



Ask Jerry

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In my March column, I answered a question from Clara about responsive doubles. Shockingly, I got a little bit wordy and ran out of column space. This is a continuation.

To jog my readers' memories, I will review a little bit of last month's column.

When the opponents bid and raise the same suit, sandwiching a takeout double by your partner, a double by advancer is best defined as responsive. It shows a desire to compete, indicating advancer holds at least two suits, each of which might be our best combined fit. A classic example:

1♠ Dbl 2♠ ?

Advancer holds:

♠7 6 2 ♥Q 5 ♦A K 6 5 ♣J 10 4 3.

With 10 working high-card points, action is called for ... a responsive double to the rescue! Double asks the takeout doubler to name his cheapest four-card or longer suit. In the past, if I had opted to bid my best suit (in this case, diamonds), partner's shape would always have been: 1=4=3=5!

Responsive doubles can pay dividends in a couple of comparable auctions. You hold:

♠J 6 ♥A J 7 3 ♦7 4 ♣K J 8 4 3.

	Partner		You
1♦	1♠	2♦	?

After partner overcalls 1♠, it seems we should be competitively involved with these values because we very possibly hold half the deck or more. Rather than supporting with a doubleton, which is a possibility, a better choice is a responsive double.

It's a good idea to use a double by advancer the same way when partner's simple overcall is sandwiched by a bid and raise of the same suit. On this auction, your double should suggest tolerance for the overcaller's suit, values to compete, and at least four cards in the other two suits. The overcaller is encouraged to bid a second four-card suit if he holds one, otherwise retreat to his own suit, hoping for tolerance from your hand, but at least secure with the knowledge that you have values.

The level to which you define these doubles to be responsive depends on partnership agreement. For simplicity, I suggest you play them through the same level as you play negative doubles.

Thus far, the central element common to responsive doubles is the opponents must bid and raise the same suit, which sandwiches either a takeout double or an overcall. Each time, advancer's double is a tool seeking to find the best fit and guaranteeing in his hand there are at least two viable candidates.

Another auction where many partnerships may choose to play responsive doubles:

1♦ 1♥ 1NT ?

Holding:

♠K Q 8 5 ♥J 3 ♦7 4 ♣K J 8 4 3,

what should advancer do? He could pass and hope 1NT ends the auction, and that perhaps you can defeat them. In my experience, if I pass, the opponents reel off five diamond tricks and another couple of random tricks to score 1NT!

In this situation, I prefer finding a reason to bid before settling for an excuse to pass. It is entirely possible that intervener (the overcaller), in addition to his heart suit, holds four spades or clubs. If that's the case, we need to be bidding. I suggest that in this specific auction, where partner has overcalled, and RHO has bid 1NT, that a responsive double should be an option. Reserving a double here for penalties just does not meet the test of frequency of occurrence as much as the frequency of the desire to compete. If advancer holds a fit for the intervener, he should raise: either a simple raise or a cuebid to show a limit raise or better. ■