

NO MORE DOUBLE TROUBLES

1. JANUARY 2018
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Doubles seem to cause inexperienced bridge players so much concern that they decide to avoid them.

This is a huge mistake.

Some think that you can only make a takeout X if you have opening points. **This is naïve!**

The main objective in Bridge is to get the best score possible with the cards we are dealt.

We compete in an auction in an attempt to buy the contract, at either game OR part score level.

We compete in an auction to find a trump fit (preferably a major suit).

Sometimes, a hand is a misfit with no trump fit (keep out of it unless you have lots of aces and kings).

Sometimes we are completely outgunned and we must defend. BUT - - -

On many hands the 40 HCPs are shared fairly evenly 22-18, etc. In these hands a good trump fit can compensate for having fewer pts. than your opponents. A pair with 18 points can often make as many tricks as the pair with 22 pts. but only IF they play in their trump suit. Most of these competitive auctions end in N/S or E/W playing in a part score but whose trumps will be in control? REMEMBER - If **they** have a fit - - then **you** have a fit!

1.

To understand the Takeout 'X' more clearly you must recognise when you are sitting in - the PROTECTIVE POSITION - the position whose PASS would close the auction. e.g.

W	N	E	S
1H	p	p	?

W	N	E	S
1H	p	2H	p
p	?		

W	N	E	S
1H	1S	p	p
?			

The question mark indicates the player who is sitting in what is called the PROTECTIVE POSITION,

Please spend a few minutes looking at these sequences to understand this principle before proceeding.

2.

To appreciate the Takeout 'X' fully you must have some knowledge of DUPLICATE BRIDGE SCORING.

Look at the middle bidding sequence shown above,

West has 13 pts. East has 6 pts. - With their trump fit, it's a nice little contract. E/W are in their comfort zone!

When E/W make 2♥, you (N/S) score **-110**.

Locate your spade fit and for 2♠ making you could score +110

Even if you have to play in 3♦ making only 8 tricks, your -50 is better than -110

Of course E/W might bid on to 3♥ and make only 8 tricks, giving you +50.

Whatever happens, PASSING 2♥ will usually be a LOSING OPTION!

Now that we are prepared to compete more, the great news is that Takeout X takes up NO BIDDING SPACE.

TAKEOUT 'X' as YOUR 1ST BID

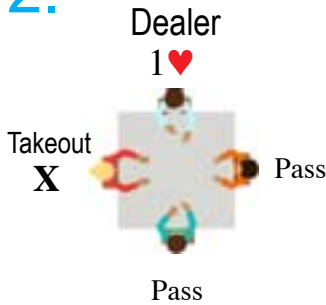
1.



'X' RIGHT HAND OPPONENTS OPENING BID (12+)
 (Usually at least one 4 card major, shortage in opening suit, etc.
BUT MAYBE TOO STRONG TO OVERCALL
 16+ any shape (Assuming you do not use strong jump overcalls.)

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS WITH 11+
 11-15 Overcall 1S with 5+ spades.
 11-15 Overcall 2D/2C with 5. Would suggest no 4 card major.
 16-19 Overcall 1NT with a good heart stop.
 11-15 Pass with opponent's suit or 4-3-3-3 shape

2.



'X' IN PROTECTIVE POSITION (10+)
 (Usually at least one 4 card major, shortage in opening suit.
BUT MAYBE
 16+ any shape (Assuming you do not use strong jump overcalls.)

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS WITH 10+
 10 -15 Overcall 1S with 5+ spades.
 10- 15 Overcall 2D/2C with 5. Would suggest no 4 card major.
 12 -14 Overcall 1NT with a good heart stop.
 10 -15 Pass with opponent's suit or 4-3-3-3 shape.

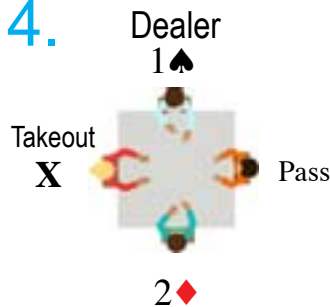
3.



(Partner has opened.) 'X' RHO'S BID - (6+)
 This is a 'Negative Double' showing 4 of the other major.
OR
 Not our recommendation but some pairs
 'X' simply to show the balance of pts. (9+)

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS WITH 6+
 9/10 Overcall 1NT with a spade stop.
 10+ Bid 2H to show 5+ hearts and happy to play in 3D.
 6-8 Bid 3D. An Inverted Minor Raise. Denies four of other major.
 10 ish Bid 2D. An Inverted Minor Raise. Denies four of other major.
 ANY suit bid other than diamonds is FORCING for one round.

4.



'X' AFTER BOTH OPPONENTS HAVE BID (12+)
 This double shows BOTH of the other suits. At least 5/5.
 If bidding is still at 1 level e.g. 1D - p - 1S, 'X' may be only 5/4

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS WITH 12+
 12-15 Overcall. (Should be good - lead directing suit.)
 12-15 Pass.

5.



'X' AFTER THREE BIDS (10 ish)

N	E	S	W
1♣	1♠	*2♣	X
P/3♣	3♦		

Cramlington last week!
 *South could have doubled to show hearts.
 West's 'X' shows other two suits.

♠ J654	♠ K10973
♥ A4	♥ 3
♦ 103	♦ KJ87
♣ AQ982	♣ J74
♠ A8	♠ Q2
♥ KJ972	♥ Q10865
♦ A9642	♦ Q5
♣ 5	♣ K1063

USING a TAKEOUT 'X' - LATER in the Auction

1.

N	E	S	W
1♥	P	2♥	P
P	X		

PROTECTIVE 'X'

8+ Usually 4 cards in the other major.
Shortage in opening suit
NOT for penalties. They have a fit - so do we!

TIP
 Try to stop opponents playing in a fit at the 2 level.

EXAMPLES

E

♠	QJ95
♥	8
♦	KJ10
♣	J9872

2.

N	E	S	W
1♥	1♠	P	P
X			

RE-OPENING 'X'

12+ North opened 1H. North is short in spades!
'X' is for Takeout.

TIP
 If you are south with spades, learn to pass smoothly.
 Trust that partner will make a re-opening double!

N

♠	5
♥	AJ982
♦	KJ10
♣	A872

3.

N	E	S	W
1♥	1♠	*P	2♠
P	P	X	

COMPETITIVE 'X'

6 ish Shows a willingness to play in 3♣, 3♦ or 3♥

TIP
 Be aware of vulnerability when competing.
 *An immediate 2♥ might have been a better bid?

S

♠	95
♥	J98
♦	J104
♣	A9872

4.

N	E	S	W
1♠	P	2♦	P
2♠	X		

A WEAK, TWO SUITED 'X'

8 ish N/S have at least 22 HCPs. Maybe game values.
East has already passed, so 'X' shows at least 5/5 in the other two suits.

TIP
 A 'Michaels Cue Bid' of 2♠ would also show this shape.

E

♠	5
♥	J10983
♦	J4
♣	AQ982

5.

N	E	S	W
1♠	P	1NT	P
2♠	X		

'X' FOR TAKEOUT OR PENALTY?

10+ 5 spades! Unlike Hand 4, south made a limit bid.
You might agree to play this 2nd round 'X' PENALTIES.

TIP
 Discuss the meaning with a REGULAR partner.
 Remember to ALERT if you agree to play this for penalties.

E

♠	KJ965
♥	J3
♦	AQ104
♣	98

6.

N	E	S	W
1♥	X	2♦	P
2♥	X		

A SECOND 'X'

12+ This 'X' is STILL for Takeout.
East knows that west is weak but insists that west bids one of the other two suits

TIP
 With 12+ pts, avoid overcalling in a minor suit if you hold a 4 card major.

E

♠	KQ109
♥	K4
♦	4
♣	AJ9852

ALTERNATIVES to the TAKEOUT 'X' with 12+ pts.

ALTERNATIVES to a Takeout 'X' when you have 12+pts. and RHO opens 1 of a suit.

west opens 1♠

N
♠ AJ1092
♥ 102
♦ K6
♣ A1043

PASS
With FOUR or FIVE of the opponent's suit, usually pass as smooth as silk.

west opens 1♠

N
♠ KQ3
♥ KJ102
♦ K6
♣ 10943

PASS
You would have opened 1NT but there is NO bid available!

west opens 1♠

N
♠ 43
♥ AJ1092
♦ K6
♣ A1043

OVERCALL 2♥
You hold a good FIVE card major with 8-15 HCPs make a simple overcall. An overcall in a minor suit suggests that you do not have a major suit or that you are too weak to double.

west opens 1♠

N
♠ KQ3
♥ AJ102
♦ K6
♣ A1043

OVERCALL 1NT
You hold a good stop and a 16-18 HCPs. Partner can now use 'Stayman' and transfers.

west opens 1♠

N
♠ 43
♥ AKJ1052
♥ KJ
♣ AQ4

JUMP OVERCALL 3♥
As most players use WEAK jump overcalls, this is not an option here. IF you have agreed to play STRONG jump overcalls then 3♥ may be your choice, but without holding SIX cards in the suit, you are back to using the 'X'.

CONVENTIONAL BIDS for experienced partnerships only

With TWO SUITED HANDS (Usually 5/5) many players use a range of conventional bids as an alternative to 'X'

	W	N	
'MICHAELS CUE BIDS'	1♥	2♥	Showing 5 of other major and 5 of a minor. (<i>Otherwise simply a game force</i>).
	1♠	2♠	Showing 5 of other major and 5 of a minor.
	1♦	2♦	Showing 5/5 in the majors.)
'U.N.T.'	1♦	2NT	Showing 5/5 in the two lowest unbid suits.
	1NT	2NT	Showing 5/5 in the minors.
'LANDY'	1NT	2♣	Showing 5/5 in the majors.

All of these bids can be used when you are EITHER WEAK 6-10 or STRONG 16+ (Prefer to overcall with 11-15)

west opens 1♠

N
♠ 4
♥ KQ107
♦ AK5
♣ AQ832

2♠ GAME FORCING CUE BID (ONLY if you do not use 'Michaels Cue Bids'). Less experienced players could agree to play a direct cue bid of the opponent's suit as showing a game forcing hand but uncertain as to where the best game is. PLEASE NOTE that there are other other types of cue bid.

west opens 1♠

N
♠ 4
♥ Q7
♦ AKJ85
♣ AQJ83

2NT - THE UNUSUAL TWO NO TRUMPS
This bid can be used over opening suit bids OR over NT openings. The meaning is virtually the same. (5/5 in the two lowest unbid suits.)

The STANDARD TAKEOUT 'X' (RECAP)

A direct TAKEOUT DOUBLE made at your first opportunity to bid, usually shows :

1. an opening hand, (12+ HCPS)
2. a shortage in opener's suit,
3. an ability to support the other three suits. (It would normally have at least 3 cards in each.)

It asks your partner to take out the double by bidding their best suit (or NTs if appropriate.)

Note that your X is the first time you have bid,

W	N	E	S
1♦	X		
or			
1♠	X		
or			
3♠	X		
or			
1♠	P	2♠	X
or			
1♠	P	P	X
P	P	2♠	*X

*In this last example, the second 'X' is STILL FOR TAKEOUT. It says "Partner I know that you may have virtually nothing, but I am very strong and I insist that you bid your best suit."

<p>west opens 1♠</p>	<p>N</p> <p>♠ 3 ♥ AJ98 ♦ KJ104 ♣ A872</p>	<p>X Perfect Double. Does exactly what it says on the tin!</p>
<p>west opens 1♠</p>	<p>N</p> <p>♠ 43 ♥ AJ98 ♦ K8 ♣ AQ432</p>	<p>X Not Perfect, but better than 2♣. IF partner bids 2♦, pass.</p>
<p>west opens 1♠</p>	<p>N</p> <p>♠ 43 ♥ AKJ102 ♦ KJ ♣ AQ43</p>	<p>X No Alternative! if you hold 16+ HCPs, you are TOO STRONG to make a simple overcall.</p>
<p>west opens 1♥</p>	<p>N</p> <p>♠ QJ43 ♥ 102 ♦ KJ4 ♣ AQ43</p>	<p>X Takeout of hearts Strongly suggesting four of the other major.</p>
<p>west opens 1♦</p>	<p>N</p> <p>♠ AQ8 ♥ KQ102 ♦ 54 ♣ K63</p>	<p>X Both majors? Ideally showing both majors, but it is not a perfect world.</p>

Variations on the standard TAKEOUT 'X'

Sometimes, before you get the chance to bid, opponents have bid two suits. Now your 'X' will promise the other two suits.

Here, souths 'X' is promising at the very least, four hearts and four diamonds. Obviously if doubler was 5/5 their High Card strength can be weaker.

<table border="1"> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>N</td> <td>E</td> <td>S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1♠</td> <td>P</td> <td>2♣</td> <td>X</td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	1♠	P	2♣	X	<p>♠ 93 ♥ AKJ10 ♦ KQ762 ♣ 54</p>	<p>X OTHER TWO SUITS and especially four of the other major</p>
W	N	E	S							
1♠	P	2♣	X							
	<p>♠ 9 ♥ AKJ103 ♦ KQ762 ♣ 5</p>	<p>2♥ SIMPLE OVERCALL Prefer to overcall with a FIVE card major</p>								

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	1NT	X

If RHO responds 1NT (6-9) to opener, a 'X' would certainly show 12+ pts. and a four card heart suit. (Four of the other major.)

<p>west opens 1♠</p>	<p>♠ 9 ♥ AKJ10 ♦ KQ765 ♣ 986</p>	<p>X TAKEOUT OF SPADES and especially four of the other major</p>
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TAKEOUT 'X' with 16+HCPs

From where your partner is sitting, this will initially appear to be exactly the same as the 'Classic Takeout 'X' that shows 12+ HCPs, a shortage in your opponent's suit and at least three cards in each of the other suits. So why is it not this? A quick recap will remind you of three things:

1. Simple overcalls are NOT unlimited. They show between 8 and 15 HCPs.
2. Most pairs these days play WEAK Jump Overcalls. 6-10 HCPs.
3. An overcall of 1NT will promise 16-18 HCPs AND a good stop in your opponent's suit.

SO if RHO opens the bidding and you have no stop in their suit, and no 5 card suit your only option is to 'X' for Takeout.

If partner gets the chance to respond to your 'X', your next bid will tell partner that it was not the usual T.O 'X'

<table border="0"> <tr><td>S</td><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>1♥</td><td>X</td><td>P</td><td>2♣</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>P</td><td>P</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♠ AKJ9</td><td colspan="2">♠ 76</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♥ 85</td><td colspan="2">♥ 962</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♦ Q62</td><td colspan="2">♦ J873</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♣ A972</td><td colspan="2">♣ K865</td></tr> </table> <p>If partner responds to your normal Takeout 'X' at the cheapest level it shows few points and you would pass.</p>	S	W	N	E	1♥	X	P	2♣	P	P	P		♠ AKJ9		♠ 76		♥ 85		♥ 962		♦ Q62		♦ J873		♣ A972		♣ K865		<table border="0"> <tr><td>S</td><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>1♥</td><td>1♠</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♠ AKJ96</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♥ 85</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♦ Q62</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♣ A972</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr> </table> <p>With a good five card major, a simple overcall of 1♠ is best.</p>	S	W	N	E	1♥	1♠			♠ AKJ96				♥ 85				♦ Q62				♣ A972				<table border="0"> <tr><td>S</td><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>1♥</td><td>X</td><td>P</td><td>2♣</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>2♠</td><td>P</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♠ AKJ96</td><td colspan="2">♠ 76</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♥ 85</td><td colspan="2">♥ 962</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♦ AQ2</td><td colspan="2">♦ J873</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">♣ A97</td><td colspan="2">♣ K865</td></tr> </table> <p>If RHO opens 1H you are TOO STRONG to make a simple overcall. Begin with 'X' If partner bids 2♣ or 2♦ you now bid 2♠ to show</p>	S	W	N	E	1♥	X	P	2♣	P	2♠	P		♠ AKJ96		♠ 76		♥ 85		♥ 962		♦ AQ2		♦ J873		♣ A97		♣ K865	
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♠ A10875	
♥ 63	
♦ 97	
♣ J753	
♠ Q92	♠ K43
♥ KJ5	♥ A9842
♦ AKQJ8	♦ 10654
♣ 92	♣ 10
♠ J6	
♥ Q107	
♦ 32	
♣ AKQ864	

Usually a direct Takeout X will promise a four card major. This west hand has no major, but it does have a good FIVE cards suit, so you may think that it is correct to overcall 2♦. BUT - -

If you remember that Simple Overcalls show between 8 and 15 HCPs, you will realise that the hand is TOO STRONG to overcall.

Start with a 'X'.
North bids 1♠ and east can bid 2♥ to show FIVE hearts
west now has a simple raise to 4♥

S	W	N	E	S	W	N	E
1C	1D	1S	2D	1C	X	1S	2H
3C	5D	P	P	3C	4H	P	P
AT THE TABLE				RECOMMENDED			

RESPONDING TO A TAKEOUT 'X'

If right hand opponent BIDS,

S	W	N	E
1♥	X	2♣	?

East 1.	East 2.	East 3.
♠ J96	♠ J9	♠ K96
♥ 852	♥ Q852	♥ 852
♦ Q63	♦ Q963	♦ KQ962
♣ Q972	♣ 972	♣ 72

1. PASS if you have nothing to say,
2. PASS with their suit and weak.
3. 2D. Bid with a decent suit. (8 ish pts.)


If right hand opponent PASSES

S	W	N	E
1♥	X	P	?

East 4.	East 5.	East 6.
♠ J96	♠ AJ92	♠ 96
♥ 852	♥ Q85	♥ Q852
♦ Q62	♦ K1096	♦ K97
♣ Q972	♣ 73	♣ J732

4. 2C. Bid your best suit at the cheapest level.
5. 2S. With 10+, bid 1 level higher than necessary
6. 2C. Do not bid 1NT with such a poor hand!

6 of the Silliest Responses to a Takeout 'X'

<p>Partner DOUBLES 1NT (for penalty)</p> <p>ERROR 1.</p> <p>Bidding with 6+ HCPs (unless looking for a vulnerable game)</p>	<p>S - W - N - E 1NT - X - P - ?</p> <p>♠ Q1073 ♥ K5 ♦ QJ5 ♣ 6542</p>	<p>BEGINNER "I will give partner my best suit." 2♠</p> <p>(as your opponents breathe a sigh of relief).</p>	<p>BRIDGE PLAYER Partner has 15+ pts! I have 8 HCPs. 23-26 in total. Game may be possible. They are vulnerable. Lets just take their money.</p> <p>Suggested bid PASS</p>
<p>Partner DOUBLES 1NT (for penalty)</p> <p>ERROR 2.</p> <p>Passing with fewer than 5 HCPs</p> 	<p>S - W - N - E 1NT - X - P - ?</p> <p>♠ J1073 ♥ 85 ♦ 965 ♣ 6542</p>	<p>BEGINNER "I don't have enough pts. to bid partner." Pass</p> <p>(Opponents enter +380* on the scoresheet for *1NT X +1 vulnerable.)</p>	<p>BRIDGE PLAYER Partner has 15+ pts! Sadly, I cannot support the penalty double but I can tell partner that I am weak by 'taking out' the double.</p> <p>Suggested bid 2♣.</p>
<p>Partner has made a TAKEOUT X</p> <p>ERROR 3.</p> <p>Failing to bid because you only have a few points.</p>	<p>S - W - N - E 1♥ - X - P - ?</p> <p>♠ 10732 ♥ J5 ♦ 965 ♣ 6542</p>	<p>BEGINNER "I don't have enough pts. to bid partner." Pass</p> <p>(Opponents enter +560* on the scoresheet) *1♥ X +2 vulnerable</p>	<p>BRIDGE PLAYER Partner has at least 12 pts! If I pass, partner will assume that I have hearts AND HCPs.</p> <p>I am forced to bid!</p> <p>Suggested bid 1♠</p>
<p>Partner has made a TAKEOUT X</p> <p>ERROR 4.</p> <p>Bidding - when you hold 10ish pts. AND five of your opponent's suit.</p>	<p>S - W - N - E 1♠ - X - P - ?</p> <p>♠ Q10732 ♥ K5 ♦ KQ105 ♣ 65</p>	<p>BEGINNER "I will give partner my best suit." 2♦</p> <p>(as your opponents breathe a sigh of relief). More advanced agreement = (If NV opponents, 1NT = 9 ish not 6-9)</p>	<p>BRIDGE PLAYER Partner has at least 12 pts! and probably four hearts. I have 10 HCPs, & no heart fit. They are vulnerable. Can we make 3NT or 5♦? Can they make 1♠?</p> <p>Suggested bid Pass</p>
<p>Partner has made a TAKEOUT X</p> <p>ERROR 5.</p> <p>Not bidding 1 level higher to show 10+ points.</p> 	<p>S - W - N - E 1♥ - X - P - ?</p> <p>♠ KJ1073 ♥ K5 ♦ KJ10 ♣ 652</p>	<p>BEGINNER "I will give partner my best suit." 1♠</p> <p>(At the end of the hand your side scores +200 instead of +650.)</p>	<p>BRIDGE PLAYER Partner has at least 12 pts! and probably four spades. I have 11 HCPs, (13 pts., as we have a fit). My hand is flat! (an 8 loser) but game COULD be on!</p> <p>Suggested bid STOP 2♠</p>
<p>Partner has made a TAKEOUT X</p> <p>ERROR 6.</p> <p>Bidding INT - when you CANNOT stop the enemy suit, or you are simply TOO WEAK.</p>	<p>S - W - N - E 1♠ - X - P - ?</p> <p>♠ 1073 ♥ K54 ♦ J108 ♣ A652</p> <p>♠ K1073 ♥ 54 ♦ J1082 ♣ 652</p>	<p>BEGINNER "I will show partner my point count" INT</p> <p>"I will show partner my spade stop" INT</p>	<p>BRIDGE PLAYER Unfortunately I cannot stop the spade suit and I do not have four hearts.</p> <p>Suggested bid 2♣</p> <p>I am VERY weak and do not have 4 hearts. I am forced to bid !</p> <p>Suggested bid 2♦</p>

PROTECTIVE TAKEOUT 'X' (RECAP)

Although a **direct** TAKEOUT 'X' (made at your first opportunity to bid) promises 12+ HCPs, TAKEOUT 'X's later in the auction could have CONSIDERABLY FEWER HCPs.

If your opponents discover an 8 card fit, and yet stop bidding at the 2 level, they probably have only a few more, HCPs than your side AND if they have a fit, it is almost certain that your side also have a fit. DO NOT let them play in their comfort zone at the 2 level. **COMPETE!** Usually by making a Takeout X. Bridge is not about making your contracts, it is about scoring more, or conceding fewer points than opponents.

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	2♥	P
P	?		

N	
♠	K1087
♥	98
♦	KJ104
♣	987

In this auction

West has opened with at least 4 hearts and 11-19 pts

East has bid 2♥ with three or four hearts and about 6 or 7 pts.

West passed, so is unlikely to have more than 15 HCPs, and may have only 11!

E/W only have half of the 40 HCPs. You have 7. Partner will have about 12.

*IF you pass the auction is finished and your opponents will score 110 for a comfortable (easy) contract.

NO!

Ask partner to bid by making a Takeout X. Hopefully partner can bid spades and make 110 your way, or even fail by one trick to score -50 or -100.

Both of these scores are better than -110 but the other possibility is that your opponents bid on to 3♥ and fail by one trick to give you +50 or +100.

Recognising the Protective Position

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	1NT	P
2♣	P	P	?

S	
♠	K10
♥	98754
♦	KJ1042
♣	7

*THE PROTECTIVE POSITION

South is sitting in the seat whose "pass" would close the auction. This is called the 'Protective Position', where bids can be made on fewer points - to keep the auction alive. North must not think that south has found a couple of aces stuck behind other cards.

Here an overcall of diamonds is possible but with FIVE hearts, this seems wrong. Similarly, to overcall the poor hearts is unwise as partner would lead this suit if east played the contract.

When opener rebids clubs, south, with a shapely 7 count, can make a Takeout 'X', asking partner to bid either of the other two suits.

W	N	E	S
1♣	P	P	<u>X</u>

OR

E	S	W	N
1♣	P	2♣	P
P	<u>X</u>		

OR

E	S	W	N
P	P	1♣	P
1♠	<u>X</u>		

In these positions the TAKEOUT X is designed simply to keep the auction alive

A protective 'X' will still tend to show a shortage in the opponent's suit or suits, but it may have fewer HCPs.

If opponents show a fit - but stop bidding at the 2 level **COMPETE!**

Here is an example:

West		East		W	N	E	S
♠	KJ982	♠	A753				
♥	92	♥	J8	1♠	P	2♠	P
♦	Q10	♦	J932				
♣	AQ32	♣	987	P	?	(north's pass would close the auction)	

If north passes, the auction is over and N/S WILL score badly!

NOTE. N/S did not bid UNTIL both east and west had shown weakness.

What does north know?

If E/W have a fit - N/S have a fit too!

West has 13 ish. East has 7 ish.

So, N/S should have 20 ish HCPs too!

N/S should compete but the suit is not clear, so use a Protective Takeout 'X'.

If opponents bid to 3♠, pass, you have done your job!

NEGATIVE DOUBLE (RECAP)

The standard Takeout 'X' is made after opponents have opened the bidding and you wish to compete but often your partner opens and annoyingly your RHO overcalls. This can make it difficult to respond. The Takeout 'X' comes to the rescue again!

This Takeout Double is made after opponents overcall your partner's opening bid
It is called a Negative Double.

It promises responding values of 6+ pts. If a major has been bid by either partner or opponent, the Negative 'X' usually shows four of the other major, or a hand with five of that major but too weak to bid them naturally.

The NEGATIVE 'X' at the 1 level only needs responding values (6+ hcps)

This is made when your partner has opened and Right Hand Opponent overcalls. (NEGATIVE = not for penalty.)

W	N	E	
1♣	1♠	X	This NEGATIVE 'X' shows 6+ HCPs and at least four of the other major.
1♣	1♥	X	This NEGATIVE 'X' shows 6+ HCPs and at least four of the other major.
1♣	1♦	X	This NEGATIVE 'X' shows 6+ HCPs and both majors.
1♥	1♠	X	This NEGATIVE 'X' shows 6+ HCPs and both minors.

If you are wondering how you can double with only 6 pts., ask what you would do if north had passed? You would of course respond with 6+ pts. The NEGATIVE 'X' gives valuable information without taking up ANY bidding space, but when you understand the concept of the 'PROTECTIVE POSITION' the 'X' card in your bidding box will lose its pristine condition and your bidding will become much more competitive.

NOTE If you had to make your negative double at the 2 level you would be happy if partner simply rebid 2♠

W	N	E
1♠	2♣	X

you would have a few more

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PRACTISE HANDS

♠ J7
 ♥ AJ432
 ♦ A1098
 ♣ Q2
 ♠ A1054
 ♥ 8
 ♦ Q43
 ♣ AK1098
 ♠ KQ86
 ♥ 975
 ♦ KJ52
 ♣ 65
 ♠ 932
 ♥ KQ106
 ♦ 76
 ♣ J743

1

N	E	S	W
1H	P	2H	X
P	3S	P	4S

NORMAL TAKEOUT 'X'

West, with 12+ and four of the other major, makes an immediate X - for takeout.

With the equivalent of 10 pts. and an 8 loser, east should raise to 3♠. This will silence south, who might have bid 3♥.

With a 5.5 loser and 16 pts., west could bid game losing only 1 heart, 1 diamond and 1 club.

♠ J7
 ♥ 9642
 ♦ K85
 ♣ 8754
 ♠ 10982
 ♥ J108
 ♦ 1097
 ♣ K93
 ♠ Q53
 ♥ Q3
 ♦ A62
 ♣ AQJ106
 ♠ AK64
 ♥ AK75
 ♦ QJ43
 ♣ 2

2

E	S	W	N
1C	X	P	1H
P	2H	P	P

NORMAL TAKEOUT 'X'

South's X shows 12+ and is for takeout!

North obviously MUST respond to the X and bids the four card heart suit.

After west's pass and holding only a five card suit, east should not bid again. South knows that north's bid at the 1 level shows a weak hand, but because south is a 5 loser hand with heart support south bids 2♥. North, wisely, is not interested!

♠ 962
 ♥ A
 ♦ KJ875
 ♣ QJ87
 ♠ AJ853
 ♥ Q72
 ♦ Q62
 ♣ 104
 ♠ KQ107
 ♥ 1098
 ♦ 1094
 ♣ A92
 ♠ 4
 ♥ KJ6543
 ♦ A3
 ♣ K653

3

S	W	N	E
1H	1S	X	2S
3C	P	4C	P
4H/5C			

NEGATIVE 'X'

West, with 8-15 and a FIVE card spade suit, overcalls 1♠.

Both major suits have now been bid, so North's X shows both minors. East should bid 2♠ making it harder for south, who nevertheless bids 3♣. North invites game with 4♣. This leaves room for south to bid hearts again (to show 6). North could pass this or bid 5♣. Both contracts make.

♠ 842
 ♥ K10
 ♦ QJ7
 ♣ AQ1075
 ♠ QJ96
 ♥ AQJ84
 ♦ K109
 ♣ 8
 ♠ A105
 ♥ 93
 ♦ A84
 ♣ KJ964
 ♠ K73
 ♥ 7652
 ♦ 6532
 ♣ 32

4

W	N	E	S
1H	2C	P	P
X			

RE-OPENING 'X'

After north's overcall, east passes with no sensible bid available. East trusts that partner will not let the bidding end here.

Now in PROTECTIVE POSITION, opener should do something, even if west had very few pts. With a singleton club opener should X for takeout.

This is exactly what east was hoping for and with 10+pts and five of the opponents suit, east passes, converting the takeout X into a penalty X! Unlucky north should make only 5 tricks for -800

PRACTISE HANDS

♠ 10
 ♥ Q74
 ♦ AKQ74
 ♣ J986
 ♠ AJ105
 ♥ 8
 ♦ Q43
 ♣ AK1098
 ♠ K9742
 ♥ J92
 ♦ 10853
 ♣ 4
5
 ♠ 854
 ♥ AK865
 ♦ 96
 ♣ 1073

N	E	S	W
1D	P	1H	X
2C	2S	P	P
3H	P	P	3S
?	?		

NORMAL TAKEOUT 'X'

With both red suits bid, west can make a normal takeout X with 12+ pts, to show the other two suits. North rebids 2♣ and east (now with a 7 count), can bid 2♠. Although south passes, north can compete with 3♥ West is likely to bid 3♠

♠ 95
 ♥ 96
 ♦ Q64
 ♣ J109532
 ♠ J43
 ♥ 4
 ♦ J9853
 ♣ AK64
 ♠ 10762
 ♥ AKQ82
 ♦ A2
 ♣ Q7
6
 ♠ AKQ8
 ♥ J10753
 ♦ K107
 ♣ 8

E	S	W	N
1H	P	1NT	P
P/2H	P	P	

SOUTH KEEPS QUIET. RECOGNISE MIS-FITS

When RHO bids your suit, PASS - as smooth as silk. Yes, they will make their contract but if N/S were to play in this mis-fitting hand they would go down rather more than 120.

♠ KJ42
 ♥ 1062
 ♦ AJ54
 ♣ 87
 ♠ Q965
 ♥ 74
 ♦ 10987
 ♣ K94
7
 ♠ 1073
 ♥ AK
 ♦ K63
 ♣ AQJ105

S	W	N	E
1C	1H	X	P
2NT	P	3NT	

NEGATIVE 'X'

West's overcall shows five+ hearts and 10ish pts North shows four spades and 6+pts. by doubling South can rebid 2NT to show 17/18 HCPs and a good heart stop. North, with 9 pts. can happily bid to game in 3NT

♠ K104
 ♥ A1052
 ♦ AK64
 ♣ 93
 ♠ J97
 ♥ 97
 ♦ 10732
 ♣ J875
8
 ♠ 82
 ♥ QJ63
 ♦ 95
 ♣ AKQ106
 ♠ AQ653
 ♥ K84
 ♦ QJ8
 ♣ 42

W	N	E	S
1C	X	P	4S

RESPONDING TO 'X' ACCURATELY

When partner, north, makes a takeout double s/he will normally have 12+pts and at least three cards in each of the other suits. Therefore, south has an 8 card spade fit and an opening hand. No more information is needed!

PRACTISE HANDS

♠ 863		♠ J1042
♥ Q1063		♥ 97
♦ J32		♦ A84
♣ A54		♣ KJ86
♠ AQ97	9	
♥ 82		
♦ Q65		
♣ Q932		
♠ K5		
♥ AKJ54		
♦ K1097		
♣ 107		

N	E	S	W
P	P	1H	P
2H	P	P	X
P	2S	?	?

PROTECTIVE 'X'

The opponents show a fit, but still stop bidding at the 2 level. West is in PROTECTIVE POSITION and should try to keep the auction alive. Never let opponents play IN A FIT at the 2 level. West should X for takeout. IF N/S bid on to the 3 level E/W have done their job by taking N/S out of their comfort zone.

♠ 654		♠ K98
♥ J64		♥ AQ987
♦ 932		♦ QJ8
♣ J843		♣ 95
♠ AQ732	10	
♥ 103		
♦ K1074		
♣ K7		
♠ J10		
♥ K52		
♦ A65		
♣ AQ1062		

E	S	W	N
1H	2C	2S	P
3S	P	4S	

No 'X' NECESSARY

After south's overcall, west does not X to show 4 spades (or five and weak.) West can freely bid 2♠ to show FIVE AND the strength to play in 3♥. When east sees that they have a 5/3 spade fit, east can invite game. with a 6 loser west readily bids game in 4♠

♠ 85		♠ KQ1032
♥ AQ2		♥ 75
♦ KQ74		♦ 932
♣ Q874		♣ 1092
♠ AJ64	11	
♥ KJ1063		
♦ 85		
♣ A3		
♠ 97		
♥ 984		
♦ AJ106		
♣ KJ63		

S	W	N	E
P	1H	P	1S
P	2S	X	P
3C	3S	p	P

STILL FOR TAKEOUT

Although north has the points to open the bidding, north cannot directly overcall or X! But when opponents reveal a fit (and both majors have been bid), north can double 2♠ to show both minor suits. If E/W bid on they will fail because of the bad position of the hearts.

♠ KQ65		♠ J108743
♥ KQ54		♥ 6
♦ AJ64		♦ 1095
♣ 4		♣ 1053
♠ 9	12	
♥ AJ10		
♦ Q872		
♣ AK987		
♠ A2		
♥ 98732		
♦ K3		
♣ QJ62		

W	N	E	S
1C	X	P	2H
P	4H		

RESPOND TO 'X'
ACCURATELY

Partner, north, doubles. East passes, so you are forced to bid even with no pts. Therefore when you have some points (10ish), you need to tell partner. Jump a level. Instead of 1♥, respond 2♥. North is a 5 loser so can raise to game.

PRACTISE HANDS

♠ 93
 ♥ 754
 ♦ 742
 ♣ AJ1086
 ♠ A1076
 ♥ AKJ9
 ♦ K85
 ♣ 97
13
 ♠ QJ2
 ♥ 1082
 ♦ J1063
 ♣ K52
 ♠ K854
 ♥ Q63
 ♦ AQ9
 ♣ Q43

N	E	S	W
P	P	1NT	X

PENALTY 'X'

The X of 1NT is always for penalties (showing 15+HCPs)
 East can pass with 6+ HCPs
 North could bid a FIVE card suit as a rescue OR using the 1st part of a WRIGGLE, north can transfer into clubs by bidding XX (redouble).
 IF E/W hold their nerve, they should score +500

♠ A1075
 ♥ AK9
 ♦ 5
 ♣ AQ876
 ♠ K8
 ♥ 102
 ♦ AK10976
 ♣ K104
14
 ♠ Q42
 ♥ J8763
 ♦ QJ
 ♣ J32
 ♠ J963
 ♥ Q54
 ♦ 8432
 ♣ 95

E	S	W	N
P	P	1D	X
1H	P	2D	X
P	2S	P	3S?

SECOND 'X' IS STILL FOR TAKEOUT

North knows that south is weak. North's second X insists that south should bid their best suit.
 So reluctantly south bids 2♠
 With a 5 loser, some north's may try one more bid but south will decline the invitation.

♠ K652
 ♥ 762
 ♦ 109
 ♣ A1098
 ♠ 104
 ♥ AK985
 ♦ QJ85
 ♣ K4
15
 ♠ J87
 ♥ Q43
 ♦ K7642
 ♣ 63
 ♠ AQ93
 ♥ J10
 ♦ A3
 ♣ QJ752

S	W	N	E
1C	1H	X	2H
2S	3H	?	?

NEGATIVE 'X'

IF west had not overcalled, 1♠ by north could be FOUR or FIVE spades.
 After west's overcall, X would show FOUR spades and 6+ pts.
 1♠ would show FIVE spades and 6+ pts.

♠ K6
 ♥ A
 ♦ K7643
 ♣ AK654
 ♠ A8
 ♥ KJ9542
 ♦ AQ
 ♣ 1032
16
 ♠ J9542
 ♥ Q106
 ♦ 52
 ♣ 987
 ♠ Q1073
 ♥ 873
 ♦ J1098
 ♣ QJ

W	N	E	S
1H	X	P	1S
2H	3D	P	4D
p	5D		

16+ TOO STRONG TO OVERCALL - 'X'

Remember that simple overcalls have a point range (8 -15 pts.)
 So here with 16 HCPs north should start with a X.
 South does as requested and bids 1♠ but now north changes suit !?!
 This change of suit indicates a hand that was too STRONG to overcall.
 With a super fit south bids 4♦ despite having only 6 HCPs.
 With a 4 loser hand, north accepts the invitation and bids game in 5♦

PENALTY 'X'

♠ AK2
 ♥ AK1098
 ♦ 3
 ♣ AQ64
 ♠ Q8
 ♥ J52
 ♦ AK104
 ♣ KJ32
 ♠ J7654
 ♥ Q743
 ♦ 762
 ♣ 10
 ♠ 1093
 ♥ 6
 ♦ QJ985
 ♣ 9875

Alternative 1.

E	S	W	N
1NT	P	2C	X
2D	P	2S	*X

*2nd double confirms X as 1NT penalty

North is holding 20 HCPs, and so knows that west's 'Stayman' bid cannot be the full value 11+ pts.

When west bids 2♠ after opener's 2♦ response, to 'Stayman' it looks certain that west is holding a weak hand with five spades and four hearts. Both doubles are for penalties. But - -

Alternative 2.

E	S	W	N
1NT	P	2C	X
2D	P	2S	*P

*Pass confirms X as only lead

Should north double the 2♣ 'Stayman' bid immediately and what would it mean?

Normally a double of a conventional bid is a lead directing penalty double of that suit. Here, a lead of clubs would not be very helpful when east is likely to hold ♣KJ.

Alternative 3.

E	S	W	N
1NT	P	2C	P
2D	P	2S	X

X is penalty with no lead sugges-

South should trust partner and NOT bid 3♦

Alternative 1.

N	E	S	W
1NT	*2C	X	2S
3C	P	3NT	P

Alternative 2.

N	E	S	W
1NT	*2C	P	2S
P	P	2NT	P
?	P		

Normally a double of a conventional bid is a lead directing penalty double of that suit.

*East's 2♣ was 'Landy' showing both majors.

♠ 74
 ♥ AK92
 ♦ K987
 ♣ A63
 ♠ Q108
 ♥ 4
 ♦ J643
 ♣ J8542
 ♠ A9632
 ♥ 10863
 ♦ A
 ♣ K97
 ♠ KJ5
 ♥ QJ75
 ♦ Q1052
 ♣ Q10

1. South with 11 HCPs wanted to double whatever E/W bid - for penalties. West bid 2♠.

North, having opened 1NT, should take no further action, but with a doubleton spade and Axx in what was assumed to be a five card club suit, north competed with 3♣. South then has no other option but to bid 3NT.

South with 11 HCPs wanted to double whatever E/W bid - for penalties. But without a good club suit, the 'X' must wait.

West bid 2♠.

North passed and east passed. Now south can X for penalty.

On best defence 2♠ can be defeated but it's almost too tight to risk doubling.

2. An alternative for south, after east's conventional bid, is to bid a natural 2NT to show 11pts and stops in both majors.

Alternative 3.

N	E	S	W
1NT	*2C	P	2S
P	P	2NT	P
?	P		

3. for pairs who use Lebensohl.

After east's overcall, south cannot bid 2NT (see below) so would pass initially. West bid 2♠.

North passed and east passed. Now south can bid 2NT naturally.

North, even with 14 HCPs should be worried about a five card spade suit.

*LEBENSÖHL'

N	E	S	W
1NT	2C	2NT	

For the record and NOT related to this hand -

the sequence on the left, is played by experienced pairs as 'Lebensohl'.

After intervention, 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ would be non forcing - to play!

After intervention, the 2NT response instructs opener to bid 3♣.

Thereafter many types of hand can be bid accurately.

EXTEND YOUR USE OF THE TAKEOUT 'X'

OPTIONS WHEN RIGHT HAND OPPONENT OPENS

W N E S
1S X (Made directly after opponent's opening bid)

This is a normal Takeout Double.

It usually shows an opening hand, a shortage in opener's suit, and an ability to support the other 3 suits. It will have at least 3 cards in each (or 16+)

W
1♠

N
♠ 43
♥ AJ98
♦ KJ10
♣ A432

X Perfect Double.
Does exactly what it says on the tin!

W
1♠

N
♠ 43
♥ AJ98
♦ KJ
♣ AQ432

X Not Perfect, but better than 2♣ (Strong and four hearts) IF partner bids 2♦, pass.

When you overcall in a minor suit it suggests that you have NO major suit or that you are too weak to double.

W
1♠

N
♠ 43
♥ AJ1092
♦ KJ
♣ A1043

2♥ Prefer to Overcall if you hold a good 5 card major with 8 -15 HCPs

W
1♠

N
♠ 43
♥ AKJ102
♦ KJ
♣ AQ43

X No Alternative! if you hold 16+ HCPs, you are TOO STRONG to make a simple overcall.

W
1♠

N
♠ 43
♥ AKJ1052
♦ KJ
♣ AQ4

3♥ Jump Overcall IF you have agreed to play STRONG jump overcalls then 3♥ may be your choice here, but you would not make this bid without holding SIX of the suit. With only five you are back to using a double.

W N E S
1D 1S X

This Takeout Double is made after partner has opened. It is called a Negative Double.

It promises responding values (6+) and either four of the other major, or a hand with five of that major but too weak to bid them naturally.

E ♠ 43 ♥ AJ98 ♦ K104 ♣ 8432	E ♠ 43 ♥ AJ982 ♦ K104 ♣ 843	E ♠ 43 ♥ AJ982 ♦ K104 ♣ K432
X No other bid possible	X Too weak to respond 2♥	2♥ Shows five hearts & 10+ HCPs

W N E S
1H 1S X

E
♠ 43
♥ AJ
♦ J1042
♣ K8432

X

Another Negative Double. When both Majors have been bid, this double promises responding values (6+) and at least 4/4 in the minors

W N E S
1D 2C X

E
♠ 109432
♥ AJ84
♦ 104
♣ Q8

X

Another Negative Double. When both minors have been bid, this double promises responding values (6+) and at least 4/4 in the majors

W N E S
1D 2C P

E
♠ 1094
♥ AJ84
♦ 1042
♣ Q82

PASS

When NO bid describes your hand sufficiently, PASS and trust that partner will take some further action.