

RESPONSIVE DOUBLES by Maritha Pottenger

Responsive Doubles are made by the “Advancer.” The Advancer is the partner of an individual who makes an overcall (after the opponents open the bidding) or who makes a take-out double (after the opponents open the bidding). In standard response doubles, the mnemonic is: B-A-R which stands for “**Bid/Action/Raise.**” (1) The opponents open the bidding. (2) Your partner takes an action (either making an overcall or making a take-out double). (3) Your next opponent raises the Opener’s suit. (4) A double by you at that point is responsive. It is take-out and shows (at least) two suits.

If the opponents open & your partner makes a take-out double & the next hand raises Opener’s suit, your double is responsive & shows at least 4-4 in two of the three unbid suits. However, over 1H-* -2H-* --that responsive double should suggest 4-4 in the minors and deny 4 spades. The assumption is that you would bid spades if you had them. Ditto, 1S-* -2S-* would deny 4 hearts and suggest that partner compete in a minor suit. Over a responsive double, partner can bid his lowest 4-card suit. You can pass or raise, depending on how good your hand is. If you don’t have that suit, bid your cheapest 4-card suit. Generally, you and your partner will find a 4-4 fit somewhere. (If partner has good cards in opponents' suit, will pass, converting double to a **penalty** double.)

If an opponent opens the bidding & your partner overcalls & the next opponent raises the Opener, your double is responsive. If partner overcalled a major, you will generally be 5-5 or 5-4 in the other 2 suits (usually having a doubleton in partner’s suit). If partner overcalled a minor, even if you have support for that minor, you would make a responsive double—looking for a 4-4 major fit—before settling into the minor. If you have a 5-card major & partner overcalls a minor in which you have a fit, go ahead & mention the major—just in case. Most responsive doubles show 8-9 or more HCP at the two level and more points—or lots of shape—at the 3 level. Your partnership must decide how high to play responsive doubles. Some people play through 2S; others through 3S; others through 4D. Playing through 3S allows you to use responsive doubles after the opponents make a preemptive jump raise.

Sample Auctions after Partner Makes Take-Out Double

- 1C-* -2C-* You promise 6-9 HCP, any two suits. (In some partnerships this is specifically both majors, not a major & a minor. Some partnerships would freely bid a 4-card major instead of doubling.)
 - 1D-* -2D-* You promise 6-9 HCP, any two suits. (Same caveats as above.)
 - 1C-* -2C-3C You promise game-going values, but aren’t sure what to bid. Ditto over diamonds.
 - 1C-* -2C-4C You promise at least 4-4 in majors & enough values for game. Ditto over diamonds.
 - 1H-* -2H-* 8-10 HCP & 4-4 (or longer) in the minors. Denies 4 spades. (Some play any two suits)
 - 1H-* -2H-3H Game-going values. Usually asks for a heart stopper, or start describing hand.
 - 1S-* -2S-* 8-10 HCP, at least 4-4 in minors. Denies 4 hearts.
 - 1S-* -2S-3S Game-going values. Asks primarily for a spade stopper or further hand description.
- 1 of anything-* -1 of a suit-* is PENALTY. (In some partnerships, 1C-* -1D-* is an exception, kept as responsive to show 4-4 in majors.)

Sample Auctions after Partner Makes an Overcall

Over a minor opening (1C or 1D), a major or a minor overcall by partner, a raise of minor, * is responsive and shows 5-5 in the two unbid suits (or 5-4 if the unbid suits are a major & a minor) and usually a doubleton in partner’s overcalled suit.

1H-1S-2H-* Responsive, showing 5-5 or 5-4 in the minors with at least 10 HCP & decent suits. Denies a fit (3 cards) for partner’s suit.

1S-2C or 2D-2S-* Responsive, shows 5-5 or 5 hearts & 4 in other minor, usually with 2-card support for partner’s minor.

1S-2H-2S-* Responsive, shows 5-5 or 5-4 in minors, at least 10 HCP, no 3-card fit for partner.