

UNDERSTANDING THE RULES

Doubling and Alerting Part II

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THIS, the second and last of two articles, concentrates on doubles of no-trumps, artificial bids and doubles in high-level auctions. The basic set of rules is found in the *Orange Book*, Section 5E2 and 5E4. For doubles of natural suit bids, please go back to the first article in the August issue of *English Bridge*.

No-trump Bids

If your opponents bid 1NT, 2NT, or 3NT and they are showing some sort of balanced hand and you double, then that is penalties unless you let the opponents know otherwise. For example:

Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2	Partner
(1NT)	Double		
(1NT) (3NT)	Pass Double	(2NT)	Pass
(1♠) (2♠)	Pass Double	(2♣) (2NT)	Pass Double

If your double of no-trumps means something else, then you should alert. The most common examples will be when it is for take-out, lead directing or showing a two-suiter.

Suppose the auction goes: (1♠) – Pass – (1NT) and you double. If this shows a strong hand with an intention of trying to take a penalty, then no alert is needed but if, as some people play, it shows a take-out of opener's first bid suit (spades), then partner must alert.

If your opponents open 1NT and this is raised to 3NT, and you have a good hand and decide to double, then there is no reason for partner to alert but if the double demands, say, a spade lead then partner should alert so that the opponents have the chance to have the same information as you.

A common misconception is that once you have doubled 1NT for penalties and it is removed, doubles of suits, if penalties, become subject to different rules. They don't. If you double a take-out of 1NT to, say, 2♥ and it is penalties, then you should alert (a double of a suit bid naturally is for take-out. If not, you must alert; see the August article).

Doubling an artificial bid

If your opponents produce a bid which is artificial and you double, then often you are suggesting that you hold the suit that is bid. If so, *no* alert is needed.

Oppo 1	Partner	Oppo 2	You
(1NT) *Transfer	Pass	(2♦*)	Double
(2NT) *Stayman	Pass	(3♣*)	Double
(1♠) *Spade raise	2♥	(3♥*)	Double

In each of the above cases if what you are showing is the suit bid, then there is no need to do anything. You might, however, play that in the first example your double of 2♦ says that you would have doubled 1NT for penalties and now partner should alert. If in the second example instead of showing clubs you are showing a minor two-suiter, then partner must alert. Once again, if the double shows the obvious, no alert is needed, but if it is more unusual, then an alert is needed. In the third example, if the double shows heart support, then there is no need to alert but if it shows something not related to hearts or perhaps something very specific such as denying a top honour, then an alert is needed.

Doubling a bid above the level of 3NT

Here the rule is simple. You only alert one type of double. Penalties? No alert. Take-out? No alert. Lead directing for the suit bid? No alert. Lead directing for another suit? *Alert!*

Most won't play any alertable doubles in this position, so you can probably look away, but here are three examples:

Oppo 1	Partner	Oppo 2	You
(1♠) *Splinter	Pass	(4♦*)	Double
(1♥) (6♥)	Pass Pass	(3♠*) (Pass)	Pass Double

(1♠) (4NT)	Pass Pass	(2NT*) (5♦)	Pass Double
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*Spade raise

In the first example, if you want partner to lead a diamond, then no alert is needed. If, for example, you are asking for a heart lead, then the double is alertable.

In the second example, if the double says: 'This is going down,' then there is no need for an alert, but if it says: 'It will only go down if you lead something unusual,' then an alert is needed because the opponents are entitled to know and might, of course, use this knowledge to move to another contract.

In the last example, if you want a diamond lead, then there is no need for an alert but if you are asking partner to lead a club, then an alert is needed.

Summary

How do I remember and what happens if I forget?

If you remember that up to and including 3NT:

- A. An opponent bids a suit naturally: alert if the double is anything but take-out.
- B. An opponent bids no-trumps naturally: alert if the double is anything but penalty.

At any level:

- C. If you double an artificial bid and the double calls for that suit, then no alert is needed, but if it calls for another suit, your partner must alert.

Then you will get almost everything right.

If you do get something wrong, then a director is still likely to be sympathetic. Two things are possible if the director decides on action: a fine or an adjusted score. Directors rarely fine unless it is a repeated or deliberate failure.

Note that if your opponents call the director and demand an adjusted score because you or your partner failed to alert, it is *not* automatic for there to be one. They have to have been damaged to be entitled to any adjustment. □