

Support Doubles

Basic Guidelines

by Mike Savage

When you open the bidding and your partner makes a one-level response and the next hand overcalls at the one or two-level, sometimes you will want to raise partner's suit with three-card support. Other times you will have four-card support. Support Doubles were created so opener can tell responder which he has - three or four-card support. Playing them, after there's a simple overcall *an immediate raise of partner's suit always shows four-card support.*

If you are playing Support Doubles and you make an immediate raise to two over the opponent's overcall, you show four-card support. If you double, you show three-card support. If your opponent doubles, instead of overcalling, a *redouble* by you is used in many partnerships to show three-card support and a raise to show four-card support. However if your right-hand opponent overcalls 1NT, it's better to play the double for penalties. When you make a Support Double, you could have a big hand or just a minimum opener but with a hand that you want to show that you have 3-card support. On the next round of bidding you can show any extra strength or length that you might have.

Most partnerships play Support Doubles thru 2H and some expert pairs only play them when their partner has responded 1H or 1S (not over 1D). If you decide to play Support Doubles, you need to use good bidding judgment as to when to use them – and when not to. Sometimes it makes more sense *not* to make a Support Double even though you *have* 3-card support. A classic example might be: S: AQ10 H: xxx D: A10x C: KJ10x. After having opened 1C and your partner having responded 1H and there is a 1S overcall, rebidding 1NT is a much better description of your hand than making a support double to show three small hearts.

However if your partnership has decided to play "Seppuku" Support Doubles (you always double with 3-card support), when opener does not make a Support Double when he could have and that always denies 3-card support, it would seem fair to alert his "Pass" (or any *other* bid) and if asked, say, "denies 3-card support". If you *do* make a Support Double or Redouble, it's always an alert. Examples follow:

1C-P-1H-1S Dbl with: S: x x H: K Q x D: A x x x C: A 10 x x

Planning to pass on your next turn unless forced.

1C-P-1H-1S Dbl with: S: x x H: A K x D: A x x C: A Q J x x

Planning to cue-bid spades next if partner hasn't bid no-trump.

1D-P-1H-1S Dbl with: S: x H: K J x D: A x x C: A Q J 10 x x

Tentatively planning to jump in clubs on your next turn.

1C-P-1S-2D Dbl with: S: A Q x H: Q x x x D: x x C: K Q 10 x

Planning to pass next unless partner forces - or invites game in spades.

1C-1H-1S-2H Dbl with: S: K Q x H: x x D: K x x C: A J 10 x x

Even when partner has shown a 5-card suit, a raise shows a 4-card fit

Planning to pass next but will accept a game invitation in spades.

1H-P-1S-Dbl Rdbl with: S: A J x H: K Q x x x D: A x x C: x x

Planning to compete in spades to the 3-level or accept game invitation

1D-P-1H-1S-2D with: S: A x H: x x x D: K Q J 10 x x C: K x (don't make a Support Double)

Planning to compete to 3D or to bid no-trump later if forced to by partner.