

Conventional Wisdom

Filling out the convention card — part 21

When the opponents preempt, what does double by your side mean? Does it matter how high the opposing preempt is? And what do bids by the partner of the doubler mean? Preempting is much more common in the modern game, so discussing common preemptive auctions with your regular partners is a good idea.

This section of the convention card allows your opponents to see what your methods are for battling preempts.

Takeout thru

The most popular way to play a double of a preempt is takeout, asking partner to bid his best suit. It makes sense to play this way for a simple reason: when the opponents announce that they have a long suit by preempting, it's more likely you'll be short in their suit. Playing double as takeout is practical.

So when the auction begins, for example, 3♥ by right-hand opponent and you hold

♠AK75 ♥6 ♦A543 ♣KJ72,
double would be the textbook action.

How high should you extend this idea? Say RHO preempts 5♣ and you hold

♠A64 ♥J543 ♦AK9 ♣742.

You hope to beat 5♣ with the ♠A and the ♥AK. If you double, though, will partner think it's takeout and bid a suit at the five level?

To prevent this sort of misunderstanding at high levels, most partnerships establish a limit for the takeout double of preempts. A common one is 4♠. If the opponents open 4♠ or higher, double is penalty. If the opening is 4♥ or lower, double is takeout.

Whatever your partnership decides the limit should be, check the "Takeout" box and write the limit in the blank provided after "thru."



Other: If you have any other special agreements, such as ways to show strong two-suited hands over a preempt (e.g., Roman jump overcalls), write it in the space provided and Alert the opponents.

Penalty

If you prefer to play that a double of a preempt is penalty-oriented instead, check the red box and Alert the opponents. This treatment is sufficiently rare in duplicate bridge that it requires an Alert.

ALERT

Conv. Takeout

Pairs who play that double is for penalty will need some way to show a takeout-oriented hand. Some prefer notrump at the cheapest level, while others prefer a particular suit at the cheapest level. If you play this way, write in your conventional takeout bid and Alert the opponents when you use it.

VS Opening Preempts Double is

Takeout thru _____ Penalty

Conv. Takeout: _____

Lebensohl 2NT Response

Other: _____

Lebensohl 2NT Response

Say LHO open 2♠ (weak) and partner makes a takeout double. RHO passes and you hold

♠97 ♥A74 ♦863 ♣KQ864.

You would happily respond 3♣ with this hand. But what if you held

♠97 ♥874 ♦863 ♣Q9864?

Yuck! You still prefer clubs since it's your longest suit, but if you bid 3♣ with this hand too, how will partner know if you have the first hand or the second one?

In an effort to combat weak two-bids, the treatment known as "lebensohl 2NT" was developed. It works like this: when partner makes a takeout double of a weak two-bid and your natural reply would be on the three level, you can show a bad hand (fewer, say, than 8 high-card points) by bidding 2NT first. This is a warning to partner that you have a weak hand, and commands him to bid 3♣. When partner obeys, you may pass (if clubs is your suit) or bid your own suit. The corollary is that when you bid directly to the three level, you're showing a good hand. This method (which must be Alerted) allows the doubler to know if partner has a weak hand.

Experienced
Players