

MAXIMAL COMPETITIVE DOUBLES

Maximal competitive doubles are used in competitive situations. They are also called “action doubles” by some people.

Maximal competitive doubles apply only when the opponents are competing in a suit that is directly below your suit, i.e., you are bidding spades and they are bidding hearts or you are bidding hearts and they are bidding diamonds. Because their competitive bidding takes up all your space in the auction, maximal competitive doubles are used to make game tries, whereas just bidding one more in your suit is considered purely competitive and NOT forward-going.

As an example:

You open 1S; LHO bids 2H; Partner bids 2S; RHO bids 3H.

You have no room to make a game try (if you had been interested). Therefore, playing maximal competitive doubles, a double is your game try (inviting partner to sign off at 3S or bid game if s/he would have accepted a game try). A bid of 3S by you is purely competitive and partner should NOT bid again.

Similarly, You open 1H; LHO bids 2D; Partner bids 2H; RHO bids 3D.

A bid of 3H by you is purely competitive. Partner is expected to pass. A double by you is a maximal double & a game try. Partner will either accept the game try (bidding 4H) or decline (bidding 3H).

If the opponents are competing in a suit that is NOT directly below your suit, then a game try is possible and doubles are NOT maximal. Doubles would be competitive. As an example:

You open 1S; LHO bids 2D; Partner bids 2S; RHO bids 3D.

Double is penalty.

3S is purely competitive. Partner is expected to pass.

3H is a game try. It does not ask or tell anything about hearts. It simply asks partner how good his/her raise was. Partner is asked to either sign off (in 3S) or bid game (4S), depending on quality of his/her hand.

NOTE: As always with non-penalty doubles, the partner of the individual making the double may elect to “convert” the double to a penalty double by passing. Thus, 1S-2H-2S-3H-*-P-: a pass by partner would show an excellent (probably 4 or 5 card) heart holding, a defensively oriented hand and usually 3 only spades. Partner prefers to try to set 3H doubled.