



## Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

My partner and I are often confused as to whether a double is penalty or takeout. Recently, we had the following auction:

Partner	RHO	Me	LHO
1♠	Pass	1NT	2♥
Dbl	All Pass		

I held:

♦AQ5 ♥7652 ♦KJ8653 ♣9.

2♥ doubled, making three, was not exactly a success since we could make 5♦. Partner insisted his double was takeout, while I felt strongly it was penalty. What should this double mean?

Double Dilemma

Hi DD,

As always, the issue of partnership agreement rears its ever-present head. This is an auction that I have discussed with all regular partners and try to remember to discuss with anyone who I might play with on more than an occasional basis. The reasons for all agreements should be based on frequency of occurrence and projected gain versus potential loss.

Holding any of the following hands, assume the auction proceeds:

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
1♠	Pass	1NT	2♥
?			

♦AK872 ♥4 ♦A972 ♣KQ5  
♦AJ8742 ♥4 ♦AQ7 ♣KJ5  
♦AKJ87 ♥84 ♦A72 ♣AQ5  
♦KJ1087 ♥8 ♦Q972 ♣AKQ

With each hand, you are blessed with extra values, yet have no clear sense of direction. You want to say, "Partner, I have extra values, but no clear way to express them." With a good partnership agreement, you can announce exactly this by saying, "Double." I suspect you will be less likely to hold strong hearts over a two-level overcall by RHO than you will to hold one of the hand types above. Responder is now in the picture. If he holds a long suit, he can escape to it. Incidentally, it matters not whether 1NT was standard, forcing, or semi-forcing.

If the 1NT bidder happens to hold length and strength in the opponents' suit, pass is an option which converts partner's takeout double to penalty. Responder would pass with hands such as:

♦5 ♥QJ1076 ♦K53 ♣9642  
♦AQ ♥AJ1097 ♦653 ♣9642  
♦65 ♥KJ10976 ♦53 ♣642

You might ask, "How could anyone overcall 2♥ if you held those hearts and partner held such a good hand?" Welcome to the real world where opponents occasionally step out and you need to step on them!

With the hand you actually held, DD, a possible diamond game should cross your mind. Visualize extra values in opener's hand, shortness in hearts, with three-card or longer support for the unbid suits. I suspect

you also would have a play for 4♣ on the combined hands. As a matter of fact, on three of the four layouts I have constructed, 5♦ is a very good contract, as is 4♣. Note the fourth example, which I would consider minimum for a takeout double.

I am not suggesting that you necessarily should reach game, but certainly you should find a diamond contract, or settle for a spade partial. Provided you have the agreement that double in this auction is not penalty, then you should tend to follow the Roth-Stone-ism found in their 1958 publication, *Bridge is a Partnership Game*: "Take out takeout doubles."

I strongly believe this double should be for takeout, and I think most experienced partnerships agree. □

### Puppet over 2NT

My inbox has been flooded since my objections to Puppet over 2NT were published in the October issue. My point was that Puppet over 2NT in its basic form as utilized by a vast number of less experienced players creates problems with hands that are 4-5 in the majors. These problems are often not recognized by those eager to adopt upgrades to their bidding arsenal.

Yes, there are modifications, but I still think the memory drain to adopt these methods may be too significant for some. In addition, multiple readers suggested that with five hearts and four spades, you simply transfer to hearts and then bid 3♣. This solves the issue, but leaves another. I prefer to transfer to hearts and bid 3♣ to show a 5-5 major-suit hands with slam interest, and to use a transfer to spades followed by 4♥ as pick a game. Each method gains on occasion and loses on others.