

Power Doubles

When we learn about overcalls we learn that an overcall shows two things:

1. A good, five card or longer suit
2. Ten to Seventeen High Card Points (maybe a smidge lower at the one-level with a very good suit)

Often we will have an overcall hand but not enough points and so we will need to pass. However, what happens if we have *too many* high card points?

Although it is unlikely, it will occasionally happen that the opponents will open the bidding and we will be holding eighteen, nineteen, twenty or even more High Card Points. In this rare situation, the hand may well be “ours” even though they have opened the bidding. (Recall that usually when the opponents open the bidding, we are not looking to bid game but are rather trying to disrupt their conversation. If we have a very big hand, we may well want to have the conversation ourself!

How do we convey this situation to our partner?

Power Doubles

Remember that when we make a **takeout double** we are showing shortage in the opponents suit, tolerance (3+) for all the other suits and enough points that we would have bid if the opponents hadn't. We will usually double and then not bid again. A power double is where we double, our partner responds thinking we are making a takeout double and we then ignore them and bid our own suit (no need to jump!) This means “I have an overcall but I was TOO GOOD to overcall directly, so I began with a double”. Some examples will illustrate just how good these hands are. Imagine our RHO opens One Diamond and we hold the following:

♠ AKJT65
♥ 9
♦ KQT2
♣ AK

Double then Spades

♠ AKT4
♥ QJ3
♦ AQ2
♣ KJT

Double then No Trump

♠ K2
♥ AQ
♦ T93
♣ AKQJ87

Double then Clubs

♠ AKT
♥ AQ5
♦ 654
♣ AKJ3

Double then ***Diamonds***

Here it is important that our partner listens to the auction. We are conveying a meaning over two bids, not just one and she will almost certainly have a very bad hand! She shouldn't just pass without thinking very, very carefully!

What does it look like from the other side of the table?

This is what we might be looking at as responder. Imagine our Left Hand Opponent opens One Club. Our partner doubles and our Right Hand Opponent passes. We would think this was a takeout double and would bid One Spade holding the following. Imagine our partner then bids Two Hearts. What should we do next?

♠ QT87
♥ 92
♦ 852
♣ AT92

Here it can be very tempting to just pass. But remember, our partner has got more than seventeen high card points and a very good heart suit!

If she has six hearts, we have a fit. If she has nineteen High Card Points, we may well be able to make game. Bid Two No Trumps, to show you have a stopper in Clubs.

♠ 9852
♥ QT8
♦ 76432
♣ 5

Here we have a terrible hand! (You might choose Two Diamonds instead of One Spade). However, we have a fit, we have a useful singleton (in the opponent's suit) and our partner has **at least eighteen high card points!** We shouldn't just instinctively pass. We should raise to three hearts. Partner will probably bid game and this will either make or it won't but it doesn't have to be right every time to be worth it in the long run!