



Ask Jerry

BY JERRY HELMS ✉ askjerry@jerryhelms.com 🌐 jerryhelms.com

Dear Jerry,

We recently had a disaster on the following auction:

1♣	Dbl	1♥	Pass
Pass(!?)	Pass		

His thinking was that because I did not redouble, my hand was weak. Of course, we missed a game because I had 12 HCP. I thought my 1♥ bid was forcing. Help is needed.

Forcing or not?

Hi Forcing,

I suspect this is an area where others are very confused. That being the case, I will try to be gentle. It is standard practice that a redouble by responder in this auction does show 10 or more points. It is equally important to realize that the failure to redouble does not deny 10 or more points.

Just to review Bridge Basics 101, the bidding process is all about determining where to play in terms of suit or notrump, and how high to play in terms of partscore, game, or slam.

A new suit by responder at the one level after a takeout double is forcing – not semi-forcing, not almost forcing, just plain old forcing. A truth I hold to be very important: When you have suits to bid, you best start bidding your suits as soon as possible.

Example:

1♣	Dbl	?
----	-----	---

Holding:

♠7 ♥K 10 7 4 3 ♦A 4 ♣K 8 7 5 4

Despite your impressive high card point holding, which clearly equals the 10 or more points for a redouble, I cannot fathom bidding anything other than 1♥! Something about my spade singleton makes me fear that the opponents, who might be short on high-card points, could be long in spades and have a lot of shape. If I were to redouble, and my LHO jumped to 2♠ (which, by the way, should be preemptive, based on the auction) and – horrors! – partner passed, and RHO raised to 3♠, then what? Here I am preparing to introduce my heart suit, for the first time, at the four level. Somehow this feels very wrong. If, however, the auction had gone:

1♣	Dbl	1♥	2♠
Pass	3♠	?	

I would happily bid 4♣, feeling that I had shown a good hand with hearts and clubs.

I think that a redouble should show 10 or more points, but much more balanced distribution and be a suggestion that perhaps our best interest might be in penalizing the opponents, even at a low level. As a matter of fact, many partnerships play that a redouble tends to deny a primary fit for partner's bid suit.

Try this auction:

1♠	Dbl	Rdbl
----	-----	------

Holding:

♠4 ♥K J 6 5 ♦A 8 6 4 ♣Q 10 6 5,
this would be a classic redouble. On

this auction, you have no clear fit, and it appears the opponents could be in trouble playing in any suit. I think that the message sent by a redouble is: "Partner, we have the balance of power. We should either play this hand, or if the opponents play, they must be doubled!"

After a redouble, the opening bidder would tend to pass with any balanced type of hand if his RHO passed. If his RHO happened to bid a suit that he has four cards in, he should double. Opener, holding a weak distributional opening bid, would act immediately to warn partner about his lack of defense.

There is a conventional treatment called "Jordan" which many partnerships employ to help find what they hold after a takeout double:

1M	Dbl	2NT
----	-----	-----

The 2NT bid, after a major, shows an artificial four-trump limit raise. This means that when responder redoubles, he always has at most three-card support in opener's suit.

1m	Dbl	2NT
----	-----	-----

After a minor, this can also be used to show good support for opener's minor suit with 10 or more points, although there are variations.

By the way, in most partnerships, a new suit at the two level after a takeout double is *not* forcing – just when you thought you were beginning to understand.