

WASHINGTON BRIDGE LEAGUE

We offer our thanks to Washington Bridge league as we, present a copy from their 2014 July -Aug bulletin on Negative doubles part 1, by columnists > Ron Zucker and Shawn Stringer. Read original - [Here](#)

Negative doubles - Part 1

A primary goal of bidding is to find a major suit contract and bidding systems are structured around finding eight card major suit fits. These sequences are common:

1 Heart	Pass	2 Heart	Pass
1 Diamond	Pass	1 Heart	Pass
4 Heart	All Pass		
2 Heart	All Pass		

Bidding is simpler when the opponents are silent. But since every player has a right and a duty to bid his cards, the opening side must be able to handle the opponent's interference or risk either getting shut out of the auction or missing the best contract.

In competitive auctions, where Opener bids one of a minor and the opponent interferes with a suit overcall, the Responder frequently has values and at least one four card major, but no clear bid. Responder usually needs five cards to bid a new suit; he also needs 11+ HCP to bid a new suit at the two level. (Note: Many players bid a new suit with 10+ HCP. We recommend 11+ HCP and will use that range throughout this book. Make sure you and your partner are in agreement.)

Responder may lack sufficient length or strength to bid a new suit, but may have too many points to pass or may not have the right cards to bid NoTrump. The opening side does not want to lose its major suit fit just because the opponents have complicated the auction.

Once the opponent makes a suit overcall, Responder holding more than a minimum must accomplish all of the following:

- 1) convey his major suit length;
- 2) show that he has at least competitive values; and
- 3) help his side compete for the game or part score. The lack of a good bid to handle the suit overcall, coupled with the infrequent use of low level penalty doubles, gave rise to the concept of the Negative Double.

The Negative Double is a bid used by Responder after his partner has opened and his Right Hand Opponent (RHO) has made a suit overcall.

The negative double shows at least four cards in the unbid major(s). The rest of Responder's hand can take many different shapes, which are detailed below. Think of the negative double as a form of takeout double made by the Responder with the emphasis on showing the unbid major.

The following auction provides a simple example of the negative double:

Partner	Opp	Responder
1♦	1♠	?

Holding ♠xxx ♥KJxx ♦Qxxx ♣Kx, Responder would have bid 1♥ if opponent had passed. Since 1H is no longer available, the overcall leaves Responder no clear suit bid.

Consider the possible bids that Responder might make and note how each bid is flawed:

- 1) Pass - Responder cannot pass with this much strength. The opening side has more than half the deck and needs to compete for the part score or push the opposition to a higher level.
- 2) 1NT - Even where Responder is balanced, 1NT is not the best bid with no spade stopper. Even if he had a spade stopper, (change the hand to ♠Kxx ♥KJxx ♦Qxxx ♣xx) Responder should still refrain from bidding 1NT because he should not waste the chance to show four hearts.
- 3) 2♦ - When Responder holds four diamonds, he could support partner right away. The problem with bidding 2♦, however, is that the partnership would likely lose the chance to find a 4-4 heart fit. When opener has a minimum hand, such as ♠xx ♥AQxx ♦Axxx♣Kxx, he will not be able to bid again, and the heart fit will be lost.
- 4) 2♥ - Responder cannot bid 2♥ because he does not have five cards in the suit. Change a small diamond to a small heart, so that Responder now holds ♠xxx ♥KJxxx ♦Qxx ♣Kx, and the hand still lacks the required 11+ HCP, even with five hearts. Remember that Responder cannot introduce a new suit at the two level unless his hand meets both the length and strength requirements.

The Negative Double solves Responder's bidding dilemma and provides the best description of his hand. The negative double promises four cards in the unbid major and enough HCP to get into the auction. That is precisely what Responder has - four hearts and 9 HCP.

In addition to holding four hearts, Responder may also have support for the other unbid suit and/or support for Opener's minor. Responder might also have four hearts and strength in spades.

Again using the 1♦ - 1♠ auction, a negative double would be the proper bid holding a variety of hands such as:

- a. ♠xx ♥AJxx ♦Qxxx ♣Jxx (four hearts and four of Opener's minor)
- b. xx ♥KQxx ♦Qxx ♣Kxxx (four hearts and four of the other unbid suit)
- c. ♠x ♥KJxx ♦Jxxx ♣Qxxx (four hearts, four of Opener's suit and four of the other unbid suit)
- d. ♠xxx ♥ATxx ♦Kxxx ♣Qx (four hearts and doubleton in the unbid suit)
- e. ♠AQxx ♥Axxx ♦Jxx ♣xx (four hearts and spades well stopped)

Next month, we'll continue our look at negative doubles.