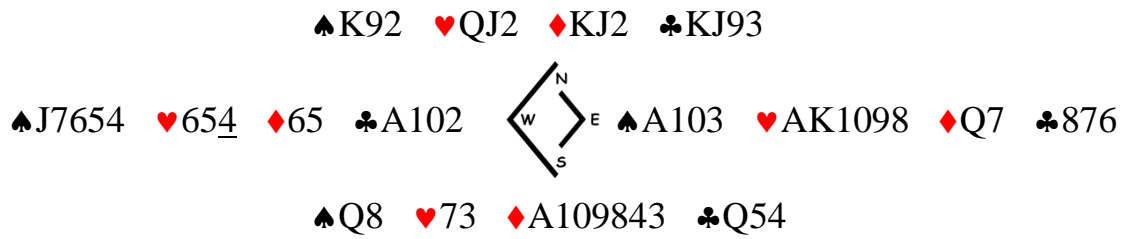
In competition, Two Over One game forcing is off, however, a new suit at the two-level is like Standard American. It shows 10+ HCP and promises a rebid.

A negative double shows either one of the following hands:

- A long suit without the ten points required for a new suit at the two-level. See example 29.1.
- The unbid suits, typically four cards in the unbid majors. See example 29.3.
- One unbid suit with the ability to rebid Notrump. See example 29.4.
- One unbid suit with support for partner's original suit (minor). See example 29.5.
- A good major raise, but less than a limit raise. A direct raise is just competitive. See example 29.6.

Example 29.1: Cannot Bid a New Suit at the Two-Level

Neither vul.



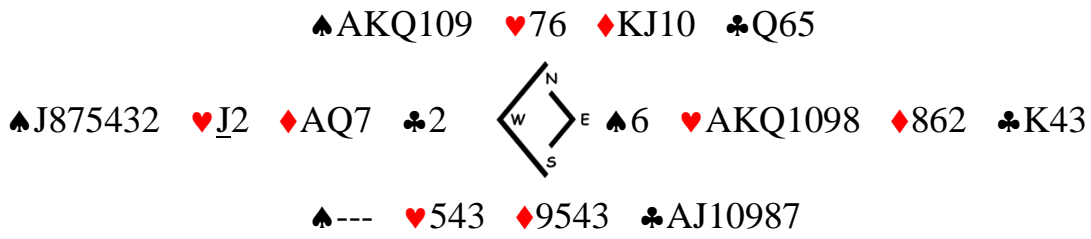
W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♥	dbl
2♥	P	P	3♦
all pass			

East overcalls with his 8+ HCP, a good suit and an outside control. West stretches to show support in a competitive auction since he has it.

Secondly, South shows a decent diamond suit with less than a 10 count.

Example 29.2: Sometimes a Pass is Better

Both vul.



W	N	E	S
P!	1♠	2♥	P
P	dbl	P	3♣
all pass			

North chooses not to open 1NT with a five-card major because he does not have three of the other major. Furthermore, he wants a spade lead on defense, and since four or more spades are held, 1NT never needs to be the rebid.

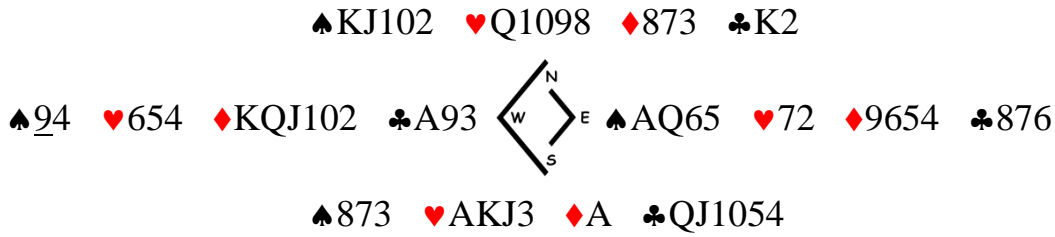
South does not make a negative double as he is not committed to declaring a contract with a void in his partner's suit.

In partner's suit, a void is -4 HCP and a stiff is -3 HCP.

He passes, and North, because he has two or fewer hearts, suspects his partner of trap passing and reopens the bidding with a takeout double. South has no intention of playing 2♥ doubled, so he bids 3♣ which gets passed out. 3♣ makes +130.

Example 29.3: Four-Four in the Unbid Suits

Both vul.



W	N	E	S
			1♣
1♦	dbl	1♠	2♥
P	3♥	all pass	

Overalls may cause bidding confusion to the opponents. Even a 1♦ overcall may leave an opponent uncertain whether his partner's 1♥ or 1♠ is a four-card suit or not. This confusion must be dispelled. When the RHO overcalls 1♦, a bid of 1♥ or 1♠ is just four cards or more and a double is four-four not four-three and certainly not five-four.

West overcalls 1♦ because he has a good five-card suit and an outside control. North doubles with four-four in the majors, and East gums up the works by getting a lead-directive bid in. He can always run to diamonds if he gets in trouble in 1♠.

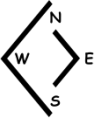
South bids right away showing 16 or 17. This may cause confusion because too many Souths incorrectly bid with 12 or 13 and four hearts.

Normally, North and South get to game, but East's overcall makes them put on the brakes for +140. It amazing how a little listening improves a player's bridge skill.

Example 29.4: Four in the Unbid Major and Able to Run to Notrump

Both vul.

♠K7 ♥65 ♦AKQJ5 ♣7654

♠8653 ♥43 ♦9873 ♣Q32  ♠Q94 ♥KJ987 ♦106 ♣AKJ

♠AJ102 ♥AQ102 ♦42 ♣1098

W	N	E	S
	1♦	1♥	dbl
P	2♣	P	2NT
P	3NT	all pass	


North opens 1♦ planning to rebid 2♣. East has a good 1♥ overall with a spotty suit but a full opener. A bid of 1♠ shows five or more spades, therefore North makes a negative double to show four cards.

South responds 2♣, and with his 11 HCP, North rebids 2NT. South has the 14 points to accept, because of his diamond suit. Obviously, the deep finesse in hearts is always taken (to the ♥10 then to the ♥Queen).

If West leads the ♣2, an impossible lead, the declarer only makes +630. On a heart lead, the declarer has four winners in spades, three in hearts and five in diamonds for +690. Is the reader convinced that it is often the lead that makes a good declarer not his skill?

Example 29.5: Able to Run Back to His Partner's Original Suit

Neither vul.

♠54	♥KQ65	♦KJ72	♣Q32		♠76	♥AJ109	♦Q43	♣9876
♠KQJ1098	♥842	♦65	♣K10					
♠A32	♥73	♦A1098	♣AJ54					

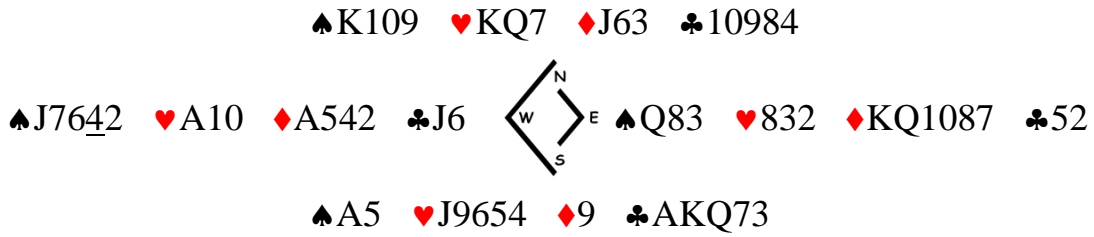
W	N	E	S
			1♦
2♠	dbl	P	3♣
P	3♦	all pass	

North makes a negative double showing 10+ points and four-four in the unbid suits. He has 10 points, as summarized in the next section, because his partner is forced to the three-level.

South denies four hearts by showing his club suit. North corrects to 3♦, and the bidding passes out. East gets finessed for the ♦Queen for +130.

Example 29.6: A Good Raise

Both vul.



W	N	E	S
		P	1♥
1♠	dbl	2♠	3♣
P	3♥	P	4♥
all pass			

This hand occurred in the team event of a South Okanagan sectional in Osoyoos, BC. West has a pretty poor overcall for a team event, but it may be a partscore battle that wins a few IMPs. North denies a limit raise because he does not cuebid, but a negative double followed by a raise shows a good 8 or 9 points¹.

¹ Bennett, Charlie (Sapphire Life Master) of Spokane Valley, Washington, A negative double is used to show a constructive raise, Osoyoos, BC South Okanagan sectional, May 26, 2019.

29.3.2 Points Needed for a Negative Double

When partner can answer at the two-level, the negative double needs six or more HCP. The next bid narrows the range.

W	N	E	S	
1♦	2♣	dbl	P	6+
2♥	P	P	P	6 to 9

W	N	E	S	
1♦	1♥	dbl	P	6+
1♠	P	3♠	P	10 to a bad 12

W	N	E	S	
1♦	1♠	dbl	P	6+
2♥	P	4♥	P	a good 12 to 15

W	N	E	S	
1♦	2♣	dbl	P	6+
2♥	P	3♣	P	Cuebid is forcing to game
3NT	P	4♥	P	East has extra values, a really good 15 or more

W	N	E	S	
1♦	2♠	dbl	P	10+
3♥	P	P	P	P = 10 to a bad 12

W	N	E	S	
1♦	2♠	dbl	P	10+
3♥	P	4♥	P	a good 12 to 15

W	N	E	S	
1♦	2♠	dbl	P	10+
3♥	P	3♠	P	
4♣	P	4♥	P	extra values, a good 15+

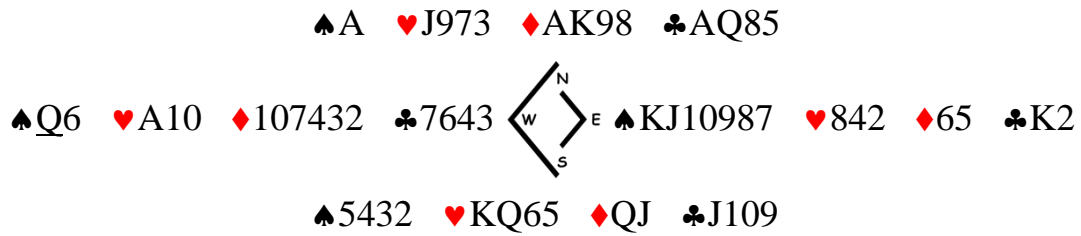
W	N	E	S	
1♦	3♠	dbl	P	12+
4♥	P	P	P	P = 12 to 15

W	N	E	S	
1♦	3♠	dbl	P	12+
4♥	P	4♠	P	extra values, good 15 to 18, setting ♥s as trump
5♥	all pass			

W	N	E	S	
1♦	3♠	dbl	P	12+
4♥	P	4NT	P	extra values, good 18+ or a good shot at 12 tricks
5♥	P	6♥	all pass	

Example 29.7: A Pass Must be Made by South over 2♠

Neither vul.



W	N	E	S
	1♦	2♠	P
P	dbl	P	3♥
P	4♥	all pass	

South cannot bid a new suit over 2♠ as that is forcing to game. 3♦ is a limit raise and a negative double is 10+. Therefore, he prudently passes. With a minimum, North also passes, but he has lots of extra values, so he can double and raise to game. The declarer loses two tricks for +450.

29.4 Responsive Doubles

The following are the two cases of responsive doubles.

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1♥	dbl	2♥	dbl	1♥	2♦	2♥	dbl

In the left case, South does not have four spades because if he does, he simply bids the appropriate level of spades. There is no such thing as a double that asks if the partner really has a proper takeout double. However, South is equal length in the minors with 10 or more points because his partner is forced to the three-level.

In the right case, South has four spades and four clubs with around eight to ten HCP. As seen in example 29.5, South need not have four clubs if he can correct to his partner's minor.

Furthermore, South has a tolerance for diamonds or better, otherwise he chooses to defend in a misfit situation.