



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(19) Finding Fits in Competition

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Level: 2

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General

Competitive auctions are the most difficult in all of bridge. They require the most precise bidding and you and partner working together to land “on your feet.” Fits are an important part of these competitive auctions. We must find our fit and determine the size of it without competing too high in the bidding and without overstating our values.

The most important tool we are going to use to compete in the bidding is *double*. When we have a larger fit than partner knows about then we will raise partner (more of this and the *Law of Total Tricks* in the next lesson.) If we have already shown our fit or we are still searching for a fit, we will use double to compete in the bidding. Once we are comfortable using it, double is a flexible call that will become our favorite tool for competing in the bidding.

To further familiarize ourselves with doubles, we will look at some of the most important examples of how we use double to search for a fit and compete in the bidding.

Fits - Doubles at First Action

Takeout Doubles

When the opponents have opened the bidding and we have the values to compete but no primary place to play (we could handle playing in any the unbid suits), we make a *takeout double* to look for our fit. Partner knows we have at least 3-card support for all the unbid suits.

Negative Doubles

When partner has opened the bidding with one suit and the opponents interfere with another suit, we use a *negative double* to search for a fit. We might have both unbid suits OR only one of the unbid suits and a plan for what to do if partner does not bid our suit.

Example

1♦	2♣	X	P
2♠	P	3♦	



This auction shows 4-card ♥ and 4-card ♦ and 8-10 points. This is an example of using a negative double when we don't have both unbid suits – you hope that partner bids the Major you have and when he does not, we go back to our known fit.

Responsive Doubles

When the opponents find a fit (bid and raise a suit) and partner takes some action in the middle (overcalls or makes a takeout double), a double by the Advancer is a *responsive double* - searching for a fit or a better fit (like a negative double.) Most of the time we will have both unbid suits, but if we are missing one then we will have a plan for what to do if partner bids the suit we don't have (bid Notrump or have a fit for partner.)

Fits - Doubles Later in the Auction

When we start by opening the bidding with a suit we get the advantage of starting to look for our fit before the opponents. When partner responds, we get to further search for our fit before the opponents get in the way too much. However, if the next opponent bids, we have some options for how to continue to look for our fit.

Here is how we continue the auction to search for our fit:

- RAISE
 - We raise partner if we have 4-card support for his suit.
- BID OUR SUITS
 - If we have one long suit of our own (6+ card) then we will rebid it (if we can bid it without getting too high.)
 - If we have two suits (and an unbalanced hand) we will strive to bid them both. If bidding our second suit will cause us to reverse (and we don't have the values for a reverse) then we need to find another call.
- PASS
 - If we have a balanced hand, we will generally PASS (or bid 1NT if we have values and stoppers in the opponent's suit.) Remember not to bid 2NT with a minimum hand – that will get the auction too high if partner has 6 points and we have 12 points.
 - We can also pass if we have a TRAP PASS - that is, the opponent has bid our other suit. In that case, we pass and plan to defend – collect our plus score. If partner happens to reopen with a takeout double then we leave it in and collect our big penalty.
- DOUBLE
 - We double to compete in the bidding if we have shortness in the opponent's suit. This is generally a takeout double in most situations, but there is a useful convention that can be played when partner has responded in a Major suit. This double is commonly used as a *Support Double* – showing 3-card support for partner's Major.



Here are some examples of these kinds of doubles and what they show:

Example

1♦ P 1NT 2♥
X

This is a takeout double, showing short ♥ and a desire to compete in the bidding. Common distributions for opener to make this double on are 3-1-5-4, 3-2-4-4, or 4-1-4-4.

Example

1♦ P 1♠ 2♥
X*

This is a Support Double showing exactly 3-card ♠ support. This convention does not show anything about extra values, it just shows “small support” for partner’s suit.

More Takeout Doubles

Another common example that is another useful way to compete in the bidding is a second takeout double.

Example

1♣ X P 1♠
2♣ X

When we make a takeout double of 1♣ we show at least 3-card support for ♦/♥/♠ and about an opening hand. When partner bids only 1♠, it shows a weak hand – generally 4+ card ♠ and 0-8 points. If we have extra values and 4-card ♠ support, then we can raise to 2♠ showing our extra values and fit. But if we have extra values and only 3-card ♠ support, we need a way to compete in the bidding but also to let partner know that we are not sure of our fit yet. We do so by making a second takeout double. This tells partner that we have extra values and exactly 3-card ♠ support. It lets partner now decide where we should be playing the hand.

Conclusion

Our primary objecting in bidding is the search for a Major suit fit. When the opponents enter the auction and it becomes competitive, the danger of losing our valuable bidding space has increased and there is a pressure to find our fit (Major or minor suit) as quickly as possible. Knowing our bidding tools for finding these fits helps us deal with the opponents’ interference and figure out where we would be playing. Make sure you are comfortable with these bidding options.