Partnership Bidding at Bridge

The contested auction

Andrew Robson and Oliver Segal, 1993

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Introduction

What makes bridge interesting to you? Why does it engage you sufficiently that you are reading a book about the game? Of course, bridge offers an endless mental challenge - but then so does chess, backgammon, or crossword puzzles for that matter. No; you probably play bridge for much the same reasons that we do - because it is, essentially and uniquely, a partnership game.

This provides obvious social attractions. But, like us, you want more than these. Otherwise you would not be reading this book - or any other. Presumably you wish also to succeed at the game. You want to win. So you go in search of texts on cardplay, or a course of lessons. The really ambitious might learn a complex system. All very useful, no doubt; but don't stop there. If you limit your advancement to improving your *individual* skills, you will have failed in a large part. For the partnership dimension of bridge is every bit as important competitively as it is socially.

Bridge is a game at which two people should *combine* rather than add together their efforts. And if you wish the interaction with your partners to encompass more than a drink after the game; if you want to avoid pitting your wits against *three* people at a time; above all, if you wish to experience the enjoyable, and profitable, thrill of real partnership understanding and harmony - then you must work at least as hard at developing these cooperative skills as ever you do at mastering obscure squeezes or convoluted relay sequences.

Now it is clearly in the auction where most of the opportunities lie to exploit partnership skills. Consider: what does it mean to say of a bridge player, 'he bids will'? Obviously it is a complimentary reflection on his judgement, but is judgement all a 'good bidder' requires in order to know whether to bid a game? or a slam? whether he should compete the partscore? or take a sacrifice?

In fact, the bids that precede that decision are just as important as the final decision itself. 'Good bidding' is much more a cooperative ability to communicate under pressure than it is the taking of inspired 'shots' based on fine judgement. What often looks like a unilateral final decision is - or *should have been* - the result of joint effort.

It is with precisely these efforts that this book concerns itself. It is an area of the game, which, though of paramount importance, has not before received the attention it deserves in bridge literature. We attempt in this book to describe and apply a consistent philosophy, whereby bridge players approach the game with their partner much in mind. We do not intend to tout system, although we shall be extracting treatments with a widespread usefulness as we progress. The emphasis will be on organising an approach and methods so that you and (with luck) the person who sits across the table from you can help each other whenever it is practical to do so.

In short, this book is going to make life easier for your partners. Which lends itself to a certain irony. For if you assimilate the approach and use the methods we detail, then you will be a much better and more successful bridge player; but it may be that it is mainly your *partners* who appear (to the uninitiated) to be 'doing the right thing' - unless, of course, you can persuade them to read the book too.

One final word. If you find the going pretty tough at times, if you're tempted to start skipping, if you being wondering why this book didn't have 'Experts Only' stamped all over it, don't despair. It is our personal and repeated experience that players of very moderate standard can understand and truly enjoy the principles of partnership bidding we explore in this book.

Just take the ideas stage by stage, and don't attempt to incorporate any new methods until you have understood their underlying rationale. Then all you will need is a partner or partners to share your exploration, and we can guarantee satisfaction!

Chapter 1 – Support with support: the theory

Making life easy: avoid the last guess

Is anything in bridge more comradely than supporting partner's suit in the auction? Not only do you convey the glad tidings that he is likely to declare the hand, but you will make his work in the subsequent auction so much easier. He will be able to make a reasonable evaluation of his hand straight away; and if he remains unsure of the level to which your side should bid, he will know exactly what bids are forcing.

The real practical benefits of this 'making-life-easier' approach to bidding are hard to overestimate. But the advantages of immediately showing your support for partner's suit go far beyond simply reducing the strain on his mental processes. There are important theoretical considerations that argue in the same direction.

Consider your opponents' fit

Bridge is not a game played by two people - a proposition frequently ignored by bidding theorists - and your opponents have not paid their table money to observe you in admiring silence. They want their slice of the action. And, as anyone will tell you, they are getting more and more aggressive in demanding attention.

So, what is the significance of all this for supporting partner? Well, before you start skipping ahead in search of the first hand, just one more piece of uncontroversial bridge theory: *if your side has a fit, so (almost certainly) have your opponents*. It's that simple. The better your fit, the better will be your opponents' and thus *the more likely they are to mess things up for you*. The conclusion: *if you have a fit for partner, you must convey this at your first bid*. Otherwise you may find your opponents have presented you with an awkward guess on the next round.

OK - a hand. In this problem and throughout the book you will be sitting South. You hold as responder to the opening bid:

♠ 106
♥ Q542
♦ AJ632
♣ Q5

and the auction proceeds

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	?

For the moment, let us assume your choices are between 2♦ (forcing) and 3♥ (invitational). Now, if West passes, 2♦ should work all right. You will bid 3♥ (or 4♥) at your next turn and partner will be in a nice position to judge the limit of the hand. But what happens if West bids 2♠, or 3♠, or 4♠!? Don't you sort of expect him to? Well, let's not be dramatic - say it's only 2♠. Partner passes and East bids 3♠.

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	2♦
2♠	pass	3♠	?

Now what? Bid 4♥ and discover partner has

♠ QJ4
♥ A8763
♦ K4
♣ KJ3

By bidding you will convert a potentially good plus score into a minus one.

Or pass and find partner had

♠ 752
♥ AK763
♦ K4
♣ A43

- a missed game?

And the problems are much worse if the auction goes

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	2♦
3♠	pass	pass	?

because now partner was under pressure also.

OK, so this time you reject 2♦ and try 3♥. What do you gain?

Well, for starters (and how important this is!) West can't bid 2♠. If he would have bid 2♠ over 2♦, he may pass (and that will probably be the end of your opponents, who may now miss a profitable sacrifice or fail to compete the partscore when it was right to do so). Or he may allow himself to get *pushed* to 3♠, misleading his partner and possibly giving your partner the chance to make a lucrative penalty double.

Secondly - and at least as importantly - if West does bid 3♠ (and, let us say, would have done so anyway), see how much better placed your side is.

(a)	(b)
♠ QJ4	♠ 752
♥ A8763	♥ AK763
♦ K4	♦ K4
♣ KJ3	♣ A43

With hand (a) partner will probably double, while with hand (b) he will bid 4♥. And if he passes? So will you, and without a qualm.

Avoiding the last guess

Now, why was it that bidding 2♦ presented us with problems, while bidding 3♥ did not? The simple answer is: because when we did not show our support immediately we found ourselves taking the last guess - whether to show it later when the enemy had forced up the bidding.

The idea of 'avoiding the last guess' is the single most important concept we shall address in this book. In short, most of the theory, most of the methods we have undertaken to introduce are designed to enable you to *avoid taking the last guess.*

It is often said that experts 'guess well'. In fact, what most characterises the bidding of a top partnership is that they rarely guess at all late in the auction. For if you do take the last guess, you will get it wrong a lot of the time, however good you are - *and the error will be irrecoverable.* Whereas if you force your opponents to make the last guess, it is they who will be conceding frequent losses to you.

More ways of raising

To return to the hand you were considering earlier,

♠ 106
♥ Q542
♦ AJ632
♣ Q5

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	?

you are probably wondering what the problem is. You'd likely have bid 3♥ anyway. 'It's easy,' you're thinking, 'whenever I've got a raise to 3♥ I'll bid 3♥.'

Fine. But what constitutes a raise to 3♥ in this context? How about...?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
♠ 6	♠ 65	♠ 6	♠ A6	♠ 65
♥ Q1043	♥ K1043	♥ Q1043	♥ Q543	♥ A843
♦ J7654	♦ J765	♦ 765	♦ K76	♦ 76
♣ 652	♣ K106	♣ KQ1065	♣ Q1065	♣ KQ1065

More ways of supporting partner

In a very real sense all these examples are types of a raise to 3♥ (particularly playing five-card majors), as we shall see later. Yet it is surely absurd for one bid to cover all these hands. What we want is more bids. We must use more of the limited vocabulary available to us to describe hands with support for partner. For these are the sort of hands that turn up frequently and must be accurately described *immediately*, if we are to avoid the 'guesswork' we spoke of above.

A problem hand – raising and bidding suit at once?

Before we return to the five hands (a) - (e) given above, let us examine a different (though connected) sort of problem. You hold, vulnerable against not (what else?)

♠ KJ65
♥ 1052
♦ AQ1092
♣ 4

and the bidding has started

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣[1]	?

[1] weak

What are your feelings on the hand? If you are sceptical about the merits of 3♦; if you're asking yourself 'what will I do if West bids 5♣?', then you are thinking along exactly the right lines. What of 4♠, then? Better. But if West bids 5♣ (and they always do), will partner know what to do with

♠ AQ743
♥ Q
♦ KJ74
♣ J63

Five spades is an easy make, and - worse! - so might five clubs be. And remember, there is no point in bidding 4♠ if it is we who are going to guess 5♠ over

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♠
5♣	pass	pass	?

For after all, partner is much more likely to hold

♠ AQ743
♥ KJ74
♦ 7
♣ Q63

Obviously what we would like to achieve is a way of communicating in one bid: (a) our ability to raise spades to the four level, and (b) our fine diamond suit. For in so doing we shall give partner the *complete* picture. He will no longer be forced to guess. He will be able to make a well-informed *decision*. We shall leave you to work out a way of doing this - it is not so hard - and return to the hand later.

Defining hand types

It is now time to categorise the hand-types that we might hold in support of partner. Looking at the five hands we gave you at the beginning of this section, on the auction,

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	?

(a) ♠ 6
♥ Q1043
♦ J7654
♣ 652

We shall define hand (a) as a *preemptive raise* to 3♥. We want to bid to 3♥ quickly, more to provide an obstacle for our opponents than to suggest a game.

(b) ♠ 65
♥ K1043
♦ J765
♣ K106

We shall call hand (b) a *mixed raise* - that is a semi-preemptive raise with some defence.

(c) ♠ 6
♥ Q1043
♦ 765
♣ KQ1065

Hand (c) we shall uninspiredly refer to as a *mixed (or semi-preemptive) raise with a good side suit*.

(d) ♠ A6
♥ Q543
♦ K76
♣ Q1065

Hand (d) we shall designate a *(neutral) limit* (ie invitational) *raise*.

(e) ♠ 65
♥ A843
♦ 76
♣ KQ1065

Hand (e) - you guessed it - is a *limit raise with a good side-suit*.

Borderline cases

Before deciding how we should treat these hands, a few words of caution: the boundaries between these five categories are not clear-cut. You might well pick up a hand that it appears possible to place in two, perhaps even three of the categories. Now, where it is purely a matter of high-card points (HCP), the distinction is not too important - vulnerability, your particular opponents and your style of opening bids will provide the requisite criteria for making a sensible choice. And, in any event, as we shall discover, many auctions will limit your options to distinguish high-card strength, such that it is often unnecessary in practice to make close judgements of this sort.

It is the overlap between (b) and (c) and that between (d) and (e) that can prove problematic. In short, what constitutes a ‘fair side-suit’?

When to show a side suit

(We shall continue to assume that the auction has started with 1♥ from partner, 1♠ on the right.) First, the more values you have *outside* your suit (and partner’s), the less inclined you should be to show your side-suit. For example:

(a) ♠ 65
♥ K753
♦ 642
♣ AJ92

(b) ♠ Q6
♥ Q753
♦ Q106
♣ AJ42

It is not unreasonable to treat hand (a) as a mixed raise with clubs. But hand (b) is quite clearly a *neutral* limit raise and *not* a limit raise with clubs.

Secondly, your trump support must be good. To show a side-suit on the given auction, for instance, you should generally have four trumps, particularly if your partner's opening may be a four-card suit. This is because, in practice, a fit-raise *sets trumps* for your side. With exceptional concentration, however, and invitational values, such as

♠ J6
♥ AJ7
♦ 642
♣ KJ1042

three-card support will suffice for a limit raise with clubs, even opposite a (potential) four-card major in a weak no-trump system. More anon.

Within your side-suit any king, queen, jack, ten (or nine) ought to encourage you to show the suit. An ace, particularly if unsupported by minor honours, should not be paid overmuch attention - it will take a trick even if partner does not fit the suit. For example

(a)	♠ J6	(b)	♠ J6
	♥ K1075		♥ Q1075
	♦ K6		♦ A6
	♣ A10542		♣ KJ1042

Hand (a) is a neutral limit raise, while we would treat hand (b) as a limit raise to 3♥ with clubs. Of course, as the last two examples suggest, the reverse logic applies to honour cards outside trumps and your side-suit. That is to say, aces outside need not discourage you too much from showing your suit, while kings, queens and jacks outside ought to do just that. Thus

(c)	♠ 6	(d)	♠ 6
	♥ J1075		♥ J1075
	♦ A64		♦ KJ6
	♣ KJ982		♣ KJ982

Hand (c) may be shown as a raise with clubs, but hand (d) should not be.

And remember one last thing in this context. If partner ends up on lead against your opponents, he will probably lead the suit you show. So if that seems likely (as when, for example your right-hand opponent (RHO) has made a take-out double), make sure it is what you want partner to do.

The need to establish priorities: what features of your support to show?

Making partner 'boss' of the auction

You may be fearful of putting your opponents in a better position to judge the hand. This is (generally) a very misguided approach to your first bid in a competitive auction. It is a strategy associated with players who don't respect their partners and who always blame them when things go wrong later in the auction.

The point is, by making a very descriptive support bid you are only making *your partner* 'boss' of the auction. He alone knows the full extent of the fit/misfit, and (if you have any faith in him) that will be an excellent thing for your side. If LHO thinks that, just because you have a fair side-suit the whole hand must be a lovely double-fit, he will soon discover otherwise - the hard way.

Consider West's decision on the following hand, at Game all:

♠ Q1065
♥ 7
♦ 642
♣ AJ954

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	4♦
?			

South's bid of 4♦ showed a raise to 4♥ with a diamond suit. West must now decide whether to bid 4♠ - as a good sacrifice, or even to make. If partner has something like

♠ AK742
♥ 654
♦ J5
♣ K106

you risk a humiliating double game-swing to the enemy if you *pass*. But what if the full hand is?

♠ K9
♥ A109654
♦ 97
♣ KQ3

♠ Q1065
♥ 7
♦ 642
♣ AJ954

N
W E
S

♠ AJ742
♥ K3
♦ K53
♣ 1062

♠ 83
♥ QJ82
♦ AQJ108
♣ 87

East should lead a club against 4♥ and that will take the contract off easily. Yet 4♠ doubled goes for -800.

In short, West is guessing![1] That is because neither West nor East had an accurate picture of their *combined strength. Neither is boss of the auction*.

It is essential that you recognise the significance of this. It is true that South has revealed his hand to the enemy just as surely as he has done so for his partner. To a certain extent his opponents may be able to make use of that information (more perhaps on lead than in the auction). But there is a huge difference between (a) knowing half of your assets and half of your opponents'; and (b) knowing the whole extent of your combined strength, and thus the enemy's combined strength also.

In the auction the crucial task is for you or your partner to get the 'complete' picture of the 26 cards your side holds. It is far, far less valuable to know only your own 13 and 13 of your opponents'.

This does not mean that you should gratuitously give away information. If you are fairly sure you know how high your side ought to bid - whatever the opponents might do - then you should take the direct, unscientific route. We shall look more fully at this sort of consideration in chapter 3.

Not enough bids

Defining hand-types is important, but is not unfortunately the only difficulty involved in raising partner. For it is an imperfect world, and in most auctions you will not have sufficient bids available to enable you to assign one for each hand-type. This means that we must establish certain priorities so that we can make the correct choices and *what to show clearly and immediately*, and what to leave ambiguous.

An example auction should illustrate the point. Remember that over

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	?

[1] In fact, there is a radical solution for East-West, which we suggest in chapter 2.

we identified five types of hand we might want to show as some sort of raise to 3♥. Let us see how many bids we have available to us to show these hands. Postponing explanation for the time being, we shall say our options are 2♠, 3♣ (or 3♦), 3♥ and maybe 2NT!! - see next chapter.

We shall define 2♠ as showing a *high-card raise* (promising invitational, limit values initially - though may be stronger); 3♣ (or 3♦) as showing a *raise with a fair side-suit* (we call such a bid a '*fit-jump*'); and 3♥ as showing a *preemptive-type raise*.

Which compromises to make - strength or hand-type?

You see that compromises have to be made. But where? One 'fusion' is (in effect) forced upon us. We have no way in this auction of distinguishing a pure preemptive raise from a mixed raise. Both will have to be bid with 3♥. The other fusion is not so obvious. One alternative would be to put all limit raises through 2♠, leaving 3♣ to show a mixed raise with clubs; the other option is to bid 3♣ to show either a mixed *or* limit raise with a club suit, reserving 2♠ for limit raises without a concentration of values.

We are forced to choose, in other words, whether it is more important to define our *strength* accurately (remaining unspecific as to hand-type), or to focus initially on describing our *hand-type* (leaving our high-card strength ambiguous). What do you think? Does it feel right to you to bid 2♠ or 3♣ with hand (e)?

♠ 65
♥ AJ75
♦ 64
♣ KQ1053

Let us say immediately that it probably won't matter if the opponents remain silent. If we bid 2♠, partner can make some forward-going move (like 2NT) with a fair hand and we can now offer him 3♣ or 4♣. While if we bid 3♣ over 1♠, partner can prod us with a 3♦ bid[2], enabling us to sign off in 3♥ with minimum values or bid beyond with extras (such as one the given hand). But what if our left-hand opponent (LHO) bids 3♠ or 4♠? *Now* what do you wish you had bid?

Hand-type first (1) - The 'two-way shot'

It is time to return to a hand we gave you earlier. You held

♠ KJ65
♥ 1052
♦ AQ1092
♣ 4

and the bidding went

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣[1]	?

[1] weak

We saw how an ideal solution to this hand would involve us showing *both* a raise to 4♠ *and* a diamond suit. We may now surmise that a bid of 4♦ would do just that.

---

[2] This is an example of something we intend discussing at length in any subsequent volume you tell our publishers is necessary! In brief, you and your partner may have agreed a fit and be bidding constructively. There may come a point when one of you wants to try for game or slam, but only has one bid available to do so - as in the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	3♣	pass	?

In such auctions, that one bid (3♦ in this case) is best used simply to pose the question: 'Are you good or bad for your bidding to date?' We shall meet further examples of this device later in this chapter and the next.

One hand-type - different strengths

Does this solve our problem? Broadly speaking, yes. But wouldn't we also want to bid 4♦ on

♠ 109653
♥ J52
♦ KQ1092
♣ -

After all, it's just as important for partner to bid on over 5♣ holding, say,

♠ KQJ42
♥ Q
♦ AJ65
♣ J76

as it was opposite the stronger hand. True, on a diamond lead, we might go one off. But is that any tragedy when our opponents are cold for 6♣?! Of course, if partner holds something much more normal, like

♠ AQ742
♥ K1076
♦ 6
♣ K76

he will know to *double*. But can we afford to bid 4♦ on both of these hands? Can we sacrifice and real definition of high-card strength in our pursuit of hand-type description?

The two-way shot

The simple answer is 'yes'. We can explain this conclusion in two ways. The first is in terms of something we shall designate 'the two-way shot'. That is to say, briefly, that if partner bids on with a fit for our descriptive raise, it will be right *whether or not we make what he bids*. Our bid is a two-way shot because if partner bids 5♠ on the basis of a good diamond fit for us, then either (a) we will make it; or (b) we will go down, but the opponents could have made 5♣.

How can we be so sure? It has something to do with what theorists call the 'Law of Total Tricks'. This says only that *the more cards each side has in its trump suit, the more tricks will be available on the hand* (to both sides combined). Now what we are saying is an extension of this law: the more cards each side had in its trump suit *and in any second suit*, the more tricks will be available on the hand, *provided that each side has most of the honour cards in its side fit*. This latter proviso is the main reason why it is wrong to show weak or 'empty' suits when raising partner.

The importance of double-fits

In other words, if we have a lovely double-fit in spades and diamonds and the enemy have a similarly delightful mesh in clubs and hearts, there will be a lot of tricks available on the hand - to both sides. Perhaps we can make 5♠, while they are one off in 5♣ - or maybe it is the other way round. If, on the other hand, there is a bit of a misfit outside of the trump suits (spades and clubs), there will be fewer tricks available. Perhaps we can make 4♠ and they are going two or three off in 5♣; or, quite possible, nobody can make game.

Let us look at two hands of the following auction, with North-South vulnerable:

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	?		

(a)

	♠ AQ743 ♥ KJ64 ♦ 7 ♣ J65	
♠ 1082 ♥ Q87 ♦ KJ85 ♣ A83	N W E S	♠ 9 ♥ A93 ♦ 643 ♣ KQ10972
	♠ KJ65 ♥ 1052 ♦ AQ1092 ♣ 4	

(b)

	♠ AQ743 ♥ Q ♦ KJ75 ♣ J65	
♠ 1082 ♥ KJ8764 ♦ 8 ♣ A83	N W E S	♠ 9 ♥ A93 ♦ 643 ♣ KQ10972
	♠ KJ65 ♥ 1052 ♦ AQ1092 ♣ 4	

As you can see, the trump suits (spades and clubs) are identical in each example. Our hand (South) is the same on each occasion (as is the 3♣ overcall). All we have done is to swap some red cards between West and North. Yet what a difference!

On hand (a) 4♠ only makes on careful play, and 5♣ will go three off on the ace of diamonds lead - which becomes very attractive if the auction goes

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	dble	pass	end

(In such auctions partner may well be short in diamonds and hoping for ruffs, especially if he is minimum. Thus his double has *lead-directing* overtones.)

Contrast hand (b). Now both sides are laydown for eleven tricks. A difference of four or five tricks (combined)!

This is a relatively forceful example, but the principle is true and important. Unless each side has a huge trump fit (eleven cards or so), these 'side' fits are of crucial importance. Particularly when you and your partner have an eight- or nine-card trump fit (the vast majority of competitive deals), the unearthing of these side-suit fits (or misfits) will be worth large amounts of matchpoints, IMPs, money...

More generally, the point is that *if we can describe our hand-type accurately for partner, he will often know what bid to make, even though he may not know what the exact result will be.*

On semi-misfits, for instance, he may be in a position to know that it is right to double, without being able accurately to foretell how large a penalty his opponents will concede. What he does know is that there are not many tricks available on the hand. If his opponents go only one or two off - in 5♣ doubled, say - we would not have made a higher contract (5♦) had he bid on. And if we could have made 5♠, it doesn't matter, because the enemy is going lots down in 5♣ doubled.

On hands with a good double-fit, however, he will often know it is right to bid on, despite not being sure of whether our contract will make. If it doesn't, then the opponents' contract would have gone down. For he knows there are a lot of tricks to be shared out.

Such situations are quite the opposite of 'taking the last guess'. Our side *knows* what to do; it is the opponents who guess last. Maybe they have already guessed wrong and are struggling in an unwise venture, such as 5♣ doubled would be on hand (a) above. Or perhaps they have yet to take their final guess (as in hand (b)): should they punish what was, in effect, our sacrifice? Or should they bid on to what will be a cheap sacrifice of their own?

Another example - the importance of suit quality

Now, as we suggested above, the importance of side-suit fits diminishes considerably as your trump fit increases to eleven cards or so, and you must be aware of this at the table. Similarly, you must remember that the relevance of a side-suit fit is in proportion to its length. Thus a nine-card fit on the side is hugely important; a seven-card fit is far less so. Lest you remain unconvinced, however, of the substantive point we are making, here is a final example using the ten-card fits we presented earlier:

(a)

	♠ KQJ42 ♥ Q ♦ AJ65 ♣ J76	
♠ A8 ♥ A108764 ♦ 8 ♣ A843	N W E S	♠ 7 ♥ K93 ♦ 743 ♣ KQ10972
	♠ 109653 ♥ J52 ♦ KQ1092 ♣ -	

(b)

	♠ KQJ42 ♥ AQ96 ♦ J ♣ J76	
♠ A8 ♥ 1087 ♦ A865 ♣ A843	N W E S	♠ 9 ♥ K93 ♦ 743 ♣ KQ10972
	♠ 109653 ♥ J52 ♦ KQ1092 ♣ -	

On hand (a), 5♠ may go one off (if East leads a diamond - not obvious); but North-South have no defence to 6♣. While on hand (b), 5♣ is easily two off and 5♠ cannot make. Again, an untypically powerful example. But a swing of at least three tricks, despite the presence of two unchanged ten-card fits, should prove persuasive.

Note, crucially, that it is the *quality* of South's diamond suit that makes all the difference. If, on hand (b), we had held A9xx in diamonds and West had KQ10x, it would be right for us to compete to 5♠ (which we should now make) rather than double 5♣ (which now only goes one down). There is nothing surprising in that - it is why you would never dream of bidding 4♦ over

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	1♠	3♣	?

with

♠ 109653
♥ J52
♦ A9743
♣ -

The message: hand definition comes first

So what principle can we extract from these examples? Simply that when we can define our hand-type clearly for partner, we should let this, rather than our high-card points, determine what bid we make. Our bid of 4♦ in the auction above says to partner: '*I have an offensive raise to 4♠, and I have a diamond suit that I want you to know about. I may or may not have the defensive strength for a raise to this level*.'

NOTE: For any of you to whom the terms 'offensive' and 'defensive' are at all unclear, we ask your indulgence only for a few pages. In a later section, 'What level to raise to', we discuss these concepts, and in particular the relationship between them, at length. Meanwhile, the following basic definition must suffice: your hand's *offensive* strength is its trick-taking potential when your side declares in your best trump suit; your hand's *defensive* strength is its trick-taking potential against a contract declared by your opponents in their best trump suit.

Hand-type first (2) - Continuations

A temporary sacrifice of high-card definition

We mentioned above that there were two ways of justifying the conclusion that we should sacrifice any real definition of high-card strength in order to describe our hand-type. The first part of that explanation was in terms of the two-way shot. With many hands partner is able to 'do the right thing' over further enemy action *without reference to our defensive strength*. With a minimum hand and a good fit he could bid on; with fair defence and no real second-suit fit he could double.

But what happens if he is interested in a slam? What if he wants to double, but hasn't enough defence to do so on his own? What if he can't risk bidding on opposite an offensively minimum hand, but the vulnerability urges him not to settle for a small penalty?

The large part of the answer to these questions is that our sacrifice of high-card (defensive) definition was *immediate, but not permanent*. That is to say, we are still there and still able to act when right. This will be the second part of the justification for our general conclusion that hand-type description should take precedence over high-card strength definition.

Looking for slam...

It is time then to look at some likely continuations of our auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
pass	?		

and to see how we can overcome any problems raised by partner's ignorance of our high-card strength. The first question we asked above concerned the possibility of partner having slam interest. Let us see how he might express this, and how we are expected to react. Initially we shall ask our LHO to keep silent. The auction then:

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
pass	?		

In addition to using Blackwood or forcing the bidding to the five level in some other way, partner can also bid 4♥ as a *general slam-try* (see footnote 2, on page 14). This bid is not (initially) a cue-bid and says nothing about hearts specifically. It simply tells us: 'I'm interested in slam, but I'm not prepared to risk the five level

(for the moment at least).' Opposite such a bid our action should be fairly clear-cut, provided we remember (as in all slam auctions) to *act on the basis of what we have already shown*.

Consider this specimen:

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
pass	4♥	pass	5♣
pass	6♠	pass	end

North	South
♠ A108642	♠ KJ75
♥ K7	♥ 864
♦ Q6	♦ AK1053
♣ A53	♣ 6

North is enthusiastic over 4♦, yet would not wish to risk the five level opposite, say,

♠ QJ53
♥ 86
♦ KJ10753
♣ 6

He therefore bids 4♥ and is prepared to give up if this elicits 4♠ from partner. South has only 11 HCP, but he is far from minimum offensively. His singleton club is excellent (particularly in view of West's failure to bid 5♣, which probably marks partner with a few clubs); his king of diamonds looks potentially valuable, and he has fair trumps. In short, he fully expected 4♠ to make opposite a minimum opening - there was nothing semi-preemptive about his 4♦ bid. He is eager to cooperate, though he will not drive to a slam if partner can do no more. His choice of 5♣ is clear. He must reassure partner that the enemy cannot cash the ace-king of clubs.

At this point North has heard enough. The worst hand partner can have is something like

♠ QJ75
♥ 864
♦ AKJ53
♣ 6

making slam depend on a likely winning finesse.

...even after interference

This time we shall assume our LHO bids 5♣ over our 4♦. Now with an offensively powerful hand partner will bid on. A bid of 5♠ would show good offence, but minimum values; a bid of 5♦ or 5♥ would indicate a powerful hand, urging us to bid a slam. One quick example:

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	5♥	pass	5♠
pass	pass	pass	

North	South
♠ AQ8642	♠ KJ75
♥ AKJ7	♥ Q6
♦ 64	♦ KQJ53
♣ 5	♣ 64

Over 5♣ North is optimistic about a slam.

♠ K753
♥ 64
♦ AK753
♣ 64

will be enough. South, however, has an offensive minimum for his 4♦ bid. His jack of spades and queen of hearts are uncertain values and with anything less in diamonds he could not have bid 4♦ at all (remember, he has already shown a fair offensive hand). Moreover, North's failure to bid 5♦ suggests a loser in that suit; thus he would need at least the ace-king of hearts and ace of clubs (as well as good trumps) to make slam good.

Partner passes - non-forcing

Another problem we suggested partner might face is wanting to double 5♣, but not having quite enough defence to do so on his own. Nothing simpler. He *passes* and we act accordingly. With no real defence we normally pass, but occasionally can bid 5♠ - on very offensive hands, such as

♠ 109642
♥ J52
♦ KQ1092
♣ -

With fair defensive values in our 4♦ bid, we now *double.*

Again - and nowhere more importantly - we must remember that we have already shown an offensive hand with a good diamond suit. We must not gratuitously restate this. Holding

♠ A753
♥ 64
♦ AQ1053
♣ 42

for instance, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	pass	pass	?

double is clearly right. The point is that *within the context of our 4♦ bid,* our hand is very defensive. We have the most defensive shape possible and we have aces. We are not expected to bid 5♠ unless we have *considerable extra* offence. Of course, with something like

♠ K9753
♥ 64
♦ AQ10753
♣ -

we would bid on, and 5♦ is best - slam interested, probably no heart control and therefore almost certainly first-round club control.

Partner passes - to force cooperation

It remains to discuss the implications of vulnerability - particularly 'adverse' vulnerability (that is, when we are vulnerable and our opponents are not - also known as being at 'red'). Partner might now be faced with a different sort of problem. He may know that, in theory, the partnership has enough values to act, but he is unable to decide unilaterally whether it is right to double or to bid on.

Holding at 'red'

♠ AQ10642
♥ KQ95
♦ 106
♣ 7

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	?		

for instance, he wants the partnership to bid 5♠ if we have

♠ KJ753
♥ 64
♦ AKJ53
♣ 6

(gaining +650 instead of a probable +300 for doubling 5♣). Yet the partnership should obviously *double* 5♣ if we have, say,

♠ KJ75
♥ J6
♦ AQ985
♣ 62

Does the opening bidder simply have to guess in such situations? In fact there is a largely effective solution to this problem, but we shall have to postpone its explanation. The answer involves use of the *forcing pass*, which we shall investigate (in this context) in the next chapter.

The general conclusion

Our general conclusion is clear. If we can make a bid in support of partner that is very descriptive of our hand-type, then a temporary sacrifice of definition regarding high-card strength need not prove embarrassing. Often partner will know what to do, regardless of our defensive strength. If not, intelligent cooperation in the subsequent auction will clarify matters.

We shall more fully investigate partnership cooperation after a fit has been established in chapter 4.

What level to raise to

Putting on the pressure

We have assumed throughout this chapter that we will know to what level we should raise partner, and we have concentrated on the different kinds of support we might show to any given level. But how do we decide on what constitutes a raise to the three level (say), as opposed to the two or four level? This is a more profound question than it might appear, and the answer often involves subtle considerations of judgement (and psychology).

At the start of this chapter we considered the merits of bidding 3♥ rather than 2♦ over

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	1♠	?

holding

♠ 106
♥ Q542
♦ AJ632
♣ Q5

and we saw that an important advantage of 3♥ was the pressure it might put on our LHO. Wanting to bid 2♠, he was forced either to pass or stretch to 3♠.

It is easy to infer the logic of this: the higher we can raise, the more likely it is that we shall present our opponents with an awkward problem. Other things being equal, then, we would always want to raise 'to the limit'. But what is the 'limit'? And what 'other things' might not be 'equal'? It is in the context of these (often difficult) considerations that we must decide how high to raise partner.

Preempting - count trumps!

The simplest place to start is with pure preemptive raises. For on such hands we need not concern ourselves with high-card strength or concentration of values. We don't have any. All we need in order to preempt is offensive strength. But just what constitutes 'offensive strength'?

Say partner opens 1♠ (promising a five-card suit). What considerations determine whether we have a preemptive raise to the three level? Or to the four level? The golden rule is that *the offensive level of a fit is determined primarily by the combined number of trumps held*. This is simply a restatement of the basic 'Law of Total Tricks' mentioned above. Broadly speaking, then, the more trumps you have, the higher you should preempt. And the rule of thumb is that you can preemptively contract for *as many tricks as you have combined trumps.*

For example, a guaranteed nine-card fit with partner entitles you to contract for nine tricks - in other words, to raise to the three level. Thus opposite partner's five-card spade suit, a weak hand with four spades should generally preempt to the three level, and with five trumps to the four level.

These rules should not be followed blindly. At Game all over

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	?

holding

♠ Q8642
♥ 753
♦ 62
♣ 753

3♠ is quite enough. It is by no means certain your opponents have game on, and your poor shape (no singleton, only one doubleton) makes it dangerous to bid any higher.

If, however, you have

♠ K8642
♥ 754
♦ 8642
♣ 7

4♠ is right.

Offence to defence ratio

So far we have dealt with hands that contain no real defence. Unfortunately, life is rarely that simple. There is usually some stray queen or jack (even a ten) that has a potential defensive value. How often have you seen an aggressive preemptive raise turn out to be a losing action when it transpired that the opponents couldn't quite make what they were supposed to? And isn't it usually because the preemptor had just a bit too much defence?

What it boils down to is this: we must consider our offence to defence *ratio* (henceforth abbreviated as *ODR*) when choosing what level to raise partner to. The higher that ratio is (the more offence we have *relative* to defence), the higher we should preempt.

To a certain extent we have defined 'offence' in the context of a preemptive fit auction - it is primarily measured on the basis of our combined trump holding. More generally, however, it is difficult (and in any case unimportant) to define offence and defence independently. It is the ratio between the two that concerns us and we must look at hands in this context.

Defining the ODR

There are four aspects to consider in judging your ODR. These are: high-card strength, shape, distribution of values, and type of values.

a) High-card strength

Of these, high-card strength is not the most important. This is because - in the abstract - high-card points are just as likely to increase your offensive potential, as they are to increase your defensive strength.

Why is it, then, that we have spoken of high-card and defensive strength as being connected? The answer is that in the context of a good fit for partner a hand may be offensively strong with no HCP; yet without HCP you can have no defensive strength at all. Previously we have compared good offensive hands containing few HCP with *similarly* offensive hands containing many HCP. In that context our defence is our high-card strength.

Do you remember the two examples

(a)	♠ KJ65	(b)	♠ 109653
	♥ 1052		♥ J52
	♦ AQ1092		♦ KQ1092
	♣ 4		♣ -

we presented to you as possible hands on the sequence

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	1♠	3♣	?

Hand (b) is not much less strong *offensively*, yet hand (a) contains about double the high-card and vastly more defensive strength.

Let us look at it another way. Partner opens 1♥, RHO overcalls 1♠, and you hold

♠ 8
♥ 9753
♦ 642
♣ 97653

We know already that the four-card support (and our singleton) makes this a reasonable offensive hand; evidently we have no defence at all. Now let us add 10 HCP to the hand, contributing equally to our offence and defence, changing it to

♠ 8
♥ A753
♦ A42
♣ Q10653

Let us agree on the hypothesis that our offence and defence have increased equally. Nonetheless our *ODR* has changed dramatically. If you are mathematically inclined, this will be obvious; if not, see the footnote below.[3] This is why, generally, *the greater your high-card strength, the less significant will be your ODR*.

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[3] The point is that the overall gap has remained constant, but the *relative gap* has decreased. Consider the following analogy. *P* and *Q* are two newborn babies; *P* weighs 10lb, *Q* weighs 5lb. At this point, *P* is 'much heavier' than *Q* - the

b) Shape

As far as your shape goes, we have established by far the most important consideration - your number of trumps. The converse of this is that *shortage* in your opponents' suit is an offensive asset.[4]

More generally, we can state the important fact that *the more unbalanced your hand is, the higher your ODR will be* (and vice versa). Thus over

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♥	?

(a)	♠ 8642	(b)	♠ 8642	(c)	♠ 8642
	♥ 753		♥ 7		♥ 75
	♦ 8642		♦ 86542		♦ 876542
	♣ 75		♣ 753		♣ 7

hand (a) is far less offensive than either of the other two hands.

c) Distribution of values

The most important variable in determining your ODR is your distribution of high-card points. Values in partner's suit are the most offensive; those in the opponents' suit(s) are most defensive. Secondarily, within the unbid suits, the more you have in your longer side-suit (the greater your *concentration* of values), the higher your ODR is likely to be. Two examples on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	?

(a)	♠ KJ106	(b)	♠ AJ
	♥ AJ75		♥ 10753
	♦ 642		♦ J642
	♣ 75		♣ K75

Hand (a) is a fairly offensive 9-count; whereas hand (b), with the same number of HCP, is much more defensive.[5]

d) Type of values

The final consideration is your type of values - often requiring subtle distinctions of judgement. We shall deal separately with (a) the trump suit; (b) a long side-suit (five-cards plus); (c) the opponents' suit; and (d) a short side-suit (three cards or fewer).

(a) In your trump suit, queens and jacks are very offensive cards, as is a king when your trump fit appears to be at least nine cards. They will probably be of use to partner, but they are unlikely to takes tricks in defence. The ace is neutral, unless your fit appears to be eleven cards or more.

(b) The situation is similar within long-side suits. Thus KQJxx is a very offensive holding, while Axxxx is much more defensive. (Recall, briefly, the observations we made as relevant to showing a side-suit as part of your raise in 'More ways of raising').

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weight *ratio* is dramatic (2:1). Thirty years later each has put on 140lb; *P* now weighs 150lb, and *Q* 145lb. The gap is still 5lb, but the *ratio* has decreased to one of insignificance, and we would not bother to speak of *P* as being 'heavier' at all.

[4] Extreme *length* in RHO's suit can also be a good offensive holding, provided (a) you can guarantee at least a nine-card trump fit with partner; and (b) you do not have honour cards in the enemy suit. Thus over, say, 1♠ - 2♥ - ?, a hand like ♠ 8642 ♥ 97542 ♦ 642 ♣ 7 is actually an excellent offensive shape.

[5] Footnote by MJA. Note also that the LTC for both hands is similar, but hand (a) you are practically certain to cover three of partner's major-suit losers; whereas hand (b) you will probably cover two major-suit losers and sometimes a club loser. It is rather more likely that partner's shortage will duplicate your club value in (b) than your spade value in (a).

(c) In your opponents' suit the situation is completely reversed. Queens and jacks are purely defensive, as probably is a king if accompanied by any length (for partner will now likely be short, and thus your king will not be a great asset offensively). An ace is neutral, unless partner rates to be void.

(d) Within short side-suits, aces and kings are likely to be useful offensively and defensively. Queens and jacks are more defensive holdings, however, unless your partner lays claim to the suit.

As for side-suits of four cards, you must rely on considerations of value-distribution. A jack, for instance, looks offensive in KQJx, but defensive in Jxxx.

Two more balanced raises on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	?

(a) ♠ K864
♥ QJ75
♦ 64
♣ A75

(b) ♠ J864
♥ A753
♦ Q6
♣ QJ5

Hand (a) has a higher ODR for this shape, while hand (b) has a much lower ODR.

Applying the logic to preemptive raises...

Returning to our preemptive raises, then, we may conclude that we should raise to the level of our trump fit, unless our ODR is significantly lowered from the 'pure' extreme. What is 'significant'? Often the distinctions are complex. In addition to the four general considerations discussed above, we must also ask ourselves the specific (critical) question: *What are the opponents likely to be able to make on this hand?*

An example: at Love all partner opens 1♥ (assume a five-card suit), RHO overcalls 2♦, and we hold

♠ 10964
♥ A7532
♦ 64
♣ J5

Do we raise to 3♥ or to 4♥? In favour of 4♥ is our fifth trump and reasonable shape. Against this we have a jack and a ten-nine outside (not powerful, but nonetheless defensive holdings), and our ace of hearts may well take a defensive trick.

In any event, what can our opponents make? Our spade holding makes it very unlikely they can outbid us in spades; our heart holding almost rules out no-trumps for them; 4♦ seems a very high target, and if 4♦ makes, it will either be because partner's hand is very minimum (in which case 4♥ might well go for -300) or because partner has short diamonds (in which case he can bid 4♥ if necessary). The important thing is that often 3♥ will make 'on the nose', while the opponents can make nothing higher. Perhaps partner has

♠ A7
♥ KQ864
♦ 75
♣ KQ64

In hearts we will lose a spade, two diamonds and a club; while in diamonds our opponents will probably lose a heart, a spade and two clubs.

It is most unlikely you will have the time or inclination to analyse hands in this way at the table. Instead your must develop your instinctive judgement by becoming increasingly aware of the relevant criteria. The answer on the given hand? Probably 3♥; though 4♥ might have practical gains against addicted sacrificers, even when it is theoretically wrong. Certainly 4♥ is more attractive if we have

♠ 106
♥ A7532
♦ 64
♣ J953

Now the danger of the opponents getting together in spades tilts the odds.

...and to fit-jumps

When it comes to fit-jumps we *guarantee* a fairly high ODR for partner. We must have fair support, reasonable shape and good concentration of side-suit values. Generally, in fact, with fair support and a good side-suit, our ODR will be sufficiently high to allow us to bid to the limit of our offensive strength. Again this will be determined primarily by our number of trumps. Consider the following hands, at Game all, over

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	?

(a) ♠ K642
♥ J7
♦ KQ1096
♣ 75

(b) ♠ KJ64
♥ J7
♦ AQ10964
♣ 7

(c) ♠ Q10642
♥ 75
♦ KQ1096
♣ 7

Hand (a) is an easy 3♦; and hand (b) is an easy 4♦. But what of hand (c)? This hand includes only the high-card strength appropriate to the two or three level; yet it is right - *semi-preemptively and descriptively* - to bid 4♦. Our fifth spade provides the requisite offence for the four level and our ODR is huge. Remember, 4♦ says simply that we have a good diamond suit and the *offensive* strength for a raise to 4♠.

Recapping

Recapping briefly: on offensive hands with a fit we generally want to raise partner to the limit of that fit immediately - both descriptively and in order to create problems for our opponents. We must be sure, however, that *we do not raise preemptively beyond the level at which those problems will arise.* We attempt to avoid this by paying due attention to our ODR, and by focusing on the level to which it seems the enemy might do well to bid. These considerations will become more central as we look at the many hands and sequences of the next chapter.

Splinter raises

Why show shortage in the opponents' suit?

Finally, in this chapter, we are able to extend our present categories of support. Imagine the auction has proceeded

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	?

and you hold

(a) ♠ K642
♥ KQ75
♦ A1094
♣ 3

(b) ♠ QJ64
♥ KJ753
♦ K1064
♣ -

You could, of course, show these hands as forcing high-card raises. There is, however, a better alternative. The hands would be well described by a bid that showed a raise to game with a shortage in clubs, and such a bid is easily available. On this auction, 4♣ can be used for just this purpose. More generally, any jump in the

opponents' suit(s) should show an offensive raise to that level with a shortage in the suit bid. The reason for so stipulating is twofold. First it is often critical for partner to know of your shortage in the enemy suit if he is thinking of bidding on - either competitively, or in search of a slam. Secondly, and critically, it is precisely when you are short in RHO's suit that you may most readily expect further interference. In such circumstances it is obviously important to make the most descriptive bid possible.

Hand-type first, again

When using splinter-jumps you should follow the same principles of 'hand-type first, high-cards later' that you apply to fit-jumps. Thus, over

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	?

(a)	♠ 6	(b)	♠ -	(c)	♠ -
	♥ A1075		♥ K10753		♥ KQ1073
	♦ KQ4		♦ K642		♦ J642
	♣ A7532		♣ Q1093		♣ 10753

it is right to bid 3♠ on either hand (a) or (b). There is a limit to everything, however, and with hand (c) a straightforward preempt to 4♥ is best. For, if you bid 3♠, partner will (and should) read you for at least a few values in the unbid suits - and may well double 4♠ on the strength of these (presumed) values. On this last hand you will feel nervous if the auction goes

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	3♠
4♠	dble	pass	end

But you should feel more content over

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	4♥
4♠	dble	pass	end

since you have implied no defence.

A summary so far

We have reached the end of a long and fairly abstract discussion of the considerations that must preoccupy you when you have a fit for partner. Along the way we have introduced and discussed several concepts that will recur importantly throughout the book: the importance of avoiding the last guess; the aim of making partner boss of the auction; the significance of a hand's offence to defence ratio; putting pressure on the opponents; the importance of describing your hand-*type* immediately; the necessity of looking to what your opponents might bid and catering for likely interference. It is because of the need to introduce and explain these concepts at the start, that this chapter has been so lengthily theoretical. We hope we have not lost you on the way.

In the next chapter we shall continue to look at when and how to support partner, by putting all this theory into practice. We shall bombard you with various sequences and hands. And the decisions you will be asked to consider should be governed by the principles established in this chapter. So we shall end by summarising those conclusions:

(1) We should never conceal a good fit for partner at our first bid.

(2) We should make our support bids as descriptive as possible.

(3) We therefore need more ways of raising partner to cater for the various types of support we might have.

(4) In particular, we should be keen to tell partner of any good side-suit we hold; or of a shortage in a suit bid by our opponents.

(5) Compromises are inevitable, however, and we must make choices of what aspects of our hands to show (first).

(6) Our initial priority should be to get our hand-type across; high-card strength can wait.

(7) Often we must decide what *level* to raise partner to. This we do generally on the basis of our offence, with particular reference to our number of trumps. But if our ratio of offence to defence is brought down by poor shape or defensive honour-holdings, we should be less aggressive.

Chapter 2 - Support with support: in practice

Preparing the ground

Reviewing our categories of support

Do you recall the categories of support we identified in the first chapter? (1) a pure preemptive raise; (2) a mixed raise; (3) a fit-raise (with a side-suit); (4) a (neutral) high-card raise; (5) a splinter-jump. It is time to see how we show these hands in various auctions.

You will remember our saying that compromises usually have to be made. With a 'fit' raise, you simply bid it to the appropriate *offensive* level, not distinguishing immediately between the defensive strengths associated with different levels of support. Also responder often has to 'fuse' (pure) preemptive and (neutral) mixed raises - although opposite overcalls the situation will be more flexible.

Finally, we mentioned that the bids we used to show our neutral high-card 'limit' raise were, in fact, *unlimited*. Thus when you hold a strong, fairly balanced hand in support of partner, you start out by showing it cheaply as a forcing high-card raise.

For example, partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♥; you have

♠ K64
♥ A53
♦ KJ642
♣ Q7

Of course, you will almost certainly play at least in a game, but you start by simply bidding 2♥, showing a *high-card raise to at least 3♦*. It does not matter that partner must initially assume you have only invitational values - you will have plenty of space to enlighten him. Nor should you fear further intervention from the enemy when you have such a good defensive hand. We say that such high-card raises show a *'limit raise or better'*. We shall examine the implications of this for opener.

To sum up, then, we are usually restricted by the available bids to showing (1) *semi-preemptive raises;* (2) *fit-raises* (of ambiguous defensive strength); (3) *high-card raises* (limit or better); and (4) *splinter-jumps* in the opponents' suit(s).

A couple further observations are appropriate here.

A crude distinction: 'limit' or 'semi-preemptive'?

First, it is a somewhat blurred line that we are forced to draw between 'semi-preemptive' and 'high-card' raises, in the absence of an available bid to show a distinct 'mixed' raise. Over

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♦	?

for instance, (and assuming for the moment you wish to raise to the three level with four spades), how would you treat

♠ KJ64
♥ K53
♦ J4
♣ 10973

A bit too much to label it 'semi-preemptive', yet not really enough for a limit raise. There is often no clear answer to problems like this, but the following considerations might combine to push you in one direction or the other.

a) Vulnerability

First, *partner will treat your raises much more seriously if you are vulnerable*, so you should be less prepared to 'shade' your limit raises when vulnerable. Better to keep them up to strength, for partner will be eager to press on to game. By the same token, he will not expect you to be 'broke' for a semi-preemptive jump when vulnerable.

b) Importance of your ODR in competition

As a general principle, *when you think it is likely that your LHO will bid, your semi-preemptive raises should guarantee a fairly high ODR*. In other words, if you anticipate further competition, the choice between 'limit / semi-preemptive' is not simply one of playing strength, but also implies a *'defensive/offensive'* distinction. Thus with borderline hands of roughly *equal offensive strength*, you should incline towards showing a semi-preemptive raise if your ODR is high, and a limit raise if your ODR is low.

We looked at how to evaluate our ODR in the last chapter. That evaluation is important not just in deciding how high raise partner, but also when deciding what *type* of raise to show *if you think your LHO might bid.*

The reasoning is twofold. First, if LHO bids, you do not want your partner pressing on as a *two-way shot* opposite a 'semi-preemptive' raise that in fact contains good defense to an enemy contract.

An example: you open 1♦, at 'green' (i.e. not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents) playing matchpointed pairs, holding

♠ 5
♥ K106
♦ AJ953
♣ AQ42

The auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	2♠ / 3♦	3♠	?

partner having shown a raise in diamonds to the three level. *If partner has made a semi-preemptive jump, you should probably bid 4♦* (planning to go one off and hoping to beat 4♠ if you push them into it). On the other hand, if partner has shown a limit raise, the right action is to *double*. (You will probably make 4♦, but your hand is also good defensively. Why try for +130, when it is very likely you can get +200?)

The second reason why it is important that you try to convey your ODR on these borderline hands when you anticipate further competition is *so that partner will know when to double*, as opposed to pass. This is particularly important at matchpoints, when a failure to double the enemy's partscore sacrifice can be very costly.

Consider your action as opener, holding

♠ AJ953
♥ 64
♦ K95
♣ A104

playing matchpoints at Game all on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♥	3♥ / 3♠	4♥	?

If partner has shown a semi-preemptive raise, you will simply *pass*. You must hope partner has pushed the enemy a level too high and attempt to beat 4♥ with your fair defensive hand. (Double would be too aggressive; +100 should be a fine score, when you were far from certain to make 3♠.) But if partner has made a high-card raise, *you must double*. For it is all too likely that you were making 3♠ exactly (partner probably won't have a singleton heart, since he didn't make a splinter-jump), and that your opponents are going one

off in 4♥. If you pass out 4♥, you will get a very poor result for +100. If you double, however, you can expect a near-top for +200 (which you will get most of the time). Of course, if partner was always planning to bid a game, he will do so anyway with a high ODR.

Bearing all the above in mind, here is a quick quiz. You are third to speak, playing matchpoints, at Game all on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♥	?

(1♦ promised at least a four card suit). What do you call on the following hands?

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ K64	♠ K106	♠ K6
♥ 75	♥ 75	♥ Q75
♦ KQJ6	♦ K642	♦ K642
♣ 9753	♣ QJ103	♣ J753

Obviously the 'answers' are not clear-cut. Each hand is a 4-4-3-2 nine-count with four diamonds, two kings, a queen and a jack. Yet we suggest that each hand merits a different bid.

On hand (a) the right bid is 3♦. Your point-count is obviously maximum for a semi-preemptive raise, but our ODR is high. Your small doubleton in hearts makes it likely that West might raise, so you must try to leave partner well-placed over the enemy's (potential) 3♥ bid. Showing a limit raise would suggest far more defense.

On hand (b) your ODR is much lower and, though minimum, 2♥ (limit raise) is best. If partner wants to double West's 3♥ bid, you are 'happy to do business'.

On hand (c) your ODR is pathetic, but you are simply not (offensively) strong enough for a limit raise. The hand may well belong to your side at the two level. The right bid is either 2♦ or a slightly 'bent' 1NT.

Note, finally, that if you make a cue-bid (showing a limit raise) on a hand without much defense, you may well provide your LHO with a cheap way of entering the auction - by doubling your cue-bid. On a borderline hand with a high ODR, it is better to jump-raise partner semi-preemptively, and force LHO to enter the auction one level higher (if he can).

c) Will your limit raise leave room for manoeuvre?

Considerations of 'economy' will appear with increasing frequency as the book progresses. What we refer to here is best illustrated by the following pair of auctions:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♦	3♦	pass	?

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♦	3♦	pass	?

In each case the 3♦ bid showed a limit raise or better. The difference is that in the first auction the opening bidder has *no room for inquiry*. He must either sign off or bid a game. On the second sequence, however, the opener can make allowances for the fact that your 3♦ bid might have been a bit of a 'stretch'. In the latter auction a 3♥ bid will discover if you are a minimum (see footnote 2, page 14). In general, *the more 'room' you leave partner, the more wide-ranging your bid can be*. This applies to all constructive and competitive auctions.

d) The single raise

Finally, remember: *just because you have four trumps, it does not mean that you must raise to the three level, even opposite a known five-card suit.* A rule of thumb (that you should raise to the level of the fit) must not become an inhibiting constraint. If your high-card strength is low for a limit raise, and your *ODR is too low for a semi-preemptive raise,* the right action will *often* be a simple raise to the two-level.

The sort of hands we are talking about are ‘stuffy’ defensive hands in the 5-9 HCP range - particularly those with *a defensive holding in RHO’s suit* or with *no doubleton* (4-3-3-3 shape), or when your *doubleton is strong*. Such hands have a pitiful ODR and a preemptive jump can only mislead partner (as well as often carrying you past the last making spot when the hand is yours). A few examples on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♦	?

(a) ♠ J642	(b) ♠ 8642	(c) ♠ Q1064	(d) ♠ 10642	(e) ♠ 9642
♥ K3	♥ KJ	♥ KJ3	♥ A753	♥ K753
♦ J64	♦ Q64	♦ 642	♦ QJ6	♦ 642
♣ J753	♣ K753	♣ Q93	♣ 105	♣ AQ

Of course, if partner’s opening might well be a four-card suit, you should be still more willing to make a single raise on such hands. We shall look more closely at these considerations of ‘system’ shortly.

Implications of an unlimited high-card raise

The second area to discuss briefly now relates to the continuations when responder has shown his ‘limit raise or better’. The important point for opener to remember is: *when he has a good hand, he should not simply bid game*. Such laziness will lead to many a missed slam.

Here is an obvious example. Holding

♠ KJ753
♥ A
♦ 73
♣ AQ642

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♦	3♦	pass	?

it is clear that a natural, forward-going 4♣ will best describe this fine hand. Responder is expected to cooperate with any good limit raise (plus) that is not ill-fitting. If opener simply bids a direct 4♠ over 3♦, how is responder to know that it is right to move with

♠ A642
♥ J753
♦ A64
♣ K5

An immediate jump to game by opener should show a hand uninterested in slam, usually short in controls - something like

♠ KQ9753
♥ Q6
♦ 73
♣ KQ6

We open - They intervene

So far in this book you have nearly always been responder to an opening bid, and that is the way we shall continue in the next two sections. After that you will be moving round the table and showing your support from different seats.

A system note

In the first chapter we gave you many auctions where your partner had opened 1♥ or 1♠, and we often stipulated that you should assume a five-card suit. Some of you may have thought: 'But this doesn't apply to me - I don't play five-card majors.' Not so. We must speak briefly about systems, however.

Assuming your opening bids of 1♥ and 1♠ show at least four cards, your basic system will fall into one of these three categories: (s.1) five-card majors; (s.2) four-card majors and a weak no-trump; (s.3) four-card majors and a strong (or medium, 14-16 HCP) no-trump.

Now, say you hold three- or four-card support opposite a one-major opening. It is obviously very important to know how likely it is that your partner has five or more cards. The difference between a seven- and eight-card fit is enormous, and *that between an eight- and nine-card fit not much less so.*

If your partner's opening 1♥ or 1♠ bid promises a minimum of five cards (s.1), it is easy. (That is a reason why many people play a five-card major system.) But if your system permits you to open four-card majors, that does not mean that you must assume partner has only got four when he opens one-major. In fact, *if you play a 12-14 NT opening (s.2), you should assume in competitive auctions that partner has five cards in his opened major.*

There are two reasons for this. First, the odds are substantial that this will be the actual case. Secondly, if partner *has* only got a four-card suit, he will nearly always have extra values (for he will generally be 15-19 HCP balanced).

This does not mean you will get to an assortment of seven and poor eight-card fit games - simply that your *initial* assumption should be that partner's opening includes a five-card (or longer) suit.

The problem system, in this context, is (s.3) - not that popular any longer amongst duplicate players, but still played as standard in many rubber-bridge clubs, particularly in Britain, and part of the once popular 'Blue Club'. The point is that if you play four-card majors and a strong no-trump, you open a lot of (often rather weak) balanced hands 1♥ and 1♠ - that is the main advantage in playing the system! It is thus most unwise, in responding to such an opening, to assume partner has more than four cards. Of course, much of the time partner *will* hold at least a five-card suit. Thus, playing (s.3), you are handicapping yourself to a certain extent in the competitive auction when facing a 1♥ or 1♠ opening, though the compensation of being able to open one-major so often might well be thought adequate.

The implications of all this are important and we shall have to refer back to these three system categories when discussing auctions.

a) One-major - simple overcall

We shall rush right in with an example sequence, giving recommended treatments for responder's bids. Afterwards we shall look more closely at any innovations.

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	?

- 2♥: natural; usually three-card support opposite (s.1) and (s.2);
- 2NT: high-card raise with four (plus) trumps and a reasonably high ODR -'limit or better' values, though may well be 'shaded' opposite (s.1) or (s.2);
- 3♣: high-card raise with three trumps (or four trumps and a low ODR) - 'limit or better' playing (s.1) or (s.2); game-forcing in (s.3);
- 3♦: fit-jump to the three level;
- 3♥: semi-preemptive raise, with four-card (plus) support - more often five-card in (s.3);
- 3♠, 4♦: fit-jumps to the four-level;
- 4♣: splinter-jump;
- 4♥: preemptive raise to the four level;

– 4♠, 5♦: TO PLAY; *not* fit-jumps.

This should be largely predictable (and familiar) from earlier pages, except the uses of the cue-bid (3♣) and of 2NT. The first thing to explain is why we suggest you should have *two* bids to show your high-card raises, *differentiating three- and four-card trump support*. The reason is easiest to understand if your opening 1♥/1♠ bids might be four-card suits. Is it not crucial to distinguish between seven- and eight-card fits as quickly as possible? Both to find the right game and to compete effectively?

Less obvious is the relevance to pairs playing five-card majors. Well, the reasons are the same, and only slightly less compelling. Again an important consideration is *playing the right game* - often, holding a 5-3 major-suit fit, 3NT will be the best spot. The distinction is also valuable (a) to decide whether to play game at all, particularly if opener is very distributional (5-5, say), when the ninth trump is gold-dust; and (b) in slam auctions.

Perhaps most importantly, though, this extra accuracy will be invaluable *over further enemy action*, in working out the total number of tricks available on the hand (remember the Law of Total Tricks?). As opener, you will know when to take a two-way shot, when to make a cautious pass and when to punish unwarranted impudence. (Of course, all these considerations apply with even greater force to four-card major systems).

There is one other, not insignificant advantage in playing 2NT the way suggested. Because you need a fairly good ODR for the bid, and because you are leaving partner space for inquiry over a pass from LHO, you can afford to 'shade' the lower limit somewhat - at least playing (s.1). For example, at Love all over

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♦	?

♠ K1062
♥ 1053
♦ 64
♣ AJ93

is an acceptable minimum for 2NT, unless you play (s.3). This means that your *semi-preemptive raise* (3♠ on the above auction) *is less wide-ranging, and thus more descriptive*.

Referring back to our 'system discussion', you should (initially) *bid much the same way in (s.1) and (s.2)* - except for being a little less aggressive with your preemptive raises if opener might be strong, balanced. In (s.3), however, you should *assume a four-card suit initially* - thus a simple raise to 2♥/2♠ will have four-card support far more often as it has three; preemptive raises to the three-level should have five- or very good four-card support (especially vulnerable), etc., etc.

In particular, it is wrong in (s.3) to drive to three-major with three-card support and invitational values - a lot of the time you won't make it! Instead you will have to bid a new suit or make a take-out ('negative', 'sputnik') double on those hands. That is why the immediate cue-bid has to show game-forcing values, playing (s.3).

Finally, we have stolen several bids that have a traditional 'natural' significance. We must therefore explain what you might do with the hands you were perhaps accustomed to describe with those bids.

Strong jump-shifts in competition (3♦ and 3♠ in the above sequence) were of very dubious value in any case. They almost never turn up, and when they do, it is often better to make a simple forcing change of suit in order to save space. This is what we strongly recommend you do now.

The 'natural' significance of *the direct cue-bid* is fairly controversial anyway, and it is certainly true that nearly all top players now use it to show some sort of support. If you hold a good hand without support, without a fair suit of your own, and without a 3NT bid, then a *negative double* will serve you well (see chapter 5 for a full discussion of this bid).

So far, so good. But what of 2NT? What are you supposed to do with a balanced hand, a good stop and invitational values? Three preliminary observations: First, *2NT is rarely a good place to play a contract* - if you can make an overtrick, you should have been in game, and if you go down, it will nearly always be a bad result. In fact, as the book progresses, you will discover we recommend sacrificing a natural 2NT bid in almost all competitive sequences.

Secondly, *the hand-type is not that common* - when did you last make the bid? Particularly if the following considerations are observed: (a) no three-card support; (b) no unbid four-card major; (c) no unbid six-card minor; (d) no good four-card holding in RHO's suit; (e) at least a potential double stop in the enemy suit. We shall see why these constraints can and ought to be observed below.

Thirdly, *you will usually have a chance to get back to no-trumps later*, if you start with a change of suit or a take-out double. Remember, in real life your LHO will not 'bounce' the bidding any higher when you have a natural 2NT bid. (If he does, he will almost certainly regret it).

You may be temporarily 'stuck', however, even in the light of all the above. Say the auction has started

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♦	?

and you hold exactly a 3-2-3-5 shape (or a 3-2-4-4 / 2-2-4-5 / 3-1-4-5 shape with the wrong diamond holding to want to defend 2♦ doubled), 10 or 11 HCP, and a good diamond stop. You are not strong enough for 3♣, which should be played as forcing to game, and which, in any event, commits you - in effect - to 3NT. So you might well wish you played a natural 2NT.

All is not lost. You can often stretch to 3NT (it will be where you usually end up playing anyway, and it is the right value-bid with 11 well-positioned points and a five-card suit). But if you aren't strong enough for that, you must *double* (negative). If partner bids 2♠, you bid 2NT. If he bids 3♠, you bid 3NT.

Anyway, let us look at some hands you might have bid a natural 2NT with, at Love all on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♦	?

(a) ♠ K64
♥ Q75
♦ KJ5
♣ Q953

Bid 3♦. You can still get back to 3NT if that is the right game, and in the meantime you have shown your exact degree of support. If you play (s.2) and partner has only four hearts, he will have game values. If you play (s.3), you will have to double on this hand.

(b) ♠ KJ6
♥ 75
♦ KJ106
♣ K753

Pass. Partner will reopen with a double 95% of the time and you will pass again. Where are their tricks?

(c) ♠ 1064
♥ 75
♦ AQ6
♣ AJ953

3NT. A little pushy, but it rates to be the right spot. Opponents will not always make the best lead if you follow with a cheap no-trump bid, but this feels wrong with so little help in the majors.

(d) ♠ Q964
♥ J7
♦ K109
♣ A1053

Double. Your major suit holding make it silly to insist on no-trumps. (If, in the past, you played penalty doubles in these sequences, you must stop - see chapter 5.) If partner bids 2♥, you have a choice between a conservative pass and a forward-going 2NT.

(e) ♠ 1064
♥ 75
♦ AQ
♣ KJ9642

Three reasonable options: a direct 3NT, which will often be wrong if partner's clubs are a small doubleton or worse; pass, planning to rebid 3NT if partner reopens with a double - playing him not to be short in clubs now; or pass, and then bid a 'good' 3♣ (see chapter 5) if partner reopens on the hand. A direct 3♣ (game-forcing) is *not* a sensible choice; it is an overbid that commits you to at least 3NT anyway, and runs the risk of encouraging partner to proceed beyond even that contract.

(f) ♠ Q64
♥ Q7
♦ A64
♣ KJ753

Pass. A very difficult hand. A natural 2NT is hardly ideal anyway - if partner has Qx, it may be the one bid that really messes you up. It partner doesn't reopen, you may miss 2NT or 3NT - but he is most unlikely to pass out 2♦. If he does, he will be minimum without diamond shortage - in which case defending may be a good idea. Opposite a reopening double we will bid 3♦, showing exactly this sort of hand. Now partner can 'right-side' 3NT if relevant; and can otherwise bid a non-forcing 3♥, 3♠ or 4♣. If partner reopens with a 4-5-2-2 13-count, we shall have to play an ungainly 3♥; but that rates to be better than 2NT - especially from our side. One alternative has fair appeal. That is to double, prepared to pass over partner's 2♠ bid, raise 2♥ to 3♥ and bid 3♦ otherwise. The losses are not so great, then. By contrast, the gains are convincing. On frequency grounds you will be using 2NT about twenty times as often, and you will simplify so many auctions. You will get to the right game more often. You will bid more good games, miss more bad ones. The same goes for slams. And your partner will be able to judge very competitive auctions much more effectively.

Here is a mixed collection of examples where you hold some sort of support for partner's 1♥ or 1♠ opening, and RHO has overcalled.

(a) ♠ KJ6
♥ A753
♦ 64
♣ 7543

Game	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♠	2♦	?

2♠. In any natural system. Even in (s.2) or (s.3) partner will open 1♥ with 4-4 in the majors; so there is no need to look for a heart fit.

(b) ♠ Q1064
♥ 75
♦ KJ64
♣ 753

Love	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♠	2♥	?

3♠. In (s.1) or (s.2) this is clear; in (s.3) you might only bid 2♠ if vulnerable or against trigger-happy opponents.

(c) ♠ A6
♥ KJ95
♦ 642
♣ Q975

N/S	West	North	East	South
vuln.	-	1♥	1♠	?

2NT. Any system. Yes, even if it is a jump.

(d) ♠ K1064
♥ AQJ5
♦ 64
♣ 1053

Game	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♠	2♣	?

3♥ - surely the most descriptive bid. Because you are vulnerable and because 3♥ leaves no room for manoeuvre, partner will play you for genuinely invitational values.

(e) ♠ 642
♥ K105
♦ A64
♣ QJ105

E/W	West	North	East	South
vuln.	-	1♥	1♠	?

2♠. Invitational values (or better), three trumps. In (s.3) you should double (negative) and pass partner's 1NT bid.

(f) ♠ A64
♥ AQ53
♦ K642
♣ 53

N/S	West	North	East	South
vuln.	-	1♥	2♣	?

2NT. Remember the bid is unlimited. Set trumps forcing (showing your fourth trump and roughly balanced values), and leave plenty of room to explore a possible slam.

(g) ♠ J642
♥ Q53
♦ K64
♣ Q73

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	?

2♠. Any system. Your shape and ODR are too poor for any other action, despite holding four trumps.

(h) ♠ K106
♥ J753
♦ K64
♣ QJ3

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♦	?

In (s.1) 3♦ is better than 2NT - your poor shape and ODR make it right to lie about the extent of your trump fit. If opponents bid again, you want to discourage partner from acting (except to double!); you want to leave 3NT open as a playable spot; but, most of all, you do not want partner to think you have a *ruffing value* and an offensive hand.

Playing (s.2) you cannot conceal an eight-card fit (if that is all there is), and you must bid 2NT. Otherwise you might miss 4♥ when it is your only making game - opposite, say,

♠ AQ53
♥ KQ106
♦ J5
♣ K65

Finally, in (s.3), we recommend a conservative 2♥ - certainly best if your 1♥ opening might be as bad as ours could be playing this system.

b) One-major - jump overcall

First, an example sequence:

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	?

– 3♠: 'natural', usually guaranteeing an eight-card fit;

– 4♣: forcing, high-card raise (not promising a club control);

– 4♦, 4♥[6]: fit-jumps to 4♠ (plus);

– 4♠: semi-preemptive.

Not a great deal to say here. Obviously you are under severe pressure, and consequently your bids must be more flexible. Still, you must not be lazy. With a reasonable (high-card) raise to four-major you must not jump to game, which shows a semi-preemptive hand with a high ODR. Such carelessness will not only result in your missing the occasional slam, but also in partner overcompeting the hand when the enemy bid again. Instead you must cue-bid. You do not necessarily show any slam interest, though you do set up a forcing pass if relevant - more anon.

The point about flexibility is that the fewer bids you have available, the more wide-ranging they must be. But, more than this, you must attempt to *spread the burden evenly*. It is wrong, for example, to have a much lower minimum limit for 3♥ or 3♠, yet still to observe the same minimum limit for game-bids. Such a policy would simply make partner's life far too difficult over your three-level raise. Instead you must bid a game yourself with the upper end of your invitational range.

In the above sequence (1♠-[3♣]-?), consider

[6] Jumps to game are generally natural and to play, except in sequences where responder jumps to 4♥ opposite a spade opening/overcall; or to 5♣ opposite a diamond bid. If responder wants to play in 4♥ over 1♠-(3♣)-? he must bid 3♥ (forcing) and follow with 4♥.

(a) ♠ 1064	(b) ♠ KJ6	(c) ♠ Q642
♥ A53	♥ A753	♥ KQ53
♦ J1064	♦ J1064	♦ K6
♣ 53	♣ 73	♣ 753

Hand (a) is a typical minimum 3♠ bid, as is hand (b), opposite a five-card major. In (s.2), or (s.3), double is better on hand (b). A maximum would be something like hand (c).

Now consider after the same sequence

(d) ♠ Q964	(e) ♠ Q1064	(f) ♠ KQ64
♥ AQ53	♥ K5	♥ J75
♦ K6	♦ KQ1064	♦ J10962
♣ 753	♣ 75	♣ 5

With hand (d) you are too strong for 3♠ and must bid 4♣. Similarly, your other four-level bids must be more flexible. Thus hand (e), which was only worth 3♦ over 1♠-(2♣), is now clearly a 4♦ bid over 3♣. It is not that your hand has got any better, simply that this is now the most descriptive option. In the same way, with hand (f), it is right to bid 4♠ over 3♣, even though you would have contented yourself with 3♠ over 2♣.

Some more examples:

(a) ♠ 64
♥ Q975
♦ AJ64
♣ Q53

N/S	West	North	East	South
vuln.	-	1♥	2♠	?

2NT. Yes, if available, 2NT still shows a four-card invitational raise or better. Thus in this sequence a direct 3♥ (playing (s.1) or (s.2)) should show a three-card raise (invitational). In (s.3) it is probably best used to show a *mixed four-card raise*. As always over jump overcalls, your bid is slightly wider-ranging. On this hand you have a near minimum and will sign-off in 3♥ over partner's 3♣ or 3♦ trial bid.

(b) ♠ J642
♥ K105
♦ K642
♣ 53

Game	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♥	3♣	?

Pass. You are simply not strong enough to bid. You must pass - and quickly. If partner reopens with a double, you will bid 3♥. Yes, you might miss a game. That is why people preempt.

(c) ♠ AJ64
♥ 53
♦ K1062
♣ QJ7

Love	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♠	3♥	?

4♥. Of course, you might not make game, but it is too much to expect partner to raise 3♠ to game on a reasonable 13-count opposite what might be a good seven-count. 4♠ by you would show a much more shapely, preemptive hand.

(d) ♠ KJ64
♥ AJ1095
♦ 62
♣ J7

Game	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♠	3♣	?

4♥. Aggressive, but what is better?

c) One-minor - overcall

We have not looked much at 1♣ and 1♦ openings. One problem is that it is a very messy area, where so much depends on your system. Playing (s.3), for example, your minor-suit openings are usually a five-card suit (plus) and therefore can freely be raised with three-card support. Playing a system where 1♣ is very often a three- (perhaps even a two-) card suit, you obviously have to tread a little more warily!

Another problem is that our injunction 'support with support' is to be interpreted with much greater latitude over one-minor openings, whatever system you play. For major-suit fits do not lose their importance simply

because you can establish a fit in a minor. It remains important to seek out a major-suit fit, *constructively* (i.e. with a view to making a game), and *competitively* (to play the higher-scoring or higher-ranking partscore).

For example, over

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♥	?

with

♠ AJ64
♥ J53
♦ Q6
♣ K753

even if the opening promised a four-card suit, you cannot afford to abandon spades in order to support clubs. Still less if you hold

♠ A9642
♥ J5
♦ Q6
♣ K753

Altogether, then, you should be showing immediate support for your partner's 1♣ or 1♦ opening far, far less readily than over his one-major openings. Nevertheless, the bids can, and should still be used in much the same way - except that *2NT should always be natural.*

An example auction:

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♥	?

– 2♣: natural; the degree of support will depend on what your opening 1♣ shows;

– 2♥: high-card raise, generally promising four clubs (plus); unlimited;

– 2♠: three-level fit-jump;

– 3♣: preemptive / mixed raise; usually five-card support;

– 3♦ / 3♠: four-level fit-jumps;

– 3♥: splinter jump.

Fit-jumps in a major suit should generally be 5-4 or 5-5 with a decent five-card major. Remember, partner will want to support your major if possible, so he must know what he is supporting. Fit-jumps to the four-level are unlimited and should be very pure. Some hands:

(a) ♠ 64
♥ Q53
♦ K642
♣ QJ53

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♠	?

2♣ in (s.1) or (s.2), though 3♣ is probably right in (s.3).

(b) ♠ 6
♥ AQ1053
♦ KJ62
♣ J73

N / S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	?

3♥. Clear-cut. You will pass 4♦, if partner insists.

(c) ♠ 642
♥ K53
♦ KQ62
♣ A75

E / W vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	2♣	?

3♣. Easy - a forcing high-card raise. In fact, this is a rare bid, since it generally denies a four-card major or a good club holding for no trumps.

(d) ♠ AJ642
♥ A5
♦ J6
♣ K1053

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	2♥	?

2♠. This is not a 3♠ bid. You have too much outside the black suits and not enough inside. 3♠ would show something like

♠ AQJ62
♥ 5
♦ J6
♣ K7542

You have to suppress your club fit for the moment while you explore the right game.

(e) ♠ 64
♥ KJ53
♦ A1062
♣ Q53

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	?

Double (negative). It depends a bit on your system. If you don't normally open 1♦ with 4-4 in the red suits, there's a strong case for 2♠ (limit raise in diamonds). Otherwise you must look for the possible heart fit.

d) One-major - double

Beyond the level of the simple raise (2♥ / 2♠), our recommendations are simple:

2NT is a (neutral) four-card (plus) raise; limit or better (with slightly *lower* minimum strength than over an overcall).

All jumps in new suits are *fit-showing*.

A direct bid of *three-major* is *preemptive* (with a *lower* range - that is, more preemptive - than over an overcall).

Below (and at) the raise to two-major, we suggest a little more 'science'. Consider, you are never more likely to hold support for opener than in this sequence, where RHO is usually short in partner's suit. And it is important to be able to show and distinguish the various support hands you may hold. You will only get one chance and you don't want to leave partner guessing over LHO's bid.

In short, what we recommend is that you use some bid to show a forcing raise without sufficient trumps for the three-level (that doesn't want to redouble). The bid is only forcing to 2♥ / 2♠ and thus has a lower limit of a fair seven-count. This, in turn, frees a direct bid of two-major to show a *preemptive raise to the two-level*. (The number of trumps you need for these bids will obviously depend on what system you play).

There are basically two options:

(1) Nominate a bid to show the forcing raise, sacrificing the 'natural' meaning of this bid. (Many Americans follow Marty Bergen in using 2♣).

(2) Use transfers from 1NT to the bid below the raise. (For example, over 1♠-(dble)-?, 2♣ would show a diamond suit, no spade fit and would not be forcing beyond 2♦). These methods mean sacrificing a natural 1NT bid. Now 2♦ (over 1♥-(dble)-?), or 2♥ (over 1♠-(dble)-?) shows the good raise.

In either event, the artificial forcing raise is unlimited in strength, but tends to guarantee a specific number of trumps (three in (s.1) and (s.2), four in (s.3)).

Some examples, using method 2 above, which we prefer:

(a) ♠ AQ106
♥ J53
♦ Q64
♣ Q95

Game	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♥	dble	?

Redouble. No need to hurry. Your opponents aren't going anywhere. You can show support later if you want. Meanwhile, if partner wishes to penalize the opponents, you will be overjoyed. If later you do show your support (as is likely), you will have also shown (by this route) your poor shape and low ODR. This is a rare hand, where it is right to redouble even playing (s.1) - your ODR should be really low to redouble opposite a five-card major with three-card support.

(b) ♠ 6
♥ Q9753
♦ KJ1094
♣ 73

Love	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♥	dble	?

4♦. Partner will not expect any defense for this bid, and you must put maximum pressure on the enemy.

(c) ♠ QJ64
♥ 7
♦ K1062
♣ 7542

Love	West	North	East	South
all	-	1♠	dble	?

3♠. It is imperative to cut out the heart suit, and you must preempt even playing (s.3).

(d) ♠ A6
♥ AJ5
♦ K8642
♣ 753

N/S	West	North	East	South
vuln.	-	1♥	dble	?

2♦ (transfer). This is a hand on which a lot of people go wrong. There is no point in redoubling. Opponents are sure to be able to escape unhurt, and might do a lot worse (for you). If the auction continues

	West	North	East	South
	-	1♥	dble	redble
	2♠	pass	pass	?

or

	West	North	East	South
	-	1♥	dble	redble
	2♠	pass	3♠	?

- which is hardly a shock - you may have lost valuable space. In (s.3) you will have to redouble or show your diamonds, forcing.

(e) ♠ KJ6
♥ 53
♦ J964
♣ 7542

E/W	West	North	East	South
vuln.	-	1♠	dble	?

2♠. This is one good reason to play these methods. Probably right even in (s.3), though

♠ A1064
♥ 75
♦ J642
♣ 753

would be more normal. Keep the pressure on West, and don't give him an easy chance to tell East what the right lead is.

(f) ♠ Q64
♥ J753
♦ KQ6
♣ Q105

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	dble	?

2♦. With such a paltry ODR, it is right (exceptionally) to conceal your fourth trump, even opposite a five-card major. Apart from anything else, 2♥ could well be your last making spot, with nothing on for the opponents.

e) One-minor - double

Unlike after an overcall, you should not be shy about supporting partner's minor suit over a double. First, game is much less likely for your side; secondly, preemption is important; thirdly, partner will more often have a fair suit if RHO is short. Again, you could use 2♣ to show a sound diamond raise, but it is best to play 1NT as natural. Otherwise, much as above.

Three quick examples:

(a) ♠ 64
♥ J53
♦ K1062
♣ J753

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	dble	?

3♦ if your opening promises four cards; 2♦ if it doesn't.

(b) ♠ A64
♥ 75
♦ AJ62
♣ Q1053

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	dble	?

2NT if 1♣ showed four; redouble if 1♣ could have been a short suit.

(c) ♠ J6
♥ KQ985
♦ K1064
♣ 73

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	dble	?

2♥. What else?

f) One-major - one no-trump

The main thing to say here is that you should not be over-eager to defend 1NT or 1NT doubled with reasonable support for partner. Say you hold at Love all

♠ 106
♥ K1053
♦ KJ6
♣ Q753

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1NT	?

The dangers of doubling are two-fold. First, you may find you only get it one off, or even that it makes, while you could have made 2♥ or 3♥ - particularly if you find the wrong lead. Secondly, and perhaps more likely, the auction may well proceed

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1NT	dble
2♠	dble	pass	?

Now what? 2♠ doubled may go down, but how many? It might well be one off against 3♥, or two off against a cold game. Wouldn't you be better placed if you had shown a fair raise in hearts? *Now* if partner doubles 2♠, you can pass with a healthy appetite.

Again we recommend that you employ certain bids to help you describe different kinds of support. One scheme that concentrates entirely on the majors seems sensible to us:

West	North	East	South
-	1♥ / ♠	1NT	?

– 2♣: both majors; say 5-3 with five cards in the unbid major; you may have only a doubleton honour in partner's suit playing five-card majors;

– 2♦: sound raise to two-major (plus);

– 2♥ / 2♠ (partner's suit): preemptive; up to a poor 7 HCP;

– 2♥ / 2♠ (new major) : natural, no fit; non-forcing.

Otherwise, much as before. Jumps in new suits are fit-showing, and jumps to three- or four-major are pre-emptive. Examples seem unnecessary, although here is one for the 2♣ bid, at 'green' over

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1NT	?

♠ Q10964
♥ J53
♦ 64
♣ J107

(obviously a minimum!)

g) One-major - 2NT (unusual)

It is common for players, even at rubber bridge, to use a direct 2NT overcall to show the lowest two unbid suits. Moreover, it is a bid that appears irresistible to its practitioners, often on unsuitable hands - so it is well to be prepared. The methods we suggest are in tune with the theory of previous pages, though (for a change) they are neither original nor uncommon. The 'standard' defense seems quite acceptable. It is

West	North	East	South
-	1♥ / ♠	2NT	?

– 3♣: game-forcing hand with no fit and a good five-card (plus) suit in the unbid major;

– 3♦: high-card raise of partner's major (limit or better);

– 3 partner's major: competitive (up to 8 HCP);

– 3 unbid major: natural, constructive, but non-forcing;

– 4♣ / 4♦: splinter-jump, agreeing partner's major.

h) One-major - cue-bid (Michaels): 'fit non-jumps'

It is almost as common these days to find pairs playing some convention like 'Michaels', whereby a direct cue-bid (as an overcall) shows a two-suiter. Again, those who have it in their armoury seem concerned that it might grow rusty through disuse - so you must not get caught out by them.

Over 1♥ / 1♠ the cue-bid is usually played to show a two-suiter with the other major and an *unspecified* minor (we would recommend you play it as showing a *specific* two-suiter). In such auctions (involving two-suited bids where one suit is unknown) it is often the first partnership who can gauge their *second-suit fit*, or misfit, who will come out 'on top'. That is why we feel it is important that responder should be able to describe his support (when support he has) as accurately as possible. For only thus can he really make his partner 'boss' of the auction.

So often auctions go something like

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♥	3♥	4♠	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♥	4♥	4♠	?

and either you or your partner is guessing. Whether to bid on, if opponents have a fair two-suit fit? Or to pass / double, if they haven't?

We should like at this point to introduce a new concept to help solve this now-familiar problem. It is really nothing more than an extension of the logic behind fit-showing jumps, and it will be very useful when we are the overcalling side. Consider: you hold

♠ 64
♥ KJ5
♦ 1064
♣ AQ1073

At 'red', your partner opens 1♥ (five-card suit) and RHO overcalls 2♥, Michaels. You are not strong enough offensively for 4♣, so you bid 2♠ to show a high-card raise. LHO bids 4♠, and your partner holds

♠ 75
♥ AQ642
♦ A5
♣ KJ82

Recognize the problem? If he doubles (as likely), he might well swing -1240! and will certainly swing -550. Of course, if he bids 5♥ blindly, the gods will 'reward' him much more often with

♠ 64
♥ KJ5
♦ KQ1064
♣ 1073

as a dummy. Yuck!

The solution is (on grounds of frequency) that you must use 3♣ and 3♦ as *fit-showing bids*, just as though they were jumps.

Rather uninventively we shall refer to such bids as 'Fit Non-Jumps' (FNJs). They show an offensive raise to the three-level (although they can be made at higher levels) with the suit bid.

And what do you do with a good hand, no fit and a club or diamond suit? The answer is either to double, or to use 2NT as an artificial bid showing a single-suited club or diamond hand.

Fit non-jumps by a passed hand

Another use for FNJs, that is obvious when you think about it, is by a passed hand at the three level or beyond.

Consider the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	1♠	2♥	3♣

What does 3♣ show? A good single-suited hand, strong enough to introduce at the three level opposite a third-in-hand opening with a fit for partner, but not good enough to open?! The hand just doesn't exist - or shouldn't.

Far better to use the bid to show a raise to 3♠ with a club suit - in other words, as a FNJ. For you might well hold something like

♠ Q1064
♥ 53
♦ J6
♣ AQ1085

Moreover, it is unwise to stretch to 4♣ on these hands. Remember, partner does not always have a sound opening third-in-hand.

Setting up a forcing pass as responder

Do you remember an auction from chapter 1 that went, at 'red'

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
3♣	4♦	5♣	?

We said that opener might be unsure of whether to double or to press on, if he held something like

♠ AQ10753
♥ KQ96
♦ 105
♣ 4

and we suggested that a solution to opener's problem involved use of a 'forcing pass'.

What is a forcing pass?

Now, forcing passes crop up in many different situations, and different criteria apply in each. Here we are talking about *auctions where responder shows a forcing raise in partner's suit*. This is the simplest type of forcing pass situation - our side has found a good fit, and has decided on the balance of probabilities that *it will be wrong to allow our opponents to buy the contract undoubled*. In other words, by defining certain auctions as 'setting up a forcing pass', we mean that if our opponents bid subsequently, *we must either outbid them or double them*. A pass directly over their bid - which does neither - is therefore forcing on partner to do something. It is an expression of doubt: 'should we bid on, or double?'

Avoiding embarrassment

So how do we create such a context in support auctions? The first thing to say is that average-to-good players seem to have just as many disasters using the forcing pass in this situation as they have triumphs. Many times we have seen a partnership pass out their opponents in some undoubled sacrifice, when they should have double them, and heard the inevitable refrain: 'I thought my pass was forcing'. Even more often, a sacrifice appears to goad players into taking a silly 'push' to the five level because 'I thought *your* pass was forcing'.

Secondly, many partnerships use the forcing pass too often. It is not uncommon to see someone hold lengthy counsel with himself about whether he should concede -790 or -800. Of course, if he had been able to pass out his opponents, he would only have conceded -620; but unfortunately 'partner's pass was forcing'.

It is very important you do not allow yourself to be embarrassed in such ways. Most importantly, you and your partners must agree (and remember!) which auctions set up a forcing pass. Also, in deciding this issue, you must recognize that you are trying to achieve a *balance* between two conflicting requirements. The first is the additional flexibility that setting up a forcing pass will give you if the opponents bid again when it is your hand. The second is the increased restrictiveness that setting up a forcing pass will place on the bids that do so. That is to say, you cannot be so free and aggressive with support bids that accurately describe your hand-type, if those bids set up a forcing pass.

This last point is so important that it merits illustration before we establish our guidelines. You hold

♠ 64
♥ KJ53
♦ KQ1096
♣ 75

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♠	?

You have a perfect 4♦ bid - very descriptive, and nicely preemptive. It is irrelevant that you don't quite have the offence for the four level nor much defensive strength. If the auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♠	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	?

you will pass with an easy mind. But this is precisely what you *cannot* do if opener's pass over 4♠ was forcing! In fact, if you have agreed to play methods whereby 4♦ will set up a forcing pass over West's 4♠ bid, it is very dangerous to bid 4♦ on this hand. Instead you may have to suppress the diamond suit and bid either 2NT (four-card raise) or 4♥ (preemptive). If you *do* bid 4♦ on this hand when it sets up a forcing pass, it is not at all unlikely that your partner will be forced to double 4♠ when it may well make. For if partner has some rubbish like

♠ K5
♥ AQ642
♦ J7
♣ QJ42

he will double in front of you to stop you bidding on - and that will probably be -590/-790. Which is better than the alternative of bidding 5♥ and conceding 500 or 800 against a game that might well *not* have made!

The message is simple: if a bid sets up a forcing pass, it often has to be *stronger* than might otherwise be required. And that means that *your opportunities to make bids descriptive of your hand-type will be restricted*.

Of course, there is an 'upside' to creating forcing pass auctions (that is why we spoke of a 'balanced'), but it is generally the 'downside' that gets ignored by reasonable players.

Sensible rules

Certain stipulations should be self-evident. For example, preemptive bids obviously shouldn't create forcing pass auctions. Conversely, bids that show a lot of high-card strength should. There are some support bids, however that *usually but do not always* contain sufficient strength to set up a forcing pass. In this category are fit-jumps, splinter-jumps and invitational high-card raises.

In order to work out an effective compromise, we must discover when a forcing pass is most useful (or least handicapping). The answer is refreshingly simple: *when we are at 'red'*. It is at this vulnerability that (a) we are least free and aggressive ourselves; (b) our opponents are most likely to compete violently; and (c) we will most often have an awkward decision at the five level. At other vulnerabilities it is not a disaster to double for two or three off if you are uncertain whether your own five-level contract will make (at least at rubber bridge or IMPs).

One other relevant consideration is the level your opponents have bid to. Let us look at these two auctions:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♣	2NT	5♣	?

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2NT	4♠	?

2NT showed a limit raise or better with four (plus) hearts. Now, an opening bid facing a fairly balanced limit raise rates to be worth three defensive tricks a sufficiently huge percentage of the time to make it sensible for auction (1) to set up a forcing pass. Auction (2) is not so obvious, however, and - erring on the side of caution, perhaps - we shall recommend that opener's pass of 4♠ in auction (2) is *not forcing*.

Incidentally, this consideration of relative suit-rank is often relevant to responder's choice of bid when he is worried about setting up a forcing pass on borderline hands. The following example should make clear what we are talking about. You hold

♠ KJ64
♥ 75
♦ KQ1096
♣ 73

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♥	?

Say 4♦ does set up a forcing pass. You would probably still make this very descriptive bid and hope that if the opponents compete to 5♥, partner will have enough to enable your side to beat the contract. But what if, instead, you hold

♠ 75
♥ KJ64
♦ KQ1096
♣ 73

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♠	?

This time setting up a forcing pass by bidding 4♦ is most unsafe (as we saw above). For the opponents can out-rank you at the four level - and four defensive tricks is a much tougher target than three. In fact, rather than set up a forcing pass on this second auction, it may be better (as we suggested) to play safe with a 2NT or 4♥ bid.

Bearing all this in mind, we recommend the following scheme. Remember, though, it is only a suggestion; what is most important is that you and your partners are agreed upon and happy with what you play.

(1) A *natural raise* to any level NEVER sets up a forcing pass.

(2) A *fit-jump or splinter-jump* only sets up a forcing pass if you are at 'red' and are raising to the four level (or higher)

(3) A *cue-bid* in the opponents' suit showing a high-card raise sets up a forcing pass if you are raising to the four level.

(4) A *bid showing 'limit or better' values* creates a forcing pass if and only if opponents bid to the *five level* (or higher).

(N.B. for the purposes of (2) and (3) 'raising to the four level' means making a bid that is beyond three of the agreed trump suit - including, say, 1♣-(1♥)-3♥ or 1♥-(2♠)-3♠.)

Using the methods above, decide whether the final pass is forcing in the following auctions (answers at the end):

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2♠	4♠	pass

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♠	3♠	4♠	pass

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	3♠	4♠	pass

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
3♠	4♥	4♠	pass

(5)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♣	3♦	5♣	pass

(6)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♣	4♦	5♣	pass

(7)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	3♥	4♠	pass

(8)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♦	2NT	4♠	pass

(9)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♦	2NT	4♦	4♠
5♦	pass		

Answers:

(1) Not forcing; 2♠ only sets up a forcing pass if the enemy bid to the five level.

(2) Forcing; 3♠ sets up a forcing pass over any enemy action.

(3) Forcing on at ‘red’, as any splinter-jump to the four level.

(4) Not forcing; direct raises *never* set up a forcing pass.

(5) Not forcing; since the fit-jump was only to the three-level.

(6) Forcing only at ‘red’ (compare example 3).

(7) Forcing only at ‘red’; 3♥ is a fit-jump to the *four* level, since it commits your side to at least 4♦ (or 3NT).

(8) Not forcing; it is the level your *opponents* bid to in these auctions that matters. Here they have only bid to the four level.

(9) Forcing; 2NT sets up a forcing pass if the enemy compete to the five level, even if it takes them two bids to get there. (Note, opener's pass over 4♦ would not have been forcing.)

The forcing pass in action

First we shall look at opener's actions when his partner has set up a forcing pass and his RHO has butted in again. For the following examples you are opener, at red on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♠	4♣	4♠	?

(a) ♠ KQ
♥ A10642
♦ K1075
♣ 62

Double. Maybe *four* hearts wasn't making! You certainly don't want to encourage partner to bid on to 5♥, *which is precisely what pass from you would do*. Remember, the more minimum you are offensively, the *less* inclined to pass you should be.

(b) ♠ J75
♥ AJ642
♦ AQ105
♣ 2

Double. 5♥ might well make, but who cares?! The hand is a bit of a misfit, your defense is enormous and if 5♥ was due to make, 4♠ doubled will be extremely ugly for your opponents.

(c) ♠ 75
♥ AQ1042
♦ AQ5
♣ J64

Pass. This is the ideal time to 'pass the buck'. Your offence is good, but not excellent; and you defense is respectable, but limited. You hope partner can bid 5♥, but you will settle for 4♠ doubled if he has something like

♠ 64
♥ KJ75
♦ 102
♣ AQ985

(d) ♠ 5
♥ AJ1062
♦ K53
♣ QJ64

5♥. This might not make; but if it doesn't, 4♠ (or 5♠) will be cold. *Always bid on with an excellent double fit*.

(e) ♠ 7
♥ AJ642
♦ A753
♣ K64

5♦. It must be right to bid, and you are a bit too strong for 5♥ (see the last example). You want partner to bid a slam with

♠ 642
♥ KQ53
♦ 2
♣ AQ753

but not anything less. As we shall see below, your 5♦ bid in this auction is a fairly mild slam try.

Just for a change, a new auction, also at 'red':

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
3♣	4♣	5♣	?

(f) ♠ A642
♥ AJ1053
♦ A62
♣ 5

Pass. You might think that you are too strong to accept defending 5♣ doubled for two or three off. But remember, partner might well have stretched to bid 4♣ on a fairly balanced 11-count. If you are facing, say,

♠ KJ5
♥ KQ64
♦ Q1053
♣ 62

it is far better to 'take the money'.

Now we return to responder, who has set up a forcing pass auction and then heard his LHO bid. Before we consider what responder should do opposite a forcing pass, it is important to note that he might also want to bid opposite a double. Remember, opener's double is not 'penalties'. It need contain no crushing defense, only a disinclination to bid on. Consider holding

♠ K10642
♥ 532
♦ AQJ64
♣ -

on the auction, at 'red'

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	pass	pass	?

You might be doing the wrong thing, but it is surely with the odds to bid 5♠. Your offence is huge and your defense slight. If your opponents were overbidding wildly and partner has diamond shortage and a couple of trump tricks against 5♣ doubled, you could well end up looking silly. But far more likely is that 5♣ doubled is going one or two off, while 5♠ (or even 6♠) is an easy make.

It is not that you are 'overruling' partner - for you have not yet really been able to make him boss of the auction. The point is that you have so far only shown the offence for the four level, whereas in fact you have the offence for the *five level*. (You wouldn't bid to the five level *directly*, over 3♣, since often you will only make ten tricks, while your opponents will be unable to compete the hand further!)

If opener *passes* (forcing), you are much better placed. Now you have been invited to exercise your judgement, and a good bridge player should always be happy in such a situation. But, *remember what you have shown already*. You are only being asked to bid on with *extra* offence.

If you have a minimum offensive hand, you must double - *however unimpressive your defensive values are*. If your offence is reasonably good (though not marvellous), you should refer to your ODR. If this is high - *bid*. If it is low, take the path of least resistance - and *double*. If you have an excellent offensive hand, you will move confidently toward slam.

Some examples:

(a) ♠ KJ64
♥ J5
♦ AQ1064
♣ 53

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	pass	pass	?

Double. Your offence is little above minimum. You would expect 5♠ to make some of the time, but why take a chance? Your ODR is low (for a 4♦ bid) and, if 5♠ is making, 5♣ doubled should go about three off. Consider: if 5♣ doubled is three off, you need odds of better than four to one (at aggregate) before it is right to bid.

(b) ♠ KJ642
♥ 53
♦ 6
♣ AJ1095

N/S vuln.	West	North	East	South
	-	1♠	2♦	4♣
	5♦	pass	pass	?

5♠. Clear. Your offence is good, but not exceptional. Your ODR, however, is very high. 5♠ will almost certainly make; and if it doesn't, 5♦ will come close.

(c) ♠ KJ106
♥ KQJ98
♦ 4
♣ 753

N/S vuln.	West	North	East	South
	-	1♠	3♦	4♥
	5♦	pass	pass	?

Double. Yes, you are sweating. Your defense to 5♦ is far from great. But you made a decision when you bid 4♥. You can't go back on it now. You are a minimum offensively and if you bid 5♠, it will probably go down. Partner may well have 5♦ off in his own hand. Perhaps you'd like to pass, but that is the way to lose partners. If you're that unhappy, you should have bid 4♠ on the last round. You knew what might happen.

(d) ♠ AJ64
♥ A5
♦ K742
♣ 753

N/S vuln.	West	North	East	South
	-	1♠	2♣	2NT
	5♣	pass	pass	?

5♥. No way you are stopping below slam now that partner has made a forcing pass. If you hear partner cue-bid 6♣, you will try 6♦ -

♠ K98753
♥ K642
♦ AQ5
♣ -

is enough for the grand.

(e) ♠ QJ6
♥ K753
♦ A64
♣ K85

Love all	West	North	East	South
	-	1♥	3♦	4♦
	5♦	pass	pass	?

Double. Of course 5♥ will make, and 6♥ may well be on. But you are very cramped for space to manoeuvre. Better not to guess, for 5♦ doubled will be carnage on the lead of ace and a trump. We expect +800, but will only be happy with +1100. (Don't assume your opponents can't be overbidding - unless you know them!).

Finally, what about this? As responder, at 'red', you hear

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♦	3♠
5♦	pass	pass	dble
pass	5♥!	pass	?

Partner's pass over 5♦ was forcing. He wanted to hear your decision. He heard it, and now he seems to have overruled it. Has he changed his mind? No. Nor is it a lack of faith in your judgement. He's trying to tell you something. He's saying he has a *maximum 5♥ bid* and will be happy if you can bid a slam.

It is an example of something called the *Principle of Fast Arrival (PFA)*. This says that: *in fit auctions, if there are two ways of bidding to a certain spot, the slower route shows extra values.* (We shall meet this again in future chapters.)

As for the example above, consider holding on the auction, again 'at red'

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♦	3♠	5♦	?

(a) ♠ KJ7
♥ KQ10642
♦ 5
♣ J62

(b) ♠ Q75
♥ AJ10642
♦ 5
♣ A62

On hand (a) you want to bid 5♥ because of your good double fit and high ODR - you are not optimistic of slam. On (b), however, you are reasonably confident 5♥ will make and are keen to encourage partner to bid on. The solution is to bid 5♥ *directly* on hand (a); and to *pass* forcing with hand (b). If partner *doubles* opposite your pass (as you expect), you will pull to 5♥ to show this sort of hand. (If he bids 5♥ himself, you will raise to 6♥.)

The same principle applies to the following pair of auctions

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
3♣	4♣	5♣	5♦

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
3♣	4♣	5♣	pass
pass	dble	pass	5♦

This time opener is slam interested on each occasion. The difference? The second auction shows an even stronger hand. Suppose, as opener, you hold

(a) ♠ KQ753
♥ A6
♦ AJ753
♣ 4

(b) ♠ KQ753
♥ A6
♦ AQ1075
♣ 4

On hand (a) a direct 5♦ seems perfect. So, with hand (b), a forcing pass to be followed with 5♦ over partner's (assumed) double is the right action.

And lastly, what do you make of this auction, again at 'red'?

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	pass	pass	dble
pass	5♠!		

Obviously partner is slammy (on PFA principles). But you might be thinking: 'Well, if partner's so keen on slam, why didn't he bid 5♦ or 5♥?' Quite so. Don't be quick to dismiss your toiling partner - assume he has his reasons. It's obvious when you apply your mind to it: he must have excellent holdings in the black suits, but is missing the red aces and the king of diamonds. If your hand is

♠ Q1064
♥ Q5
♦ AK1094
♣ 53

you had a clear double on the previous round. Now you have an equally clear 6♠ bid. Partner will have something like

♠ AK7532
♥ KJ64
♦ Q73
♣ -

Of course, if instead your hand is, say,

♠ QJ64
♥ 53
♦ KJ1094
♣ A5

you will pass and hope for the best.

We overcall

Finally we have moved round the table. This time the opponents got in the first blow, but partner has been able to show a suit by overcalling. Believe it or not, it is now *even more* important to show our support immediately and descriptively.

The reasons are easily stated. First, partner nearly always has a good suit to overcall and is much more likely to be one-suited than when he opens the bidding. One corollary of this is that you should be far more eager to raise partner's *minor-suit overcall*, than you were his minor-suit opening.

Secondly, your opponents will rarely go quietly. Bridge players do not like starting an auction only to see it taken over by the enemy. You will need to describe your hand as quickly and accurately as possible for your partner, if he is to do the right thing under the pressure to which he will usually be subjected.

Thirdly, you must often give thought to the problems your partner may face on opening lead.

If your RHO passes, the situation is not so dire. If your RHO bids, however, you are suddenly part of a battle - a struggle to be *the first side on which one of the players can accurately express the degree and type of his support*. That is to say, your basic aim as the overcalling side is a competitive auction is no different from when you are the opening side - *to ensure that your side does not take the last guess.* And the way to achieve this is (as before) to make your partner *boss of the auction*, by quickly getting across a 'complete' picture of the degree and type of your support.

Consider how limited your opponents are

Often what you bid must be predicated on how successful the enemy, and especially RHO (responder), has been in describing their hands. Sometimes the battle is already almost lost by the time you get to bid - and the more nearly your opponents play the methods we have been advocating for responder, the more often this will be the case.

If one of the opponents has been able to give a fairly 'complete' picture of his hand, then (a) you have less to gain in terms of preemption; and (b) the risks of being punished for overaggression are greater. If, on the other hand, neither opponent really knows what his partner has got, you have a great opportunity to mess things up for them and the risks are small. *Refusing to take advantage of such situations is simply 'losing bridge'.*

Usually the critical bid is your RHO's, but you must not ignore the opening bid. To take an extreme example: if LHO opens 1NT and the auction continues something like

West	North	East	South
1NT	2♥	2♠	?

there is every reason to act with caution. By opening 1NT your LHO has already made his partner 'boss of the auction' and you will ignore that fact at your peril. Similar considerations apply if the opening bid is, say, a 'Precision' 1♥ / 1♠ (showing 10-15 HCP and a five-card suit).

At the other end of the spectrum are opening bids like a strong 2♣ or strong 1♣; closely followed by a nebulous, 'natural' 1♣ opening, playing a five-card major system.

Generally, however, the opening bid is sufficiently ambiguous as to strength and distribution for it not to cause you overmuch concern. It is responder's (RHO's) bid that will usually determine how aggressive or timid you should be.

If, for example, the auction begins (1♦)-1♥-(1NT)-?, (1♦)-1♥-(3♦[preemptive raise])-?, (1♦)-1♥-(2♠[fit-raise])-?, etc., etc... you must act with discretion. Opener will not often do the wrong thing opposite such a descriptive bid and you should content yourself with bidding only what you are confident you are worth.

This is not to say you should be lazy - only cautious. Say the auction starts

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	3♣	?

where 3♣ showed a raise to 3♥ with a club suit. At the moment West (the opener) is boss of the auction. What if you now have a chance to show a raise in spades with a diamond suit? Should you bother? Emphatically, *yes*! West already knows whether the hand is a double fit or not. What you must do is to put *your* partner in the same happy position. Then there will be two 'bosses', and one of them will be on your side. (Incidentally, there is a way of gaining security on such auctions, to provide against the hand being a bad misfit outside the trump suits - see below.)

On the other hand, the auction may start (1♦)-1♥-(dble[negative])-?, (1♦)-1♥-(1♠)-?, (1♦)-1♥-(pass)-?, (1♦)-1♥-(2♣)-?, etc., etc... All of these are situations where it will pay you to be aggressive in describing your hand, since your RHO has not yet given the opening bidder anything like a complete picture of his hand. And you must be equally bold and imaginative in providing yourself with the tools to exploit these situations. If this means sacrificing time-honoured natural bids in order to cater for much more common hands with support - so be it.

Finally, you must often consider the lead. Many auctions will indicate a strong possibility (or a near certainty) that your partner will be on lead when the smoke has cleared. You must always be alert to the likelihood of this happening. And *you must bid accordingly*. You may have to stretch to show support when you are not really worth it, simply to let partner know he can lead his suit. Conversely, it may be right to suppress biddable support, lest you steer your partner toward the wrong lead. More frequently still, you will have to strain to show your side-suit values as you support partner.

Say you hold

♠ 64
♥ J95
♦ KQJ2
♣ 7543

on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

Certainly you are worth a raise to 3♥, but it is probably better to pass than bid 3♥. Consider: what will happen most of the time if you bid 3♥? Partner will end up on lead to 3♠, 4♠ or 4♠ doubled and he will likely lead a heart. This might be from, say, AQxxx. Even a lead from KQ10xxx could be wrong. *You know it is right for him to lead a diamond and you should either tell him that (see below) or shut up.*

This time it is *you* who are on lead. You hold as the overcaller

♠ QJ753
♥ A6
♦ 53
♣ KQ104

on the auction, at Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	1♠
2♦	pass	2NT	pass
3NT	pass	pass	pass

The king of clubs feels right. Partner may have Jxxxx and the opponents only eight top tricks. More likely, perhaps, partner will have Jxx(x) and the king of diamonds, say. A few seconds later you feel like an idiot, for the full hand was:

	♠ K64 ♥ 10953 ♦ J62 ♣ 753	
♠ 98 ♥ J2 ♦ AKQ107 ♣ J986	N W E S	♠ A102 ♥ KQ874 ♦ 984 ♣ A2
	♠ QJ753 ♥ A6 ♦ 53 ♣ KQ104	

'Well, how was I to know?', you ask plaintively.

'I suppose I should have bid 2♠?!' partner comments with heavy irony. Time for the next hand.

But the answer is: *yes*! In that position, 2♠ from partner is not an attempt to buy the contract; it is simply a *bid for the lead*. Both you and your partner know you are heavily outgunned on the hand, and the overcaller should not compete further without huge extra offence.

In short, when responding to an overcall, you must bend over backwards to help partner out with the lead when appropriate. The benefits will be enormous and will far outweigh the risks.

And so, to cases.

RHO passes

You are not under great pressure yet. If you have fine support, however, you cannot be sure the enemy do not also have a good (concealed) fit, and LHO might have a strong offensive hand. Generally, *it is when your opponents have not yet found a fit you are reasonably certain they must have, that you must put on maximum pressure.* With good support, then, you should aim at quick, accurate description of your hand.

Some example auctions:

(1)

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	pass	?

– 2♣: sound three-card raise (or four-card with low ODR);

– 2♠: weak raise (as above, up to 9 HCP);

– 2NT: good four-card limit raise or better (cf. 1♠-(2♣)-2NT);

– 3♣: 'mixed' four-card raise;

– 3♠: preemptive four-card (plus) raise;

– 3♦ /3♥ /4♦ /4♥: fit-jumps;

– 4♣: splinter-jump.

e.g.

Love all

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	pass	?

(a) ♠ KJ7
♥ A64
♦ Q7543
♣ 62

2♣. Down-the-middle. You will pass partner's 2♠ bid.

(b) ♠ K73
♥ A642
♦ J753
♣ 42

2♠. Near a maximum for the bid, which has a higher upper-limit than 1♠-(dble)-2♠.

(c) ♠ Q753
♥ Q64
♦ KJ5
♣ K62

2♣. Your ODR is too low for 2NT. Again, you should pass 2♠.

(d) ♠ K1073
♥ 64
♦ A7543
♣ 62

3♣. A classic mixed raise: nice shape, good ODR, too strong for 3♠, too weak for 2NT. 3♦ (fit-jump) would be wrong on such an empty suit, when it is likely to be your side's hand (and when you probably wouldn't want a diamond lead).

(e) ♠ AQ7
♥ J6
♦ AQ1073
♣ 642

2♣. You should not generally fit-jump opposite a one-level overcall on these auctions with only three trumps. You will have time to bid 3♦ later, and that is probably what you should do if partner simply rebids 2♠.

(f) ♠ 753
♥ 8642
♦ AQ753
♣ 2

2♠. Remember, you must not suppress support on what is very probably your hand. Even if you play 2♦ as forcing, it is wrong.

(g) ♠ 753
♥ KJ6
♦ Q1075
♣ Q42

Pass. You will almost never miss a game, and your RHO might be waiting to pass out a double. Your ODR is miniscule. If the queen of clubs were the king, you might try 1NT. If your hearts and spades were reversed, however, it is a clear 2♠ bid.

(h) ♠ KJ75
♥ 6
♦ J10753
♣ 642

3♠. Someone has a lot of hearts, and it isn't your side. If you go down a trick, it will probably be an even better result than if you make it!

(i) ♠ A753
♥ KJ62
♦ J73
♣ A4

2NT. Opposite each other we would not quite insist on game, but maybe your overcalling style is different.

(j) ♠ KQ75
♥ K64
♦ A7532
♣ 8

4♣. Is anything more descriptive?

(k) ♠ QJ75
♥ KQ1086
♦ Q7
♣ 64

3♥. What else?

(2)

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♣	pass	?

- 2♠: high-card raise;
- 2NT: natural, invitational; usually based on some sort of fit;
- 3♣: offensive raise, weaker than 2♠;
- 3♦ / 3♥: fit-jumps;
- 3♠: splinter-jump.

e.g.

Game all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♣	pass	?

(a) ♠ KJ7
♥ Q642
♦ J75
♣ K62

2NT. Your red-suit values are just too 'soft' for 3NT - which would be right with, say

♠ KJ7
♥ A642
♦ 753
♣ K62

(b) ♠ 75
♥ K642
♦ 10753
♣ Q62

3♣. You cannot crime a pass, but 3♣ may be an effective preemptive bid. Also partner can be fairly strong - 3NT will be excellent opposite

♠ A64
♥ A3
♦ J2
♣ AJ10753

And that is not nearly the best hand he might hold.

(c) ♠ 7543
♥ A62
♦ J73
♣ K42

2♠. Opposite a vulnerable two-level overcall, this hand is worth a show of strength - though it is minimum for the bid.

(d) ♠ 7543
♥ Q642
♦ K73
♣ A4

2♠. Generally, you can play partner's two-level overcalls for six cards, particularly in the minor suits. You cannot afford to pass, and any other action is wrong.

(e) ♠ 73
♥ AJ964
♦ J73
♣ K42

2♥ (forcing). You must not suppress this fine heart suit, and your are not suitable / good enough offensively for 3♥.

Time to extract a few 'rules' to cover auctions where partner has overcalled and RHO passes:

(1) Direct raises are always fairly weak / preemptive.

(2) All non-game jumps into new suits show fits (as well as a jump to 4♥ opposite a 1♠ overcall, or to 5♣ opposite a diamond overcall).

(3) The cheapest cue-bid always shows a sound raise. Opposite a one-level overcall it denies four trumps with a fair ODR.

(4) A jump-cue to the three-level shows a mixed four-card (plus) raise - including (1♣)-1♦-(pass)-3♣.

(5) 2NT is natural, except that opposite a 1♥ / 1♠ overcall it shows a 'limit raise or better' with four trumps - much as opposite a 1♥ / 1♠ *opening*.

(6) A jump-cue to the four-level (including, say, (1♠)-2♦-(pass)-3♠) is a splinter-jump.

RHO doubles, negative

Now it is even more important to show support, and as descriptively as possible. Your opponents are bound to want to bid again. They haven't yet found a fit (or not so that they both know), and (generally) you must keep the pressure on. Also it is in this auction as much as any other that you must consider the *lead*. Unless you are quite strong, partner is going to end up on lead a great deal of the time. It is up to you to ensure you give him all the help you can.

You may think we have harnessed every available bid to the cause. Not so. With the lead in mind, we should like to recommend playing the 'Rosenkranz redouble' at the one level. This bid simply says 'Lead your suit, I have a top honour (ace, king, or queen), but not enough to support you.'

Also two further 'rules' suggestions:

(7) After a negative double of a two-level overcall, 2NT shows a *mixed raise* (a direct raise being preemptive).

(8) If RHO doubles a two-level overcall negatively, *any three-level bid in a new suit is fit-showing, even if it is not a jump.* Welcome to FNJs again.

Thus for example,

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	dble	3♣

shows a raise to 3♥ with a club suit/values.

What do you do with no fit and a good club suit? Forget it for the moment - it is more important and much more frequent that you want to support partner's two-level overcall. Remember, unless someone is lying, you will rarely have enough values anyway without a fit to bid a suit your RHO has shown (inferentially). And in supporting partner the advantages of being able to bid your side-suit values are enormous - both in helping partner to compete the hand and in directing him to the right lead.

Some examples:

(a) ♠ K7
♥ J642
♦ K73
♣ 8642

Love all

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	dble	?

Redouble. Take the pressure off partner on lead. Almost nothing will gain you more gratitude... or points.

(b) ♠ J75
♥ 64
♦ AQ103
♣ 8642

Love all

West	North	East	South
2♣[1]	2♠	dble	?

[1] Precision

3♦ (FNJ). Descriptive, elegant, correct.

(c) ♠ J753
♥ 62
♦ J73
♣ J642

Love all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	dble	?

3♦. Why bid with three points? Especially three jacks? And particularly when it is likely the opponents have already located a heart fit?

Be wary of people who argue like this - they play bridge as a pure science, not to win. With this hand you don't know whether you want your opponents to stretch to a thin game or miss a good game. What you do know is that they are unlikely to do the wrong thing if you leave them room for cultured invitational sequences. If the bidding would have gone

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	dble	pass
2♥	pass	3♥	end

nothing is more certain that it will now go

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	dble	3♦
3♥	pass	4♥	end

Similarly, if the auction would have continued

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	dble	pass
3♥	pass	pass	pass

it will now often go

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	dble	3♦
4♥	pass	pass	pass

and what would have been

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	dble	pass
3♥	pass	4♥	end

may well become

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	dble	3♦
3♥	pass	pass	pass

We shall look more fully at the approach to auctions such as this, when we discuss *preempting against 'implied fits'* in the next chapter.

Players sometimes dismiss this 'uncultured' pressure bidding because of the information it gives to the opponents. Supporting partner is supposed to enable one opponent to diagnose a shortage (in your suit) in his partner's hand. There is obviously some truth in this, but we would urge you not to overemphasize its importance.

First, the additional accuracy in evaluation you may allow will often be negated by the space you take away. An example: you hold

♠ AJ753
♥ A642
♦ 753
♣ K

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♦	dble	3♦	?

As a good player you feel that 3♦ has improved your hand (since it makes it likely partner has short diamonds). You are now worth 3♥, whereas over a pass from East you would have bid only 2♥. But will your partner know your hand has gone up in value? Or will he assume you are simply competing the hand, not expecting the contract to be secure opposite minimum values? And will he know when to ignore the value of his singleton diamond because you already 'know' about it, and when to consider it a valuable asset?

It's never as easy as the scientists make out.

Secondly, if LHO is always going to play you for a diamond holding like Jxx when you bid 3♦, there is every reason occasionally to make the bid on, say,

♠ K753
♥ 64
♦ K5
♣ 86432

If your opponents assume you bid like a computer, make sure they are punished for that error.

(d) ♠ 73
♥ 642
♦ KQ103
♣ J642

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	dble	?

Pass. The pressure you put on by bidding 2♥ will be much less important than the greatly increased likelihood of getting the wrong lead. Bid 2♦ rather than 2♥!

(e) ♠ K73
♥ 642
♦ Q53
♣ 8642

Game	West	North	East	South
all	1♥	1♠	dble	?

Redouble. If you had a doubleton in a side-suit, you would put maximum pressure on the enemy with 2♠. As it is, you can ensure a spade lead without encouraging partner to overcompete the hand.

(f) ♠ 9753
♥ KJ6
♦ K753
♣ 42

Game	West	North	East	South
all	1♠	2♥	dble	?

2NT. Too strong for 3♥ (which would be fine without the king of diamonds); and not enough for 2♠. Fair three-card support is plenty for a mixed raise opposite a two-level overcall.

(g) ♠ 73
♥ KJ4
♦ 753
♣ AQ982

N/S	West	North	East	South
vuln.	1♠	2♥	dble	?

4♣. Just because 3♣ is available to show a fit, it does not mean that you have to use it when you clearly have the offence for the four level.

(h) ♠ 76543
♥ J104
♦ KQJ
♣ 42

E/W	West	North	East	South
vuln.	1♠	2♥	dble	?

3♦ (FNJ)! If it is your hand, this is surely the best move constructively, and will get you to a good game opposite, say

♠ J
♥ KQ9753
♦ A642
♣ K3

Even more helpful if it is the opponents' hand, and partner will have a five-level decision or a problem on lead.

RHO raises

If RHO makes a simple raise, he has gone far in describing his hand, but not all the way. (Of course, most players have a much wider range of hand than you do after reading the first chapter). Preempting is no longer at such a premium, though its value should not be completely discounted - at least you can take away their trial bids, etc. As for accurate description of your own values, making partner boss of the auction, telling him what to lead - if not now, when?!

One further 'rule':

(9) If you have no cue-bid available to the three level (i.e. opposite a two-level overcall), 2NT shows *a sound raise to the three level (or better).*

The corollary of this is that *direct raises*, in sequences like

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥

are *offensive/preemptive.*

N.B. 2NT continues to show a sound four-card (plus) raise opposite a 1♥/1♠ overcall, while a non-jump cue to the three level shows a high-card raise with only three-card support (or four-card support and a low ODR). For example, over

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	?

2NT and 3♥ show exactly the same hand-types as in the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♥	2NT/3♥

while over

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♦	2♣	?

2NT remains natural.

Also, *FNJs apply at the three level*, just as over a negative double - including auctions like

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♣ / ♦

Some example sequences:

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦	?

– 2♠: natural raise; usually not four cards, unless a poor ODR;

– 2NT: sound, offensive four-card raise to 3♠ (plus);

– 3♣: FNJ - raise to 3♠ with clubs;

– 3♦: good three-card raise, limit or better (or same with four-card support and low ODR);

– 3♥: fit-jump;

– 3♠: semi-preemptive.

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	2♠	?

– 2NT: high-card raise to 3♦ (plus);

– 3♣: FNJ;

– 3♦: offensive/preemptive raise;

– 3♥: NATURAL; remember, FNJs apply in lower-ranking suits.

Some examples:

(a) ♠ A75
♥ 642
♦ A753
♣ K42

Game all

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♦	2♣	?

2NT. Natural. If the king of clubs were the king of hearts, bid 3♣ (good raise).

(b) ♠ Q75
♥ AQJ4
♦ 7543
♣ 62

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
2♣[1]	2♠	3♣	?

[1] Precision

3♥. Glad to have the methods to deal with this common hand-type.

(c) ♠ AJ7
♥ J642
♦ K53
♣ K106

Love all

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	2♦	?

3♦. Better than 2NT with such a low ODR.

(d) ♠ Q7
♥ KJ62
♦ 7543
♣ 642

E/W vuln.

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	2♣	?

3♥. You promise no more. This bid is certainly not guaranteed safe, but even if it is wrong 30% of the time, it will take very good opponents to *punish* you not more than 10% of the time. The other 90%, there are so many wrong things they can do...

(e) ♠ A5
♥ Q62
♦ Q1073
♣ 10642

Love all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

2NT. High-card, balanced raise to 3♥. Not a lot to spare, but you would bid 3♥ without the ace of spades!

(f) ♠ 53
♥ Q62
♦ Q1075
♣ 10642

Love all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

3♥. Yes, the same hand without the ace of spades. Playing that 2NT shows a hand like the one above, you can safely bid 3♥ on this hand. Otherwise you would have to pass - and that feels bad.

(g) ♠ 73
♥ K6
♦ J753
♣ KJ1042

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

Double (take-out) or 3♣ (FNJ). It depends on how good a suit partner promises for this bid. Although 3♣ would normally contain three-card heart support, it is a very descriptive bid if your partner's overcall is always based on at least a decent six-card suit. If you double, you are prepared to play 3♣, but will pull 3♦ to 3♥. That would tend to show your 2-2-4-5 shape, but says nothing about your concentration of values.

RHO jump-raises - more on fit non-jumps

No new methods here - simply a reminder that FNJs apply equally at the four level. For instance, in the auction

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠	4♣

4♣ shows a raise to 4♥ with a club suit/values.

It is time to look a little more closely at these fit non-jumps. There is probably a rising suspicion amongst some of you that we have abandoned common-sense completely in pursuit of an ill-thought crusade. When we discussed FNJs as a defense to 'Michaels', you were probably content with the logic. When we introduced them into sequences that began something like

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	dble	?

You were prepared sceptically to withhold judgement – after all, it *was* unlikely you had an excellent holding in a suit promised by RHO; any anyway, you knew you would get another chance if you had to pass.

But now we are suggesting you play FNJs in auctions like

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♦

or

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♣

What are you supposed to do on these sequences if you have no fit for partner, a good minor suit, and fair values?

The first thing to be said is that it's not such a common hand to hold. Say you play three-minor as natural and non-forcing in these sequences (surely better than natural and forcing), what sort of hand will you have? You won't have support for partner. You must have a fine suit (anything less would be very dangerous on a possible misfit hand with LHO unlimited). You will not have a fair four-card holding in the other unbid suit (otherwise a negative double is generally a better bid). You are unlikely to have more than four cards in the enemy suit. And, finally, you will not be too good to make a non-forcing bid.

In short, on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

something like

(a) ♠ J75
♥ 6
♦ J53
♣ AQ10964

(b) ♠ J75
♥ 64
♦ Q5
♣ KQJ964

Not a very common hand-type, as we indicated – certainly not nearly so common as the one you need for a FNJ of 3♣. But the fact remains, you can expect occasionally to hold it. How badly off are you, if you have to pass on these hands?

The answer is: not badly at all. The important things to remember when holding a hand like this are:

(a) you are likely to have enough points and enough cards in the opponents' suit to *prevent LHO bidding a-gain*;

(b) *partner will almost certainly reopen over a pass from LHO*: if he doesn't he will be minimum with at least two cards in the enemy suit; in that case, defending will be no bad thing – it might be the only way to go plus; and

(c) if partner does reopen with a double and RHO passes (as he nearly always will) *you can usually show a fair hand without going beyond the three level*: you do this via a sort of 'Lebensohl' device (see chapter 5).

Some quick examples:

(a) ♠ Q75
♥ 642
♦ 3
♣ AQJ962

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♦	2♥	?

Pass. If, or rather when, partner reopens with a double, bid 3♣ ('good' – see chapter 5). With the ace of spades instead of the queen, bid 4♣ when partner reopens with a double.

(b) ♠ 753
♥ J
♦ AKJ753
♣ K64

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

Double. With this improbably good hand you are strong enough to 'control' the auction (see chapter 5, when we shall consider possible continuations for the auction).

(c) ♠ 753
♥ KQ10986
♦ 5
♣ K42

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	2♠	?

3♥. Just checking! Remember FNJs only apply in *lower-ranking* suits.

All this is by way of an apology for the 'downside' of FNJs over RHO's raise. What of the gains? Consider, you hear the auction begin

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

and you hold a moderate hand in support of partner. What is likely to happen? First, partner will be faced with a genuine competitive decision at the four or five level much of the time – making that decision that partner should know of any side-suit concentration you have. Secondly, partner is going to end up on lead to a spade contract (perhaps doubled) *on the majority of deals.* Are you going to help him? Or do you want him to lead 'blind'?

One example:

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	4♠	end

What would you lead, holding

♠ 6
♥ AQ10753
♦ K62
♣ J73

Would you lead a diamond? Well, you might if partner has bid 3♦! (instead of 3♥). Now you will get your good score when the full hand is

	♠ 753 ♥ J62 ♦ AJ102 ♣ 642	
♠ QJ4 ♥ 94 ♦ 8543 ♣ KQ105	N W E S	♠ AK10982 ♥ K8 ♦ Q9 ♣ A98
	♠ 6 ♥ AQ10753 ♦ K62 ♣ J73	

And remember, such hands are far from infrequent. How often does the choice of opening lead determine the fate of a contract?

Exactly the same principles apply at the four level. As we said, in the auction

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠	?

4♣ and 4♦ would be FNJs. In such auctions (depending a bit on vulnerability), the lead should be much in your mind. To this end, a few further words. In previous pages, when discussing fit-jumps, we advised against showing 'empty' side-suits, such as AJxxx. This remains essential advice *when the hand is likely to be yours* (thus, normally when you are responder to an opening bid). For on such auctions it is much more important to steer partner toward the right *bid* than the right *lead*. (In any event, as responder to an opening bid when RHO has overcalled, you will be on lead yourself much more often than will your partner!)

But on a sequence like

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠	?

your partner will end up on lead a huge proportion of the time. It is no longer essential to have a 'good, full suit' when you make a FNJ. You are bidding primarily for the lead, and partner will take that into account. On this auction, you should happily introduce your club suit, say, if you hold

♠ 75
♥ J642
♦ 73
♣ AJ642

You will doubtless by now have inferred an important corollary of all this 'bidding for the lead' - which is that *the overcaller must not treat such bids, generally, as an invitation to compete the hand further.* Just be happy partner has told you what to lead - do not compete to the five level unless your hand is exceptional. Partner will not thank you if he has stuck his neck out to indicate the winning defense to their game, if you blunder on with an expensive 'sacrifice'.

Of course, whether partner's FNJ is (a) *consultative* (inviting you to compete the hand further); or (b) primarily *lead-directing* - will *depend on the auction*. If the hand appears to belong to the enemy, then your FNJ should be basically for the lead. If, on the other hand, the deal may belong to your side and partner is not limited, your FNJ must be invitational for partner to compete further.

There are no hard and fast rules opposite overcalls, but we may usefully compare the following two sequences for guidance.

(1) Game all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	4♦

[1] invitational

(2) Love all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	4♦

[1] preemptive

On the first auction, both the strength shown by your RHO and the vulnerability make it most unlikely your side wants to compete to 5♥ over 4♠. Therefore your 4♦ bid is very much for the lead. Perhaps you have king-queen doubleton!

In auction (2), however, the situation is very different. There is no reason now to assume that the hand belongs to the enemy, and partner might well want to bid on to 5♥ with a diamond fit. On this sequence, then, your 4♦ bid must be much more 'pure' and consultative - not dissimilar, in fact, to a hand that would qualify for a fit-*jump* to 4♦.

A quick note: in chapter 4 we shall see how all is by no means lost if you *do* wish to encourage partner to bid on over the opponents' contract when your FNJ was primarily lead-directional.

RHO bids a new suit at the one level

Similar to those auctions where RHO makes a negative double, here also it can pay handsomely to be aggressive with your support bids. Your opponents are both fairly unlimited in strength and distribution, *they haven't yet found a fit* and you can often make life extremely awkward for them.

First, an example sequence:

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	1♠	?

- 2♣: sound three-card (or low ODR four-card) raise to the two level or better;
- 2♥: preemptive three-card raise;
- 2♠: sound three-card (or a low ODR four-card) fit-jump to the three level, promising the fourth suit;
- 2NT: high card, offensive raise to the three level with four (plus) trumps;
- 3♣: mixed raise to the three level with four trumps;
- 3♦: fit-jump, guaranteeing four hearts and a good ODR;
- 3♥: preemptive;
- 3♠/4♣: splinter-jumps.

Thus 'rule' ten is

(10) after RHO's one-new-suit, a 'spare' cue-bid (i.e. the lower cue-bid to the three level) shows a good three-card (or low ODR four-card) fit-jump, *promising the fourth suit.*

This also applies, if relevant, after a bid of two-new-suit by RHO. For example, in the sequence

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♣	3♣

3♣ shows something like

♠ K107
♥ KQ1096
♦ 5
♣ 8642

As for our original auction,

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	1♠	?

consider these three hands:

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ J7	♠ J7	♠ J7
♥ 1064	♥ Q106	♥ J1064
♦ AQ1073	♦ AQJ73	♦ AQ1073
♣ 642	♣ 642	♣ J6

Hand (a) is simply not worth the three level. You should either bid 2♥ (the 'correct' bid), or double (responsive), which is only slightly misdescriptive and is more helpful to partner if the hand belongs to the enemy (as is likely). Why? Because it directs partner toward a diamond lead (or switch).

Hand (b) is just what a 2♠ bid is there for (though near a minimum). Not enough hearts for 3♦, but hardly well described by 2♣ (sound three-card raise).

Finally, hand (c) is a fine 3♦ bid. Partner will know he can play you for a good offensive hand.

RHO bids a new suit at the two level

If RHO bids a new suit (forcing) at the two level, you are likely to be heavily outgunned. There's certainly going to be no point in bidding without a fit for partner. Thus, in addition to all the other support-showing bids we have recommended, here is another one to add to your armoury:

(11) If RHO bids two-new-suit (forcing), a double shows a minimum raise *suggesting that partner shouldn't lead the suit*.

A hand from recent play:

Game all

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♦	?

♠ J975
♥ 8642
♦ 75
♣ KJ4

Double. You haven't got enough for a jump raise at this vulnerability. But if partner is on lead, it might be wrong to lead a spade. Double conveys this message.

It was gratifying that the full hand was:

	♠ AQ1064 ♥ 73 ♦ 642 ♣ A73	
♠ K8 ♥ AKJ109 ♦ J3 ♣ Q862	N W E S	♠ 32 ♥ Q5 ♦ AKQ1098 ♣ 1095
	♠ J975 ♥ 8642 ♦ 75 ♣ KJ4	

and we were the only pair not to concede a vulnerable game on the North-South cards.

If RHO's bid of two-new-suit is *non-forcing* (a 'negative free bid'), 'rule' eleven doesn't apply. Double is simply for takeout.

RHO bids in no-trumps

Over RHO's 1NT bid, the message is: *caution*. He has described his hand within fairly narrow limits, and has already suggested things do not lie well for you. Again, we would recommend you focus on the major suits over

West	North	East	South
1♣ / ♦	1♥ / ♠	1NT	?

– 2♣: majors (5-3 or similar);

– 2♦: good raise;

– 2 partner's major: preemptive.

You can use the jump-cue (e.g. (1♦)-1♠-(1NT)-3♦) to show an offensively strong raise without the values to double.

Over 2NT from RHO, the message is: *don't* FNJs apply and you must only bid what is in front of you.

RHO makes a fit-jump

Well, you probably won't come across this too often - at least, not for a while. But it is well to be prepared. Obviously, you must act with discretion, for RHO has limited his hand very accurately. There is only one type of situation worth discussing specifically. It occurred in a hand we gave in chapter 1. West held

♠ Q1065
♥ 7
♦ 642
♣ AJ954

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	4♦[1]
?			

[1] fit-jump

We saw (chapter 1) then that if, as West, you bid 4♠ on these cards, you may concede a large penalty against a non-making game. While if you pass, you may find that both 4♥ and 4♠ were solid.

The solution is as follows: a double of a fit-jump (or FNJ) can be used to *show support for partner with the fourth suit*. It does *not* force partner to bid at that level over the opponents' contract. Thus if the auction above were to continue

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	4♦
dble	4♥	pass	pass
?			

there is every reason for the doubler to pass with the given hand, hoping to beat 4♥, happy he has been able to indicate a club lead (see chapter 1).

Finally, you may wish to double, even if you can bid the fourth suit at the same level. Consider an auction like

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	3♣	?

Suppose you hold

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ KJ75	♠ K107	♠ 10753
♥ 6	♥ 64	♥ 64
♦ AJ1093	♦ AJ1093	♦ KQ1053
♣ J42	♣ 642	♣ K6

By now you know that we recommend 3♦ be used as a FNJ on a hand such as (a). But what if you hold hand (b) or (c)? If you bid 3♦ on these hands, you are overstating your strength. Moreover, you do so in a very dangerous situation. LHO will be well-placed to double on a partial misfit, since he is boss of the auction.

The solution (again) is to double. Now you will only get caught if LHO can double 3♠ *and* stand 3♣ doubled - unlikely. Also your bids of 3♦ and 3♠ will be more narrowly defined.

We are not saying that this is the only possible use for double. You might employ it as 'take-out' without three-card support; or as an attempt to enlist partner's help in penalizing the enemy's contract (3♥ on the above auction). But it is more important to know whether and how far to compete the hand when you are most likely to want to - which is when you have some sort of a fit for partner. The methods described are therefore strongly recommended, though they must be used with caution!

Two quick examples:

(a) ♠ 75
♥ K642
♦ KQ10973
♣ 4

Game all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	4♣[1]	?

[1] fit

4♦. Silly to double on such an offensively powerful hand. If the auction continues

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	4♣	4♦
4♠	dble	pass	?

you can pass, confident in the knowledge you have shown a very offensive hand.

(b) ♠ 7
♥ K642
♦ 53
♣ AJ10962

N/S vuln

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	4♦[1]	?

[1] fit

Double. You must show your club suit, yet you shouldn't force to 5♥. If the auction continues

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	4♣	dble
4♠	pass	pass	?

you should double again, showing a good two-way hand for your first double and forcing partner to choose between defending 4♠ doubled and bidding to the five level. (We shall look more fully at this sort of second-round double in chapter 4).

Forcing passes opposite overcalls

We suggest you adopt exactly the same methods with respect to setting up a forcing pass opposite an overcall as you do opposite an opening bid (see previous section). The following additional observations seem sensible:

(1) No bid showing a 'mixed raise' ever sets up a forcing pass.

(2) No FNJ ever sets up a forcing pass.

Thus we may compare

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	4♦

which does set up a forcing pass *at red*, with

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠	4♦

which never sets up a forcing pass. This must be right when your bid is so often 'for the lead'.

Recapping

A long section, certainly. But bidding opposite an overcall is an area of the game where opportunities to play 'winning bridge' occur all the time. If you do no (or cannot) use these opportunities to good effect, you will not be a winner.

It is important that you do not view this section as a large chunk of 'system'. You must understand the general principles we have discussed and appreciate how they might be applied. The rest will come naturally, easily, enjoyably and profitably.

A case in point. You hold, as South

♠ 753
♥ Q64
♦ AJ1094
♣ J6

and the auction goes

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	pass
pass	2♥	dble[1]	?

[1] take-out

It is most unlikely you will have discussed this sequence, but isn't it obvious that 3♦ should be a FNJ? Also that 2NT should show a sound raise to 3♥? (for you have no cue-bid available, and 3♥ directly must be best used to show an offensive, preemptive raise.)

It is possible, nonetheless, to list generally applicable guidelines. These are, we hope, no more than a common-sense formalization of sound competitive principles.

(1) All *direct raises* are offensive / preemptive if there is any alternative way of raising to the same level.

(2) All *jumps into new suits* are fit-showing.

(3) All *non-jump bids in lower-ranking new suits* show a fit at the three level or higher, except over a *pass* from RHO (FNJs).

(4) A *jump-cue to the three level* (the *higher* three-level cue if a choice exists) shows a *mixed* raise with four trumps.

(5) The *cheapest cue* always shows a sound, high-card raise. If at the two level, it denies four trumps and a fair ODR - as when there is no cue-bid available at the two level and 2NT promises four trumps (e.g. (1♦)-1♠-(2♦)-3♦).

(6) 2NT is
- a good four-card raise opposite a 1♥ / 1♠ overcall;
- natural opposite a 1♦ overcall, or opposite a two-level overcall followed by a pass;
- a sound raise of a two-level overcall *when no cue is available* (e.g. after RHO's simple raise);
- a mixed raise of a two-level overcall when RHO bids, but a *cue is available at the three level* (as after a take-out double).

(7) A double shows a fit
- over two-new suit (forcing), when it suggest another lead;
- over a fit-jump of FNJ by RHO, when it promises the fourth suit also.

(8) A redouble is lead-suggesting at the one-level (at higher levels, it shows a good hand with no fit).

(9) A *'spare' cue-bid* shows a good three-card (or low ODR four-card) fit-jump, as in (1♦)-1♥-(1♠)-2♠.

The potentially contested auction

You may think we are introducing a new concept here. Not really. From the very first pages of chapter 1 we have discussed the importance of anticipating LHO's interference. That is the single clearest reason why you must show your support immediately and descriptively - to *avoid taking the last guess* whether to show it later when the enemy have forced up the bidding. All we are doing in this section is extending that principle to some auctions where our RHO has passed.

Defining the potentially contested auction (PCA)

Bidding theory generally draws too sharp a dividing line between 'contested' and 'uncontested' auctions. When arranging your so-called 'uncontested' methods, it is often right to consider how best to preempt and / or cope with enemy action.

In fact, we shall say that - in theory - any auction is a PCA *when RHO has passed and your LHO has not (since the opening bid) either (a) passed, or (b) made a limited bid*. Don't worry about this over-technical definition. Far better to look at some sequences with a view to the risks of potential enemy interference.

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	pass	?

This may properly be termed 'uncontested'. Nothing is certain, but it is sensible to concentrate your attention in this auction on constructive accuracy. Forget about your opponents and organize your methods so that you can get to the best game or slam, or stop low if necessary.

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	?

You are not out of the woods yet. If you have a fair heart fit, it is not unlikely that West has got a bid. If your methods take no account of this, you will lose out on some of those occasions.

(3)

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	pass	?

Much less of a risk than the auction above, but still you cannot write off West.

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	2♣
pass	2♥	pass	?

As generally when both opponents pass consecutively once the bidding has started, forget about them. It may be that if you drop the auction low they might protect; but you can worry about that when it happens.

(5)

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	pass	?

This is an auction where you cannot rule out either opponent from taking a further bid. The opening bidder, especially, may have much to say.

(6)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♥	1♠	pass	?

It is true that a 1♥ overcall is not, strictly, unlimited, but West may well not yet be 'dead' (especially nowadays, when simple overcalls are becoming increasingly wide-ranging).

(7)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
2♠[1]	dble	pass	?

[1] weak

If East couldn't bid over partner's negative double, he will scarcely be able to do so later (except, perhaps, to double you for penalties!). West, as a preemptor, can also be discounted.

(8)

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	dble
2♠	dble	pass	?

West is assumed to be very limited and East appears to have said his piece. You can never tell - particularly against weak opponents who are nervous of bidding their hand all in one go - but the remainder of this auction should be 'uncontested'.

(9)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	dble
1♥	1♠	pass	?

On this sequence it is most unlikely that you will have the rest of the auction to yourselves. West, in particular, will be loath to go quietly in these situations.

(10)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	1♦
1♥	1♠	pass	?

No different, really, to the previous sequence. Especially if you have a fit for spades, you can be confident that West is going to want to bid again.

When to worry about interference

Now, even if you can identify the theoretical degree of risk in a PCA of opponents bidding again, this does not mean that - as you are deciding what to bid - you must always act with the same degree of caution. Say the auction has started

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	pass	?

and you hold

♠ K1064
♥ A1095
♦ -
♣ KJ753

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	pass
1♥	1♠	pass	?

and you hold

♠ 7
♥ AK64
♦ KQ75
♣ KJ92

In theory, these are PCAs. But if anyone wants to get in your way when you hold either of these hands, you will politely crush them beneath your heel.

You've already worked out what we're going to say: if the auction is a misfit, you can go about your business slowly and with due unconcern for your opponents, but *when you have a clear fit for partner, then you must treat the enemy with respect as long as the PCA is alive*. So what's new!?

Of course, every auction (and every pair of opponents) is different, and each must be considered on its own merits. But the general principle is evident: the more likely your opponents are to intervene, the more immediate and descriptive your support bids must be.

In fact, we have already looked at one sort of PCA without labelling it as such, when we dealt with RHO's pass over our partner's overcall. For example, auction 5, above:

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	pass	?

We commented earlier in the chapter how with a good fit you should not be over-confident of enemy silence. You should show the degree of your support quickly and descriptively. Perhaps this is not the most dangerous sequence, but you will ignore the risks to your cost.

What about this hand?

♠ 106
♥ Q542
♦ AJ632
♣ Q5

Look familiar? Last time you saw it, you were asked to consider your action over

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	?

and we saw that it was imperative we showed our support, lest our LHO raise and we were forced to take a difficult guess on the next round.

This time we want to remove your RHO (temporarily) from the auction, which has now started

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	?

Perhaps you think that 2♦ would now be the right bid - we hope not. Granted it is less likely, but how surprised would you be if the auction continued

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	2♦
2♠	pass	3♠	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	2♦
3♠	pass	pass	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	2♦
3♠	pass	4♠	?

creating exactly the same problems for you as before?

There are also, of course, many *constructive* advantages in showing good support immediately on non-game-forcing hands.

Dealing with undiscussed PCAs

We shall postpone for the moment a discussion of the unique problems of responding to an opening bid. Nor shall we further review responding to overcalls. What of the rest? The sort of auctions that come up all the time, but that you won't - indeed shouldn't have discussed specifically? Is it possible, or desirable to categorize these other PCAs?

Let's look again at some of the sequences we gave above where we decided the enemy were most likely to bid subsequently. And let us try to apply the logic of 'support with support' to them.

(6)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♥	1♠	pass	?

No doubt we could label this sort of auction - 'rebid as opener when LHO has overcalled and partner has responded in a new suit', or some such like - but why bother? The important (and far easier) task is simply to apply the logic of our previous analysis. With a view to possible further interference, is it not sensible to employ similar support bids to those discussed above, in the context of responding to opening bids and overcalls? How about something like ... ?

– 2♠: minimum three-card raise (or four-card balanced raise with a low ODR - especially if you might have a weak no trump for your 1♣ opening);

– 2♥: strong three-card raise; say ♠K107 ♥A6 ♦K5 ♣AQ6432;

– 3♠: minimum, unbalanced four-card raise with a high ODR, such as ♠Q1075 ♥6 ♦K73 ♣AK642;

– 3♥: strong four-card raise, unlimited; say, ♠AJ75 ♥642 ♦AQ ♣AQ104.

(9)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	dble
1♥	1♠	pass	?

Responding to an overcall, but with extra cue-bids available. How about...?

– 2♠: preemptive three-card raise (or four-card, low ODR);

– 2♥: 'mixed' three-card raise, say ♠K75 ♥64 ♦A73 ♣87632;

– 2♣: sound defensive three-card raise, say ♠Q75 ♥A64 ♦Q1073 ♣K82;

– 3♠: preemptive four-card raise, say ♠Q753 ♥64 ♦865432 ♣2;

– 3♥: 'mixed' four-card raise, such as ♠K1073 ♥642 ♦KJ53 ♣62;

– 3♣: sound four-card raise, say ♠A1073 ♥A4 ♦QJ5 ♣8642.

NOTE: there is no need to have a 'spare' cue-bid to show a three-card fit-jump with diamonds - you will have overcalled 1♦ already with that hand.

(10)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	1♦
1♥	1♠	pass	?

Same as above, although the strengths required for each bid will be proportionately higher. For instance, a bid of 2♣ (sound three-card raise) should now be at least

♠ K107
♥ A64
♦ AQ1053
♣ 42

Looking at these last three examples together, it is not difficult to extract a few generally applicable principles that will guide us in such undiscussed auctions:

(a) *all cue-bids show support;*

(b) if there are two or three ways of showing support to a given level, *the lower the bid the stronger the hand;*

(c) opposite a 1♥ or 1♠ overcall or response, *support bids at the two level deny four-card support and a good ODR* (vice versa at the three level);

(d) 2NT is best used as *natural* unless you have no cue-bid available, in which case it shows a sound raise.

That wasn't too painful, surely? Just sound 'support with support' principles and common sense.

Let's look at a couple more sequences:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	pass
1♠	2♣	pass	?

We know what we're doing with 2♦, 2♠, 3♣, we trust. But what of 3♦ and 3♠? Jump cue-bids opposite a two-level overcall (i.e. raising to the four level) or normally splinters in offensive raises to that level. No different here. Thus 3♠ might show

♠ 7
♥ A64
♦ J7643
♣ K1062

And what of 2♥? Yes, 2♥!? Remember, you couldn't overcall 1♥ over 1♦. Are you now prepared to introduce your heart suit anyway at a higher level with no fit? Of course not. 2♥ must logically be a FNJ - something like

♠ 753
♥ KQ104
♦ J5
♣ QJ73

It's not a question of previous discussion, simply of *not being lazy*.

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♠	2♥	pass	?

An auction that is presented as a sort of 'exception to the rules'. It is most unlikely the enemy will dare speak again and your priorities are strictly constructive. So why are we looking at this sequence here?

Well, just to point out that you can't get complacent and rely on 'rules' too much when interpreting cue-bids. In this auction, a cue-bid of 2♠ might well show a strong balanced heart raise, but it is also quite consistent with a game-forcing hand with no clear bid - say,

♠ 75
♥ A6
♦ A5
♣ AQ108642

Responder must be aware of this when he makes his next bid. In either event, the bid should probably be game-forcing, so there is no need to hurry. You might compare an auction like

West	North	East	South
2♠	3♥	pass	3♠

where 3♠ can either be a forcing noise looking for 3NT, or the beginning of a slam try in hearts.

The PCA - in practice

Before we end this section, here are some example hands where the 'right' bid is to be found not in any system file, but simply by applying the logic and methods of support-showing that are already second-nature to you.

♠ 75
♥ 8642
♦ J753
♣ 642

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	pass
1♠	2♦	pass	?

3♦. Isn't it just 'losing bridge' to have to pass this hand? Your LHO obviously has a fair hand with extreme diamond shortness (your RHO would probably have found a bid unless he had a couple himself). It would be a crime to pass and leave the enemy all that space to explore their fit and values. Because you play good methods, and have 2♠ and 3♣ available to show stronger raises to the same level, partner will not play you for any values. In fact, with

♠ 5
♥ 86542
♦ J753
♣ 642

it is right to bid 4♦.

♠ KJ5
♥ 4
♦ AJ753
♣ AQ42

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♥	1♠	pass	?

2♥. First, tell partner you have a fair hand with three spades. There will be time to get across the club suit (or heart shortage) later, if necessary. If you consider the evidence, it looks like your RHO has a six-card heart suit and a good hand (assuming he is playing weak jump overcalls). It is very likely he will bid again. If so, partner's life will be much easier if you have described your support and values.

♠ AQ107
♥ K642
♦ 753
♣ 62

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	pass
1♦	1♥	pass	?

2♠ (fit jump). You can't have a much better suit to have passed over 1♣.

♠ K73
♥ A642
♦ Q753
♣ J4

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	pass
2♣[1]	2♠	pass	?

[1] Stayman

2NT, showing a sound raise. No cue-bid available, so 2NT (on general principles) must be used to show a high-card raise. Otherwise you will have to pass on a hand like

♠ Q73
♥ 8642
♦ Q753
♣ J4

With concentration, you would make a FNJ of 3♣, 3♦, 3♥.

♠ 73	E/W	**West**	**North**	**East**	**South**
♥ AJ642	vuln.	-	-	1♣	1♥
♦ Q753		1♠	dble[1]	pass	?
♣ K4					

[1] responsive

3♣. Partner's double shows something like two hearts and five diamonds. Cue-bids, then, should show diamond support. With a four-card fit it must be right to bid to the three level unless your ODR is very low (which it is not on this hand). You have a choice of 3♦, 3♣, and 2♠. This hand seems best described by 3♣ showing a mixed raise. 3♦ would be something more like

♠ 5
♥ AJ642
♦ QJ53
♣ 642

while 2♠ might be a hand such as

♠ 73
♥ AK642
♦ Q753
♣ A4

The first response to an opening bid

And so to the first response. This is a sensitive area for discussion. First, the various basic systems each place different demands on what responder can or should show at his first bid. Secondly, the 'natural' meanings of the first response are well-established by popular usage. Thirdly, partnerships who have put a lot of work into their 'uncontested' system will be loath to modify their responses to opening bids. For in so doing, they may have to abandon some of their favourite gadgets.

We shall therefore not discuss this area in any detail now. Instead, here are a few radical suggestions you might care to consider:

(1) all single jumps to new suits are *fit showing* - opposite 1♣/1♦ openings they show five cards in the suit bid, four (plus) cards in support of partner and *invitational or better* values; opposite major suit openings they show *semi-preemptive/invitational* values with the appropriate number of trumps to raise to the three level and a concentration of length/strength in the suit bid;

(2) direct raises to the three level are semi-preemptive;

(3) 2NT opposite a major suit opening shows a (possibly shaded) limit raise or better.

Further detailed agreements will depend very much on what your basic system is. If you want a full analysis with examples, write and tell our publishers how useful Volume Two would be... Meanwhile, why not have a go at constructing methods from first principles that suit your basic system.

The important point to remember is that *you are simply dealing with another potentially contested auction*. Whatever theory can validly be applied to an auction like

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	-	1♣	pass
1♥	1♠	pass	?

is equally appropriate to an auction like

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	1♥	pass	?

If you can straddle the artificial, time-honoured gulf between 'contested' and 'uncontested' sequences, you will realize that our suggestions are no more than one further application of the principles that lie behind all the treatments recommended in this chapter for 'contested' auctions: support with support; anticipate the enemy; make things easier for partner; preempt your opponents; don't take the last guess...

Opener's rebid

Up to this point you have generally been third or fourth to speak. For this last section you are going to sit in first seat - or, more strictly, 'fifth' seat. You have opened the bidding (1♣, 1♦, or 1♥), your partner has responded one-major, and you have a fit for him.

There are three situations to consider:

(1) Both opponents have passed; e.g.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
pass	1♥	pass	?

(2) LHO has overcalled, but RHO has passed; e.g.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♥	1♠	pass	?

(3) RHO has bid (whether LHO has bid or not); e.g.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	2♣	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♥	1♠	2♥	?

We have already discussed the second type of sequence in the previous section. Now we are going to look at the first and third.

The uncontested rebid

You may think there's not a lot we can say here. After all, with both opponents passing, surely we have a truly 'uncontested' auction. Quite so. You no longer have to worry about the enemy, yet we would still preach 'support with support' to this extent:

when you have a minimum unbalanced hand with three-card support for partner's 1♥ or 1♠ response, show your support immediately (as a general rule).

For example, say the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	pass	?

we suggest you raise directly to 2♠ on any of the following hands:

(a) ♠ K64	(b) ♠ Q62	(c) ♠ J62
♥ A753	♥ 5	♥ A5
♦ KQ962	♦ AQ642	♦ AQ8642
♣ 5	♣ KJ73	♣ J5

Obviously the reasons have nothing to do with anticipating your opponents, avoiding the last guess, etc. Our contention is simply that if you adopt this policy, you will make your partner's - and your own - life much easier in the subsequent auction (if there is one).

Let us say first, that in the partscore zone there is a downside as well as an upside to playing these methods. Whereas you might get to a good 5-3 fit, even 4-3 major-suit fit you would otherwise have missed in order to play in an inferior minor-suit fit, you might also get to a poor 4-3 major-suit fit instead of a safer minor-suit fit.

Let us take hand (b) as an example

♠ Q62
♥ 5
♦ AQ642
♣ KJ73

If you rebid 2♣, you will find yourself in 2♦ opposite

♠ KJ753
♥ Q642
♦ 73
♣ Q4

If you raise to 2♠, however, you might find partner had

♠ J753
♥ A62
♦ J93
♣ Q65

or

♠ K853
♥ K82
♦ 103
♣ Q1094

(although it is difficult to see you beating an enemy contract of 2♥ if partner has either of these last two hands.)

When the alternative to raising partner appears to be rebidding your own five-card suit, as hand (a) above

♠ K64
♥ A753
♦ KQ962
♣ 5

it is more clearly right to raise partner if the deal is a partscore - otherwise you will often play a 5-1 diamond-fit, instead of a 5-3 spade-fit.

One less obvious, but real advantage in playing this style when the deal is a partscore, is the increased risk for your opponents in protecting an auction like

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	-	-	1♣
pass	1♠	pass	2♠
pass	pass	?	

Because you will often be in a 4-3 fit, they will either have to be more than normally cautious (which will suit you just fine when you *do* have an eight-card fit), or you will get some useful penalties. Also, of course, 2♠ is more preemptive than (say) 2♣.

It is in the game and slam zone, however, than these methods really prove their worth. Not so much by technical or theoretical advantages, but because they will make the subsequent auction *easier*. That is to say, you and your partner will not have to make as many 'well-judged' bids in situations where there appears to be a choice of calls. We can divide the analysis into two parts: (a) when you raise partner, and (b) when you don't.

a) When you raise partner

You might think that if responder has invitational or game-forcing values, he will be handicapped by not knowing whether he is facing three- or four-card support. Not at all. There are simple, elegant methods available that will enable responder to move forward with confidence. The main items are *non-forcing bids of*

three-minor (when responder has only a four-card major and invitational values), and a *forcing inquiry* of 2NT (over 2♠) or 2♠ (over 2♥).

Over the inquiry opener bids out his shape at the three level if he only has three-card support. Higher bids guarantee four-card support. One quick example sequence:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
pass	1♥	pass	2♥
pass	2♠	pass	?

– 2NT: 4-3-1-5;

– 3♣: 6 clubs, 3 hearts;

– 3♦: 1-3-4-5 (remember, these first three bids guarantee fairly minimum values);

– 3♥: 4 hearts, very minimum;

– 3NT: natural, non-forcing, with four hearts;

– 4♣: good 5 or 6 clubs with 4 hearts;

– 3♠/4♦: shortage in the bid suit, 4 hearts and a fair hand;

– 4♥: natural, non-minimum, with 4 hearts.

b) When you don't raise partner

This is when the real dividends are paid. The key is: *simple rebids by opener in his own or in new suits generally deny three-card support for partner in a minimum hand*. The principle value of this is that when responder bids on over such a rebid, particularly with a third-suit or fourth-suit forcing bid, opener is much better placed to make a clear and helpful bid.

Some examples:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	2♥	pass	?

If opener has three-card spade support, he will nearly always have extra values. He bids 3♠, and all is revealed. If opener bids 2♠, then, he is usually showing a *doubleton honour*. Consider, you hold

♠ K7
♥ J4
♦ AJ753
♣ KJ62

on the above auction. What on earth are you supposed to bid, if you can't bid 2♠? Yet many players can't. For them, 2♠ guarantees three-card support.

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	?

This time you hold

♠ Q5
♥ A62
♦ AJ7543
♣ J6

Well, maybe you'd bid 2♠ anyway. It's either that, or a revolting 3♦. But isn't it going to be helpful if partner knows you almost certainly don't have three-card support?

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	?

You hold

♠ AJ73
♥ J62
♦ 5
♣ AQ962

Passing 1NT could be very wrong, yet you have an uneasy feeling you are not strong enough for 2♥. You're not! But that doesn't matter, because you can't have this hand. You've raise to 2♥ on the previous round. So, if you do bid 2♥ on this auction, partner can, an will read you for extra values - something like

♠ AJ73
♥ K62
♦ 5
♣ AK1062

as a good minimum.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♥	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♥

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	2♠

carry a similar guarantee of extra strength.

We could multiply examples, but it is surely unnecessary. You can see how such a policy will add accuracy and clarity to your constructive auctions.

Consider one further useful advantage when you open 1♣, 1♦, or 1♥ and then rebid your suit over a 1♥/1♠ response: *you are much more likely to have a six-card suit*. In some sequences you virtually guarantee one. For instance, if the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	pass	1♥
pass	2♦	pass	?

and you hold

♠ 642
♥ KJ753
♦ K4
♣ A95

isn't 3♦ the most sensible, descriptive move? Partner must have a six-card suit - he hasn't got four spades, he hasn't got three hearts and he hasn't got four clubs (otherwise he would have rebid 1♠, 2♥, 2♣ respectively). Moreover, he isn't balanced, or else he would have opened or rebid 1NT. Q.E.D. At worst he is 3-2-6-2 or 2-2-6-3.

The inferences are less secure over, say

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	2♣	pass	?

for opener might be 3-1-4-5 or 2-2-4-5 and be unwilling/unable to rebid 1NT. Nevertheless, such hand-types are the exception. You should play the odds in assuming partner has a six-card suit, rather than distort your own rebid.

Don't take it to extremes

As always, system and methods must not be used to displace judgement. An example:

♠ KQJ5
♥ J62
♦ Q
♣ KJ1062

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
pass	1♥	pass	?

On this occasion it is best to rebid 1♠. Your black-suit values are too concentrated and too 'slow' (i.e. they need to be developed - no aces!). Obviously, if partner rebids 1NT over 1♠, you will pass, contented.

Similarly with

♠ J75
♥ K4
♦ KQJ983
♣ K6

your hand is basically your diamond suit. You must rebid it, even if partner responds 1♠.

These hands are *very exceptional*, however, and you should generally not be deterred from showing your support with a minimum hand. Consider this example:

♠ AK75
♥ 642
♦ AQ1073
♣ 4

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♥	pass	?

You might think that with so much in spades and so little in hearts, it is right to rebid 1♠. Not so. When you raise on these 5-4-3-1/6-3-3-1 hands on what turns out to be a partscore deal, you hope to use your trumps for *ruffing*. The smaller they are, the more you are promoting their value by making them into trumps! As for your spades - what could be better than two quick tricks in a side-suit?

The contested rebid when RHO has bid

The auctions we shall look at in this section are only those that satisfy the following two conditions:

(a) The 1♥/1♠ response must be capable of being a four-card suit. For instance, if you play that in the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♥	1♠	2♥	?

the 1♠ response guarantees a five-card suit (not our recommended methods, see chapter 5), then this auction does not qualify.

(b) RHO's bid must be *below* the level of the simple raise of 2♥/2♠. Thus, say

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
dble	1♥	2♠	?

is not an auction we are presently interested in.

The support double - and alternatives

Let us start by examining a convention known as the *support double.* If you haven't come across it before, this is how it works. In auctions such as those we are now discussing, *if opener doubles he shows three-card support for responder*. For example

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
pass	1♥	2♦	dble

This bid says nothing else about opener's hand and is unlimited. Thus a direct raise would guarantee four-card support. The advantage of this convention is that responder knows immediately whether his partner has three- or four-card support.

The drawbacks are that (a) your support double does not guarantee a fair holding in the fourth suit (as a normal take-out double would do), and (b) you can no longer make a take-out double without three-card support. (If you play this double for penalties, please suspend judgement until reading chapter 5.) This means that apart from the occasional loss of accuracy (when responder is afraid to bid the fourth suit naturally opposite a support double), opener may well be stuck for a bid. For example, you hold

♠ K5
♥ 4
♦ AJ7543
♣ AK62

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	2♥	?

You are too strong (and too short in hearts - see chapter 5) to pass. Yet if you can't double, you are left with an inelegant and misdescriptive 3♣.

As between playing flexible take-out doubles which can accommodate hands like the one above, or playing support doubles which enable opener to clarify his degree of support, even on balanced hands - there is no obvious 'right' choice. On grounds of frequency, support doubles will serve you best, but in terms of avoiding silly results, they may prove wanting.

Perhaps the key is in your opening no-trump range. It is probably wrong to play support doubles if your play a weak no-trump, but if your 1NT opening is 14-16 or stronger, if may be right to employ that convention. The logic behind this distinction is best illustrated by example. Consider the four hands below, on the auction (where relevant)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	2♣	?

(a) ♠ Q1073	(b) ♠ Q1073	(c) ♠ Q1073	(d) ♠ Q105
♥ A63	♥ AQ4	♥ AJ4	♥ A4
♦ KJ73	♦ AJ73	♦ AJ753	♦ AJ7543
♣ Q4	♣ K4	♣ 4	♣ J4

If your 1NT opening is weak, you will on

(a) have opened 1NT;

(b) rebid 3♣ to show a high-card raise to 3♠ (or better);

(c) rebid 3♠ to show a distributional, offensive raise;

(d) rebid 2♠, normally showing three-card support in an unbalanced hand (though may be four with a low ODR).

If your 1NT opening is strong, however, then you will on:

(a) rebid 2♠, guaranteeing four-card support in a fairly minimum hand;

(b) have opened 1NT;

(c) rebid 3♠, as above;

(d) double (support) to show a three-card raise.

In other words, if you play a weak no-trump, then when you have four-card support you are generally worth the three level in terms of distribution or high-card strength. Thus your 2♠ rebid virtually guarantees only three-card support, making it wasteful to employ double to serve the same purpose!

If, however, your no-trump range is strong, you will very often have a minimum balanced hand to open 1♣ or 1♦. Now support doubles are very useful. For you will not want to jump to the three level on hands such as (a) above

♠ Q1073
♥ A62
♦ KJ73
♣ Q4

We have two other radical offerings in this context. The first is probably too wild to gain widespread acceptance, but we promise it is theoretically sound. Let us return to the auction above

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	2♣	?

The suggestion is that you use 2♥ as a 'support double', showing three spades! Thus

– double: take-out, and denies three spades if minimum (i.e. the emphasis is very much on the fourth suit - hearts in this example);

– 2♠: a minimum four-card raise, as when playing support doubles.

This 'fourth-suit support bid' is also available in auctions like

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
dble	1♥	1♠	2♦

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♥	1♠	2♣

When it is not available, you must resort to one of the methods discussed above.

Our second radical idea concerns auctions where RHO makes a take-out double in front of opener. For example

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	dble	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♦	1♥	dble	?

In such sequences we recommend you use 1NT as a ‘support double’, showing a three-card fit for partner in a hand that doesn’t want to redouble (which would show a good defensive hand, in search of penalties).

The point is that you have no need for a natural 1NT bid in these auctions. Either you are strong enough to redouble on a good balanced or slightly misfitting hand, or you are not strong enough to bid at all. Elegant and foolproof - if we say so ourselves!

Well, we thought we’d end this chapter on an esoteric note.

This last chapter is almost a book in itself! It is no wonder if you feel a little overwhelmed. You must pick and choose which methods to try out as you see fit. The important thing is that you lay to rest the phantom preconception of traditional bidding theory. Never mind what ‘natural’ significance various bids have acquired over time. Remember, originally all bids were an expression of what a player ‘thought he might make’. Then we had preempts, Stayman, the take-out double... Have the courage to scrutinize conventional ‘wisdom’ under the clear light of ‘support with support’ theories. You will find the task stimulating and profitable.

Chapter 3 - Putting on the pressure

Introduction: a cautionary tale

This is the fun chapter - to write as well as to read! After the compressed analysis of the previous pages we are going frequently to abandon science and to shun cooperative hand description with a smile.

We shall start, however, with a cautionary tale. One of the authors was East on the deal below, playing with an enthusiastic friend.

N/S vuln.
Matchpoints
Dealer West

	♠ K872 ♥ Q862 ♦ A8 ♣ Q98	
♠ 106 ♥ KJ973 ♦ K642 ♣ 73	N W E S	♠ QJ53 ♥ 4 ♦ QJ1095 ♣ 1062
	♠ A94 ♥ A105 ♦ 73 ♣ AKJ54	

The bidding began

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
pass	pass	?	

and your author produced the bold and creative stroke of 3♦!

'Double' (take-out), said South.

At this point, our friend holding the West cards, one eye knowingly on the vulnerability, the other eagerly fixed on partner, spoke the dreaded words: 'Five diamonds'.

'Double' (responsive), quoth North.

And there the matter rested.

After conceding the inevitable -800, the travelling scoresheet was examined. The large majority of North-South pairs were making between +600 and +660 in 3NT. It was painfully clear that had West passed over South's double, or contented himself with a single raise to 4♦, we would almost certainly have gotten a 'top'. Either our opponents would have gone minus in 4♥/4♠, or - at worst for us - collected +500 from 4♦ doubled.

So what went wrong? Was it your intrepid author or his eager partner who had caused this disaster? The answer is: *neither, on his own*. The 3♦ opening, whilst hardly standard, was an imaginative 'shot' that could, and would, have paid handsome dividends. West's direct jump to 5♦ was an equally excellent bid facing a more 'normal' preempt, since it would then represent a good sacrifice against North-South's certain 4♠ or 5♣.

In the present chapter we shall attempt to provide as great a scope as possible for imaginative, unilateral or 'off-beat' actions. Yet, just as importantly, we must ensure that they are not punished by partner's well-intentioned 'cooperation'.

Pressure-bidding by agreement

Partnership 'style'

Every decent partnership has a 'partnership style' when it comes to messing the opponents around. Some have agreed not to bother. They believe that the best way to avoid trouble is to keep their openings, overcalls, raises, etc. always 'sound' - which means 'conservative'. Others are happy with a style where both partners are generally free to 'bend' things and to bid very aggressively. No less frequently a partnership will develop in such a way that one player is very 'sound', while his partner is always 'putting on the pressure'.

Perhaps you recognize yourself? We hope to convince you that none of the above formulas is the theoretically ideal recipe for success at bridge. We say 'theoretically', because in the end it is far better to keep partner happy by doing the 'wrong thing', than to bid 'correctly' and antagonize him. It is useless, for example, making aggressive light overcalls if your partner so despises such a practice that he either insists on playing you for a good hand anyway, or remains sourly silent opposite your overcalls on the assumption that they are virtual psyches.

This is not a treatise on the implications of temperament in bridge, however, and we shall assume that neither you nor your partner is so intractable.

Why mess the opponents around?

First, perhaps, we should investigate the *reasons* for putting pressure on the enemy. For there are still many players who believe it is only right to 'bid what your hand is worth'. They are happy, for instance, to open 3♣ with

♠ 5
♥ 642
♦ 73
♣ AQJ10642

but in no position, at no vulnerability would they countenance making the same bid on

♠ 5
♥ J62
♦ 753
♣ KJ9862

let alone

♠ 5
♥ Q4
♦ J753
♣ QJ10862

or (!)

♠ 5
♥ Q62
♦ 7543
♣ KJ1094

Now, we are not suggesting that your preempting style should be wild and undisciplined - honestly! On the contrary, we strong believe that is it *discipline* that is the key to successfully messing the enemy around. But it is the discipline of *partnership agreement* and *cautious support*, rather than conservative and predictable initial actions.

Again you must set aside conventional 'wisdom' on the subject of preempting. Never mind 'the rule of 300 and 500' or such like. It is simply a question of *probabilities: do the likely gains of a given action outweigh the likely risks?* If so, make the bid.

‘Sound’ bidders go wrong in two ways. Many ignore the issue of probability altogether. They are so terrified of conceding the occasional large penalty that it is quite irrelevant to them how much they might gain over the long run.

Most, however, are at least dimly aware of the need to compare success and failure relatively, yet they defend a very conservative style on the basis of false assumptions. Of these, there are four important erroneous beliefs which are sufficiently wide-spread to merit reasoned challenge at this point.

a) ‘The enemy will always get you when you’re wrong’

This is at the heart of timid attitudes to pressure-bidding. It is closely associated with a frigid purism that holds that it is somehow ‘wrong’ or ‘unfair’ to get a good result by ‘bullying’ the opposition. People who think like this enjoy nothing so much as seeing an ‘unsound’ action punished – to the extent that they convince themselves that good players are always able to achieve this delicious result.

Not true. No way. No. Even if your opponents were to double your aggressive pre-empting opening, overcall, or raise every time it was right for them to do so, you might well show a profit (when they overbid, underbid, get to the wrong game, are defeated by an otherwise unlikely lead). *But this will not happen* – not if you accept the sort of discipline we advise in this chapter.

Far from consistently getting ‘caught speeding’, you will find, in fact, that well over half the time you were ‘due’ to be punished, you get away scot-free. Note, particularly, that *if your aggressive action is taken before your opponents have defined their distribution*, they will not generally be able to ‘catch’ you unless your LHO has a very good trump holding.

Let’s look at a hand. Say you hold

♠ 10753
♥ KJ1084
♦ A73
♣ 4

on the auction

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♦	?

and you bid 2♥ (weak jump overcall - WJO). Fairly extreme, you might think. Leaving aside for the moment the majority of deals, where your opponents will not want to defend (or fatally misdefend!) 2♥ doubled, we shall assume that you have done the theoretically ‘wrong’ thing - i.e. that 2♥ doubled (on normal defence) will represent a bad result for you. Here are just two very common ways you might get away with murder - despite your opponents taking reasonable, normal actions.

(1) The trumps are split between the enemy

Love all
Dealer West

	♠ A96 ♥ 73 ♦ J94 ♣ KJ985	
♠ KJ82 ♥ A62 ♦ 862 ♣ Q73	N W E S	♠ Q4 ♥ Q95 ♦ KQ105 ♣ A1062
	♠ 10753 ♥ KJ1084 ♦ A73 ♣ 4	

-300 on a partscore deal? Not at all. In fact, the auction continued

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♦	2♥
dble[1]	pass	3♣	pass
3♦	pass	pass	pass

[1] negative

Well-played for -50, when most East-West pairs were making +90 in 1NT. Perhaps East should have rebid 2NT(?), but that will probably fail in practice also. It is almost impossible for him to pass.

(2) LHO bids in front of RHO

Love all
Dealer East

	♠ J82 ♥ 73 ♦ Q64 ♣ KQ1073	
♠ AKQ96 ♥ 52 ♦ 982 ♣ J95	N W E S	♠ 4 ♥ AQ96 ♦ KJ105 ♣ A862
	♠ 10753 ♥ KJ1084 ♦ A73 ♣ 4	

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♦	2♥
2♠	pass	?	

Another escape! and East-West under pressure not to overbid.

Nobody's saying you'll never get caught. If LHO has a good trump holding, particularly if he has short diamonds as well, you will have to declare 2♥ doubled opposite some pretty disappointing dummies. And possibly the given auction is too dangerous at IMPs, although at green... Just don't get fooled into thinking that every time you stick your head into a noose, someone will tighten the rope.

b) 'Good players will bid to the right contract anyway'

It is only fair to say that expert players are under no such illusion. They know from experience that no matter how good you are, you are more likely to do the wrong thing under pressure than if left to your own devices. To hold otherwise is demonstrably nonsense. Why do you think expert partnerships spend so long working out how best to use all the space available to them in uncontested auctions? It's because they need it - and sometimes more! If you take up lots of their space and they can't successfully get their hands on you, they will get things wrong. Not all, not even most of the time - but often enough.

Consider the hand we gave at the start of the chapter. The North-South cards were

North	South
♠ K872	♠ A94
♥ Q862	♥ A105
♦ A8	♦ 73
♣ Q98	♣ AKJ54

Without interference the auction would doubtless proceed something like

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	3NT	pass	end

or

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	1♣
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	pass	end

Once East has opened 3♦, however, it is in practice impossible for North-South to get to 3NT. Assuming West passes at his second turn, the auction will probably go

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	3♦	dble
pass	4♦	pass	?

(that is certainly how the authors of this book would bid).

If West raises to 4♦, the best North-South can (and should) do, it to continue

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	3♦	dble
4♦	dble	pass	end

We could multiply this example a thousand times (why do you think every bridge magazine has a regular column in which experts disagree as to the best bid in these 'pressure' contested auctions?). The important point is: if you regularly put your opponents under pressure, *even if they always make the best bid available* (and how many players do you know who fall into that category?!), they will still - *through no fault of their own* - often end up doing the wrong thing.

As for more fallible competitors... well, the practical gains of giving them awkward decisions early in the auction are simply huge.

c) 'Partner will carry you overboard'

In a sense this is the most cogent argument; for it focuses on the most important aspect of pressure-bidding - *partnership understanding*. In fact, however, this argument can easily be challenged.

Obviously, if you are going to 'mix it up' in certain situations, but your partner is always going to bid (and defend) as though you were pure as the driven snow, you will regularly land up in trouble. But *this would be a defect of partnership understanding, not the result of over-aggressive preempting*. As the proverb goes: 'forewarned is forearmed', and we shall shortly be examining in detail the issue of anticipating partner's aggression.

For the moment, however, let us assume simply that you must always be very cautious in raising partner's preemptive bid. Let us say, in fact, that you intend always to deduct one level from your 'normal' raise. In other words, if you would have raised a sound preempt one level, you should now pass; if you would normally jump-raise, you must now make only a single raise, etc.

The disadvantage of such a policy is easy to identify; a certain proportion of the time (when the preemptor has a 'normal' preempt), responder to the preempt will under-compete the hand by one level - at least *initially*, for we shall discover that good methods can even compensate for this loss to a large extent.

What are the gains of a more aggressive preempting style that requires partner to play you for about a card less is your long suit when he has a fit? Quite simply, you will be preempting *more than twice as often*, gaining *two or three levels* (not just one) when it is most important - which is *as early in the auction as possible*.

It is essential you understand how enormous the *relative* gains are when partner has a fit, but is forced to act with great caution. So we shall continue with a somewhat theoretical example. Say the bidding, at Love all, starts

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	?

and you hold a fairly weak hand with six or seven clubs. Your partner has a fairly weak hand with three or four clubs. Assume, if you will, that we are comparing the following two situations:

(a) *'sound'* - you only open seven-card preempts at the three level in this position, and partner acts accordingly.

(b) '*variable*' - you open six- or seven-card preempts at the three level in this position, and partner assumes you only have a six-card suit when he is thinking of raising.

Now these are obviously fairly artificial constraints, since we have ignored suit-quality, side-suit shape and values, other possible openings, etc. Nonetheless, we think the point will be well-made. Consider, then, the following four possibilities (we shall assume that the strong hand - your LHO - will double for take-out if you open 3♣):

(1) You have seven clubs, partner has four -

In 'sound', the auction will go

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	3♣
dble	5♣	?	

In 'variable', it will go

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	3♣
dble	4♣	?	

(in this last sequence we shall discover how the 4♣ bidder can invite a sacrifice).

(2) You have seven clubs, partner has three -

In 'sound', the auction will be

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	3♣
dble	4♣	?	

In 'variable', it will go

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	3♣
dble	pass	?	

(3) You have six clubs, partner has four -

In 'sound', the auction will go

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	pass
?	pass	?	

In 'variable', it will go

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	3♣
dble	4♣	?	

(4) You have six clubs, partner has three -

In ‘sound’, again -

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	pass
?	pass	?	

In ‘variable’, it will be

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	3♣
dble	pass	?	

A quick comparison shows that ‘variable’ loses *two levels* (one each in situations (1) and (2)), *after* the enemy have taken a bid - and in (1) you will not lose that level permanently. Meanwhile ‘variable’ gains *seven levels*, six of them before the strong hand gets to bid!

And remember, six-card preempts are much more likely than the seven-card variety - even allowing for the greater suitability needed to preempt with a six-card suit.

We trust the example is decisive. When partner has a fit, the relative gains of pressure-bidding are enormous, provided partner is disciplined in his cooperation.

d) ‘You’ll tell them how to play the hand’

Nonsense. It is the other way round. How often have we all seen, in books and at the table, declarer confidently solving a ‘problem’ on the basis of a preemptor having a ‘normal’ hand for his bid? In books, of course, declarer is always rewarded. In real life it is up to you to ensure he frequently receives a rude shock. Perhaps the preemptor’s suit is not decently long enough... maybe he has an unbid four-card major... possibly he has too many outside values.

Few things are so enjoyable (or profitable) as watching a good declarer reject a normal, winning line because of a tragic miscalculation as to your distribution or values, on the basis of an ‘unsound’ preemptive action you have taken. It happens regularly - we speak from experience!

There is another very pertinent argument pointing in the same direction. We have seen that opponents will frequently do the ‘wrong’ think under pressure; and, as often as anything else, they will allow themselves to be pushed into an overbid. So far so good. But this can actually be very dangerous for the defending side. For if your preempt goads the enemy into bidding a low point-count game (say), you risk getting an appalling result if they make it.

Consider, then: when are your opponents most likely to make a low point-count game (or slam)? Is it not when declarer can place all the cards; when he can shut out the preemptor’s hand from the play? The deal below contains a salutary lesson:

Game all
IMPs
Dealer West

	♠ 10732 ♥ 73 ♦ 7 ♣ KQJ1086	
♠ 95 ♥ K62 ♦ AKJ95 ♣ A73	N W E S	♠ AJ86 ♥ QJ95 ♦ 1063 ♣ 52
	♠ KQ4 ♥ A1084 ♦ Q842 ♣ 43	

In one room the bidding went

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
1NT	pass	pass	pass

making three for +150.

In the other, North put in an aggressive 3♣ WJO:

West	North	East	South
1♦	3♣	dble	pass
3NT	pass	pass	pass

making three for +600.

Instructive, no? It is precisely because North is so 'pure' that his call of 3♣ back-fired. It isn't necessarily an 'incorrect' call (although it proved to be so on this occasion), but it runs a very real risk of inducing precisely the horrible result that occurred. Reflect on how different life would have been if North had held the queen of diamonds or the ace of hearts? Yet conventional theory has it that we should be dissuaded from making preemptive bids by the presence of such outside values. Draw your own conclusion.

Of course, the form of scoring and the quality of your opposition are both important. But we would say that, in fact, 3♣ was 'against the odds' on the hand above. The combination of (a) making a bid that probably won't be made in the other room, and (b) the possibility of pushing them into a low point-count 3NT (or 4♥) that rates to make, constitutes too much of a risk to be outweighed by the potential gains of the bid.

If North held instead

♠ 1073
♥ 73
♦ 7
♣ KQJ10865

it would be perverse, though not absurd, to pass, if a WJO of 3♣ were available. The risk of pushing the enemy into a making 3NT is no less real, but this time you hope that you will be presenting the enemy with the same competitive decision as your team-mates will face - which shouldn't be a bad thing... And remember, declarer knows you by reputation and will not be confident about placing you with a standard preempt.

It comes to this: *you pressure-bid principally in the hope that the enemy will end up declaring a different contract to the one they would have reached if left to themselves. You must try to ensure that they are not rewarded for so doing.*

We might compare the scorn heaped by many good players on those who make two-suited overcalls with weak hands. Their case is easily overstated, but it is true that giving the opposition a blue-print of your distribution when they are very likely to declare the hand is a risky business, *if your hand contains no surprises for declarer*.

No, it is the purists who help declarer, not the mavericks. Of course, if you are preempting when 'sound' players would not, you are giving something away. You are telling declarer you have a long suit (seven? six? five?!) and that you are fairly unbalanced. A small price to pay for the benefits of (a) being able to crowd the opposition much more often; (b) making it impossible for declarer to diagnose your 'pure' preempts; and (c) occasionally directing partner to a winning lead.

Enough theory. We shall end our attack on conservatism with two very practical points. First, what sort of opponents do *you* prefer playing against (assuming equal abilities)? Those whose bidding is predictable, who can be relied upon? Or those who are always trying to put you under pressure to do the right thing, whose policy is one of disciplined aggression? Give us the first type any day.

Secondly, consider who has more fun: players who bid 'soundly', scientifically and less often(!)? Or those who are ever on the look-out to mess their opponents about?

The key principle - 'predefinition'

It is time to articulate the guiding principle of pressure-bidding to which we have been alluding since the start of this chapter. Let us return briefly to the hand we gave in our 'cautionary tale'. The East-West cards were

West	East
♠ 106	♠ QJ53
♥ KJ973	♥ 4
♦ K642	♦ QJ1095
♣ 73	♣ 1062

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	3♦	dble
5♦	dble	pass	end

What went wrong? Why did we concede -800? The reason is fairly self-evident: East thought he had a licence to 'bend' things in this position (third seat at green); West didn't! Neither East nor West, 'playing with himself', would have got into trouble. *West* would not have opened his partner's hand, while *East* would not have raised beyond 4♦ if he had held West's cards.

We shall not now concern ourselves with who was 'right' in theory. We shall simply extract the fundamental message, defining the discipline required for successful pressure-bidding: *if you want a licence to make a pressure-bid that is 'non-standard', the situation must be predefined and agreed with partner as granting you that licence.* Otherwise it's *your* fault if partner double-crosses you by over-zealously cooperating.

We have already seen many comparable applications of this principle in chapter 2. A simple illustration:

Game all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

you hold

♠ 4
♥ J105
♦ 8642
♣ K7543

If you are playing standard methods, it really is too much to take a bid on this hand. If, however, you and your partner have an agreement that 3♥ in this sequence is specifically preemptive (with 2NT showing a fair raise), then 3♥ will do nicely.

Similarly: you hold

♠ Q642
♥ 5
♦ KQ104
♣ 10753

on the auction, non-vulnerable against vulnerable:

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	3♥[1]	?

[1] invitational

If you play that 4♦ is basically lead-directing and nothing more, it seems like a worthwhile risk. If, on the other hand, it might encourage partner to bid on over 5♥, it is far better to bid a simple 3♠ (or an aggressive 4♠).

An understanding that preemptive openings or overcalls may be 'non-standard' is no less real and certainly no less important an agreement than either of those illustrated above. You must discuss such things with your partners as a matter of priority (and, incidentally, reveal the content of such discussions to your opponents on a convention card or if asked).

THEORY → AGREEMENT → DISCIPLINE: successful pressure-bidding in a nutshell.

As for *when* it is appropriate to make such arrangements - that is the stuff of later sections.

What is pressure-bidding?

Certainly a pressure-bid is usually in the form of a preemptive jump, but it's more than that. The two key elements of a pressure-bid are that it should be *unilateral* and *immediate*. We must examine these two aspects separately. We shall start by analysing what makes pressure-bidding unilateral and the consequences that flow from this.

Attacking the enemy single-handed

A pressure-bid is necessarily *wide-ranging*. This is marginally a matter of deliberate policy - in other words, you calculate that it is in your favour if you keep the opposition guessing in the auction and in the play. But the real reason a pressure-bid has to be wide-ranging is as a consequence of another overriding strategy - *to make pressure-bids as often as you can*.

Say you hold

♠ 753
♥ K1062
♦ AJ10873
♣ -

on the auction, non-vulnerable against vulnerable

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♠	?

and you are contemplating a bid of 3♦ (WJO). Obviously you do not have the 'standard' hand for the bid, which would include a good seven-card suit and not have so much in hearts outside. You decide to make the bid anyway. It is important to realize that you are not bidding 3♦ *because* you are non-standard (on that basis, the gains are pretty well balanced by the increased likelihood of conceding an unpleasant penalty). The truth is: you are non-standard (on this occasion) *because you want to bid 3♦ as often as possible in this position*.

We can see, then, that an aggressive policy of pressure-bidding leads you to make certain bids on non-standard hands. Thus, of necessity, these bids are wide-ranging. And it is this that makes them to a large extent unilateral. That is to say, a pressure-bid aims at almost the reverse of the normal object of bidding, which is to begin or continue a *dialogue* with your partner by describing your hand as accurately as possible.

When you make a pressure-bid, you are largely abandoning any attempt to involve your partner in a conversation. Instead you are blurting something out - suddenly, loudly and crudely - in order to prevent your opponents having their own dialogue.

Now it must be stressed: you should not indulge yourself capriciously. It is generally quite contrary to your interests to bid unilaterally, excluding partner from the competitive process. A pressure-bid represents an attempt to take on the enemy single-handed, which in normal circumstances will lose you points - and partners.

Assuming, however, that you and your partner have identified sensible situations for pressure-bidding, what are the *consequences* of such bids being unilateral? Doubtless you anticipate us. In short, *don't double-cross your partner*. That is to say, if partner makes a pressure-bid in a situation you have agreed is appropriate for a unilateral strike, you must respect that agreement and not attempt actively to join the struggle unless absolutely necessary.

You might thing this is all rather obvious. And so it should be. Yet it seems to be a philosophy far harder to practice than to preach. The truth is that most bridge-players are dispositionally talkative and optimistic in the auction and find it particularly painful to pass (or 'underbid') in a situation where the 'normal' action is more aggressive.

You hold as dealer, non-vulnerable against vulnerable

♠ Q96
♥ J
♦ K10942
♣ 10753

and the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	2♠[1]	dble[2]	?

[1] WJO
[2] take-out

Assume you have agreed that WJOs in this position are pressure-bids. Would you 'bounce' to 3♠? or 4♠? If you do, you will regret it. The full hand was

Game all
IMPs
Dealer West

	♠ KJ1087 ♥ Q1062 ♦ 5 ♣ A64	
♠ 52 ♥ K85 ♦ AQ8 ♣ KQ982	N W E S	♠ A43 ♥ A9743 ♦ J763 ♣ J
	♠ Q96 ♥ J ♦ K10942 ♣ 10753	

Now don't start making excuses. Don't tell partner he didn't have his bid. Provided you've discussed such calls as being unilateral, his hand is quite acceptable - though obviously at the extreme (defensive) end of the scale. Don't start explaining how the opposition would have got to 3♥ and made it for an average-plus score - they probably wouldn't, and anyway so what? The fact is, if you concede -500 on this hand, it will be your fault *for not having the discipline to pass.*

There is no point in giving partner a free hand to attack the enemy, if you're going to blunder about getting in his way. Glance again at the hand above. Is it inconceivable the auction should continue...

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	2♠	dble	pass
3♣	pass	pass	pass

and that won't make! Or even

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	2♠	dble	pass
3♣	pass	3NT	end

with East confident he can shut our your partner's hand during the play (poor fellow!)?

Bluntly, it comes to this: if (as the dealer) you are thinking of raising on this auction, you must *assume* that partner has a five-card spade suit and fair defence! Of course he may have a six-card suit and little defence, but you can't have your cake and eat it.

THEORY → AGREEMENT → DISCIPLINE

We are not saying that you can never act opposite a pressure-bid. If you have very good defence to the enemy's contract, you can double them. You should not assume partner has any great defence, but often he will be able to give you a lot more help than you expected - and your opponents will suffer! Also, if you have excellent support for partner, it may be right to show it, or to indicate a lead. Let's stick to the auction, again non-vulnerable against vulnerable

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	2♠	dble	?

Say you hold

♠ 10642
♥ 73
♦ KQJ4
♣ J73

3♦, showing a raise to 3♠ wanting a diamond lead is mandatory. A fit-jump to 4♦, however, would be excessive.

'In quick, out quick!'

We said above that the two key elements of a pressure-bid are that it should be unilateral and immediate. It is time to focus on the quality of *immediacy*. To make the point, here is a real-life 'counter-example' from rubber bridge.

Game all
Dealer South

	♠ KQ852 ♥ K6 ♦ J10952 ♣ 7	
♠ - ♥ Q1074 ♦ Q ♣ AQ1085432	N W E S	♠ 1074 ♥ J9532 ♦ AK874 ♣ -
	♠ AJ9636 ♥ A8 ♦ 63 ♣ KJ96	

South opened 1♠. West, a self-confessed 'flair-bidder', passed (!) North raised to 4♠ and this was passed back to West.

'5♣', he murmured, half hoping this would be doubled.

North passed. East turned pale and did the same. South made the obvious double.

The full auction:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
pass	4♠	pass	pass
5♣	pass	pass	dble
pass	pass	pass	

There wasn't much to the play (three down, -500), but the post-mortem was enlightening. West agreed (presumable with himself) that he had been very unlucky, and announced proudly that 4♠ was cold.

South ventured to query this: what if West led the queen of diamonds and switched to a heart?

'I would have led the ace of clubs,' stated West with finality.

East, the best card-player at the table, put everyone right. 'It's always cold,' he muttered; 'The nine of diamonds can always be established for the tenth trick.'

'Exactly!' shouted West triumphantly - let no one suggest he would have bid 5♣ if his partner had held the nine of diamonds!

Yet it was North, a poor player though a very successful businessman, who made the most telling comment: 'You know, if you bid 5♣ straight away, I'd have bid 5♠.'

'Which I would have doubled,' said East sourly.

West appeared to want to say two things at once and almost choked on his cigarette...

It is unnecessary to dwell on the moral of the tale. Suffice it to say, actions similar to those of West on the deal above can be observed in every bridge-club, rubber or duplicate. Not so dramatic, perhaps, but just as foolish.

What is your approach to this fairly ordinary hand? It is Game all, at matchpoints

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	pass
2♦	pass	pass	?

Now what? A fairly routine protection at matchpoint scoring, so you bid 2♠. Your LHO doubles to show a maximum defensive hand and there the bidding rests. The full hand is:

	♠ 92 ♥ K1053 ♦ K962 ♣ KJ7	
♠ K86 ♥ 96 ♦ J1074 ♣ A1085	N W E S	♠ J54 ♥ AJ72 ♦ AQ83 ♣ Q3
	♠ AQ1073 ♥ Q84 ♦ 5 ♣ 9642	

North leads the jack of diamonds and, despite guessing the spades, you go down two for -500 and a terrible result.

Partner shrugs philosophically, 'Should I not protect?' you ask him.

'Well, *I* would,' he assures you.

Just bad luck, then? Later you discuss the board with a friend at the bar. He had held the West cards and had made +90 on the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
1NT	pass	pass	pass

'They overcalled 1♠ on that garbage?!' you complained.

'Hardly a great hand,' your friend laughed. 'Mind you, I'd have probably done the same.'

This gave you pause for thought, since this friend had a habit of winning the club duplicate, and you had never thought of him as a reckless bidder. 'What happens if partner takes you seriously?' you asked sceptically.

'Well, my hand's not so bad opposite a good fit; I want a spade lead; and I might avoid a problem on the next round. Anyway,' he joked, 'I don't encourage partners to get carried away opposite me one-level overcalls.'

Enough stories and contrived post-mortems. Time to state a general proposition - perhaps the single most important piece of advice for a bridge player after 'love your partner'. You can phrase it many different ways. We choose to put it as follows: '*In quick, out quick!*'

And what we mean is this: *try to make one bid that will 'get your hand off your chest' as early in the auction as possible. Then shut up!*

If this sounds familiar, good. It is, of course, simply another expression of the philosophy of 'avoiding the last guess', which featured so importantly in our chapters on 'support with support'. Compare the reasoning behind a semi-preemptive fit-jump, say. You hold, at Love all

♠ Q962
♥ 105
♦ AJ1094
♣ 62

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	?

You bid 3♦ for two reasons. First, so that you yourself will not have a decision whether to bid again over enemy action. And secondly, so that your partner will not be faced with an awkward guess - he will know exactly how high to compete the hand over enemy bidding opposite such a descriptive raise.

Now when it comes to pressure-bidding, the overall strategy of avoiding the last guess is the same. Yet now your tactics are markedly different. Instead of making your partner boss of the auction by describing your hand as accurately as possible, you are taking a unilateral swipe at the enemy and then beating a hasty retreat, hopefully with your partner closely behind. And, as any military expert will tell you, the best time to launch such an attack is *immediately and with surprise.*

Don't wait until the enemy have prepared themselves by a constructive exchange of information. Force them to assemble their forces under pressure of space and time. Another quick example: what is 'wrong' with this auction, at Game all playing matchpoints?

West	North	East	South
1♥	dble	2♥	2♠
pass	pass	3♥	pass
pass	dble	pass	end

Answer: almost certainly East's actions are inconsistent. *Either he should have bid 3♥ immediately over the double, or he shouldn't have bid at all.* Unless he is bluffing, East has committed the cardinal sin. He has taken the last guess when he could have avoided doing so.

Assume, for the sake of argument, that East-West are one down in 3♥ doubled, while North-South would have made 2♠ or 3♠ - very likely on the given auction. Now, say East had bid 3♥ *directly* over the double. If South bids 3♠

West	North	East	South
1♥	dble	3♥	3♠

East-West can gain in one of two ways. Either 3♠ might go down: or North may be encouraged by his partner's overbid to press on to game himself - 4♠ one off. At worst, North-South will play and make 3♠ - nothing East could do to stop that.

Much of the time, however, South will pass over 3♥ if he was only worth 2♠. In that event it is very likely East-West will play 3♥ undoubled for -100 and a good result.

It amounts to this: when you are raising partner in a competitive auction, decide on the level to which you are willing to compete the hand and *raise to that level at once.* Leave your opponents to take the last guess.

The next example is similar, though perhaps less obvious. You hold as dealer, vulnerable against not, at IMPs

♠ AQ109753
♥ -
♦ KJ94
♣ K5

What would you open? 1♠? 4♠? (assume you have no other options, such as an artificial 4♦ opening or a strong two-bid). If you open 4♠, you may well miss a good slam when partner has a hand like

♠ J62
♥ 7543
♦ A104
♣ A73

So you opt for 1♠. The auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♥	pass	pass	?

What now? A conservative 3♠? An aggressive 4♠? Or an off-beat reopening double? In the end you choose to bid 4♠ - after all, you almost opened 4♠ and partner seems marked with a bit. Seconds later you are declaring 4♠ doubled on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♥	pass	pass	4♠
pass	pass	dble	end

This goes one off, and the full hand is:

♠ 64
♥ Q10862
♦ 753
♣ A87

♠ -
♥ AKJ9753
♦ Q2
♣ QJ93

N
W E
S

♠ KJ82
♥ 4
♦ A1086
♣ 10642

♠ AQ109753
♥ -
♦ KJ94
♣ K5

This is not a good result. (Why couldn't West have bid 4♥ over the openings? You'd probably have bid 4♠ anyway, but you *might* have reopened with a double). In any event, team-mates have done even worse: -800 in 5♥ doubled!

'How did that happen?' you ask, partly relieved that your own bad result has been overshadowed somewhat.

'Well, maybe I was over-ambitious,' your team-mate confesses, 'but when RHO opened 4♠, it seemed right to bid 5♥. They did well to double in your room.'

You decide to postpone further explanation, since it is time for the next set...

The logic of 'in quick, out quick' applies to all situations when you can put pressure on the enemy by taking an immediate, unilateral bid early in the auction. It is the same whether you are opening or overcalling. Even preemptive raises have an element of pressure-bidding - though in this case you must also be fairly descriptive, so the emphasis is on 'immediate', not 'unilateral'. Let us look briefly again at the four auctions we have recounted in this section. For convenience, we shall make the offending party West on each occasion.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
pass	4♠	pass	pass
5♣	pass	pass	dble
pass	pass	pass	

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	2♦	pass	pass
2♠	dble	pass	end

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	dble
2♥	2♠	pass	pass
3♥	pass	pass	dble
pass	pass	pass	

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	pass	pass
4♠	pass	pass	dble
pass	pass	pass	

In all cases West decided to 'hold fire' and ended up having to take the last guess. This is just losing bridge - in theory, and especially in practice. Remember, bridge is not an exact science. You cannot afford to be too much of a purist, unless your interest in the game is limited to the post-mortem.

Far better to make a slight overbid, a slight underbid or produce an otherwise off-centre action, *if you can express your hand at one turn and then keep silent*. Let the *opponents* struggle thereafter in scientific pursuit of the 'correct' result. 'In quick, out quick!' We cannot say it often enough.

Don't think you can never lose out by abandoning science and sticking your neck out. If your pragmatic approach gives occasional cause for the purists to revel in your misfortune, accept this censure gracefully. Just continue to play the odds and to avoid the last guess.

The right time to strike

We have seen why it is essential that you identify and discuss those limited, though frequent, situations when the odds favour certain actions being unilateral. And, as always, *it is a question of odds:* in any given situation, do the likely gains of a wide-ranging and unilateral strike outweigh the likely losses?

So when is it right to 'go it alone'? Let us start by taking two extreme examples. In each, you are the 3♦ bidder.

(a) Game all

West	North	East	South
pass	1♠	pass	3♦

Whatever your methods, it is obviously ridiculous for 3♦ to be wide-ranging and unilateral by agreement. Partner has opened a dialogue with you and it appears that there will be no interruptions. It is your job to continue that conversation as descriptively and economically as you can.

Compare the following sequence:

(b) E/W vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♣[1]	3♦

[1] 17+ HCP

The situation is now quite different. The opponents have opened a dialogue with a strong, unlimited and unspecific bid. They will want as much space as possible to converse accurately in peace. Your side, on the other hand, is most unlikely to have either the need or desire for conversation. Partner has passed; East has shown a good hand. *Your priority is destructive, not descriptive.* Far more urgent than telling partner exactly what you have, is the need to make dialogue as difficult as possible for the enemy. You must speak immediately and loudly. Thus we would recommend 3♦ as the right bid on:

(a) ♠ AJ5	(b) ♠ J7	(c) ♠ QJ95	(d) ♠ 10973
♥ Q4	♥ 62	♥ 62	♥ 42
♦ KQ107543	♦ KQ108753	♦ AQJ973	♦ KQ10953
♣ 6	♣ 42	♣ 6	♣ 4

How can we encapsulate the difference between the two auctions above? We have often used the metaphor of 'dialogue', and one way of putting it would be in terms of *the relative need for each partnership to converse*. That is to say, the more important it is for the enemy to have a dialogue, the more eager you should be to strike out unilaterally. Similarly, the less need you and your partner have of dialogue, the less inhibited you should feel about making a pressure-bid that will effectively exclude partner from the competitive process.

There are several aspects you should consider. One of the more important - the *vulnerability* - is rather obvious. The others are investigated more fully in the following pages.

Whose hand is it?

It is usually wrong to make a pressure-bid when your side 'owns' the hand. You must not exclude or hamper partner in the competitive process when your priority is to discover how high a contract your side can *make*. In such auctions your aim is to converse *descriptively* with partner. Similar considerations apply if the hand seems to be evenly balanced, with each side able to make about the same number of tricks.

The only major exception to this is when you open with a *game bid*. Now - even if the hand appears to be yours - it will often be right to open high. On the one hand, you may induce your opponents to concede a large penalty if they guess to bid at the five level (see a couple pages ago). On the other, you may prevent the enemy finding a profitable sacrifice. The following deal caused some discussion.

N/S vuln.
Dealer North

	♠ KQJ9854 ♥ Q ♦ 7 ♣ AK96	
♠ 10 ♥ K1074 ♦ Q8432 ♣ QJ7	N W E S	♠ A7 ♥ AJ6 ♦ KJ1096 ♣ 1053
	♠ 632 ♥ 98532 ♦ A5 ♣ 842	

In one room the auction went

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♦	pass
5♦	pass	pass	pass

one off, for North-South +50.

In the other room the auction was

West	North	East	South
-	4♠	pass	end

North-South +620.

East's pass over 4♠ is normal. North has played the odds - and won. True, he knew the hand was probably his. But he also knew he would be unhappy doubling 5♦ or 5♥. Better to open 4♠, losing the chance of a perfect-fit slam or an inspired stop in 3♠, but forcing the enemy to guess at the five level.

In general, however, your pressure-bids are based on the assumption that *the opponents own the hand*. You hope simply to jostle them into an inferior contract by crowding their space.

The main point to make is that you dealing with a question of *probability*. You hold

♠ 6
♥ KQ10532
♦ K74
♣ 1063

Here are some possible starts to the auction: who owns the hand?

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	pass	?

No guarantees, but the deal is very likely yours. Concentrate on describing your hand for partner.

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♠	?

Again, it is not certain, but it is an excellent bet that the hand belongs to your opponents. You should be seeking to obstruct them.

(3)

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♠	?

The odds have shifted some way against unilateral action, now LHO is a passed hand. But it is still likely the enemy own the deal.

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	?

Closer still. The odds remain in favour of the hand belonging to the opposition (East has at least 4 HCP more than you, and has a higher-ranking suit), so you should be keen to express yourself aggressively. But you cannot afford to be too unilateral. For it is now reasonably likely that it will be right for partner to be involved in the auction.

(5)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣[1]	?

[1] 16+ HCP

More likely, now, that the hand belongs to the enemy, and thus you need greater latitude for pressure-bidding.

(6)

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	?

The opponents are a bit less likely to own the hand than in the previous example. But this time you have a chance to strike before the strong hand (if there is one) announces itself. Again you need scope to bid unilaterally.

(7)

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	?

Very different. No reason at all to assume the enemy own the hand. You must bid on the assumption that partner is listening carefully and will act accordingly.

(8)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	?

This time you deal. The indications are very slight, for you have only 2 HCP below average and your playing strength is good. On the other hand, your shortage is in a higher-ranking suit and you have no aces. Undeniably, however, you have the chance to 'get in the first blow'. First-in-hand preempting is a controversial subject, which we shall look at fully later.

In brief summary, the 'green light' is most likely to be on *when partner is a passed hand*, particularly *when LHO has yet to speak*. It is less critical whether RHO has passed or opened in front of you. Compare directly

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♠	?

with

(6)

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	?

The situations are not dissimilar in effect: what RHO had in (2), LHO probably has in (6). Moreover, RHO's 1♠ bid in (2) is just as limited / unlimited as his pass in (6). More important is *what* RHO has opened (see below).

If you are second to speak, you need some latitude when RHO opens the bidding, but not too much - *unless the opening shows a strong hand*, which switches on the green light for you. If, instead, your RHO passes, you need no latitude at all.

Finally, if you are first to speak, it is obviously something of a toss-up whose hand it is. All that can be said with certainty is that the potential gains of pressure-bidding in this position when the enemy *do* own the deal are very great.

How limited is partner?

We have dealt with a large practical part of this question already, when we focused on the importance of partner being a passed hand. But there are ways for partner to limit himself other than by passing. Probably the most common example is when partner opens 1NT. Consider, say, the auction, at Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	dble	?

Whatever strength your opening 1NT shows, but particularly if is weak, this is an ideal situation for pressure-bidding. Say you bid 3♠ here: it is entirely your own business whether you intend the contract to be two off or to be close to making. You have a very good idea of your side's combined strength. Your partner will not act again (if he wants to stay your partner). In short, you are boss of the auction. Exert your authority!

Compare the auction at Game all

West	North	East	South
-	2♠[1]	dble[2]	?

[1] weak
[2] take-out

Again, you are in control of the auction, and if you bid 4♠ now, it is your secret whether you are hoping for +790 or taking an advance sacrifice against what you assume is your opponents' game. Perhaps you have

♠ Q642
♥ 7
♦ 643
♣ A7542

or maybe

♠ Q642
♥ AQ
♦ 643
♣ AQ75

How limited are your opponents?

This is a subtle and important question. To an extent, what we have to say covers 'old ground'. You may recall a section 'Consider how limited your opponents are' in our discussion of raising partner's overcall (chapter 2, 'We overcall'). In that context we were concerned primarily with the degree of *caution* dictated by one of the enemy being boss of the auction. We also drew attention then to the fact that '*you have less to gain in terms of preemption*' when one opponent has been able to limit his hand.

In the context of pressure-bidding, it is this last consideration that must be decisive. In short, *what is the likelihood of inducing an error?* Let us apply this test to an extremely hypothetical example. Say the auction begins

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♥	?

Partner has passed, RHO has opened. The 'light is green' - or is it? Consider the following, sometimes implausible possibilities:

(1) 1♥ showed any shape, 17+ HCP;

(2) 1♥ showed four (plus) hearts, 10-22 HCP;

(3) 1♥ showed five (plus) hearts, 10-15 HCP;

(4) 1♥ showed five (plus) hearts, 7-11 HCP;

(5) 1♥ showed six or seven hearts, 8-9 HCP.

Apart from (5), all the suggest interpretations are in fact used by some players. But that is by the way. You are simply deciding whether the circumstances are right for pressure-bidding.

(1) 1♥ showed any shape, 17+ HCP

Now, if ever, go for your gun. RHO is strong and his distribution quite unlimited. Bid first, think later.

(2) 1♥ showed four (plus) hearts, 10-22 HCP

Not much less propitious for blasting away. More is known about RHO's distribution, but less about his strength.

(3) 1♥ showed five (plus) hearts, 10-15 HCP (i.e. standard 'Precision')

If you ignore the differences between this auction and the last one, you will pay for that oversight. RHO's hand is, in fact, reasonably limited now, so you must act with far greater discretion. While LHO is not yet boss of the auction, he is at least 'middle management'!

(4) 1♥ showed five (plus) hearts, 7-11 HCP (as played by some top Swedish pairs)

Not dramatically different to the previous auction. Remember, if you are thinking of making a pressure-bid, it is not terribly relevant how strong RHO is, *unless that affects the odds of the hand belonging to the enemy*. In this case (with your partner having passed), the less your RHO has, the more your LHO rates to have.

(5) 1♥ showed six (plus) hearts, 8-9 HCP (as played by nobody!)

This time you would be crazy to attack the enemy with insufficient weaponry. Your LHO knows exactly what his partner has got. You have almost no chance of steering him away from the correct contract and, meanwhile, he is waiting to pounce if you stick your head out too far.

How much space will you steal?

In its purest form, this question is most relevant to simple overcalls. Say the auction, Love all, starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	?

You hold

(a)	♠ K73	(b) ♠ K73
	♥ K6	♥ AJ1092
	♦ 753	♦ 753
	♣ AJ1092	♣ K6

Do you overcall? On hand (a), a 2♣ overcall is probably wrong. Your suit is not good enough, your hand is defensive and you are not going to inconvenience the opponents greatly if the hand is theirs.

Hand (b) suffers the same defects of suit quality and defensive holdings. Yet a 2♥ overcall is a much better proposition. The reason is simply stated: you are taking up much more space. An overcall of 2♥ on this auc-

tion is popularly known as ‘exclusive’, because it ‘excludes’ the two unbid suits. In other words, if West wants to bid clubs or diamonds, he must do so a level higher than without your intervention.

We recommend you attend to such considerations, for the probabilities shift according to how much space you steal. As a corollary, you may be more free in raising a ‘non-exclusive’ overcall than an exclusive one. Thus, with

♠ 10642
♥ K1075
♦ A62
♣ J5

at Game all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	pass	?

it is probably best to bid 2♣, and not force the bidding beyond 2♠ if partner shows a minimum overcall. Contrast the auction, also at Game all

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	pass	?

Now, holding

♠ J642
♥ 75
♦ A62
♣ K1053

you should bid a direct 3♥ (mixed raise).

Whilst on the subject of raising overcalls, what of the following, at Love all?

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	dble[1]	?

[1] take-out

You hold

(a) ♠ K8642
♥ 753
♦ 62
♣ J73

(b) ♠ 62
♥ 753
♦ K8642
♣ J73

Is either hand worth a preemptive raise? In terms of offensive potential, there is clearly nothing to choose between the two hands. You would probably make a bid of 3♣ (preemptive) if you could guarantee partner had a six-card suit. Well, can you? Nothing is certain, but we suggest your partner is less sure to have a good suit opposite hand (a), than hand (b). If you can see why, you show excellent insight into the practical, imprecise probabilities of competitive bidding.

The point is that hand (a) suggests partner might be short in spades, and thus may well have *stretched to bid 2♣ in order to shut out the spade suit*. With hand (b), however, partner rates to have at least three spades and therefore should not be stretching to exclude a 1♠ response. Of course, this is just one factor - far less important than your ODR, say - but it shifts the odds perceptibly.

After all, you should not be surprised if partner has

♠ 3
♥ A62
♦ Q753
♣ AQ1084

opposite hand (a). But you would be entitled to feel a little aggrieved if, opposite hand (b), he had

♠ Q753
♥ A62
♦ 3
♣ AQ1084

Remember, it is not how much *space* you take up, but how many bids useful to the enemy you exclude that matters.

Similar considerations can apply to opening bids. Say you play fairly aggressive weak twos in the majors. You deal at Love all. Would you open 2♥ with...?

(a)	♠ K75	(b)	♠ 3
	♥ Q109762		♥ Q109762
	♦ 3		♦ K75
	♣ 642		♣ 642

Assume you consider yourself borderline in terms of suit-quality and strength. It is a common fallacy that the best singleton to hold is in spades. Quite the reverse.

With hand (a), if the deal belongs to the enemy, the chances are that they won't be able to bid their best suit below the three level. On hand (b), however, if they enemy have nine spades, one of them will probably be able to make a 2♠ overcall. And if they only have eight, and neither has a good enough suit to overcall, partner has four, often with honours.

Just one factor to put into the balance.

Have the opponents found their fit?

This is the most crucial consideration, if you are considering a 'pressure' action once your opponents have started bidding (assuming neither has made his partner boss of the auction).

Until the enemy find their fit (or can be sure there isn't one), they are ripe for the picking. They know they have a lot of points; they're fairly sure they can make a respectable number of tricks in some contract - but which? You must show your opponents no mercy in this anxious state. Bully them. Get in their way. Force them to guess immediately - and as high as possible.

Once the opponents have found a fit, however, the real pressure is off. They will tend to bid to roughly the right level. And if you step too far out of line, they will double you. When the enemy have found a fit, the situation is logically akin to when one of your opponents is very limited. In either case, *you have far less - relatively - to gain* by sticking your neck out.

Of course, this does not mean you can't give them awkward decisions at the four or five levels when you have a good fit for partner and when the opposition's competitive methods are not as accurate as yours. But it does mean that unilateral, preemptive actions at the two and three levels must be viewed with scepticism and prudence.

These considerations are particularly appropriate to *jump overcalls in the 'sandwich' position* - that is, when LHO has opened, partner has passed and RHO has responded. For example,

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	2♥	3♠

West	North	East	South
1♣	pass	1♠	3♦

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1NT	3♥

They are also very relevant when thinking of a *preemptive raise of partner's overcall when both opponents have bid* - as in the auctions

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	dble	3♠

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	2♦	3♥

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	1♠	3♥

Before we look at some hands, there is another important distinction to make clear. Say you open 1♥, holding

♠ KJ73
♥ AQ642
♦ K5
♣ 62

If the bidding continues

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	2♥		

You know you have a heart fit. If, instead, the auctions starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	1♠		

you clearly have a spade fit. But what of partner? On the first auction *he knows of the heart fit also.* When he responds 1♠, however, he knows nothing of the spade fit *until you tell him*.

This distinction has very important implications. We call the first type of fit 'express' (when both players know); and the second sort of fit '*implied*' (when only one player knows). Auctions like the second we shall refer to as '*Implied-Fit Auctions' (IFA's).*

a) Pressure-bidding against an express fit

Don't. Unless your opponents - or their methods - are very poor, there is no point in pressure-bidding when the enemy has a known fit. If the auction starts, say

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	2♥	?

or

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	?

a 3♠ bid from you should be down-the-middle and descriptive. More to the point, *it must show a willingness for partner to bid 4♠ over 4♥*. Your bid of 3♠ may be preemptive, but *it is not a pressure-bid*. Far from being unilateral or wide-ranging, your bid is descriptive and invites partner to compete the hand further.

It is essential you understand the implications of this. How often have you witnessed - or been party to - a painful postmortem, such as might follow the hand below?

N / S vuln.
Dealer South

	♠ J84 ♥ K84 ♦ J10842 ♣ K6	
♠ AQ962 ♥ - ♦ KQ95 ♣ 10742	N W E S	♠ K1073 ♥ QJ107 ♦ 7 ♣ J953
	♠ 5 ♥ A96532 ♦ A63 ♣ AQ8	

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2♥	3♠	4♥
4♠	pass	pass	dble
pass	pass	pass	

only one off, but 4♥ could have gone for 500.

The expression on East's face when his partner bids 4♠ may easily be imagined - something like the face of a man who sees his 33-to-1 horse overtaken on the finish-line after leading throughout. But bridge is not horse-racing. At bridge it is always foolish to back a 33-to-1 shot. What on earth did East think would happen if South could dredge up a 4♥ bid? And if East didn't hope to induce a 4♥ bid, what was he doing bidding 3♠?

The strange thing is, it is usually *West* who mumbles his apologies. East simply groans at the cruel fates, interrupting himself only to explain that he would have doubled 4♥.

In the introduction to this book we stated that sound 'partnership bidding' would make your *partners* look good, rather than you. No more graphic illustration is required than the hand above. East should *pass* - yes, pass! - over 2♥. *The auction will not end there.* If it continues

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2♥	pass	pass
dble	pass	?	

he will bid 3♠, indicating this type of hand. Over

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2♥	pass	3♥
pass	pass	?	

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2♥	pass	3♣ / ♦
pass	3♥	?	

he will, again, normally bid 3♠ to show this sort of hand - though he might make an aggressive double at matchpoints. If the enemy bid to 4♥, East will express doubt about that contract making.

What will never happen, however, is to induce West to 'save' over 4♥, incurring the contempt of sympathy of the uninitiated, who think he has made the 'wrong' bid, or taken a 'wrong' guess.

Let us make East's hand worse offensively - say he holds

♠ K1073
♥ QJ107
♦ 75
♣ J53

Again he must pass over 2♥. But this time he should bid only 2♠ if partner reopens with a double, and probably not compete with 3♠ over 3♥.

It comes to this. When the opponents have an express fit, you must not encourage partner to over-compete if you have a good defensive trump holding. You will always get a chance to show your *offensive* strength later, if it is right to do so. It is all about bidding as a *partnership*. Sound competitive bidding theory dictates that preempting after the opponents find an express fit should be descriptive and *cooperative*. Partner is expected to listen and to act when possible. Which means you cannot bid unilaterally in these positions.

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Contrast the situation we shall look at below, when the enemy have not yet found an express fit. Now, sound bidding theory indicates a need for latitude in pressure-bidding. You are no longer obliged to consult partner, you are largely ignoring him. Again, failures of discipline (this time on his part) will cost you dear.

The two auctions below offer a clear illustration of how different interpretations must be put on partner's preemptive bid, according to the opponents' preceding auction. You hold at Love all

♠ A106
♥ J52
♦ K7632
♣ 85

(1)

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	-	1♥	pass
2♥	3♠	4♥	?

(2)

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	-	1♣	pass
1♥	3♠	4♥	?

Do you give partner a 'fourth'?

The answers should be clearcut. On the first auction 4♠ is automatic. Partner will have seven or eight playing tricks and no great defence to a 4♥ contract.

On the second auction you should pass. Only your partner knows why he bid 3♠ - perhaps he has seven playing tricks, maybe only six. He will almost never have eight. More to the point, he might well have two or three defensive tricks. Perhaps a guess to overbid. *If you bid 4♠, you simply ensure that your RHO can never guess wrong.*

Don't take the last guess. *Assume partner has done the work.* You will never have 4♠ to make, unless partner reopens with a double. You might miss an occasional good sacrifice; but that is a small price to pay for pushing the opponents about so much.

THEORY → AGREEMENT → DISCIPLINE

b) Pressure-bidding against an implied fit

The last auction was an example of preempting an implied fit. In other words, when partner bid 3♠ over

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	-	1♣	pass
1♥	?		

he had sufficiently short hearts to guess that he was interrupting an implied-fit auction (IFA). You know partner was thinking along these lines because, holding

♠ A106
♥ J52
♦ K7632
♣ 85

over

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	pass
1♥	3♠	4♥	?

you know he must have short hearts.

To recap, an IFA is a sequence where one opponent has bid the enemy's presumed trump fit for the first time. An implied fit is particularly relevant when you are considering raising your partner's overcall; but also in some auctions when you might make a 'sandwich' WJO - even an immediate WJO.

We shall start by placing you opposite partner's simple overcall. Say the auction begins, non-vulnerable against vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	dble[1]	?

[1] usually showing 4 hearts

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
♠ KJ62	♠ KJ62	♠ KJ62	♠ KJ62
♥ 73	♥ 7	♥ 73	♥ 7
♦ 64	♦ 642	♦ Q6	♦ Q64
♣ Q7542	♣ Q7542	♣ J7542	♣ J7542

With all these hands it is a workable assumption that the opponents have a heart fit - on (b) and (d) it is all but certain. Opener (West) already knows of any fit. Responder (East) does not. Say you bid 3♠. What is likely to happen? The answer is that much of the time *West will overbid to 4♥*. That is the way of the world. With a fair 1-4-5-3, 1-4-6-2 - even a good 2-4-5-2 shape - people bid 4♥.

Most of the time we would agree with their choice; but that doesn't mean they have done the right thing. Remember, the major reward of pressure-bidding is that the 'correct' call will often be a losing action. Even if West does not bid 4♥ immediately, the auction may continue

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	dble	3♠
pass	pass	dble	pass
4♥			

At this point we must return to an earlier section, in which we castigated a strict adherence to 'pure' preempts (page 91). We warned there of the dangers of 'pushing' the opponents into a game they would not have otherwise have reached, if the preemptor can see the cards lie favourably for the enemy. This consideration is of the essence when preempting an implied fit. In short, *you hope to induce the opponents to overbid - you must ensure you do not live to regret it*.

Looking at the four hands above, they might all seem 'much of a muchness' in terms of offensive potential. But *what of your defensive chances against 4♥?* There are two aspects to consider. First, are the hearts breaking for the enemy? Secondly, do the diamonds lie well for them?

On hands (b) and (d), your singleton heart suggests that the hearts may well be 4-4-4-1 round the table. This is much in favour of bidding 3♠. Any overbid by the opponents will be unlikely to succeed against a 4-1 trump break. Partner may even be able to double 4♥.

On hands (c) and (d), your queen of diamonds is a bad card to hold. It suggests the diamonds lie well for the enemy; Qxx is a particularly poor holding. On hands (a) and (b), not only is the queen of clubs a better offensive card than the jack, but there are slim indications the diamonds may lie badly for the opposition - especially on hand (a), where you have a doubleton diamond.

So what? Well, obviously the differences between the four hands are not so great. But the signs are there to be interpreted, nonetheless.

Hand (c),

♠ KJ62
♥ 73
♦ Q6
♣ J7542

is a poor 3♠ bid. You might well push your opponents into a making 4♥ on very low values. It is better either to bid 2♠; or to pass, intending to compete later with 2♠. This later manoeuvre is obviously something of a psyche, but it just may allow you to play 2♠ when LHO is 2-4-5-2 or 2-4-4-3 without extra values.

Hand (b),

♠ KJ62
♥ 7
♦ 642
♣ Q7542

is an excellent 3♠ bid. You will defend and beat 4♥ a lot of the time - maybe doubled. And, of course, you have a nice hand for partner if he bids 4♠.

Hands (a)

♠ KJ62
♥ 73
♦ 64
♣ Q7542

and (d)

♠ KJ62
♥ 7
♦ Q64
♣ J7542

are more borderline. Hand (d) is probably a 3♠ bid. But don't be surprised if you occasionally concede a horrible -620 when the full hand is something like

N/S vuln.
Dealer South

♠ 1094
♥ K1084
♦ 952
♣ A96

♠ AQ753
♥ J952
♦ 107
♣ KQ

N
W E
S

♠ K1062
♥ 7
♦ Q64
♣ J7542

♠ 8
♥ AQ63
♦ AKJ83
♣ 1083

Hand (a) - well, who knows? Maybe a psychic 2NT (sound four-card raise) will allow you to buy the contract in 3♠ - but it might also lead to -790! Anyway, if you do bid 3♠, you know the risks.

The same sort of considerations might apply in auctions like the following, at Love all

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
1♣	pass	1♥	?

(a)	♠ KQ1094	(b)	♠ KJ1094
	♥ 75		♥ 7
	♦ 64		♦ 642
	♣ A753		♣ A753

If you're going to stick your neck out with a WJO of 2♠, if is better to do so on hand (b), than on hand (a). This is simply because *if* the opponents have a heart fit, they are likely to overbid it some of the time over your WJO. If they do, you don't want trumps to be breaking.

What about direct jump overcalls? Consider holding

(a)	♠ KQ10964	(b)	♠ KQJ1064
	♥ -		♥ 75
	♦ KJ4		♦ KJ4
	♣ 7542		♣ 75

on the auction, non vulnerable against vulnerable

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	?

Doesn't hand (a) cry out for a 3♠ overcall? How often do you think the auction will proceed

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	3♠
4♥	dble		

with 4♥ being an overbid, and partner doubling on a good four- or five-card trump holding?

Hand B, on the other hand, probably only merits a 2♠ (or even a semi-psychic 1♠) bid. On the - far from certain - assumption that there is an implied fit in hearts, *pushing* them into 4♥ is the last think you want to do.

c) Pressure-bidding before the opponents find a fit

As we said, this is where the biggest gains are to be sought. Sometimes it is obvious the enemy haven't located their fit - not least when they have yet to bid. In this section, however, we shall concentrate on those occasions where your opponents *have* bid, but it appears they have not yet found their fit - even by implication.

Let us begin with overcalls. We said earlier that exclusive overcalls are a more potent weapon than the non-exclusive variety. But we also saw that you must *exclude a likely fit* to be effective. Now, many players think that when you make a semi-preemptive overcall, it is best to be short in opener's suit. This is a fallacy. Say you are second to speak, at Love all, after

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	?

(a)	♠ Q64	(b)	♠ 6
	♥ 6		♥ K753
	♦ AJ10963		♦ AJ10963
	♣ K75		♣ Q4

If you overcall 2♦ on hand (a), you are probably excluding nothing of importance. There is very likely an implied fit in hearts and West will simply raise in hearts, unimpeded by your interruption. Indeed, by overcalling, you may *increase* West's options to show a raise. Better to pass - or risk 3♦.

Hand (b), by contrast, is clearly worth 2♦ - perhaps even 3♦. If West has a fair hand, nothing is more certain than that he will have a spade or club suit, or both. Why let him bid 1♠ or 2♣? For that matter, why let him bid 2♠ or 3♣?!

All it amounts to is this: you are much more likely to 'score a goal' *before* the opponents establish an IFA than afterwards.

This distinction is especially critical when you are raising an overcall in fourth position. Here is an instructive example. Say at Game all the auction begins

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	1♠	?

(where 1♠ promised at least a five-card suit). You hold

(a)	♠ 4	(b) ♠ Q7643
	♥ KJ73	♥ KJ73
	♦ Q7643	♦ 4
	♣ 642	♣ 642

It is easy to think that hand (a) merits more aggressive action than hand (b). After all, you may have a double fit or sorts on the first hand, and you have a singleton in the enemy's best suit. This reasoning is totally wrong.

The point is, it is doubtful whether you will achieve anything by making a pressure-bid on the first hand, except to help the opponents to play 4♠ - or 6♠. It is extremely likely the opposition have a good spade fit. You cannot outgun them; you have no defensive surprises against a spade contract. It is possible you can crowd their invitational sequences to some effect by bidding 3♥, but it is not all that likely. It may well work better to pass, or bid a simple 2♥, or psyche 1NT, rather than jump to 3♥. Possessing the right tools does not mean you should use them without purpose or design.

With hand (b), it is equally likely your opponents have a good fit - but this time *neither* of them know about it! Your spades sit nicely over the enemy's length, and you will make quite a few tricks in hearts on a cross-ruff. Bid 3♥ and force them to find their diamond fit and gauge their combined strength at the four or five level - if they can.

Put briefly, hand (a) suggests you will be interrupting an IFA. Hand (b) indicates 'no fit yet'.

The situation is similar when you contemplate a WJO in the 'sandwich' position. Thus, at Love all, over

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♥	?

(a)	♠ KJ1062	(b) ♠ KJ1062
	♥ A753	♥ 5
	♦ 642	♦ 642
	♣ 5	♣ A753

Hand (a) represents a far better 2♠ bid than hand (b).

A final word of caution. Say the auction starts

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	pass
1♥	3♠	4♥	?

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
2♥	3♠	4♥	?

It is Love all; you sit over the 1♦ opening. If partner has been heeding our advice, you will often have a good heart holding and can comfortably defend - perhaps twice the price. *What if you find yourself short in hearts?* BE CAREFUL! It is not unlikely that partner thought he was putting on the pressure in a non-fit auction, rather than an IFA. In other words, partner is quite likely to have at least three hearts. This doesn't mean you should never bid 4♠. Only that you must act on the assumption that partner has heart length. To bid 4♠, then, you should have a reasonable expectation of that contract making - unless you have very little defense indeed.

Thus, over

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	pass
1♥	3♠	4♥	?

♠ J64
♥ 5
♦ Q1073
♣ K7432

is an extremely dangerous 4♠ call. You have good defensive cards, and if the full hand is something like

N / S vuln.
Dealer South

♠ K72
♥ A962
♦ 95
♣ QJ85

♠ J64
♥ 5
♦ Q1073
♣ K7432

N
W E
S

♠ AQ10985
♥ J1084
♦ 84
♣ 10

♠ 3
♥ KQ73
♦ AKJ62
♣ A96

you will look silly if you bid.

Similarly, over

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
2♥	3♠	4♥	?

♠ AQ1053
♥ 4
♦ K62
♣ Q1074

suggests a prudent pass.

THEORY → AGREEMENT → DISCIPLINE.

Let us briefly return full circle. We started this section by saying that the right time to make a pressure-bid was when your opponents had most need of space to converse, and when you yourselves had least need. We have covered a lot of ground since then, but this should remain your guiding principle.

In the next section we shall try to provide a kind of 'list' of pressure-bid situations. But you must not interpret this as an excuse for laziness. Remember always *why* you pressure-bid. On any given hand, ask yourself (a) *what you hope to achieve*, and (b) *what the risks are*. Do not be foolhardy - the probabilities must be in your favour before you stick your neck out. But, if it looks like the enemy's hand; if your partner is limited and your opponents are not; if your interruption is likely to cause real problems; if you are confident you are not pushing them toward a pot of gold - *be bold and imaginative.*

And, above all, *appreciate when your partner is trying to do the same.*

Categories of pressure-bid

This next section is by way of a recap. We shall make a 'list' of the pressure-bid situations we have been investigating in the previous sections. We shall also attempt to provide a rough guide to *how great a licence for pressure-bidding* applies in the various situations. This guide must not be employed to displace judgement - its main usefulness is by way of forewarning the *partner* of the preemptive bidder how gingerly he must tread.

Unfortunately, we must stray briefly into the area of 'system'. Doubtless you have your own ideas as to what your opening bids should mean. This is not the moment to discuss such matters generally. We shall assume you are playing natural three-level preempts and weak twos in the majors. It does not matter much if your methods are different - so long as *some* of your opening bids are preemptive!

More important is *style* of opening preempts. Here we must impose our own philosophy to a certain extent. We shall assume you are flexible - that you are prepared to vary the 'soundness' of your openings according to the requirements of the situation. According, that is, to the need for pressure-bidding. No matter; for doubtless you would have abandoned this chapter long ago if you disliked pressure-bidding altogether.

As to overcalls, we shall be more dogmatic. We strongly believe in *weak jump overcalls* (WJOs). As you will see, 'weak' is a bit misleading - 'preemptive' would be better, 'pressure' still more descriptive. The term 'weak jump overcall' is now popular, however, so we shall not attempt to displace it. It at present to play 'intermediate' or 'strong' jump overcalls, we urge you to change. It is not difficult to bid either sort of hand via a simple overcall (or double). More important by far: *by not playing WJOs, you are denying yourself one of the most potent obstructive weapons in a bridge-player's armoury*.

Using jump overcalls to show good hands is less defensible than playing second-in-hand three-level openings to show strong hands. Remember, if you open with a preempt second-in-hand, it is no worse than 'even money' that the hand belongs to your side. Even first-in-hand preempts are made in the knowledge that about one-third of the time you own the hand. Contrast the situation when you make a preemptive overcall. Now, the odds are substantially against your side owning the hand - and if your partner has passed, it is virtually certain the enemy have you outgunned. To deny yourself the opportunity to make pressure-bids in these situations is to concede a huge advantage to your opponents. It is losing bridge.

Finally, we shall assume that your direct raises of partner's overcall, particularly your jump raises, are specifically preemptive - as suggested in chapter 2.

Throughout this section we shall use an artificial scale from one to ten, to characterize different pressure-bidding opportunities. 'One' means the time is *not* right at all for putting on the pressure - your preemptive bid must be descriptive and cooperative. You expect partner to listen and often to act. 'Ten' would indicate that you have a complete licence to be wide-ranging and unilateral. Your partner will only raise you if he has a very offensive hand - and even then he will be cautious.

We shall assume IMP or aggregate scoring. At matchpoints you generally want to move matter toward the extremes. In other words, a 3 or 4 becomes a 1 or 2, while a 7 or 8 becomes a 9 or 10. This is because at matchpoints, the *size* of loss / gain is far less important than the *frequency* - if the odds are in your favour, go for it! If they are against you, refrain.

Preemptive openings

There are two important considerations: *vulnerability* and *position*.

a) First-in-hand, non-vulnerable: 7/9

This is perhaps the least obvious of all pressure-bidding situations. The point is, about one-third of the time your side will own the hand. If that is the case, you might give partner a very awkward guess if your opening is wide-ranging. On the other hand, if the deal belongs to your opponents, there is no better time to apply the pressure than before they bid.

In short, you are balancing the chance of inconveniencing your opponents two-thirds of the time, against the risk of inconveniencing partner the other one-third. These odds are not sufficiently in your favour, unless (1)

then enemy have a lot to lose when they get things wrong, and (2) you are not risking too much yourselves when partner gets it wrong.

Your main loss comes when partner has to pass instead of bidding constructively opposite your opening preempt. In other words, you will miss some games (or overbid to others). Note, however, that partner should be able to *invite* game opposite a 2♥/2♠ opening, or a 3♣/3♦ opening (even in no-trumps[7]). You also risk conceding unpleasant penalties if you are too aggressive at equal or unfavourable vulnerability - though this risk often gets exaggerated.

Your chance of big gain comes when the opponents miss a game (or slam), get to the wrong game (or slam), or overbid to a slam. You will also pick up steady gains when they overbid to a game.

When you are not vulnerable, we believe these odds are sufficiently in your favour to suggest that your opening preempts should be pressure-bids. Your opponents' vulnerability is also important, however, for assessing the odds. We should say that Love all is only a 7, while non-vulnerable against vulnerable is a 9.

Some examples of 'pressure' 3♣ openings:

(1) Love all

(a) ♠ 5	(b) ♠ 6	(c) ♠ Q3	(d) ♠ J632
♥ Q104	♥ 742	♥ Q6	♥ 5
♦ KJ3	♦ 653	♦ 72	♦ K2
♣ QJ10843	♣ AQ10962	♣ KJ87542	♣ KJ9862

(Don't worry overmuch about having a four-card major on the side when you are making a pressure-bid. You have already placed your bet on the enemy owning the deal.)

(2) Non-vulnerable against vulnerable

(e) ♠ 5	(f) ♠ Q4	(g) ♠ 7532
♥ K632	♥ 73	♥ J63
♦ Q10	♦ J1062	♦ 4
♣ QJ9862	♣ KQJ94	♣ QJ1094

b) First-in hand, vulnerable: 2-3/6-7

Now the odds shift - particularly if your are at 'red'. In fact, vulnerable against not we would not really call it a pressure-bidding situation at all. At Game all the odds are obviously not dissimilar from at Love all - except that if you concede one or two off doubled against a partscore, it will be more painful.

Whilst on the subject of partscores, it is important to recognise that, at matchpoints, it is very dangerous to pressure-preempt when vulnerable. For even if the opponents could have made a partscore at the three or four level, it will be more than adequate compensation for them if you concede -200 for one off doubled or two off undoubled. In fact, at matchpoints, we would grade all first-in-hand vulnerable preempts as 2-4.

Some examples of 3♦ openings (at IMPs):

(3) Game all

(h) ♠ J632	(i) ♠ -
♥ 5	♥ 732
♦ KQJ932	♦ QJ10963
♣ K4	♣ QJ104

[7] Via a device by the late British star, Jeremy Flint. The next suit (e.g. 3♥ over 3♦) asks partner to bid: (a) 3♠ with a good suit (for no-trumps); (b) 3NT with a heart 'fit' and not a suit good enough for 3♠; (c) 4♦, if unable to bid either 3♠/3NT.

(4) Vulnerable against not

(j) ♠ J732	(k) ♠ 74	(l) ♠ Q4
♥ 4	♥ -	♥ 72
♦ AQJ8632	♦ KQJ1096	♦ KQJ9632
♣ 7	♣ 86542	♣ Q5

Before we move round the table, it is important to note that we have only been giving *extreme* examples in each instance. Thus all twelve hand should be opened 3♣/3♦ non-vulnerable against vulnerable; and hands (h)-(l) should also be opened at Love all. It is simply that at some vulnerabilities your *range is wider*. Rarely you might get dealt such a 'pure' preempt that you want to do something more with it at 'green'. Say you hold

♠ -
♥ 7632
♦ KQJ9762
♣ 52

It you are vulnerable, this represents simply the 'pure' extreme of a 3♦ preempt. At 'green', however, (and maybe at Love all) we would want to open this hand at the four level.

c) Second-in-hand: 1-3

This is not the time to pressure-bid, as we saw in the section 'The right time to strike'. Take the vulnerability into account a little, but generally keep your preempts within a fairly narrow range. Partner will often have a good hand and will need to know what you've got - either in order to bid constructively; or to double the opponents, particularly if they protect - e.g.

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
-	-	pass	3♦
pass	pass	dble	pass
3♥	?		

d) Third-in-hand: 7-10

Partner has passed. As always, this means you have a 'licence to kill'. Only at 'red' should you be at all concerned with safety. In particular, we strongly recommend that you open preemptively on some relatively high point-counts, provided the hand is basically one-suited. You might miss the occasional game, but you will frequently put your opponents on very insecure ground - in the auction and in the play. Assume you play a weak 2♠ opening. The following examples are certainly non-standard, but...

(1) Game all

(a) ♠ AQ9842	(b) ♠ AQ10932	(c) ♠ QJ10862
♥ QJ3	♥ 4	♥ 5
♦ Q105	♦ K1093	♦ 7632
♣ J	♣ Q5	♣ 92

(2) Non-vulnerable against vulnerable

(d) ♠ AKJ953	(e) ♠ KQ1093	(f) ♠ KJ1085	(g) ♠ QJ1082
♥ QJ4	♥ 7632	♥ -	♥ 4
♦ Q3	♦ 4	♦ J7632	♦ 763
♣ 72	♣ Q54	♣ Q53	♣ 8632

e) Fourth-in-hand

We won't grade this one. Obviously you only open in fourth seat if you expect to go plus. All we would say is that, again, you should risk missing the occasional game, rather than let the opponents in cheaply. Thus,

examples (a), (b) and (d), above, should be opened 2♠ at any vulnerability fourth-in-hand. Here is an example of a 3♥ opening, fourth-in-hand, Love all:

♠ 6
♥ KQ109532
♦ AQ10
♣ Q7

You hope to make 3♥, maybe 4♥. What you don't want is the auction going

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	1♥
1♠	pass	3♠	?

One-major openings, third-in-hand, non-vulnerable

We are straying toward what many people consider 'psyching'. Yet this would be a very wrong way of interpreting what we suggest - which is only to *increase the range* of third-in-hand 1♥/1♠ openings when not vulnerable. This practice can have devastating preemptive effect. It works best in a five-card major system, where partner can raise most freely; but it is always a useful weapon. It is perhaps a good idea for responder to have some convention like 'Drury' available to show sound raises cheaply, but that is less important than being able to open 1♥/1♠ more often in third position.

What will you gain? Your most frequent area of gain will be your opponents misjudging the auction and playing a partscore instead of a game, or letting you play an undoubled partscore one or two off when they had game (or at least their own partscore) on. Secondly, your opponents may misjudge the play. Thirdly, you may induce a winning lead from partner - or steer yourself away from a losing lead of your long suit.

As always, there are risks. Your partner may occasionally bid too high on a misfit. You may provide an enemy declarer with clues to the winning line. On balance, however, you would do well to open 1♠ on any of the following hands, Love all, third-in-hand.

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ KJ1032	♠ KQ952	♠ AJ962
♥ A1053	♥ 6	♥ 4
♦ Q62	♦ A73	♦ QJ732
♣ 4	♣ 9763	♣ 62

Of course, any such agreement with your partner must be stated clearly on your convention card, or if asked by your opponents. You may not be legally obliged to alert partner's opening, but we recommend you do so anyway.

Weak jump overcalls

Now at least one of your opponents has taken a bid. This means you must always be aware of how limited they are and whether they have found a fit. Nonetheless, certain generalized observations can be made.

a) Second-in-hand: 6-9

The suggested grading assumes a standard one-of-a-suit opening on your right. (See above for how your style should change over different openings.) Important considerations are (a) the vulnerability; (b) whether you are overcalling at the two or three level; (c) how much space you are stealing. The best situation for a 'pressure-WJO' is non-vulnerable, at the two level and exclusive - i.e. (1♣)-2♠! Least propitious is a vulnerable, non-exclusive WJO at the three level - i.e. (1♠)-3♣.

We shall take, Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	2♠

as our example auction. The following are instances of pressure-WJOs on this auction:

(a)	♠ QJ10862	(b)	♠ KJ1095	(c)	♠ AQ1087
	♥ Q5		♥ Q3		♥ 743
	♦ 743		♦ 7632		♦ K632
	♣ 84		♣ 63		♣ 6

b) Third-in-hand: 9-10

This is the one. Apart from strong club auctions and the like, you will never be in a better position to mess your opponents around. The following examples are triple-X-rated. All we can say is - they work! Again, at Love all.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	2♠

(d)	♠ J10984	(e)	♠ KJ943	(f)	♠ Q10985	(g)	♠ KJ1085
	♥ 743		♥ 4		♥ -		♥ J963
	♦ A652		♦ A73		♦ 742		♦ A62
	♣ 3		♣ J742		♣ K7643		♣ 5

And remember, at the other extreme you'll have

(h)	♠ KQ10963	(i)	♠ AQJ1063
	♥ 4		♥ 743
	♦ 762		♦ 62
	♣ A53		♣ 74

c) Fourth-in-hand: 8-9 (e.g. pass - pass - 1♦ - 2♠)

Somewhere in between. Be a bit more aggressive than when partner has yet to bid, but slightly less free now that LHO has passed also.

d) 'Sandwich' WJOs: 1-10!

As we saw earlier, whether this represents a pressure-bidding opportunity depends entirely on whether the auction is

(1) no fit: 8-10;
(2) IFA: 2-9;
(3) express fit: 1-2.

Further examples are unnecessary, but here is a 10 on the auction

E/W vuln.

West	North	East	South
1♣	pass	1♠	?

♠ A7643
♥ KQJ96
♦ 4
♣ 53

3♥. This might be going a bit too far for most of you. But consider: partner couldn't overcall 2♠ or 1♦; he is likely to have at least three hearts, and may well be 1-4-5-3, 1-4-4-4, 2-4-3-4, or similar. He will know you are bidding his hand for him to a large extent. He will almost never raise without four hearts - and often not even then!

Simple overcalls

Here the space you steal and the vulnerability are very important. Consider two-level vulnerable overcalls should always be made in the hope or expectation that the hand belongs to you. Non-vulnerable overcalls that steal valuable space, however, should have a more flexible lower limit.

Remember this also: *if partner is a passed hand, it will often be right to make a WJO on a hand that would 'normally' make a simple overcall.* Here are some examples:

(a) ♠ A4
♥ 7653
♦ AQ1082
♣ J4

E/W vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	?

This is the ideal time to put in an obstructive 2♦ bid. Partner will not take you too seriously when it appears you were excluding a 1♠/1NT/2♣ response at this vulnerability.

(b) ♠ 52
♥ A9732
♦ 73
♣ KQ64

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	?

Probably best to pass - certainly at IMPs. You are very minimum; you are not sure you want a heart lead; and you are not excluding anything.

(c) ♠ 6
♥ KJ1084
♦ 762
♣ A1054

E/W vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♦	?

Why bid a non-exclusive 1♥, when you can bid a preemptive 2♥? See if West is good enough to come in with 2♠...

(d) ♠ K3
♥ Q62
♦ J4
♣ AJ9752

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	?

Not even close to a 2♣ overcall at this vulnerability. Your suit and hand are not good enough; you are defensive; and you will be excluding almost nothing. Pass.

(e) ♠ A62
♥ J104
♦ AJ10974
♣ 6

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	pass	1♠	?

If you consider yourself too defensive for a WJO if 3♦ (as you probably are), this is a reasonable 2♦ bid. You are excluding the two most likely responses of 1NT/2♣.

There are useful negative inferences for the auction and defence provided by this style of pressure-bidding.

You hold as dealer

♠ 107
♥ J7542
♦ K8654
♣ 10

at Love all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	1♠	2♥	pass
3♣	pass	3NT	end

What do you lead?

Consider first: what is partner's normal hand for a simple overcall in this position? In particular, *why did he not bid 2♠ instead of 1♠?* Basically, there are two reasons for making a simple, rather than jump overcall in

this sort of auction. Either you are *too good for a WJO* - you are not sufficiently confident it is the enemy's hand; or *your suit is not good enough in the context of your hand as a whole.*

Doesn't a diamond lead stand out now? Partner won't have a hand like

♠ AQ1086
♥ 83
♦ 72
♣ J763

but he might easily have something like

♠ KJ963
♥ Q
♦ AQ3
♣ 7632

Preemptive raises

Nothing more to add to what was said in the first two chapters and the earlier sections of this chapter. It's more a case of knowing when *not* to preempt to the level of the fit. The warning signs have been discussed.

We can compare the situation with respect to 'sandwich' WJOs - it largely depends on what sort of a fit your opponents have unearthed, what you think they can make and whether you want to push them into an overbid.

Again we shall give you an example of a 10:

		West	North	East	South
♠ 76543	E/W				
♥ 6542	vuln.	1♣	1♥	1♠	?
♦ 5	3♥. Nothing to lose; plenty to gain!				
♣ 632					

Summary

In these first five sections we have outlined and illustrated a successful strategy of pressure-bidding. We have investigated *why* to pressure-bid, and *when* and *how* to pressure-bid. Most critically, we have explained the importance of being able to *recognize* your partner's pressure-bids and when you should act opposite them.

It is not terribly relevant whether you approve of our particular style, as exemplified in these sections. Far more crucial is that you understand and apply the two fundamental injunctions of pressure-bidding:

1. In quick, out quick!
2. THEORY → AGREEMENT → DISCIPLINE.
   - force the opposition to take the last guess;
   - put the pressure on immediately;
   - understand and agree with your partner *which situations* allow you *how much license to pressure-bid*;
   - have the discipline to respect those agreements.

If you and your partners do this, you will be very difficult to play against. And that is all you can ask of pressure-bidding.

Responding to partner's preemptive bid

We have dealt with the question of *when* to bid (or rather, when *not* to bid); we must now concern ourselves with *how* to bid opposite partner's preemptive opening or overcall.

'Save-suggesting' and 'push' bids

Do you remember a hypothetical situation we described earlier at Love all on the auction...

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	3♣	dble	?

We said then that responder to this non-vulnerable, third-in-hand 3♣ bid must *assume* he is facing a six-card suit. This means he might be at a disadvantage when partner actually has a 'standard' seven-card preempt, for he will be under-preempting the hand. In particular, a good sacrifice to an enemy game might be missed. There is a substantial solution to this problem (as we suggested earlier).

a) 3NT/four-minor

You hold as dealer

♠ A6
♥ J7543
♦ 62
♣ Q753

at Love all on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	3♣	dble	?

What you want to do is to *invite* a sacrifice if the enemy bid to 4♠. This is easily achieved by bidding 3NT. This says to partner: *'I want to compete to at least 4♣, but I am also interested in bidding to the five level if your hand is suitable.'*

Needless to say, 4♣ by you (instead of 3NT) does *not* invite partner to continue. It is a *'push'* or '*tempo*' bid, designed to encourage the opponents to be hustled into an overbid. You hope to defend and beat your opponents at the four level.

There are two reasons for playing the bids this way round. The first is theoretically based. You are obviously less happy to be doubled in 4♣ when you have a 'push' bid; therefore you must give the opponents as little time as possible to decide on defending. If you were to play 3NT as the push bid, you might get an auction like

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	3♣	dble	3NT
dble	4♣	pass[1]	pass
dble	pass	pass	

[1] forcing

where both your opponents have been allowed the space to suggest defending and to apply their judgement accordingly.

The second reason is purely practical. Making a direct preemptive raise of partner's suit in auctions like this (IFAs) has an undeniable psychological effect on LHO - it encourages him to overbid. Sometimes 'he has no choice'. If - *and only if* - you think you are likely to beat what LHO overbids to, then 'put the pressure on'...

Finally we must point out that you do not always have to be honest. In particular, you might try the occasional 4♣ bid on a hand with a very high ODR - perhaps they will believe *you* rather than their partner.

Of course, the same methods are applicable when the preempt is in diamonds. Moreover, it is easily extendable to auctions where the preempt is a WJO, rather than an opening bid. For instance, on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♠	3♦	3♥	?

4♦ is a push bid; 3NT suggests a save. Similarly on the auctions

West	North	East	South
1♠	3♦	3♠	?

West	North	East	South
1♠	3♦	dble[1]	?

[1] negative

Even after

West	North	East	South
1♣	2♦	2♠	?

or opposite weak 2♦ openings (if you play them), 3NT in competition should be used to suggest a save, while 4♦ is a push bid.

You might, in theory, use the same methods opposite major-suit preempts to suggest a five-level save - say, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	3♠	dble	?

But this would be going too far. It is much better to exclude the four level with a direct raise to 4♥/4♠, than to worry about inviting partner to the five level. In any event, as the saying goes (popular amongst top players): 'the five level belongs to the opponents'. Meaning, *it is rarely right to save over the enemy's five level contract*.

Incidentally, you may be thinking: 'what if I want to play in 3NT?' Well, it's unlikely - on some auctions inconceivable. Nevertheless, if it is a realistic possibility, partner simply assumes you are hoping to declare 3NT until you 'pull' it - if and when you are doubled.

Thus, if, at Love all, the auction goes

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	2♦
dble	3NT	pass	?

you must pass. If it continues

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	2♦
dble	3NT	pass	pass
dble	4♦	4♠	?

you have been invited to save in 5♦ with the right hand.

b) Double/three-major

The same sort of device is available opposite WJOs of 2♥/2♠. Say the auction, non-vulnerable against vulnerable, starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	2♠	3♥	?

and you hold

♠ K742
♥ 653
♦ KQ42
♣ J7

It would be a grievous breach of discipline to bid 4♠ on this hand. Partner might have a five-card suit and fair defence. Yet why concede -620, rather than -300 when partner has something like

♠ AJ10963
♥ 74
♦ 63
♣ Q64

The answer is to double. The bid performs the same function as 3NT did on the auctions above. It says: 'I am prepared to compete to at least 3♠, and will be happy for you to bid 4♠ over 4♥ if your hand is offensive.'

Obviously, a bid of 3♠ (instead of double) on the above auction is a *push* bid, and does *not* invite partner to bid on.

When can you use double as a save-suggesting three-major bid? After all, there's no point in partner inducing an indiscretion if you are unable to punish it. It's obvious you don't need a penalty double when RHO bids a new suit forcing. What about a raise of opener's suit to the three level? Or a non-forcing new suit? Personally, we use a save-suggesting double opposite a 2♥/2♠ WJO in auctions like

(1)

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♠	3♥[1]	dble

[1] forcing

(2)

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♠	3♦	dble

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♦	2♠	3♥[1]	dble

[1] non-forcing

but not in auctions like

(4)

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♠	3♥[1]	?

[1] non-forcing

where we play double as penalties.

However, it would not be unreasonable to limit its use to type-1 auctions and when you are a passed hand. Or perhaps to extend it to type-4 auctions.

What about when partner *opens* 2♥/2♠? If you are not a passed hand, you must reserve double as punitive. If, however, you have passed and partner opens *third-in-hand*, e.g., non-vulnerable against vulnerable

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
pass	2♥	3♣	dble

there is every reason to play double as inviting a four-major - either as a save, or to make if partner is strong.

If partner opens *fourth-in-hand*, it is certainly right to play double for penalties, in the unlikely event that your RHO bids a suit now on a hand he couldn't open.

If, instead of bidding a suit, your RHO makes a take-out double, we suggest you play 2NT as your save-suggesting three-major bid - e.g.

West	North	East	South
-	2♠	dble	2NT

If partner's bid was a WJO, you will have a cue-bid available also. You can use that as game-invitational with defence - i.e. inviting partner to bid a game, or maybe to double the enemy if they bid again. Thus, on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♠	dble	?

2NT suggests a save in 4♠; 3♦ shows a good two-way hand.

The save-suggesting devices we have described above go a long way toward mitigating one of the few areas of potential loss connected with wide-ranging pressure-bids.

Bidding new suits

a) In competition: 'consultative', or 'lead-directing'?

What we are talking about here is when partner has made a preemptive bid, RHO has then bid (or doubled for take-out), and you now bid a new suit. For example

	West	North	East	South
(1)	1♣	2♠	3♣	3♦
(2)	-	3♦	3♥	4♣
(3)	1♦	3♣	3♥	3♠
(4)	1♥	2♠	3♣	3♦
(5)	pass	3♥	dble	4♦
(6)	1♦	3♣	dble	3♥
(7)	1♦	2♥	dble	4♣
(8)	-	3♣	dble	4♦
(9)	-	2♠	3♦	4♥

You should be sufficiently well-versed in competitive bidding theory by now to realize that when your partner has shown a weak one-suited hand and the opponents have made a strong bid, your new suit bids are far more usefully employed to show some sort of fit than to introduce your own suit on a misfit. But that is not the end of the matter. Should these fit-jumps and FNJs be (1) *'consultative'*, suggesting further competition from partner? or (2) *'lead-directors'*, not inviting partner to bid again?

The answer is: *it depends*. Let's look at some different situations.

(1) Fit-jumps

These always invite further competition. If you don't want partner to bid again, why make a fit-jump? Either jump directly in partner's suit, or make a simple change of suit to indicate a lead. Thus auctions (7) to (9) above show a willingness for the preemptor to compete further over an enemy bid.

(2) Partner probably won't be on lead

If your RHO has shown a long suit naturally, particularly in a major, the chances are it will be *you* - not partner - who ends up on lead if your opponents play the hand. Therefore, again, your new suit bid should invite partner to compete the hand further. Consider auction (2) above

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	3♥	4♣

Certainly it is possible that West might bid 4♠ to play (or 6NT, for that matter), but the odds favour the enemy wanting to play in hearts - especially when you consider that you are unlikely to want to bid if you have length in RHO's suit. It is thus silly for 4♣ to be lead-directing - you do not have to direct yourself to the best lead! Better to use 4♣ as 'consultative', asking partner if he is interested in saving in 5♦ (or 5♣) against a 4♥ contract. Perhaps you have, at Love all

♠ 107632
♥ 4
♦ Q53
♣ AQJ6

If the auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	3♥	4♣
4♥			

partner will know to bid 5♦ with

♠ Q
♥ 65
♦ KJ97642
♣ 1053

but will pass (even double?) with

♠ Q54
♥ 65
♦ AJ97642
♣ 5

Similarly, on auction (3), above

West	North	East	South
1♦	3♣	3♥	3♠

it is not impossible that the opener will try to declare 3NT or 5♦. Still, it is right that, in principle, 3♠ should suggest a save in 4♠/5♣ over a 4♥ contract.

(3) RHO makes a negative/take-out double

This time your partner rates to be on lead over 90% of the time. So the odds favour your new suit bid telling him what to lead, if it is not a jump. You'll have to give up on inviting a sacrifice, unless you can do so generally, by using one of the methods introduced earlier in this section. Just concentrate on getting the right lead. Consider auction (5), above

West	North	East	South
pass	3♥	dble	4♦

Say, as South, you held

♠ 74
♥ 653
♦ AK
♣ J98432

No guarantees, but wouldn't it be nice if partner had something like...

♠ J6
♥ AQ109742
♦ 762
♣ 2

And don't tell us he would have led a diamond against 4♠ unless you had given him instructions.

Auction (6)

West	North	East	South
1♦	3♣	dble	3♥

carries a similar message: 'Lead a heart against 3NT, 4♠ or 5♦; but don't bid 5♣.'

(4) RHO raises

Again, partner will be on lead nearly all the time. Help him out if you can. You hold, second-in-hand,

♠ AQ10762
♥ J54
♦ 63
♣ 74

at Love all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	2♠
3♣	3♠	3NT	end

You lead...? Who knows? You suspect RHO has the king of spades, but what if he hasn't!? Where's partner's entry? Has he got one? Much easier if partner has bid 3♦ over 3♣ (auction 1, above). Now you hope the full hand is something like

Love all
Dealer East

♠ J83
♥ 10962
♦ AQ952
♣ 9

♠ 94
♥ KQ7
♦ J74
♣ K10632

N
W E
S

♠ K5
♥ A83
♦ K108
♣ AQJ85

♠ AQ10762
♥ J54
♦ 63
♣ 74

Of course, East might see the writing on the wall and choose to defend instead. You'll still get a good score; and on another day, you might well contrive to steer such pessimistic opponents away from their lay-down games. Perhaps next time the full hand will be:

Love all
Dealer East

♠ J83
♥ 10962
♦ AQ952
♣ 9

♠ A4
♥ Q74
♦ J74
♣ K10632

N
W E
S

♠ K5
♥ A83
♦ K108
♣ AQJ85

♠ Q109762
♥ KJ5
♦ 63
♣ 74

And if your partner *does* bid 3♠ over 3♣, and you hold

♠ AQ10762
♥ J54
♦ 63
♣ 74

there's a strong case for leading a spade, playing partner for Kx, and declarer for Jxxx. Certainly partner expects you to lead a spade to a club contract, so he rates to have the king.

(5) RHO bids a minor suit

Now it's about even money which of your opponents is going to declare. Still, we recommend your new suit bid be for the lead. For a start, you will often be able to suggest a save via a double - see above, and auction (4)

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♠	3♣	?

Secondly, if partner is not going to be on lead, the enemy will frequently be in a minor-suit game - and 'the five level belongs to the opponents ...'

In summary, then: if you bid a new suit in competition opposite partner's preemptive bid, it is *generally for the lead*. It only invite partner to bid again when it is a *jump* or when *RHO has bid a new major*.

As we shall see in the next chapter, you may still be able to invite partner's cooperation at the four or five levels, even though you started with a 'lead-directing' bid.

c) Over a pass: 'natural' or 'FNJ'?

Consider the following auctions:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♦	2♥	pass	3♣

(2)

West	North	East	South
1♣	2♠	pass	3♦

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	pass	3♠

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	2♥	pass	4♣

(5)

West	North	East	South
pass	2♠	pass	3♥

Sometimes, as with auction (1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♦	2♥	pass	3♣

it is clear that your new suit bid must be based on a fit - especially when (as here) you are a passed hand. On this auction, 3♣ is a 'normal' FNJ, to be compared with the 3♣ bid in, say,

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♦	1♥	2♦	3♣

It primarily tells partner when he can bid on, but it has a lead-directional content as well.

But what of auctions (2)-(5), where - in theory - your are unlimited? First, let's look at those sequences where the opponents have not yet bid. Perhaps you are accustomed to think of such auctions only as 'uncontested', rather than as PCAs (see chapter 2). Maybe you have even ascribed artificial meanings to some of the bids. For example, many pairs play that a 4♣ response to a 3♥/3♠ opening is some sort of slam-inquiry.

Certainly some of the time that the auctions starts with a preemptive opening from your partner followed by a pass from your RHO, you will hold a very good hand that wants to bid constructively without knowing where you will end up. Far more often, though, you will have a hand with some sort of a fit for partner that strongly suggests your LHO will be taking a bid. On these hands it is frequently important to be able to be descriptive, so that partner can be called upon to use his judgement when the enemy announce themselves.

Earlier in the section you held

♠ 107632
♥ 4
♦ Q53
♣ AQJ6

at Love all on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	3♥	?

Anticipating West's 4♥ call, you bid 4♣ to enable partner to press on with 5♦ when right. Same hand, different auction:

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	pass	?

If you bid 4♦, it is almost certain the auction will go

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	pass	4♦
4♥			

or

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	pass	4♦
dble	pass	4♥	

It is probably better to pass, or bid 5♦, rather than raise to 4♦.

But wait a second. Surely we should be able to achieve the same competitive accuracy over a pass from RHO as we did over his 3♥ bid? And so we can. Just bid 4♣, as you did when RHO bid 3♥. The large majority of the time your LHO will be bidding 4♥ or double. Now partner should bid just as if the auction had gone

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	3♥	4♣
4♥	?		

If LHO makes a timid or a 'cunning' pass, partner should generally bid 4♦, unless he has a club fit and an offensive hand. In that case, he can freely go beyond 4♦.

What if you have a huge hand with no diamond fit and a good club suit? Not terribly likely, but no real problem anyway. Bid 4♣ just the same! If LHO bids (most unlikely) and partner passes - e.g.

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	pass	4♣
4♥	pass	pass	?

simply double to show this hand (or bid 5♣ or 6♣ ...).

If LHO passes and partner bids 4♦ - e.g.

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	?

you are now slightly worse off than in 'standard', for partner had less freedom to bid beyond 4♦ without a club fit than if you had promised an excellent all-round hand. But you remain at liberty to continue the auction, and it is unlikely you will have lost much.

If LHO passes and partner bids beyond 4♦ - e.g.

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	pass	4♣
pass	4♠	pass	?

you are now excellently placed. You know partner has a club fit and an offensive hand (and - on this occasion - spade shortage).

Can we apply these same principles to other auctions, such as (2)-(5), above? We suggest *yes*. Remember, when partner makes a preemptive bid, it is usually on the assumption that the enemy own (or, at least, share) the hand. It seems sensible to try to capitalize on the large majority of instances when it is right.

Except for any bids you have set aside as artificial inquiries, then, we recommend that (generally) you use all new suit bids as *two-way*. They are usually FNJs, inviting partner to compete further if the opposition gets involved; but they may be strong one-suited hands without a fit.

Before we get carried away, however, let's look at auction (5), above:

West	North	East	South
-	2♠	pass	3♥

With both your opponents having passed, it would be perverse to bid on the assumption that they are about to come in at the four level! Common sense dictates that if you bid a new suit opposite a second-in-hand preempt (with RHO having passed also), it should be natural and forcing.

However, we recommend you use the new suit bids as two-way in each of the situations exemplified by auctions (2)-(4) that we gave at the start of this section. Thus

West	North	East	South
1♣	2♠	pass	3♦

would initially show a FNJ with a spade fit. Partner can bid 4♥ (an encouraging noise) with a diamond fit if West passes.

Similarly,

West	North	East	South
-	3♦	pass	3♠

can also be a two-way bid. In this case opener responds just as if facing a 'standard' 3♠ response, perhaps being slightly less eager to raise to 4♠. (4♣/4♥ would be shortages with a spade fit.) If West bids over 3♠, North should assume partner has a FNJ and bid accordingly.

Finally,

West	North	East	South
-	2♥	pass	4♣

should be a normal fit-jump. But importantly, 4♣ does *not* (initially) invite slam. It simply prepares partner against a 4♠ bid (or similar) from the enemy.

Redoubling

Not a great deal to say here. Redouble should *invite partner's cooperation in penalizing the opponents*. Say, non-vulnerable against vulnerable, the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	2♠	dble	?

and you hold

♠ 7
♥ AK5
♦ AK63
♣ KQ742

Don't redouble. Wait until the enemy have got into as much trouble as possible - then double. Don't give your opponents the chance to scramble about finding their best fit - make them guess. Once every century West will jump to 4♥! Much more often, if you pass, you will get a chance to double a 3-3 club fit rather than a better red-suit fit. And if they're always going to pull 3♣ doubled, so much the better. Clubs will only be your longest suit one-third of the time.

But say you hold, on the same auction,

♠ 73
♥ AK105
♦ K6
♣ A10972

You're prepared to challenge a 3♣ or 3♥ contract without further consultation. But most likely, the enemy will find their way to 3♦. Now you want partner's opinion. Nothing simpler. Start with a redouble. If and when your opponents bid 3♦, partner can double with some defence - say

♠ AJ10654
♥ 62
♦ J53
♣ 64

but can pass with

♠ QJ10965
♥ 642
♦ 53
♣ 64

Indeed, if the auction goes something like

West	North	East	South
-	2♠	dble	redble
pass	pass	3♦	pass
pass	?		

partner can (and should) bid 3♠ with, say,

♠ KQJ964
♥ 642
♦ 53
♣ 64

Exactly the same logic applies opposite a WJO. You hold

♠ A3
♥ A10975
♦ AQ108
♣ 73

at Love all on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♠	3♣	dble	?

Nothing to stop partner having

♠ J952
♥ 6
♦ 75
♣ KJ10986

If you redouble, he'll tell you about it, if and when the opponents bid to 3♠.

Again, the occasional dishonest announcement of defensive strength might deter gullible opponents...

Summary

By now you will have gathered that in many positions we favour pressure bidding with few inhibitions. This means we must be cautious and flexible when responding to such unilateral attacks launched by partner.

The methods outlined in this section will enable you to compete cooperatively and therefore effectively. They also allow you to make those critical lead-directing raises that give partner an easier life and you a healthier scorecard.

More bidding for the lead

We shall round off this chapter by looking at two ways of helping partner with the lead, other than in fit auctions. It's not so much that you'll be making (or responding to) 'pressure-bids'; rather that you'll be bidding in situations where the 'standard' action is to pass (and vice versa, to a certain extent).

By way of introduction, we would remind you of how important the opening lead is. It is somehow 'glamorous' to gain 13 IMPs by bidding a good slam missed by your opponents. The 12 IMPs you pick up by helping partner find the right lead against their game are more easily forgotten. As for matchpoints, the unusual lead that save you one overtrick, or provides a second undertrick, will serve you just as well as the grand slam you reach with only a fraction of the field.

Meanwhile, the *opportunities* to produce a 'winning' lead occur all the time. If you are ever on the lookout to help partner on lead, you probably need never bid another difficult slam again!

One-level overcalls

You hold, fourth-in-hand,

♠ J63
♥ AJ74
♦ 643
♣ J76

at Love all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
2♦	pass	3NT	end

What do you lead to 3NT? It must be right to start with a black suit. But which one? You may think it is a blind guess. In fact, there should be a strong reason to lead a club.

The point is, *partner didn't overcall 1♠*. Well, he didn't overcall 2♣ either, you might argue. But he needs a lot more to overcall at the two level than at the one level. At least, that is what we hope to convince you of.

Even a non-vulnerable exclusive 2♣ overcall must contain at least a good five-card suit and a minimum of 10-11 HCP. Otherwise you will make partner's job too difficult and will concede too many penalties. But we would recommend a 1♠ overcall at Love all on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	?

on some much weaker hand - particularly if you are short in hearts / long in diamonds. For instance

(a)	♠ AQ973	(b)	♠ KQ973	(c)	♠ AQJ9
	♥ 65		♥ 65		♥ J6
	♦ Q72		♦ K7		♦ 8752
	♣ 852		♣ 8532		♣ 853

(You should have a 'pure' hand to overcall with a four-card suit - that is: a very good suit, length in opener's suit, and not many slow values in the other two suits.)

If you overcall 1♠ on hands such as these, you do so partly to exclude a 1♥ response; partly on the principle of 'In quick, out quick!'; but also, importantly, *for the lead*. Whether partner is on lead to a heart or a no-trump contract, you want him to lead a spade. Tell him while you've got the chance.

And if you should be dealt ...?

(a)	♠ 852	(b)	♠ 8532	(c)	♠ 853
	♥ 65		♥ 65		♥ J6
	♦ Q72		♦ K7		♦ 8752
	♣ AQ972		♣ KQ972		♣ AQJ9

at Love all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	?

you must obviously pass. But if partner ends up on lead to a no-trump or major-suit contract, he will know to lead a club most of the time *because you didn't overcall 1♥ or 1♠*.

Of course, vulnerability and how much space you steal are important considerations also. But when you are thinking of making a simple overcall on a fairly weak hand, the lead is often the most critical consideration. You hold

♠ Q10752
♥ 65
♦ Q7
♣ KQ102

at Game all on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	?

Do you bid? Probably best not to. If you overcall 1♠, you might be in a better position to compete the hand. Also you exclude a 1♥ response. But your hand is very defensive, and the vulnerability is wrong for competing the partscore aggressively. You will (should) end up defending a lot of the time.

Most importantly, if partner is on lead, you don't want him to feel he ought to lead a spade. How many times have you seen a player expectantly bang down ace from Ax opposite an overcall, only to find he has given away at least one trick? And that is not the only danger. On the given hand, you actively want to encourage a *club* lead. So 1♠ is a poor bid.

Another interesting example. You hold

♠ AQJ9
♥ J4
♦ 7643
♣ 852

at Love all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	?

The hand is one we suggested it was appropriate to overcall 1♠ at this vulnerability over a 1♦ opening. Now we would urge you to pass. You may think this is because you are no longer excluding LHO's likely re-

sponse. It isn't. Or at least, not mainly. It's because the lead-directional benefit of a 1♠ overcall is now very doubtful.

The point is, it's better than even money that, if the enemy buy the hand, it will be *you* who will be on lead - probably to a heart contract. (Also, if partner raises you, a spade contract will usually play better with your side-suit length in RHO's suit.)

There are the usual corollaries. You should be circumspect in raising one-level overcalls if your trump holding is weak and it looks like you might end up on lead to an opposition contract. Partner may have a good suit (conceivably only four cards) and not much else. (If the overcall appears to have 'stolen' useful space, as well, you must be doubly cautious.)

Doubling artificial bids

Another lead problem. You hold, at Game all

♠ K1074
♥ Q7632
♦ 84
♣ 97

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	pass
2♣	pass	2♠	pass
3NT	pass	pass	pass

Not an inspiring collection. A heart looks very wrong with LHO marked with four, and RHO with two or three. A spade is even worse. Perhaps you lead a club - better minor! In fact, we suggest a diamond is right. The reason being: *partner didn't double 2♣*.

Now, some of you might play a double of Stayman as showing strong hand, or promising the equivalent of a vulnerable 2♣ overcall. If so, we urge you to be more flexible. If you are dealt

♠ J53
♥ 62
♦ A74
♣ KQ1086

at Game all and the auction starts

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♣	?

you have a golden opportunity to help partner. Double, and make sure he leads a club.

Yes, you might concede 2♣ redoubled with an overtrick every twenty years or so. You may also beat 2♣ redoubled a trick with 3NT making in the other room on a heart lead. So what? The fact is, on normal everyday hands you will be defeating more games and partscores, saving more overtricks and relieving the strain from partner, if you double on hands like this.

Indeed, one of your authors achieved a vulnerable game swing in a major teams event by doubling Stayman on

♠ A4
♥ 1075
♦ 8632
♣ KQJ9

To return to the original lead problem, there is obviously no guarantee partner will have, say,

♠ J65
♥ 54
♦ KQ1093
♣ A54

But two things you know. First, if he does, he would never overcall 2♦ vulnerable (though, non-vulnerable, this is as good an opportunity for a lead-directing two-level overcall as you will get, and it may well be worth the risk ...). Secondly, he *won't* have the same hand with the minors reversed. So lead a diamond from

♠ K1074
♥ Q7632
♦ 84
♣ 97

and play the odds.

The same goes for doubling transfers. If you hold

♠ J4
♥ KJ1095
♦ A7
♣ 8643

and the auction starts

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♥[1]	?

[1] transfer

or

West	North	East	South
2NT	pass	3♥[1]	?

[1] transfer

for that matter - double! How else do you expect partner to find a heart lead?

Skipping over the obvious warnings about reading too much into these doubles, what does the sequence below mean?

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♥	dble
2♠	pass	pass	dble

It simply say: 'I had a genuine 2♥ overcall. Perhaps you would have bid on the last round if you'd known. No matter; I am able to invite you to bid now.' Thus, while more conservative doublers might reach 3♥ at Game all on

North	South
♠ K63	♠ 54
♥ 854	♥ AQJ962
♦ A5	♦ K63
♣ 97642	♣ K5

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♥	dble
2♠	3♥	pass	end

you will bid

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♥	dble
2♠	pass	pass	dble
pass	3♥	pass	end

Summary

Just as when responding to a preempt, so when the enemy have opened: bidding for the lead is a big winner.

If it seems likely, then, that your partner might end up on lead, you must have this fact at the front of your mind. Stretch to help him out, and pass, rather than steer him in the wrong direction.

Lastly, be aware when you are the object of partner's lead-directing concern. Don't punish him for trying to make your life easier, by competing too aggressively.

All this leads us nicely on to a concluding paragraph for this chapter as a whole.

In the practical rough and tumble of modern competitive bidding, there is only one way to come out on top:

- *Put the opponents under pressure.*
- *Don't double-cross partner when he is doing the same.*
- *Help your partner as often as possible.*
- *Be aware when he is trying to help you.*

Chapter 4 - Competing after you have established a fit

Introduction

So far in this book, responder to an opening bid or overcall has generally been striving to describe his hand accurately *as he makes a raise*. Often these efforts will prove sufficient to put his partner in control - sufficient, that is, for his partner to make the final competitive decision without consulting him further.

On other occasions, however, the opening bidder or overcaller may require further assistance. We have already looked at some such sequences when we discussed continuations after fit-jumps (chapter 1, 'Hand-type first (2) - Continuations'), and using the forcing pass in fit auctions (chapter 2, 'Setting up a forcing pass as responder').

Also, *responder* (to the opening bid or overcall) may *not be able* to describe his hand fully in one bid. In particular, he may have extra strength, as yet unrevealed.

In short, there is often scope for partnership cooperation in fit auctions *after* the fit has been established.

In this final, important chapter on contested partnership bidding with a fit, we are going to look at how both the opening bidder or overcaller, and his partner, can cooperate *after* a fit has been expressly declared. Some of what we say is very advanced, in the sense that few pairs would have precise agreements about the sequences we shall be investigating. But it is all based on sound principles, common sense and previously discussed theory.

Responder has extra strength

Responding to an opening

As far as responder to an opening bid is concerned, we have little to add to what was said in the first two chapters. Because you focus *immediately* on describing your *offensive* strength when raising an opening bid, you will not normally have a problem over enemy action on the next round. (It also helps that the bidding is usually *lower* when you respond to an opening, than when you respond to an overcall in a contested auction - thus you have greater flexibility on the first round, as *opener's* partner.)

If you were *not* able to limit yourself as you raised partner's opening, and the bidding is uncomfortably high when it returns to you, a *forcing pass* situation will generally exist to provide extra accuracy.

Responding to an overcall

When it comes to responding to an overcall, however, the position is frequently more ambiguous. In part, this is because you are often cramped for space on the first round. More generally it is because you had - in theory - other concerns on the previous round, than simply limiting your *offensive* strength.

In earlier chapters we have often spoken of the need to make a *lead-directing* new suit bid, when raising partner's overcall or preempt. This means that your partner will frequently be unsure of how *offensively* strong you are, when you have made what might have been a purely 'lead-directing' raise. We stated, however, that it may still be possible for responder to the overcaller to invite partner's cooperation over further enemy action, even though his new suit bid was (initially) only for the lead. Let's dive straight in with an example of what we mean. You hold

♠ 6
♥ J752
♦ AKJ94
♣ 642

at Game all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	?

[1] invitational

Your 4♦ bid was very much 'for the lead'. You would (or should) have been fairly surprised if partner had bid on over 4♠ - after all, you could have had something like

♠ 64
♥ J753
♦ KQ104
♣ 642

With your actual hand, however, you *want* to encourage your partner to compete further, for you have excellent offensive values *that you have not yet shown*.

Do you give up, defeated for once by your chosen methods? Or do you blunder on with 5♥, only to find that this contract has no more play than 4♠ did?

Neither. What you do is to double. This says to partner: 'I have a good offensive raise to 4♥ with a diamond suit. I think we can probably make about the same number of tricks as the enemy (or more). Please act accordingly.' Perhaps partner has

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ 53	♠ 53	♠ K5
♥ AKQ1064	♥ AK8643	♥ AQ10964
♦ 1073	♦ Q73	♦ 73
♣ J5	♣ K5	♣ K53

With hand (a) he knows 4♠ is probably making, so he bids 5♥ (-200, or -500 and a good save). With hand (b) he thinks both 4♠ and 5♥ might make. Perhaps his RHO (opener) has something like

♠ KJ8742
♥ Q9
♦ 6
♣ AJ73

If he holds hand (c), he is happy to pass out your double; pleased he knows to lead a diamonds.

Let's recap. *Your double is not for penalties.* It does *not* say: 'Partner, I want to defend 4♠ doubled on a diamond lead, whatever your hand is.' If that is your wish, you must choose between (a) defending 4♠ undoubled, having requested the diamond lead; and (b) defending 4♠ doubled without having called for a specific lead.

But nor does your double force partner to bid. Therefore, *it must contain some defence.* If partner has two and a half defensive tricks, he will be upset to pass and concede -790 for 4♠ doubled making. If, for example, your hand is

♠ -
♥ K752
♦ KQ10642
♣ 742

you must just press on with 5♥. To double would be suicidal.

Different messages conveyed by a second-round double

We have looked at similar sequences in chapter 1, when we discussed continuations in fit-jump auctions. Let us return briefly to a hand from that section. You held

♠ A753
♥ 64
♦ AQ1053
♣ 42

at Love all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	pass	pass	?

We said that responder must now double. So he should. But this double tells a very different story from the double we looked at in the previous auction (a). The point is that our 4♦ fit-jump in this auction has *already shown an offensive raise to 4♠ with a diamond suit*. We have *already* invited partner to bid on over 5♣. When he does not do so, it is unlikely to be right for your side to compete further, unless you have an exceptionally high ODR.

Thus your double on the second round simply says: 'I'm betting that 5♣ won't make.' You would be extremely surprised if partner sprang to life with a 5♠ bid, now that you have suggested a *lower* ODR than you might have. In fact, the only explanation for partner bidding over your double would be that he had forgotten to do so on the previous round.

The meaning of double on these auctions, then, *depends on the message of the preceding 'new suit raise'*. This is so whether the 'new suit raise' was a fit-jump, a FNJ or a new suit bid after a fit has been established, as in

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	dble

(see below).

If the new suit raise showed a high ODR and invited partner to bid on over enemy competition, as in

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	3♣	4♦
5♣	pass	pass	?

a subsequent double is punitive.

If, however, the new suit raise was primarily lead-directing and therefore did not encourage partner to compete further, as in, say, at Game all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	?

[1] invitational

a subsequent double shows a *better offensive* hand with some defense.

On the auction, again at Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	2♥
3♠[1]	4♦	4♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

[1] invitational

partner expects you to bid on to 5♥ at least half of the time - either to make, or as a save. Put another way: in this auction, 4♦ didn't initially promise the ODR for the four level. Your double on the next round tells partner that, in fact, you *do* have the ODR for at least the four level (though you are not barren of defense).

Perhaps we can make the point most forcefully if we compare this auction (a) with a similar looking auction (b), as we did in chapter 2:

(1) Game all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	dble

[1] invitational

(2) Love all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	dble

[1] preemptive

On auction 2, your 4♦ bid is not primarily lead-directing. It is a more 'pure' FNJ, inviting partner to compete further over 4♠. Thus your double in auction 2 is far less consultative than in auction 1. *You have already consulted partner*. Your second-round double is punitive.

You mustn't think that the primary distinction is between different *hands* you require to make the double in auction 1, as opposed to in auction 2. In fact, the same hand may well (infrequently) qualify for both. The point is that your *aim* or *message* is different.

In sequence 1, you want to encourage partner to bid 5♥, though you are allowing him to pass 4♠ doubled if he has a low ODR in the context of the auction. In sequence 2, you expect partner to pass nearly all the time. He may bid on only if he almost did so on the last round - in other words, if he now expects 5♥ to make.

Once again, the reason for this distinction is that on sequence 2, you have *already* invited partner to compete to 5♥. There is no point in bidding again unless you want to take the maximum penalty out of what you know to be the enemy's sacrifice in 4♠ (or unless you can 'go it alone' with a huge ODR). On sequence 1, however, you have *not* really invited partner to bid again until you double. *He might still have a high ODR*. If he does, it is imperative you give him the chance to bid on.

Here are some example hands. What would you do with them on the sequences:

(1) Game all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	dble

[1] invitational

(2) Love all

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	dble

[1] preemptive

(a) ♠ 6
♥ A753
♦ KQ1094
♣ 753

On sequence 1, you should double. Your offence is far too good to pass, but you have enough defense to allow partner to pass out 4♠ doubled if that is his wish.

On auction 2, however, you should pass. You have only got what you've shown. Your defense is far too slight to double now on this auction.

(b) ♠ 64
♥ 1073
♦ KJ109
♣ A753

On auction 1, you should pass. You bid 4♦ to ensure the lead. You're fairly confident 4♠ will now go down. The last think you want to do is encourage your partner to bid 5♥. If you wanted to defend 4♠ doubled, you should have bid 4♥ on the previous round. But then partner might not have led a diamond...

On sequence 2, you should double. The percentage shot. With partner not having bid on, your hand rates to be worth two defensive tricks or so. Partner should have at least one heart trick, and if 4♠ was bid as a save (as it probably was), you must extract the full penalty. And remember, partner will be making the best lead.

(c) ♠ A62
♥ 10753
♦ KJ1062
♣ 4

After auction 1, you should double. As hand (a) - simply a much better offensive raise than you have so far shown.

On sequence 2, you should also double. Partner has short spades (probably) and hasn't bid on. He's likely got a bit in clubs. You might easily take a ruff (or two). Remember, you expected to make 4♥; so you should take some positive action over 4♠ (the enemy's sacrifice).

(d) ♠ -
♥ K7543
♦ KQJ42
♣ 753

On auction 1, you should bid 5♥. You mustn't give partner the chance to defend 4♠ doubled.

On the second sequence it is even more clearcut to bid 5♥. Double would probably lose you -690!

What of the following doubles?

(3) Love all

West	North	East	South
1♥	3♦	3♥	4♣
4♥	pass	pass	dble

(4) Love all

West	North	East	South
1♥	3♦	3♠	4♣
4♠	pass	pass	dble

On both auctions, your 4♣ bid was a FNJ. It showed a diamond fit and something in clubs - but *what*? That is the key. On auction 3, 4♣ was very much lead-directing (initially), on the assumption that your LHO would be declaring a heart contract. Therefore your double in this auction corrects that impression and is *consultative*. It shows a good offensive raise to 4♦ with a club suit (and some defense) - something like

♠ K64
♥ 5
♦ A862
♣ AQJ73

On auction 4, however, your 4♣ bid was itself a *consultative* FNJ. Therefore your double now simply shows extra defense and a desire to take a lead to 4♠ doubled. You can almost certainly see the contract off in your own hand. Perhaps you have

♠ A6
♥ 7642
♦ A62
♣ KQJ3

Look at the same issue from a different perspective. You hold

♠ A653
♥ 742
♦ AQJ72
♣ 4

non-vulnerable against vulnerable, on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♣	2♠	dble	?

Perhaps you favour a majestic jump to 4♦ / 4♠. But remember, 2♠ could well be an off-centre pressure-bid at this vulnerability and in view of your club shortness.

What if the full hand is...?

♠ KQ1094
♥ 1063
♦ 9
♣ J1073

♠ J7
♥ KJ8
♦ K85
♣ AQ852

N
W E
S

♠ 82
♥ AQ95
♦ 10643
♣ K96

♠ A653
♥ 742
♦ AQJ72
♣ 4

Why go minus when the hand is yours in 3♠? In fact, the hand is yours in 2♠! Just bid 3♦. If the auction continues

West	North	East	South
1♣	2♠	dble	3♦
4♥	pass	pass	?

you can double. Now if partner has something like

♠ KQ10942
♥ 6
♦ 94
♣ J763

he can bid 4♠ happily. But if he has

♠ KQ1094
♥ 63
♦ 9
♣ Q7632

you might take +500 out of 4♥ doubled.

As for the 'dangers' of missing a making game, they are more apparent than real. If your LHO bids 3♥ (say), your partner will be able to show a suitable hand by *passing*! (see below). And if LHO passes, partner can bid 3♥ himself with a good offensive hand. Of course, if LHO bids beyond 3♦, partner will probably pass whatever his hand is (your bid was initially *lead-directing*) - but that is where *you* come back in.

Finally, this is not an area in which you can use 'rules' to replace judgement. The meaning of double on these sort of sequences depends simply on an interpretation of the preceding 'new-suit raise'. There is a *continuous spectrum* of message conveyed by new-suit raises, ranging from *purely lead-directional → half-and-half → very invitational*.

Thus there is a corresponding spectrum of interpretations for responder's double on the next round.

Consider this auction, at North-South Game:

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	3♠[1]	4♣
4♠	pass	pass	dble

[1] mixed raise, 4-8 HCP

What is the message of South's double? Well, what was the message of his 4♣ bid? The vulnerability argues for it being lead-directional, for you will only want to bid to 5♦ at this vulnerability if you are confident it is close to making. But, on the other hand, there is no reason to assume the deal belongs to the opponents - partner has made a vulnerable two-level overcall and East may be quite weak.

In short, 4♣ was bid in the expectation that partner would press on to 5♦ some of the time, but not a lot of the time.

Thus the second-round double should say: 'If you were close to bidding 5♦ over 4♠, do so now. Otherwise pass; I have fair defense.' In other words, the double as much as lays a claim to the hand (as usually at 'red'). It has a similar effect to a forcing pass: 'I think it is right to act, but am undecided how.'

The opener or overcaller has more to say

In this section you are the opening bidder or overcaller. Your partner has already been able to raise you - and he has been as descriptive as your excellent agreed methods allow. The opposition is still bidding.

Bidding a new suit

Let us digress for a moment. Often one side opens the bidding and the other overcalls, with each partnership raising - as here. In these circumstances, either the overcaller or responder to the opening bid will end up on lead. Thus it is the *opener* and (particularly) *responder to the overcaller* who should look to make lead-directing bids in such auctions.

During the last two chapters we have been at pains to emphasize the importance of responder to the overcaller being able to make a lead-directing raise. The situation is not so clearcut for the opening bidder. This is partly because the *a priori* odds are in favour of the opening side owning the hand. Far more relevant, however, is the fact that opener is usually *unlimited*. Let us compare two auction:

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♣

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♥	2♠	3♥	4♣

In the first sequence, South is not only showing club values and a fit. He is also *limiting* his hand. He is only worth the three level (or he would have bid 4♣). On the second auction, however, opener's strength is scarcely more limited than when he opened. It is thus very possible that he will want to invite partner to bid on.

On the sequences below, you must decide the following: Is the initial message of your new-suit bid: (a) *consultative* (inviting partner to progress)? or (b) *lead-directing* (not expecting partner to bid further)? or (c) *a combination of both*?

(1) Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♣	3♠[1]	4♣	4♦

[1] preemptive / mixed

In this particular sequence it is not that likely that opener will want his partner to bid on to 5♠ over 5♣. He is not at 'red', and 'the five level belongs to the opponents'. Also partner has already limited his hand fairly well. In short, if opener thinks it likely that the opponents will bid 5♣, he might well want to indicate a lead.

Say the opener's hand is

♠ QJ1075
♥ A96
♦ AQJ10
♣ 3

Perhaps the full deal is:

	♠ K942 ♥ J10853 ♦ 853 ♣ 9	
♠ A63 ♥ K ♦ 96 ♣ KQJ8642	N W E S	♠ 8 ♥ Q742 ♦ K742 ♣ A1075
	♠ QJ1075 ♥ A96 ♦ AQJ10 ♣ 3	

or

	♠ K942 ♥ J10853 ♦ 85 ♣ 92	
♠ A63 ♥ 2 ♦ K96 ♣ KQJ1064	N W E S	♠ 8 ♥ KJ74 ♦ 7432 ♣ A875
	♠ QJ1075 ♥ A96 ♦ AQJ10 ♣ 3	

Yes, the opponents might take +100/+300 out of 4♠ doubled on a heart lead - but will they? Sometimes you'll lose -50/-100. More likely you'll get +50. Most importantly, *you won't concede -400*, now that partner knows to lead a diamond against 5♣.

Don't take matters to the extreme, however. When you defend at the five level, it will usually be right for partner to make his natural lead - generally your suit or a trump. So your 4♦ bid shouldn't be purely lead-directing. You must be prepared for partner to bid on over 5♣ if he has a good double-fit hand with few defensive values - say,

♠ K942
♥ 54
♦ K7643
♣ 64

Even

♠ K942
♥ 54
♦ K764
♣ 642

is close to a 5♦/5♠ bid at IMPS, over

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♣	3♠	4♣	4♦
5♣	?		

This will be the exception - say, one hand in fifteen.

Of course, if partner has something like

♠ A642
♥ QJ753
♦ 76
♣ 64

he will double 5♣, lead a diamond and smile.

In short, your 4♦ bid is tentatively consultative, primarily lead-directional.

Say you were interested in a slam with a diamond side-suit? Bid 4♦ anyway. If LHO passes, partner can bid 4♥ (encouraging) with a good hand. And if the auction goes...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♣	3♠	4♣	4♦
5♣	pass	pass	?

Well, we're sure you can guess... double.

(2) Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♣	2NT[1]	4♣	4♥

[1] sound four-card raise

Again partner will be on lead to a club contract. But this time he is *unlimited*. This means that he is much more likely to have a hand worth bidding on with, and much less likely to need to lead a specific side-suit to beat 5♣ by one trick.

A small additional point is that 4♥ leaves no space below 4♠ to express slam interest.

The conclusion: 4♥ should be primarily *consultative*, suggesting to partner that he should often bid on over 5♣, and perhaps move toward slam over a pass. The lead-directional content of the bid is marginal.

(3) Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2NT[1]	3♠	4♣	4♥

[1] the minors

Easy. Partner won't be on lead, so 4♥ is strictly *consultative*. At the vulnerability (and given the option of a 4♦ cue-bid) you are not really inviting slam, so much as saying: 'If they bid to 5♣, I want you to know I have an offensive two-suiter in the majors.'

(4) E/W vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dble	3♦	3♠	4♦

Strictly, 4♦ is not a 'new-suit bid'. Still, it is right to use such bids in partner's side-suit much as we have been using other 'new suit' bids opposite a raise that has not shown a side-suit.

Anyway, the message is obvious. *You* would be on lead to 4♠, so your 4♦ bid is *consultative*. 'If they bid 4♠,' it says, 'I want you seriously to consider bidding on, in the knowledge that I have a diamond fit.'

Of course, *you will not be too pure*. Then you will not need to consult partner. Just bid 4♥ and let the enemy guess why. (If the opponents bid to 4♠ anyway, you will press on with 5♥ as planned. At least you have not made things easy for them.)

But if you have, say

♠ A5
♥ AQ642
♦ K753
♣ Q7

why guess whether partner has ...?

(a)	♠ 64	(b) ♠ 64
	♥ K753	♥ J1053
	♦ AQ1064	♦ AQJ6
	♣ 64	♣ J64

Ask him, and he'll tell you (if required).

(5) Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♦

As near a purely *lead-directing* bid as you ever make in this position. Partner is limited. The hand is likely to be evenly balanced. The enemy will often bid to 4♠. You need four tricks to beat that contract. Partner will be on lead and his selects could be crucial. Finally, the vulnerability makes it most unlikely you will want to compete speculatively to the five level. You expect partner to bid on over 4♠ only if he is exceptional - say, one hand in twenty-five.

Let us pause here. Can we formulate any general principles for opener is this sort of auction? First, new suit bids are never lead-directing if opener is going to be on lead! Secondly, they are never 100% lead-directing, even if it is responder who will be on lead.

Further, if responder will be leading to any enemy contract, the following considerations apply (in order of importance):

(1) *The more limited partner is, the more lead-directing a new suit bid should be.* The more nearly you know partner's hand, the less the need to consult him further. Also, the more values partner has, the less likely it is he will have a problem on the lead.

(2) *If the enemy out-rank you at the four level, it is more important to be able to indicate a lead.* A target of four defensive tricks is a lot harder than three.

(3) *Vulnerability is important.* Its effect varies according to the precise situation. If you are trying to find a good save, 'green' is obviously best. But if you are looking for a bigger plus-score by declaring at the five level, 'red' is the only important vulnerability. Perhaps you rate the chances of their game making to be not much worse than 50%, while you are fairly certain that you are going one off if you bid on - now Love all (or 'green') at IMPs suggests bidding; at Game all, or playing matchpoints, you should probably defend.

It should be unnecessary to restate that there is a *continuous spectrum* of 'consultative'/'lead-directional' message for these new suit bids. You must be aware of the most important considerations, but there is usually no substitute for judgement.

The overcaller

Now we turn to the overcaller. Remember, as the overcaller, it is you who will normally be on lead if the enemy declare. If it is your partner who will have that honour, however, there is more reason for your new suit bid to be lead-directing than when you have opened. This is mainly because the range of descriptive raises available to your partner is even wider (FNJs, mixed raises, etc.) than is available to responder to an opening bid. There will therefore be less need to consult your partner further. Secondly, the overcalling side is - *a priori* - that much more likely to end up defending than declaring.

(6) N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♣[1]	3♥[2]	4♣

[1] FNJ
[2] invitational 3♠ bid

This is a typical sequence. Partner has made a very descriptive raise. But it is *you*, the overcaller, who would be on lead to a 4♠ contract. Your 4♣ bid is 100% consultative.

(7) Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	dble[1]	4♦

[1] 'game-try' double (not our recommended method)

No different. Partner is weaker. The vulnerability does not suggest bidding on. But you can't ask partner to lead a diamond. He's not allowed to lead at all.

(8) Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♥
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♣

All change. Not dissimilar to auction 5, earlier. Partner will be on lead to 4♠. The enemy out-rank you at the four level. Partner is very limited. The vulnerability suggests defending. 4♣ is 95% *for the lead* - at least for the time being.

To recap the situation for the overcaller. Most of the time the issue of requesting a lead will not apply. He will be the one on lead to an enemy contract. If, however, his partner would be on lead, the same considerations apply as did to opener - though, generally, the emphasis is *more on the lead*.

Setting up a forcing pass

It is *not* terribly important for the opener/overcaller to be able to set up a forcing pass in these auctions, if one does not exist already. This is because partner has already made a descriptive raise. If, on top of that, you can consult him further, the cooperative framework will normally be sufficient without dragging in forcing passes. Moreover, if you make a new suit bid that does not set up a forcing pass or is not even consultative, you will have the option of a third-round double - which will have almost the same effect. See below.

Nevertheless, there are some auctions where it seems obvious that your side's passes should be forcing. It is hoped that it will 'feel right' to you for the following situations to require that pass be forcing over further enemy action.

a) When a forcing pass auction already exists (see chapter 2)

For example:

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♦	4♣	4♦	4♥

Here, the 4♥ bid - whatever it means - is made in the context that a pass will be forcing over 5♦ from the opposition. But 4♥ does not *set up* a forcing pass. 4♣ did that.

Similarly,

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♣	2NT	4♣	4♦

Again, pass will be forcing over a 5♣ bid from the enemy. But that would be the case even if opener had passed over 4♣.

b) Any four level cue-bid in the enemy's suit sets up a forcing pass

As always. For example:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2NT	3♠	4♣	4♦

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♥
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♠

c) A new suit at the four level at red sets up a forcing pass

This proposal may be compared with our discussion in chapter 2 of why a four level fit-jump or splinter-jump should set up a forcing pass at 'red'. The logic is the same in each case.

For example:

N / S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2♠	3♠	4♦

N / S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♥
1♠	2NT	3♠	4♣

N / S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dble	3♦	3♠	4♦

Remember, you are treating your 4♦ bid as a 'new suit bid'.

These 'rules' for setting up a forcing pass are intended to be simply the application of common sense. As always, partnership discussion and agreement are more important than whether you play certain sequences as setting up a forcing pass or not.

Third-round doubles

Nothing new to say here. Doubles are consultative only to the extent that you have made a new suit bid on the previous round with a *lead-directional* content.

Consider this auction:

(1) Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♥
4♠	5♥		

The 5♥ bidder ought to be forced to take up solitaire - unless he was bluffing on the previous round. He has limited his hand and partner has made no effort to involve him further. It is only too likely that partner's 4♥ bid was made precisely in order to induce a 4♠ bid. Quite possibly opener never thought 4♥ would make. He wanted the auction to continue

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♥
4♠	pass	pass	dble
pass	pass	pass	

The meaning of double on this auction is clear, then. It usually expresses a smug satisfaction that things have worked out as planned. This is always the case when a player makes a non-consultative direct raise and then doubles. He wants blood.

What about...?

(2) Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♠
4♠	pass	pass	dble

Now the double performs a different function. It is, in fact, a response to an inquiry. Partner's pass over 4♠ was forcing - suggesting (initially) that he is uncertain whether to declare or defend. Your double says you are not willing to progress opposite this hesitancy.

(3) N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2NT	3♠	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	dble

Again, pass was forcing over 4♠. So double simply says: 'In the light of your (presumed) uncertainty, let's defend.'

(4) Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	2NT	3♠	4♦
4♠	pass	pass	dble

Here, your 4♦ bid was 90% lead-directing. Your double is therefore 90% consultative. You have achieved in two stages exactly what the 4♦ bid in the previous auction did at once. The double asks partner to choose between defending 4♠ doubled, or bidding on to 5♥ (or further) on the basis of your having a good offensive hand with a second suit of diamonds.

Of course, partner has already rejected one chance to bid on, which he would have done with the 'one in twenty-five' hand. So you expect him to pass over half the time.

(5) Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♥
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♣
4♠	pass	pass	dble

Even more consultative. Your 4♣ bid was 95% for the lead. Now you are saying: 'I have an offensive hand with a club side-suit. I hope you can bid on - either to make, or as a sacrifice. But if you do not fit, I have fair defence also. I am happy for you to pass out 4♠ doubled in that event.' You expect partner to bid on about half the time on this particular sequence.

Passing to show strength

We have already seen how a forcing pass can be used in fit auctions to provide extra definition: 'do we bid on, or do we defend doubled?' So far, we have only looked at forcing passes in the context of answering that particular question. In other words, we have only looked at forcing pass auctions when our side has laid claim to the hand.

You may be surprised to learn that there is another sort of forcing pass in fit auctions that lays no claim to the hand. Often, in fact, it will be clear that the hand belongs to your opponents.

Using an 'idle' bid

We will start with a fairly simple auction:

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	dble	3♣
3♦	pass	pass	?

Your 3♣ bid showed a fit-raise to the three level; so should you now bid 3♠ automatically and go back to sleep? Would you ever pass?

Put it another way. Say the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	dble	3♣
3♦	3♠	pass	?

Would you ever give partner a 'fourth'?

Obviously it would be a strange state of affairs if you allowed the opposition to play 3♦ undoubled on this sequence. After all, you've already announced an offensive raise to 3♠. Therefore the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	dble	3♣
3♦	pass	pass	pass

should not exist.

Does that mean partner's pass is an 'idle' bid - simply a 'transfer' to 3♠? No. Clearly opener should be able to invite 4♠ - either by bidding 3♠, or by passing. (On this sequence opener could bid 3♥, but why shouldn't that guarantee a heart suit?)

Bidding is weaker than passing! - PFA again

You might think it is more 'natural' for pass to show the weaker hand. But there are good reasons for playing the bids the other way round - that is, 3♠ showing a hand unwilling to progress further; with pass indicating a stronger hand.

First, *pass is more flexible*. It can be used to keep the bidding low on strong hands - it is forcing, and therefore unlimited. It allows partner to make a return game try in many auctions - in the sequence above, for example, responder can bid 3♥ to show interest, without committing the partnership to game. Also, it gives partner the chance to double with a maximum defensive hand in the context of the auction - which could be just what the doctor ordered.

Secondly, 3♠ denies the opponents flexibility *when they are most likely to require it*. If you were to play pass as the weaker action, you might see the given auction continuing, say,

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	dble	3♣
3♦	pass	3♥	3♠ / pass
4♥			

Much more difficult for the doubler if opener has bid 3♠.

This type of situation is, in fact, another example of the *Principle of Fast Arrival* (PFA - see chapter 2). There is a fit auction and there are two ways of getting to the same spot, so the slower route shows extra values. The logic of PFA is always the same: put the opponents under pressure quickly if you are minimum; keep the bidding low and flexible when you have extra strength.

So, then: opener's pass is the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	dble	3♣
3♦	pass		

shows extra values and *is forcing*. But only as far as 3♠ - the level to which the partnership has already voluntarily forced itself. Thus the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	dble	3♣
3♦	pass	4♦	pass
pass	pass		

is perfectly acceptable. Opener showed extra strength; responder wasn't interested. Neither wanted to double 4♦ for penalties. What could be simpler?

Situations like the one above occur with surprising frequency - particularly if you play the sort of methods we advocate in these first four chapters. This simple extension of the forcing pass can be applied in them all. The principle may be shortly stated: *whenever one player commits the partnership to a specific level, all passes are forcing over enemy bidding below that level - and show extra offensive strength.*

Let us look at some more auctions.

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	3♦	dble	pass

Perhaps you think pass should suggest playing in 3♦ doubled. Maybe. Personally, if we're unable to redouble, we'd much rather play pass as suggesting 4♥.

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	3♣[1]	3♥	pass

[1] fit-jump

Clear. Pass shows extra values.

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♥	2NT[1]	3♥	pass

[1] sound four-card raise

More of the same.

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	2♠
dble	3♦	3♥	pass

Almost certainly the hand belongs to your opponents. But your pass is still forcing, since 3♦ committed you to 3♠. It indicates a willingness for partner to save in 4♠ over 4♥. Particularly useful when your range for a WJO is wide.

(5)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	1♠
3♦	dble[1]	3♥	pass

[1] fit-raise in spades with a club suit

If you recall our discussion of the double in this auction from chapter 2, you will note that it does not set up any kind of forcing auction. Specifically, it does not force the bidding to 3♠ over an enemy 3♥ bid. Therefore the final pass is *not forcing*. It simply shows an unwillingness to compete further in spades opposite what might be an offensively minimum raise for the three level.

(6) Love all

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2NT[1]	3♦[2]
3♥	4♦	4♥	pass

[1] sound four-card raise
[2] FNJ

Partner's 4♦ bid forced the bidding to 4♠. Certainly it was consultative, since you will not be on lead to a heart contract. Now *you* take the opportunity to say: 'If they compete to 5♥, I'm interested in bidding on.' You are borderline for a 5♠ bid, if the enemy push on to 5♥. Rather than guess, tell partner now and let him decide.

Perhaps the full hand is

Love all
Dealer West

	♠ AQ1063 ♥ 8 ♦ A942 ♣ J74	
♠ 7 ♥ AQ1095 ♦ Q53 ♣ K852	N W E S	♠ 952 ♥ KJ742 ♦ 7 ♣ A1063
	♠ KJ84 ♥ 63 ♦ KJ1086 ♣ Q9	

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2NT	3♦
3♥	4♦	4♥	pass
pass	4♠	pass	pass
5♥	pass	pass	pass

Let us go through the auction bid by bid. West opens 1♥; North overcalls 1♠. So far so good.

East bids 2NT to show an invitational four-card raise (or better). Perhaps 4♥ would be an equally good bid, but East has an excellent offensive hand and is not keen to defend 4♠. So he keeps the auction flexible.

South has a clear 3♦ bid (FNJ). This may help partner in the auction or on lead / in the defense.

West bids 3♥ to show a minimum hand - pass would be a *stronger* action.

North bids 4♦ to tell partner of the double fit. This is certainly the 'correct' bid, but a simple 4♠ might leave East-West with a more awkward guess whether to bid to 5♥. Nevertheless, North's hand suggests the enemy might well bid on over a direct 4♠. In which case he would rather bring partner into the final decision. If South has something like

(a)	♠ K842 ♥ 63 ♦ KQ865 ♣ 93	(b) ♠ K842 ♥ 632 ♦ KJ1065 ♣ 3

it would be perverse to defend 5♥.

East bids 4♥ to invite West to bid 5♥ over 4♠. He knows North-South are committed to 4♠, so 4♥ is *consultative*, showing an offensive hand. (Pass would be *non-forcing*, and thus not encouraging at all).

South *passes* to tell partner he would be interested in bidding on to 5♠ over 5♥, but not certain. He is fairly pure, but not completely. If he had a very pure hand, such as North was hoping for when he bid 4♦, *South would now bid 4♠*. Why should he give away information gratuitously? Let the enemy guess whether he is very offensive or very defensive for his bidding - if they guess right and bid 5♥, he can bid 5♠ *without involving partner any further*.

West could bid 5♥ at this stage, but it serves no purpose. He hopes (vainly) that his partner will be able to suggest defending 4♠ doubled - in which case he would be happy to oblige.

North bids 4♠. East passes (he has said his piece). South passes. And West bids 5♥ now.

The spotlight is on North. Should he bid on? General principles tell us 'no' - 'the five level belongs to the opponents'. But general principles are not subject to the extremely accurate exchange of information this auction has produced. North thinks it is likely that 5♠ will lose three tricks - two clubs and a heart. Occasionally it may lose another club or a diamond. How about 5♥? He expects his two aces to cash - what other defensive trick might there be?

If partner has five diamonds and the opponents can be trusted, it is unlikely any more spades or diamonds will stand up. *But why did partner pass over 4♥?* As we say, South's ODR - while good - must be flawed in some way. Perhaps he has ♣Qxx; maybe he's got a 4-2-4-3 shape, in which case two diamonds will probably cash. Most likely, however, he has ♣Qx. After all, East did not fit-jump in clubs, and West did not have enough to bid 4♣ or 4♥ over 3♦. It is not too fanciful, we suggest, that North should be optimistic of a slow club trick against 5♥.

Look at it another - simpler - way. When North bid 4♦, he only wanted to compete to 5♠ if partner's ODR was 9-10 on a scale of 1-10 for a 3♦ FNJ. Now it looks like partner is 6-8 on that scale. (Remember, if partner had a maximum offensive hand, he would not be involving you in the final, five-level decision. He would have bid 4♠ and then - if required - 5♠.)

So it looks right to defend. Of course, there is not need for North-South to double 5♥, unless they are desperate.

If you think this auction has been unnecessarily scientific, we would agree! Although no bid was clearly wrong, we think that North's 4♦ bid was against the odds. Given that he wants only to compete to 5♠ opposite the 20% most 'pure' hands partner can have for his bidding to date, it would be better to have bid 4♠. Surely it is more likely that East-West will guess wrong over 4♠, than it is that North-South will find a good save in 5♠ over a making 5♥. On the given hand, is it not probably that one East in five will fail to bid 5♥ over a direct 4♠?

A hand like

♠ AJ6532
♥ 8
♦ A1042
♣ J7

would be more appropriate for a 4♦ bid. Now you want partner to compete to 5♠ over 5♥ almost half the time. Also, it is correspondingly unlikely that the opposition will let you play in 4♠. Thus it will not often prove critical that you exclude a 4♥ bid from East.

Even when pass is already forcing

Finally, the principle of pass showing extra strength below the level to which you have committed yourselves as a partnership applies even if pass is forcing anyway! Consider this auction:

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
dble	4♣	4♥	pass

At this vulnerability, North's 4♣ bid sets up a forcing pass auction to any level. But still, 4♠ would be the weakest bid South could make over 4♥. Pass shows extra strength. (Perhaps he is hoping to defend 4♥ doubled!)

One last hand:

Game all
Matchpoints
Dealer West

	♠ 9 ♥ AK10632 ♦ K95 ♣ A84	
♠ KJ10632 ♥ 7 ♦ AJ8 ♣ J95	N W E S	♠ AQ85 ♥ J95 ♦ Q1063 ♣ 73
	♠ 74 ♥ Q84 ♦ 742 ♣ KQ1062	

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2NT	3♣
pass	3♠	dble	pass
4♠	pass	pass	?

By now we can skip over the first four bids of the auction. West's pass over 3♣ shows interest in bidding to 4♠. To do so unilaterally would be a fair practical shot, but is a little reckless at this vulnerability and form of scoring. North is in a good position to double for one off (or worse), if he has short clubs; and there are no guarantees 4♥ is making.

North decides to make a show of strength. He is reasonably confident 4♥ is on, and is loath to defend 4♠ undoubled at matchpoints with three likely defensive tricks in his own hand. His 3♠ bid sets up a forcing pass auction, making partner choose (if necessary) between bidding on to 5♥ (with a high ODR on the auction to date) and doubling 4♠ (with a low ODR). 3♠ is a better bid than 4♣, which would invite partner to bid on too often, and does not allow his side the luxury of a forcing pass. 4♥ would be even worse. After 4♥, it is likely that the auction would continue

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2NT	3♣
pass	4♥	4♠	pass
pass	?		

and North would be forced to take the last guess, without being sure whether 4♠ or 5♥ is making.

East's double over

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2NT	3♣
pass	3♠	?	

says something like: 'I can't bid 4♠ with any confidence. I have good trumps and an average-plus ODR.' With more offence he would bid 4♠. With more defence he would pass and then double 4♥.

South's pass is well-judged. He is good offensively for his 3♣ bid (which was, in large part, lead-directing). But his shape is not that great, and he cannot be certain yet that partner has a good club fit - though obviously he expects at least a partial fit. He wants to suggest that partner bid on over 4♠ (or make a forcing pass). But he will settle for defending if partner doubles having heard his encouraging pass.

West bids 4♠ in the expectation that 4♥ is making. The auction suggests there will not be many defensive tricks against a heart contract beyond the major-suit aces. He assumes 4♠ will go down a trick, but -200 is better than -620.

North has got what he wants - the chance for his side to make a well-informed cooperative decision over 4♠. In the light of his partner's pass on the last round, North is worth a forcing pass now. His ODR is just too good to double at this stage, but not quite good enough to go it alone. He needs one final blessing from partner.

South has, in fact, already decided to bid 5♥ if his partner consults him. With ♣KJ10xx instead of ♣KQ10xx, or ♥Jxx instead of ♥Qxx, he would almost certainly have bid the same way up to this point. But with these hands he would probably now double.

If you think these distinctions are unrealistically subtle, consider what North-South have been able to communicate in four bids, starting with South's 3♣. That bid showed a raise to exactly 3♥ with a concentration of values in clubs. North then said: 'The hand is probably ours. I have good offensive and defensive strength opposite your call. I will want to consult with you further.' South was next able to define his raise more narrowly by showing the better offensive half of a 3♣ FNJ (by passing on the second round). Yet still North gave him the chance to clarify matters.

Returning to the deal, two additional observations. First, East-West will (should?) probably pass out 5♥. They wanted to push the enemy to the five level. This is what they have done.

Secondly, you might be thinking: 'What if the ace of diamonds were wrong? Then what would happen to 5♥? Two off!' True. But if East had, say,

♠ KJ85
♥ J95
♦ A1063
♣ 73

4♠ would be making. Rather bid to 5♥, then, especially since some opponents will bid on to 5♠.

Summary

This chapter has been fairly short (relatively!) - but tough. It deals with important aspects of partnership co-operation in fit auctions. But these must be seen for what they are - the icing on the cake. It is right at this point to remind ourselves of the *relative* importance of the bids that determine success in a competitive fit-auction. That success will be decided - in the large majority of deals - *by the first two bids your side makes.*

Remember that your primary aim in any competitive fit-auction is to express your whole hand *in one bid*. In quick, out quick - let the opponents take the last guess. Sometimes the opening bidder or overcaller will try to achieve this by making a pressure-bid. More often, it will be down to his partner, who will try to make a very descriptive raise that will establish the opener / overcaller as boss of the auction. In any event, generally, by the time each player has made one bid, *the work should have been done.*

This chapter deals with a small minority of competitive fit-auctions, where there is a need and opportunity for cooperative action beyond that point. These second- and third-round new suit bids, doubles, and forcing passes are the fine adjustments that are usually unnecessary and / or unavailable. However, they can be critical if the target is small and the marksmen are allowed the time for precise alignment.

Let us quickly review the mechanisms available to the marksman in such situations:

(1) He can introduce a new suit
   a) *as* he makes his raise, if he is responding to an opening or overcall;
   b) *after* his partner has raised, if he is the opener or overcaller.

(2) Usually that new suit bid, fit-jump or FNJ will show an offensive hand and invite partner to bid on over further enemy action.

(3) Sometimes, and particularly if the bid is a FNJ, the new suit bid or raise will be primarily *lead-directing*.

(4) Subsequently, the player who has made a new suit bid / raise can *double* the opponents. This shows a better offensive hand *only and exactly to the extent that his previous new suit bid/raise was lead-directing*.

(5) If the previous new suit bid / raise itself showed an offensive hand and invited partner to bid on, any subsequent double is punitive.

(6) Once a fit has been established, a *pass* over enemy action may be *forcing* in the following situations:
   a) by virtue of an initial forcing raise, fit-jump or splinter-jump;
   b) if a subsequent new suit bid by the opener / overcaller made it so (particularly if you are at 'red');
   c) if partner's last bid committed you to a level higher than that so far reached by the enemy.

(7) In all these situations, a forcing pass suggests that partner bid on.

(8) In situation 6c, a direct bid of the agreed suit is (initially) the weakest offensive action.

Chapter 5 - Competing without a known fit

Introduction

Up to this point, all your cooperative competing has been on the basis of a fit with partner. Perhaps you feel we have been over-optimistic! After all, a lot of time you and your partner won't have a fit - at least, you won't know *immediately* of such a fit.

So why have we spent over three chapters on how to bid competitively *with* a fit, yet intended devoting only one chapter to the problems of competing *without* a known fit? The answer may be summarized thus:

(1) *You should do a lot more bidding with a fit for partner than on a possible misfit hand.* Indeed, unless you are quite strong, it is far better to let the opponents monopolize the auction if the indications suggest a misfit.

(2) *You need a lot more bids to express hands with a fit*. It is then that you must try to describe your hand accurately and immediately - that is to say, in *one bid* (see chapter 1).

(3) *Conversely, if you must compete on a hand with no fit for partner, your choice need only be limited*. Usually you will bid your own good suit at the lowest level, or make a take-out double. Occasionally you will want to make a natural bid in no trumps.

In short, it is not that (potentially) misfit hands turn up less frequently. On the contrary. It is simply that you won't (or shouldn't) want to take a bid on them nearly so often. Moreover, if you do bid when you have no known fit for partner, you will generally want to do so conservatively and flexibly.

Nonetheless, there are certain important areas for discussion; and there are many sequences where 'partnership' bidding is essential.

One final word of introduction. We shall, generally in this chapter, be avoiding any investigation of what might be termed 'artificial conventions' - two-suited overcalls, defenses to 1NT, defenses to a strong club, transfer responses to overcalls and/or doubles, and the like.

It is not that we find such inventions distasteful. The best of them can be useful if you don't mind the memory work. Rather, we have no space for a discussion of them here. Moreover, they are far less important than a general 'feel' for how to compete effectively - which means flexibly - when conditions are treacherous; when the bidding is getting higher, you have no sure fit with partner, but you are too strong to pass. This crucial ability cannot be gained through the use of bids of 'system' designed for specific sequences.

When not to bid at all

Often the most critical decision you have in a 'non-fit' contested auction is whether to bid or to pass. This book is not really designed to improve your basic judgement of how good a hand is. Nevertheless, certain important *strategic* considerations overlap with hand-evaluation in this area. Analysis of some examples, then, may be helpful even to those whose basic judgement is reliable - or, at least who are not looking to this book for its improvement.

We wish to impress upon you two fundamental considerations when you are deciding whether to take a bid competitively in a situation may be a misfit. The first is: *does your hand look DEFENSIVE, or OFFENSIVE?* The second is: *do you need to bid NOW*?

Consider your ODR

The first point is fairly straightforward, yet its application in practice often seems a problem. Consider your actions on this hand:

♠ A64
♥ KJ53
♦ A107
♣ QJ4

Game all

West	North	East	South
2♦[1]	pass	2♥	?

[1] weak two opening in either major

You are not yet sure in which suit West has a weak two opening (East will usually have more than two hearts on this auction). Should you bid? And would it matter if your spades and hearts were reversed? The answers, we suggest, are 'no' and 'yes', respectively.

If you are sitting under a weak two in hearts, your hand has 'defense' written all over it. You might well get this contract two down with a little or nothing on your way. If 2♥ is making and partner cannot protect (see below), you are risking a large penalty by bidding. Here's just one nightmare hand partner might hold:

♠ Q974
♥ 64
♦ Q643
♣ K75

- 2♥ going down at least one, while you are conceding anything from -200 to -800 if you bid.

Now imagine you held

♠ KJ53
♥ A64
♦ A107
♣ QJ4

Can you see that your hand is much more *offensive* in the context of a 2♥ opening on your left? If partner is fairly short in hearts (as is very likely, if West has a weak two in that suit), you have six good offensive cards for him - about two tricks better than on the previous hand. Your *defensive* potential against a heart contract, however, is markedly less. It is therefore right to bid. Double (take-out) is best, though 2NT is not silly.

Opposite the 'nightmare' hand above,

♠ Q974
♥ 64
♦ Q643
♣ K75

you can make 2♠ or 3♠, while the opponents are solid for at least 2♥. Even opposite, say,

♠ Q97
♥ 64
♦ Q643
♣ K753

you can probably scrape together eight tricks in a minor, while your opponents still rate to make 2♥. They'll have to double you for one off to get a good score - unlikely.

Of course, if West turns out to have a weak two in spades (as will be the case about 30% of the time), that will suit you just as well. You will have described your hand without risk, and partner will be in a good position to judge his action over

West	North	East	South
2♦	pass	2♥	dble
2♠	?		

Perhaps he can make a responsive double? ‘That’ll do nicely!’

It is important that you understand why it is wrong to bid with the first hand

♠ A64
♥ KJ53
♦ A107
♣ QJ4

and right to bid with the second

♠ KJ53
♥ A64
♦ A107
♣ QJ4

despite having the same sort of shape and the same number of HCP. It is simply a question of your ODR, on the assumption that West has hearts. (If he has spades, you will get another chance.) *You should be much more willing to pass when your ODR is low - even with fairly good high-card strength*. By bidding on these hands you achieve little, except to rescue your opponents.

Remember also, that if partner has any sort of hand without heart length, he can protect the auction

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
2♦	pass	2♥	pass
pass	?		

More anon.

Let’s stick for a little longer with the sequence

Game all

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
2♦[1]	pass	2♥	?

[1] weak two opening in either major

Less obvious - and therefore more interesting - is a slightly different hand:

♠ A64
♥ KJ5
♦ A1075
♣ QJ4

Again it is right to pass. This time your defense to 2♥ is not so great, but by bidding you run the very real risk of going -300 or -800! against -110/-140 for defending 2♥. And what’s partner supposed to do holding, say ...?

♠ K953
♥ 64
♦ KJ4
♣ K1053

over

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
2♦	pass	2♥	2NT
pass	?		

You’re almost certain to end up in 3NT going two off on a heart lead, with 2♥ destined to fail by at least one trick.

Swap the majors again, however, giving yourself

♠ KJ5
♥ A64
♦ A1075
♣ QJ4

and it is right to bid. Again, we would double, though 2NT is a very reasonable alternative. Opposite this better offensive hand partner will often make 2♠ or three-minor, with 2♥ cold. Perhaps he has

♠ Q976
♥ 75
♦ K64
♣ K753

or

♠ Q76
♥ 75
♦ KJ6
♣ K10753

And if he forces to game, even with as little as

♠ Q976
♥ 75
♦ KJ6
♣ K1073

you will often score +600, when both black aces are on your right (as likely).

How about this? The auction starts

Love all

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	dble[1]	?

[1] take-out

and you hold either

(a) ♠ 75
♥ K64
♦ AJ9873
♣ Q4

(b) ♠ 75
♥ 642
♦ KQ10973
♣ A4

Would you bid 2♦? The first example is the sort of hand where players frequently make what looks like a 'no-cost' bid, only to find that things get ugly quickly. Your ODR is very low for your shape and HCP-count. There is a very real chance your RHO has a fair diamond holding and will be able to double you. Your opponents have about the same number of points as you do. In short, your hand should be telling you: 'defend'. At the table the full deal was:

Love all
Dealer West

♠ KQ984
♥ Q108
♦ 5
♣ J1096

♠ AJ6
♥ AJ952
♦ 104
♣ K73

N
W E
S

♠ 1032
♥ 73
♦ KQ62
♣ A852

♠ 75
♥ K64
♦ AJ9873
♣ Q4

2♦ doubled went for -300, with quite a few East-West pairs struggling in 1NT.

Of course, if the auction continues

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	dble	pass
2♣	pass	pass	?

you might think again. Though even now protection is not guaranteed safe.

With hand (b) however,

♠ 75
♥ 642
♦ KQ10973
♣ A4

your ODR is far higher. Even if the full deal is

♠ KQ984
♥ Q108
♦ 5
♣ J1096

♠ AJ6
♥ AKJ95
♦ 84
♣ Q73

N
W E
S

♠ 1032
♥ 73
♦ AJ62
♣ K852

♠ 75
♥ 642
♦ KQ10973
♣ A4

and if East doubles, you will still only go -100, against a very likely +120 for East-West in 1NT.

Even over RHO's pass, do not be too quick to speak. Say you hold

♠ Q63
♥ 74
♦ AKJ5
♣ 10762

Vulnerable against not, on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	pass	?

In our experience, the best action is to pass - without delay or interest. You may have a better spot in 1NT, 2♦ - even 3NT! But it is just as likely you will make things worse if you bid. Meanwhile, how do you feel about defending? There's a pretty good chance at this vulnerability that West will reopen. If he does, you will be able to do what your hand suggests - defend, maybe doubled.

Do you need to bid NOW?

Often, when deciding whether to bid, you must consider how likely it is that an immediate pass might leave your side stymied. Consider a simple illustration. You hold

♠ 74
♥ KJ6
♦ A10752
♣ Q103

and the auction begins either

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♠[1]	?

or

(2)

West	North	East	South
2♠[1]	pass	pass	?

[1] weak

We trust you would not bid on this hand in the first auction. Yet a protective double is right on the second.

This may seem a rather basic example, but it is worth delving a little deeper into the logic behind the distinction. Do not be too quick to dismiss the issue as being one of safety - 'it's much safer to bid once responder to the 2♠ opening has passed' - or as one of point-count - 'you need more points to bid directly than in the protective seat'. These are the *results*, not the causes of the distinction.

The real reason that you do not bid directly on this hand is that *if it is right for your side to bid, your partner will probably protect* (unless it is right to defend 2♠ doubled). That is to say, if partner has at least a ten-count and fewer than three spades - even xxx in spades and a fair hand - he will protect. If his hand is more defensive, or weaker than that, you will do best to take a lead.

In the protective seat, however, you are in a 'now-or-never' situation. Thus you should reopen whenever your hand is offensive (within reason).

Now, consider in the light of this logic your actions on the following hands, vulnerable against not, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♠[1]	?

[1] weak

(a) ♠ 653
♥ AQJ974
♦ K105
♣ 6

(b) ♠ 6
♥ AQJ974
♦ K105
♣ 653

(c) ♠ 6
♥ KJ74
♦ AJ953
♣ Q106

Let us look at the first pair of hands together. Should you bid 3♥? You are obviously very minimum in either case - in fact, you haven't really got the bid to make. Now the point is, you can probably afford to pass on the first hand. For your spade length makes it likely partner is short, so that with any sort of hand he will be in a position to protect. A likely continuation would be

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♠	pass
pass	3♣	pass	3♥

showing this type of hand.

With the second hand, however, it is quite dangerous to pass. Partner could easily be fairly balanced with three spades or so and about 10-12 HCP. It will be right for him to pass with such a hand (generally speaking). Yet is that what you want? You might well miss a game opposite as little as

♠ K1053
♥ 652
♦ A4
♣ KQ105

or

♠ A53
♥ 652
♦ Q43
♣ KQ105

and will often under-compete the partscore. On balance, it is more dangerous to pass with the second hand than to bid 3♥. And partner will be making allowances for you being a little light, if it seems as though you have short spades (see below).

How about the third hand...?

♠ 6
♥ KJ74
♦ AJ953
♣ Q106

Can you see that it is right to double for the same reasons as it was right to bid 3♥ on hand (b)? If you do not bid now, will partner be able to bid later? Certainly you will play the odd 21-, or even 20-point game, but these games may well make. If partner bids 4♥, for instance, he will not have much less than

♠ A53
♥ Q10652
♦ 104
♣ K95

More to the point: if you pass, partner will often be unable to reopen through having too many spades. How do you fancy defending 2♠ undoubled, holding

♠ 6
♥ KJ74
♦ AJ953
♣ Q106

opposite, say ...?

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ 10752	♠ A75	♠ KJ872
♥ Q1063	♥ Q6	♥ Q6
♦ 64	♦ K64	♦ 64
♣ AK7	♣ K9753	♣ AK73

It comes to this: *on borderline hands, the shorter you are in the opponents' suit, the more you should want to take some positive action*.

We mentioned the same sort of consideration when we were looking at FNJs in chapter 2. Do you recall such sequences as ...?

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

What were you to do if you held something like...?

♠ K64
♥ 4
♦ Q72
♣ KQ10752

The answer is: *wait*. If it's right for your side to do more bidding, then for sure partner will reopen. In this sequence you have no real option playing the methods we recommended, for 3♣ would be a FNJ. But you must be no less cautious in a sequence like

E/W vuln.

West	**North**	**East**	**South**
1♦	1♠	2♦	?

holding something like

♠ 63
♥ AJ743
♦ Q53
♣ KJ6

Not many players would pass this hand at green. Yet we are convinced that pass is the right action. If partner cannot reopen, you will do much better defending (on balance). If partner does reopen with a double (say), you should just bid a simple 2♥, and be prepared to miss a game one time in ten. Remember, partner is unlikely to have more than an 11-count on this auction, and is much more likely to be 5-3-2-3 or 5-3-1-4 than 5-4 in the majors.

These considerations are especially pertinent when your partner has opened the bidding and RHO has over-called. Recently, your authors touted the following hand around amongst some English players:

♠ AQ742
♥ 63
♦ Q54
♣ J75

on the auction

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	?

Opinions were fairly evenly split between double (take-out), and 2♠. Almost nobody selected our first-choice call of pass.

We look at it like this. If partner doesn't reopen over

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	pass
pass	?		

it is very likely right to defend. It's almost certainly a misfit, partscore hand, and the opponents rate to go down, probably a couple of tricks. Perhaps partner has

♠ 106
♥ AQ1054
♦ A76
♣ Q83

Consider what would happen if you had bid over 2♣ opposite this hand. If you had bid 2♠, you are almost sure to go minus - quite possibly -200 or -300. If you had doubled, you might well get out in 2♥, but that is unlikely to make on the lead of the ace-king of clubs and a club ruff.

And what if partner reopens? Say the auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

We might well bid 3♠ vulnerable at IMPs, though a conservative 2♠ is probably better at most other vulnerabilities / forms of scoring.

You may be thinking: 'Hold on! First we pass, then we jump to 3♠. Does this mean we can never play in 2♠?' In fact, an initial pass is the only way you *might* get to play in 2♠! Not vulnerable at matchpoints, for instance, we would probably only bid 2♠ over partner's double, and that will likely end the auction. Compare the alternatives. If you bid a direct (forcing) 2♠ over 2♣, you are obviously destined for higher things. While if you start with a double, you surely intend raising

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	dble
pass	2♠	pass	?

to 3♠. If you're thinking you might start with a double and then pull partner's 2♦ / 2♥ to 2♠ - don't! First, the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	dble
pass	2♥	pass	2♠

should show a different sort of hand (see 'Doubling and then Bidding a Suit' later in this chapter). Secondly, even if it did show this hand, it would be a very speculative effort opposite what might easily be a 2-6-3-2 or 1-6-3-3 hand (or a 2-5-4-2 / 1-5-4-3 hand if opener has bid 2♦).

Strangely, perhaps, double is a much better bid over

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	?

if you hold

♠ AQ72
♥ 63
♦ Q542
♣ J75

Partly because you can stand a 2♦ response, but more importantly because if the auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♣	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

you will have no idea what the best strain is. We shall investigate this particular consideration more fully later in this chapter.

Let's look at a clearer example. You hold

♠ Q72
♥ AJ963
♦ 52
♣ K75

at Game all, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	2♠	?

Clearly wrong to bid now, unless you try 2NT!! If partner doesn't reopen, be happy to defend. If, on the other hand, the auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	2♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

you can bid 3♥ to show your long suit and fair values (!) - see below.

The same reasoning applies even when you are more one-suited. Say you hold

♠ QJ9852
♥ Q42
♦ K3
♣ 75

at Game all on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	2♥	?

Assuming a bid of 2♠ would be forcing, it is best to pass on this hand. Again the key feature is your heart holding. If partner cannot reopen, the hand is probably something of a misfit, and a direct 2♠ will push you too high.

Change the red suits, however, so that you hold

♠ QJ9852
♥ K3
♦ Q42
♣ 75

and you must bid 2♠ on this auction. 2♠ is not much of an overbid with this better offensive hand, but the real difference is that it is too dangerous now to pass with only ♥K3. If partner has, say

♠ K103
♥ 1043
♦ AJ3
♣ KQJ6

and you pass, you will end up defending 2♥ (which might make) when you had a good play for 4♠.

Of course, there is a 'flip-side' to all this. First you must be ever prepared to keep the auction alive with shortage in the opponents' suit, if partner could still have quite good hand. Thus, on the auction

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
2♠	pass	pass	?

for instance, holding

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ 6	♠ J62	♠ 6
♥ K4	♥ K4	♥ J1054
♦ Q762	♦ Q7	♦ K76
♣ KJ10853	♣ KJ9853	♣ KJ953

hand (a) would be a minimum to reopen with 3♣. But with hand (b) a pass is safer and correct. Similarly, hand (c) is a clear reopening double (though obviously minimum).

The second corollary is that you must proceed with caution if *partner* appears to be short in the opponents' suit. Thus over

West	North	East	South
2♠	dble	pass	?

holding

♠ AJ4
♥ Q6
♦ 853
♣ A10753

you should content yourself with an invitational bid (probably 3♣, see 'Responding to a take-out double', later in this chapter) rather than blast into 3NT. Remember, if partner is short in spades, he may well have doubled on a good-looking 11-count.

We might compare the discussion in chapter 3, on whether to 'bounce' partner's overcall, depending on how long/short you are in the 'excluded' suit.

Love all

West	North	East	South
2♥	2♠	pass	?

and you hold

(a)	(b)
♠ K63	♠ K63
♥ A742	♥ 72
♦ KJ54	♦ KJ54
♣ 74	♣ A742

With the first hand, partner's heart holding rates to be a small singleton or doubleton. On the second, he probably has three hearts (note East's failure to compete to 3♥). All this means that partner is far more likely to have 'stretched' to bid opposite the first hand than the second. Thus, we believe that while a raise to game is the most common-sense bid holding hand (b), it is safer and more correct simply to invite with 3♠ holding hand (a). (Note: 3♠ is invitational not preemptive in this auction, since the opening bidder may be safely ignored.)

The take-out double - a commercial break!

OK: you've decided you must bid - you can't or won't risk passing. Remember, you are stepping into a minefield. How are you to avoid injury?

Flexibility is the key to competitive bidding without a known fit. You must aim to keep partner's range of options as wide as possible. Enter the take-out double, which is the most *flexible* bid in your armoury. It does not raise the level of the auction; and it gives partner the option to defend the enemy's contract. In fact, we give you this piece of advice: '*If your hand is offensive and you want to bid, but there is no obvious bid to make - double.*'

At this point, many of you will be thinking: 'What the hell are they talking about? Most of my doubles are for penalties. I don't want partner to bid over them!' It may take a huge effort of will-power, but you must abandon this philosophy if you want to be a successful bridge player in the modern game. Later in this chapter we shall look at some auctions where doubles must be for penalties. For the moment, however, we are going to ask you to assume every double is for take-out *unless you and your partner have found a fit*.

The best way of justifying this approach is by looking at hands - and this we shall do. But consider these preliminary remarks. In a competitive auction, you should have one overriding concern: *to declare when it is right to declare, and to defend when it is right to defend.* When everyone is bidding, don't be over-concerned initially with extracting a huge penalty. Just try to make sure: (1) that you go plus whenever the hand is yours; and (2) that you know how high to compete the partscore or when to take a save if the hand belongs to your opponents.

Putting it another way: *concentrate initially on achieving your own 'par'*; don't make it your first priority to punish the opposition when they fall below theirs. Playing take-out doubles is the best way to pursue these aims. They provide you with what you need most - a flexible method of announcing an interest in competing the hand. And it is far from clear that they prevent you extracting as many large scores 'above the line' as those whose doubles are generally for penalties.

Now let's look at some auctions:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	dble

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	dble

(3)

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	3♥	dble

Maybe you play some or all of these three doubles as take-out already, in which case skip to the next section. If not, read on.

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	dble

This first auction is a good place to start, because it is a good example of how times have changed. Long ago, bridge players realized it was silly for the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble

to indicate a hand that wanted to defend 1♠. It was far more important to be able to tell partner you wanted to compete the hand in one of the other three suits.

For many years, however, the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♠	dble

was always played for penalties. It seemed indecent to allow your RHO to open at the three level on a weak hand unless he ran the risk of being severely punished whenever possible. But now, for over a decade, nearly all good pairs have taken to playing this double as take-out also. Not because they were any less ea-

ger to punish preempts, but, again, because they found it was far more important to be able to express an offensive hand with no other clear bid.

Old habits die hard, though. Even today, very few non-expert pairs play the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	dble

for take-out. Yet the rationale over 4♠ is not much different to what it is over 3♠ - or 1♠, for that matter! Make sure you know when to play the hand and when to defend, and stay as flexible as possible when competing without a known fit.

Of course, the emphasis changes as the level of the auction gets higher: it becomes less important to 'convert the declarership' (that is to say, arrange for your side to play the hand when your opponents are trying to do so). But it becomes increasingly, and correspondingly vital to stay flexible if you *do* wish to express an offensive hand. More anon.

Anyway, let's look at some hands

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	dble

(a) ♠ KJ6	(b) ♠ KJ106	(c) ♠ 6	(d) ♠ 64
♥ A54	♥ A5	♥ AJ54	♥ K75432
♦ K73	♦ 7532	♦ AJ752	♦ A752
♣ AJ62	♣ 642	♣ KQ9	♣ J

Hand (a)

♠ KJ6
♥ A54
♦ K73
♣ AJ62

is a fairly infrequent specimen. Unless you play against lunatics, you will not often have two trump tricks when your RHO opens 4♠. Playing penalty doubles, you have an easy double on this hand. Playing take-out doubles, you must pass.

What does this cost? (Certainly it can never gain on this hand). If, as is likely, partner has a fairly weak hand with short spades, *your opponents have already done the wrong thing*. It looks like a partscore deal. Perhaps the enemy can make 2♠, perhaps you can make 3♣ or something similar. In any event, if you can't double for penalties, you rate to take +100 instead of +300, or +150 instead of +500, on a hand where 4♠ may well not have been the standard opening.

If partner has a stronger hand with short spades (so that you are very likely to have been able to make a game - probably 3NT), say

♠ 5
♥ KJ63
♦ AJ642
♣ Q75

he will reopen with a double over

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	pass
pass	?		

which you will pass out for a substantial penalty.

Hand (b)

♠ KJ106
♥ A5
♦ 7532
♣ 642

is even more rare. Again a fine hand for a penalty double - provided partner will never pull it with his 0-6-2-5 15-count, as it would have been right for him to do opposite hand (a). This time you are less likely to lose playing take-out doubles. For partner will often be able to reopen with a double over

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	pass
pass	?		

which you will happily pass out.

Anyway, so far a fairly good advertisement for playing penalty doubles. But now let's look at hand (c)...

♠ 6
♥ AJ54
♦ AJ752
♣ KQ9

Playing penalty doubles, you have an unenviable choice. One option is to pass, in the almost certain knowledge that the auction will end there. This is most unsatisfactory. You may be solid for a five-level contract, with the opponents only one off in - or even making! - 4♠. Equally likely is that you are one off in a five-level contract while the enemy are cold for 4♠. You can hardly expect partner to protect with something like

♠ 73
♥ KQ762
♦ Q3
♣ J874

Wherever the king of diamonds is, it is right for you to play 5♥ on the assumption that the dealer has either an eight-card suit or a seven-card suit with good shape outside.

The alternative would be to double for penalties. This is not much better. Often you will convert +50 or +100 into +100/+300. But not infrequently you will turn -420 into -590. And again, *no chance of playing the contract your way*. Of course, you could launch into 5♦, or 4NT (intending to bid 5♦ over 5♣). But this would be suicidal. Much of the time you will concede a horrible penalty, when 4♠ was not even making.

How much easier if you are playing take-out doubles. If partner has a fairly balanced hand with a bit of defense, he will pass. The hands below all qualify for a pass over

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	dble
pass	?		

♠ J54	♠ A54	♠ 754
♥ K62	♥ Q62	♥ KQ6
♦ 104	♦ 643	♦ 643
♣ J7642	♣ 7642	♣ A762

As, of course, does a hand like ...!

♠ KJ105
♥ 632
♦ 63
♣ A762

If partner has an *offensive* hand, however, he must bid - *even if he is fairly weak*. Thus he should bid over

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	dble
pass	?		

with

♠ 5	♠ 542	♠ 52
♥ Q10763	♥ K107632	♥ KQ73
♦ 64	♦ Q6	♦ 64
♣ J10762	♣ 76	♣ AJ762

What about...?

♠ 64
♥ K75432
♦ A752
♣ J

Why is this here? Surely you won't bid over

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	?

whatever methods you play. Quite so. The reason we've given the hand is that it was held on this auction at IMPs and a big swing developed.

The point was that partner held

♠ 5
♥ AJ96
♦ KQ3
♣ 109642

In the first room, playing penalty doubles, the auction went

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	pass
pass	pass		

making ten tricks for +420.

In the second room, playing take-out doubles, the auction went

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	5♥
pass	pass	pass	

This contract also made for +450, and the successful team gained 13 IMPs.

You may be thinking we've missed the point. After all, the critical action was the double in the second room, which was *under* the 4♠ opener. Even if you play the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	dble

for penalties, it is not unlikely that you play

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	pass
pass	dble		

as for take-out. Fair enough. So did the losing side on this board in room one. The fact is, however, that the player holding

♠ 5
♥ AJ96
♦ KQ3
♣ 109642

didn't think his hand was worth a double, if partner could have doubled 4♠ for penalties. *Nor do we.* It is far too risky reopening, purely in the hope that partner has a good offensive hand.

The situation was very different in room two. Now partner's hand could have been ...

(a) ♠ K64	(b) ♠ KJ6	(c) ♠ AJ6	(d) ♠ AJ96
♥ J73	♥ Q73	♥ KJ7	♥ 73
♦ A762	♦ J7642	♦ 7642	♦ 7642
♣ AK5	♣ AK	♣ A53	♣ K53

and the odds are substantially improved in favour of reopening.

So what are we left with? On hand (a)

♠ KJ6
♥ A54
♦ K73
♣ AJ62

there is a very likely loss playing take-out doubles. With hand (b)

♠ KJ106
♥ A5
♦ 7532
♣ 642

if you play take-out doubles, there is a possible loss. Although, on both hands, the opponents have almost certainly already done the wrong thing.

On hand (c)

♠ 6
♥ AJ54
♦ AJ752
♣ KQ9

you will often gain heavily playing take-out doubles - even if the 4♠ opening was 'text-book'.

On hand (d)

♠ 64
♥ K75432
♦ A752
♣ J

if you play take-out doubles, you will show big gains on a narrow band of hands - when partner has an offensive hand with short spades in the 10-12 HCP range. But note that this is a fairly common hand-type for him to hold.

So, is the position fairly evenly balanced? With penalty doubles gaining on hands (a) and (b), while take-out doubles gain on hands (c) and (d)? No!

The crucial point is this: *you are much more likely to hold hand (c) or hand (d) than hands (a) and (b).* It boils down to the simple undeniable fact that when your RHO opens 4♠, you are more likely to have a good hand without spade tricks than a good hand with spade tricks. And if you can guarantee that your RHO's opening is 'standard', the odds are tilted even further in favour of catering for the good hands with short spades - the take-out double hands.

We have spent a long time on this auction for two reasons. First, it is one in which you very probably do not use take-out doubles. But also the case for playing penalty doubles is arguable - not correct, but arguable. In other words, if we convince you to play take-out doubles over

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♠	?

it will be simplicity itself to persuade you to play then in a hundred other auctions.

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	dble

It is fairly common nowadays to find even inexperienced duplicate players using the take-out (or 'negative') doubles over simple overcalls. Other pairs will state on their convention-cards that they play such doubles 'up to 2♠... or 3♥... or 3♠... or to 7♠!' - in other words, over all overcalls at any level.

Anyway, to return to our auction ...

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	dble

The case for playing penalty doubles in this position is quite untenable. You will gain very little, while you will lose over and over again - often heavily.

We will start by asking you to recall our discussion of pressure-bidding. Why do you make pressure-bids? In the hope that you can propel the opponents into a different contract from the one they would have reached without your interference. Now, how do you propose to arm yourself against these attacks? Surely, *by reserving the most flexible bid available to help you find the right contract*.

Here are just some of the hands you might hold over

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	dble

where you are fairly sure your side ought to be declaring some contract, but you've no idea which:

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ 63	♠ 5	♠ 6
♥ KQ74	♥ A10742	♥ AQ72
♦ K52	♦ Q52	♦ J52
♣ A762	♣ KQ76	♣ AJ762

You *must* be able to make a take-out double on these hands. If you can't, you're surrendering to the enemy. You're making sure your opponents reap huge rewards for their pressure-bids. Take hand (a) as an example...

♠ 63
♥ KQ74
♦ K52
♣ A762

and assume a double would be for penalties. What are you supposed to do? Bid 4♦? Or 4♣!? It's a nightmare. How are you going to get to 4♥ opposite...?

♠ Q5
♥ AJ65
♦ AJ763
♣ K5

And 4♦ opposite...?

♠ J5
♥ A6
♦ AQJ763
♣ 543

And 5♦ opposite...?

♠ A5
♥ A6
♦ QJ10763
♣ K54

and 3NT opposite...?

♠ AQ
♥ 65
♦ AJ10763
♣ Q54

And 6♣ opposite...?

♠ A5
♥ 65
♦ AQJ76
♣ KQJ5

And 3♠ doubled opposite...?

♠ KQ95
♥ A6
♦ A763
♣ J54

Maybe you can construct plausible auctions to the right spot on some of these hands without the use of a take-out double, but surely you can see the problems.

How much easier if you are playing take-out doubles and the auction can go...

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ Q5	♠ 63	-	1♦	3♠	dble
♥ AJ65	♥ KQ74	pass	4♥	pass	end
♦ AJ763	♦ K52				
♣ K5	♣ A762				

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ J5	♠ 63	-	1♦	3♠	dble
♥ A6	♥ KQ74	pass	4♦	pass	end
♦ AQJ763	♦ K52				
♣ 543	♣ A762				

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A5	♠ 63	-	1♦	3♠	dble
♥ A6	♥ KQ74	pass	5♦	pass	end
♦ QJ10763	♦ K52				
♣ K54	♣ A762				

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ	♠ 63	-	1♦	3♠	dble
♥ 65	♥ KQ74	pass	3NT	pass	end
♦ AJ10763	♦ K52				
♣ Q54	♣ A762				

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A5	♠ 63	-	1♦	3♠	dble
♥ 65	♥ KQ74	pass	4♠	pass	4NT[1]
♦ AQJ76	♦ K52	pass	5♣	pass	6♣
♣ KQJ5	♣ A762	pass	pass	pass	

[1] probing for the best strain

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ95	♠ 63	-	1♦	3♠	dble
♥ A6	♥ KQ74	pass	pass	pass	
♦ A763	♦ K52				
♣ J53	♣ A762				

Already we can hear the distant protests: 'What about doubling them for a large penalty?' First, let's not forget the last auction above. How are the penalty doublers going to extract their pound of flesh on that hand!? Secondly, remember that you are much more likely to hold a fair hand without spade tricks than a fair hand with spade tricks.

All that aside, however, what about those hands where you hold a juicy penalty double of 3♠ over the bid? Say...

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ KJ6	♠ AJ96	♠ Q1096
♥ A742	♥ K74	♥ A74
♦ 5	♦ 52	♦ 52
♣ J7642	♣ Q764	♣ J764

Nothing simpler. Pass, and wait for partner to reopen. The point is that your partner will reopen with a double on over 90% of hands with short spades. Thus, on the auction

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ J5	♠ 63	-	1♦	3♠	pass
♥ A6	♥ KQ74	pass	?		
♦ AQJ763	♦ K52				
♣ 543	♣ A762				

the opener should protect with a double holding any of the following...

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
♠ 5	♠ -	♠ 5	♠ 5	♠ 53
♥ KJ65	♥ A1065	♥ KQ6	♥ K6	♥ AQ6
♦ A7643	♦ KQ764	♦ AJ7643	♦ AK7643	♦ AK764
♣ KQ5	♣ K543	♣ K54	♣ Q1064	♣ K105

And isn't that precisely the sort of hand you expect partner to hold when you have one of the three 'penalty double' hands above?

There's just not context. Far better to give up Blackwood or Stayman, rather than not be allowed to make a take-out double on sequences like this

And so to our third auction.

(3)

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	3♥	dble

We shall assume 3♥ was bid preemptively. Obviously if it is invitational, it cannot be right to play double as being for penalties. In fact, it is scarcely less foolish to play a penalty double over a preemptive raise.

Competitive auctions where your opponents have found a good fit make the penalty double even more redundant than it has previously appeared to be.

You will almost never hold a good penalty double opposite what might be a minimum hand for partner's bidding to date. So it is very rare that you will miss a penalty. More important, partner is under no real pres-

sure to reopen at the three level or higher unless he has considerable extra values. Which, in turn, means that you will have very few awkward decisions to make opposite such a reopening double.

Meanwhile, how on earth are you to bid over

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	3♥	dble

holding hands like...

(a)	♠ K6	(b)	♠ Q6	(c)	♠ Q6
	♥ 54		♥ 5		♥ 542
	♦ AQ764		♦ KQ764		♦ KJ107
	♣ KJ65		♣ A10653		♣ AQ65

unless you can make a take-out double?!?

OK. If you're still not convinced, we give up. Anyway, for the rest of this chapter, doubles are assumed to be take-out until you have found a fit, unless otherwise stated.

Using the take-out double

It's all very well to arm yourself with a powerful weapon. It is equally important that you know when and how to employ it. Strangely enough, using the take-out double is much less complicated than you might think. To a certain degree you must plan the auction - consider possible continuations. But the basic rule remains: *if your hand is offensive and you want to bid, but there is no obvious bid to make - double.*

That underlying proposition should be qualified, however, to this extent: *the lower the level of the auction, the more shape-suitable or shape-specific your take-out double should be.* Best to explain this by looking at examples.

Over an opening bid

Say your RHO opens 1♦ at Love all. Here are four hands you might hold:

(a)	♠ AJ976	(b)	♠ KJ7	(c)	♠ A76	(d)	♠ AKJ76
	♥ K1064		♥ AQ6		♥ AQJ96		♥ K6
	♦ 5		♦ 5		♦ 5		♦ 5
	♣ AJ7		♣ AQ10754		♣ KQ107		♣ A9753

All these hands have a singleton diamond, and the first three contain at least three-card support for the other suits - features that might suggest to you that a take-out double fits the bill. In fact, we would recommend that over

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	?

you do not double on any of them. The reason is that we believe it is best in this sequence if you play a take-out double not only as 'shape-suitable' (that is, with support for all the unbid suits), but also as '*shape-specific*'. In particular, we suggest that, in general, your double should deny a five-card major or a six-card minor. Thus we would recommend you call: 1♠ on hand (a); 2♣ on (b); 1♥ on (c); and 1♠ (or a bid showing a black two-suiter) with hand (d).

Why? Well, the point is that the auction is so low that you have a chance to try for a *complete hand-description*, rather than a partial one. Take hand (a) as an example...

♠ AJ976
♥ K1064
♦ 5
♣ AQ7

If the auction starts

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠

you will be sure to find an eight-card or better spade fit; while if partner bids a new suit (or makes a responsive double) opposite your overcall, you will be able to show him good support (or bid your heart suit). And if partner has no spade fit and is not strong enough to act immediately, you still have an excellent chance of finding a heart or club fit. For you will often be able to *come back in with a take-out double later*.

If the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
2♦	pass	pass	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
pass	pass	2♦	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
1NT	pass	pass	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
1NT	pass	2♦	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
3♦	pass	pass	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
2♦	pass	3♦	?

you should now double. This says simply: 'I have short diamonds and want you to bid.' You are not always 5-4-1-3; you may be 5-3-1-4, 6-3-1-3, 6-4-1-2, etc.

In short, it is most unlikely you will miss a heart or club fit when it is important, if you start by overcalling 1♠. On the other hand, you are almost certain to miss a 5-3 spade fit, if you start with a double. Also, when partner has four or more spades, he will often under-compete the hand if he knows nothing of your five-card suit.

The same reasoning applies to the other three hands. Bid your long suit first, and come back in with a take-out double (or second-suit bid on hand (d)), if it appears sensible later.

Of course, you must not go to silly extremes. The following two hands are clear take-out doubles on the sequence

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	?

(a) ♠ 75432
♥ KQ106
♦ 5
♣ AK7

(b) ♠ KQ75
♥ AQ6
♦ -
♣ Q76542

And what about...?

♠ KJ75
♥ AJ643
♦ 5
♣ KQ7

We'd still recommend a 1♥ overcall over

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	?

but if we swap the spades and diamonds, so that you hold

♠ 5
♥ AJ643
♦ KJ75
♣ KQ7

over

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	?

you have an example of: 'I have an offensive hand. I want to bid, but there is no obvious bid to make.' Your heart suit is clearly inadequate for a 2♥ overcall, so you must double. Yes, you might miss a 5-3 heart fit. Rather that, than get to 3♥ opposite Qx when you had an eight or nine-card minor-suit fit available.

Sometimes the vulnerability can be enough to decide matter in favour of a double or overcall. Say you hold

♠ Q9542
♥ AJ75
♦ K105
♣ 7

over

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	?

you should probably overcall 1♠ if you are *not vulnerable*, and be prepared to protect with a double later. If you are *vulnerable*, however, this hand is usually only going to be worth *one bid*. (In other words, you are probably not going to be strong enough to act again over enemy bidding, if partner has passed.) Since you won't generally be able to achieve a complete hand description, then, it is better to go for the best immediate partial description available - which is to double.

Anyway, let's return to our original four hands:

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
♠ AJ976	♠ KJ7	♠ A76	♠ AKJ76
♥ K1064	♥ AQ6	♥ AQJ96	♥ K6
♦ 5	♦ 5	♦ 5	♦ 5
♣ AJ7	♣ AQ10754	♣ KQ107	♣ A9753

and assume now that the opening bid has been a weak 2♦ on your right...

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♦	?

It is now right to double on hand (a). One important point is that, if you overcall 2♠, the auction is now very likely to end

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♦	2♠
pass	pass	pass	

where partner has no fit for spades, but a good fit for either hearts or clubs. Another problem with overcalling is that if the auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♦	2♠
3♦ /4♦	?		

partner will often over-compete the hand in spades, perhaps again with a better fit available. Especially if the deal is a partscore (as it often will be on hand (a)), you cannot afford to be inflexible (i.e. show your hand as one-suited) with such a threadbare suit in what is, essentially, a three-suited hand.

The situation is directly comparable to an earlier hand

♠ 5
♥ AJ643
♦ KJ75
♣ KQ7

we looked at, on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	?

Not a good enough suit for a two-level overcall; double is a fair description of the hand as a whole.

Turning to hand (b)

♠ KJ7
♥ AQ6
♦ 5
♣ AQ10754

it is very close whether double or 3♣ is the better call. Both should work out all right opposite most hands. 3♣ has the advantage if partner has a fair hand, or if the opponents compete again in diamonds (you are strong enough to reopen with a double at any level). But an immediate double allows you to play in 2♥ /2♠ (or 2♦ doubled).

With hands (c)

♠ A76
♥ AQJ96
♦ 5
♣ KQ107

and (d)

♠ AKJ76
♥ K6
♦ 5
♣ AJ975

however, it is probably right to overcall 2♥ and 2♠, respectively. Your suits are good, and you are plenty strong enough for further action if necessary. (Yet you are not quite good enough to double and then bid a new suit over partner's response - see 'Doubling and then bidding a suit' later in this chapter.)

Now say the auction has started

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♦	?

This time it is clearly right to double on hands (a) and (b), probably on hand (c), and maybe on hand (d) also.

Hand (c)

♠ A76
♥ AQJ96
♦ 5
♣ KQ107

is interesting. Your heart suit is pretty good, but you would certainly rather play in a 5-3 spade fit than a 5-1 or 5-2 heart fit. With RHO having so many diamonds, it is not unlikely that partner has a 5-1-3-4, 5-2-3-3, or 5-2-2-4 shape. Also, importantly, with equal length in the majors (4-4 or 3-3), he will bid hearts if you double - which will suit you fine.

On hand (d)

♠ AKJ76
♥ K6
♦ 5
♣ AJ975

it is probably still just right to bid 3♠ (assuming you have no way of showing this hand as a two-suiter). You could double on the assumption that partner will bid 3♥, which you will pull to 3♠. But first, you are not quite strong enough for that sequence (see below), and secondly, what if the auction goes...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♦	dble
pass	4♥	pass	?

Disastrous to pass now, if partner has

♠ Q54
♥ A1094
♦ A62
♣ 863

but equally silly to bid 4♠ if partner's hand is

♠ 5
♥ QJ10943
♦ A62
♣ 863

Probably better to bid 3♠ directly, after which you can pass comfortably over

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♦	3♠
pass	4♥	pass	?

Finally, let us assume the auction has begun

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♦	?

Now it is right to double on all four hands. You intend to pass any non-forcing bid partner makes, except that with hand (d), over

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♦	dble
pass	4♥	pass	?

you will bid 4♠ to offer a choice of the black suits.

Most importantly, however, you must not prevent the auction continuing

West	North	East	South
-	-	4♦	dble
pass	pass	pass	

At this level, you must stay flexible - which means (most critically) that you must allow partner to defend, unless you have exceptional playing-strength. If you bid a suit, even on hand (d), you could find you have swapped +300 for -300, or worse! Remember: 'I want you to bid' is not the same thing as 'you must not pass'. Obviously, the higher the level of your take-out double, the more likely partner is to leave it in.

This does *not* mean that you can start making take-out doubles at the four-level on defensive hands, hoping that partner will leave them in. The more defensive you are, the more offensive partner is likely to be. *A take-out double must always ask partner to bid on with an offensive hand.*

Over an overcall

The same consideration of: 'the lower the level of the auction, the more shape-suitable your take-out double should be', can be applied to any take-out double situation. Turned around, it means that: *the higher the level of the auction, the more flexible you must be* and there is nothing more flexible than a take-out double.

Let's look at the position over overcalls. Say the auction begins

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	?

We are not going to get into an argument about 'negative free bids' - that is, non-forcing new suit bids over overcalls (with stronger hands going via a take-out double). Suffice it to say, we are sceptical, unless you play four-card majors and a strong no-trump. In any event, we shall assume that your new suit bid would be forcing in sequences like

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	2♣

or

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	2♠	3♥

and that double is negative / take-out.

Incidentally, a few words on terminology. There are many titles given to doubles used in various sequences: 'negative', 'sputnik', 'responsive', 'snap-dragon!' and others. Colourful though some of them are, these terms are largely redundant, and (worse) confusing. They tend to distract from the fact that all these doubles are simply 'take-out', showing an offensive hand that wants to compete with no other clear bid to make. If you decide that in certain sequences at low levels your take-out doubles ought to be shape-specific - should promise particular holdings - that's fine. But it will be simpler (and more revealing) if we refer to all such doubles as 'take-out'.

In fact, we suggest your take-out doubles should be shape-specific only thus far. In the sequences

West	North	East	South
-	1♣ / 1♦	1♠	dble

West	North	East	South
-	1♣ / 1♦	2♥ / 2♠	dble

West	North	East	South
-	1♥ / 1♠	2♣ / 2♦	dble

the double should promise four (or five) cards in the unbid major. Otherwise you place too much strain on your constructive (and competitive) bidding, which will frequently be directed toward finding a major-suit fit.

The same should probably apply when the double is opposite an overcall, as in

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	2♦	dble

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	2♥	dble

Anyway, back to

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	?

What about these hands...?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
♠ 64	♠ 6	♠ A5	♠ 6	♠ 6
♥ KJ93	♥ A10743	♥ KJ74	♥ A10743	♥ AJ7
♦ J6	♦ Q6	♦ 64	♦ J6	♦ J64
♣ A10764	♣ K7642	♣ AQ1076	♣ AQ764	♣ AQ10764

Hand (a) is a classic take-out double in this sequence: four cards in the unbid major, a good holding in the other unbid suit, no other obvious bid. Hand (b) should also double. The normal reason: an offensive hand, you want to bid, no other sensible alternative. Skipping ahead a bit, opener will often bid 2♥ over

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	dble
pass	?		

on a fair three-card suit.

Hand (c) is debatable. There's nothing terribly wrong with making a take-out double, but a forcing 2♣ is probably a better choice. You have enough to drive a game, so you might as well be as descriptive as possible. There is no risk of losing a heart fit.

Hand (d) is a 2♥ bid. Don't make it tough to get to a 5-3 heart fit, when you have the strength to make a forcing bid.

Hand (e) is an obvious 2♣ bid. Why show a hand of wide-ranging strength with four hearts and almost any number of clubs, when you can show a strong hand with a good club suit without suggesting four hearts?

In summary, a take-out double in the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	dble

should show four (or five) hearts, and is limited or balanced.

Now say the auction has started

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	2♠	?

With hands (a) and (b), it is still clear to double. Hand (e) is an equally obvious 3♣ bid. Hands (c) and (d) are more interesting. With

♠ A6
♥ KJ74
♦ 64
♣ AQ1076

it is close. 3♣ is probably right, but double is certainly OK. The point is you have less room now. 3♣ gets your strength across better and guarantees a good club suit, while double gets your overall shape across better and promises more strength than over a one-level overcall.

Hand (d)

♠ 6
♥ A10743
♦ J6
♣ AQ764

is definitely a double now. A bid of a new suit at the three level must be game-forcing, and usually shows a better suit than A10xxx. Also, why run the real risk of only getting one of your two suits into the game? Far better / more flexible to double.

And if the auction starts...?

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	?

♠ 64
♥ KJ97
♦ J6
♣ A10764

raises a very interesting point. You might think that 9 HCP scarcely justifies taking any action at this level without a good diamond fit or a very good suit of your own. Not an unreasonable point of view. But the fact remains, you do have a very offensive hand. You are not vulnerable, and if you double, can you really get into trouble, provided partner does not assume you have a much stronger hand? From the perspective of safety and descriptiveness, it is a close call.

But consider this. Say you pass, and the auction continues

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

what will you bid? 4♥, to try for the game bonus? 4♣ as a conservative, but fairly safe effort? 5♣ as a 'shot', playing partner for only three (or two) hearts and a good hand? And what is partner supposed to do with...?

♠ J
♥ A6
♦ KQ107532
♣ Q53

Why concede -140, when you can probably make 4♦?

They key to this hand is: if it's right for your side to compete further, *it would be far better if partner could choose the suit*. Looking at your fair offensive hand

♠ 64
♥ KJ97
♦ J6
♣ A10764

it does seem that it will probably be right for your side to act over 3♠ (occasionally to defend 3♠ doubled). You want partner to select the right strain. So you should double. This is a slight overbid, but partner will be wary of leaping towards a slam. He too knows it is far more important to play the right strain.

Note that (strangely) it is less clear to bid if you have an extra heart and a club fewer:

♠ 64
♥ KJ975
♦ J6
♣ A1076

The reason is that this time your best chance of locating a possible eight-card heart fit (your most likely game) is on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	4♥

If you double, however, over 3♠, partner might hesitate to bid a three-card heart suit, and it is quite wrong for *you* to bid 4♥ over

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	dble
pass	4♣/4♦	pass	?

This means that you will probably miss your 5-3 heart fit by doubling over 3♠, when partner is 1-3-5-4, 2-3-4-4, 1-3-6-3, 2-3-6-3, etc.

This is not to say that double is wrong holding

♠ 64
♥ KJ975
♦ J6
♣ A1076

(you may be just too good to pass - it depends on what your partners reopen on); simply that it is less clear than when you hold

♠ 64
♥ KJ97
♦ J6
♣ A10764

The rule of thumb on borderline offensive hands is: if you are going to be 'tossing a coin' when partner re-opens with a double, it's better to make a slight overbid and double yourself. If, on the other hand, *you* want to pick the strain opposite partner's average offensive hand, it might well be right to make a slight underbid and pass.

Hands (b)

♠ 6
♥ A10743
♦ Q6
♣ K7642

and (d)

♠ 6
♥ A10743
♦ J6
♣ AQ764

are fairly clear take-out doubles on the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	3♠	?

You should not be over-keen to look for slam on (d), if partner bids 4♥ opposite the double, just because you know he may have extras. Perhaps he has done an excellent think in bidding 4♥. He may even have

♠ J75
♥ KQ6
♦ A7532
♣ K5

Hand (c)

♠ A6
♥ KJ74
♦ 64
♣ AQ1076

is also a clear double. Again you should be cautious about moving toward slam if partner bids 4♦ or 4♥. Remember, you are forcing partner to bid, unless he wants to defend 3♠ doubled. The one cardinal sin when

the enemy have made a pressure bid, is to allow yourself to be pushed into a minus score when you had a game available.

Hand (e)

♠ 6
♥ AJ7
♦ J64
♣ AQ10764

remains best expressed by a forcing bid in clubs (4♣). Six of a minor is a very realistic prospect, and bidding a new suit at the four level is the sort of show of playing strength that alerts partner to slam possibilities. Just as importantly, 4♣ is more likely to get you to a good 5♣ contract. (Though double has the advantage of keeping 3NT and 3♠ doubled in the game.)

Finally, let's assume the auction has started

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	4♠	?

Now, if you act at all on these hands, it must be with double. To bid 5♣ or 5♦, even on hand (e), is far too unilateral. You must allow partner the chance to pass out 4♠ doubled. The only question is: are you strong enough to act?

You might bid 4NT with hand (3), to show a very offensive hand playable in two strains, if that is what 4NT would mean. Otherwise, double is clear on (c), (d), and (e).

What of (a) and (b)? Again we would recommend that you double, although (a) is very close indeed. Don't worry too much about persuading partner to bid when it is right to defend. He knows that 4♠ is unlikely to make if you can bid at all, and he is aware that eleven tricks is a tall order. He won't only pass on good defensive hands like

♠ AJ7
♥ Q6
♦ AK753
♣ 853

but also on most balanced or semi-balanced hands, even without spade tricks. Thus pass is routine on

♠ 753
♥ A65
♦ KQ753
♣ K5

even

♠ A5
♥ J652
♦ KQ753
♣ A5

To bid, as opener, at the five level, you must have a high ODR. You will usually have a singleton spade or ten cards (plus) in two suits. Occasionally you may have a 5-4-3-1 shape with three small spades - say

♠ 753
♥ KQJ6
♦ AKJ75
♣ 5

A 5-4-2-2 shape with a small doubleton spade is probably the borderline case. It will usually be right to bid if partner has a singleton spade, but wrong if he has a doubleton. You'll have to let the form of scoring, the vulnerability and your honour-card structure decide matters with this shape.

Because the opener promises a high ODR by bidding at the five level opposite your double, if it seems as though you have a good fit, you can confidently bid a slam on hands (c) and (e), and maybe on hand (d).

One quick example: you hold hand (c)

♠ A6
♥ KJ74
♦ 64
♣ AQ1076

at Love all, and the auction goes

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	4♠	dble
pass	5♣	pass	?

6♣ is almost certain to be on - so bid it. Partner will not have much less than

♠ 75
♥ A6
♦ AKJ75
♣ KJ95

or

♠ J
♥ Q6
♦ AK753
♣ KJ953

At worse, it might be on a finesse of the king of diamonds.

Before we leave the subject of take-out doubles over overcalls, it is worth mentioning sequences like

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♦	dble

or

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♥	dble

What does the double guarantee? What does it deny? It's probably no big deal, but we would suggest (contrary to popular practice) that double in these sequences should *deny* a fair four-card major. Thus

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♦	dble

might be

♠ KJ7	♠ QJ7	♠ 7642
♥ K65	♥ A6	♥ KJ6
♦ J85	♦ 8532	♦ Q85
♣ 7653	♣ J765	♣ K76

While

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♥	dble

might be

♠ K76	♠ A7
♥ 653	♥ J65
♦ 853	♦ Q85
♣ AJ76	♣ K10765

If you've got a fair four-card major that you can bid at the one level bid it. If you've got two - bid 1♥!

This style is particularly useful if you play five-card majors and thus can't freely raise partner's one-minor openings.

Other sequences

We shall end this whirlwind tour of the take-out double by looking at some random sequences where the double is made later than the third bid of the auction. Paradoxically, the more bids that precede the take-out double, the more obvious it is, generally, what sort of hand the double shows. Not infrequently, in fact, you will be in a position to say (if required): 'Oh, partner's showing extra strength with something like a 3-6-1-3 shape' - or similar.

(1) Love all

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	1NT	dble

There's very little percentage to playing this double as penalties. East thinks he can make 1NT. If he's wrong, it'll probably be because you have a good suit of your own on lead. To double will very likely push the enemy into 2♦ (or opener's second suit). Either pass and hope to defeat 1NT by at least two tricks (particularly if they're vulnerable), or bid your suit.

Meanwhile, what are you going to do on

(a)	(b)
♠ J5	♠ 10
♥ KQ63	♥ KJ632
♦ 76	♦ 76
♣ AJ754	♣ KQ1075

if you can't make a take-out double? Particularly at matchpoints, it can be disastrous to let the enemy play 1NT on hands like these. It's all too likely you could have made a partscore in hearts or clubs, while your opponents are making, or - at best - are one off in 1NT. You must recognize: these are very common hands to hold. If you do not have a way of bidding them, you will often lose out.

Remember, finally, partner is under no obligation to bid if he has...!

♠ KQ1083
♥ Q7
♦ KJ104
♣ 32

(2) Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♠	dble	2♠	dble

How about...?

♠ 5	♠ 5	♠ 5
♥ AJ6	♥ K106	♥ A6
♦ K1074	♦ KQ7	♦ K743
♣ AJ986	♣ AQ8653	♣ AQ10865

- crazy if *you* have to guess the right strain, holding any of these hands.

(3) N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
dble	1♥	3♦	dble

Maybe

♠ KQ105
♥ 643
♦ 7
♣ AQJ108

- again, far too unilateral to bid 3♥, 3♠, or 4♣ on either of these hands. Particularly if partner has...!

♠ 643
♥ AQ1052
♦ Q1096
♣ 4

(4) N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
2♦	dble	3♦	dble

Something like

♠ AQ8752	♠ A108752	♠ AQJ97
♥ K64	♥ Q64	♥ J64
♦ A7	♦ 7	♦ 74
♣ 86	♣ KQ10	♣ AJ8

(5) E/W vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♥	1♠
2♥	pass	3♥	dble

What about...?

♠ AJ8752	♠ KJ875	♠ AJ987
♥ 64	♥ 6	♥ 64
♦ KJ7	♦ KJ97	♦ AQ74
♣ J8	♣ Q86	♣ J8

Wherever it comes in the auction, the logic of a take-out double remains the same. You have extra offensive values, but you want to stay flexible. To understand the take-out double is to learn to love it - as the most useful and reliable weapon in the cut and thrust of bidding competitively in non-fit auctions.

Responding to a take-out double, showing strength at the three level, and 'scrambling'

There's no particular secret to responding to a take-out double (in general). Just use common sense and *stay flexible* if you have no obvious fit.

Sequences beginning with a take-out double of a one-level opening have been fully investigated by others. We have nothing to add to standard methods. As for responding to later take-out doubles, we have a little more to say.

Staying flexible in response to a take-out double

First, consider this hand. You hold

♠ AQ965
♥ K74
♦ Q63
♣ 54

on the sequence

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♣	dble	pass	?

Nothing seems obvious. Perhaps you don't even have an eight-card fit with partner, who could be, say,

♠ K7
♥ QJ96
♦ KJ97
♣ 763

Still, the right bid is 2♦. If partner has five diamonds, he will be happy to have located a fit. If he has five hearts and two spades but not five diamonds, he will probably now bid 2♥ - and again you will have found a fit. If he is 3-4-4-2 with weak spades (and he might choose to double with this hand - see the next section), he will pull your 2♦ to 2♠ - and all is well once more. In short, your 2♦ rebid is the most *flexible* way of responding to partner's double.

Say you were to bid 2♥ instead. Often it will make no difference. But what if partner is, say...?

♠ J7
♥ Q1065
♦ KJ754
♣ Q7

This time you hold

♠ A65
♥ AQ10743
♦ 6
♣ Q105

on the auction

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	2♥
2♠	dble	pass	?

Again, it is far better to show your clubs (rather than rebid your hearts). Not only will you keep the auction lower, and thus more flexible, but, in any event, partner will expect you to bid a three-card minor in preference to rebidding a six-card suit. The point is, he already assumes you have a six-card suit. Why tell him what he already knows?

Partner could easily be 2-1-5-5 on this auction, in which case clubs is your only fit. If he is 2-2-5-4, say

♠ 74
♥ J5
♦ AJ974
♣ K1076

you will play the hand in hearts anyway when you show your clubs (see next section).

A sequence like

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	pass	?

is a little different. This time it is right to bid 2♥, not 2♣, with a hand like

♠ 65
♥ KJ7
♦ AQ764
♣ AJ5

Partner's double is much more shape-specific, anchored to the heart suit (at least, the way we recommend). He appears to have a few spades, given your LHO's silence. He may well be

♠ A743	or	♠ A74
♥ Q1065		♥ Q10653
♦ J5		♦ 53
♣ Q64		♣ Q64

He will not be

♠ A743	or	♠ A74
♥ Q64		♥ Q64
♦ J5		♦ 53
♣ Q1065		♣ Q10653

Forcing to game opposite a take-out double

The best (and simplest) approach to suit bids opposite a take-out double is that they should all be natural and non-forcing. This means you have to find some other way to express either (a) a hand strong enough for game, but with no clear direction; or (b) a slam interested hand with a fit.

The answer is to *cue-bid the opponents' suit* in either of these situations. This cue-bid initially says: 'We are game-forced; but I'm not sure where.' Consider this example. You hold

♠ A76
♥ AQ5
♦ 63
♣ AKJ74

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
2♦	dble	pass	?

Bid 3♦. If partner bids 3♥/3♠, you will raise him - playing the 4-3 fit perhaps, if partner has, say,

♠ KQ5
♥ KJ64
♦ 742
♣ 653

If partner bids 3NT, you will let matters rest there. If he bids 4♣, you will bid 4♦ to ask him to choose between 4♥/4♠ on a 4-3 fit, or 5♣. While if partner bids 4♦ (to ask you to choose a major), you will bid 4♥.

Same auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
2♦	dble	pass	?

different hand

♠ KJ76
♥ A5
♦ 6
♣ AK7432

This time you want to investigate slam, in spades or clubs. Again you should bid 3♦. Say partner bids 3♥. You now bid 3♠ (promising four, since you are not playing partner to have five spades on this sequence). Over to partner: with four spades he should either bid 4♠ (minimum), or 4♦ (extras); without four spades he will just make a natural bid (3NT or 4♣ probably). Over...

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
2♦	dble	pass	3♦
pass	3♥	pass	3♠
pass	3NT	pass	?

you will bid 4♣ (still forcing), on your way to 5♣, or 6♣ - perhaps partner has something like

♠ A105
♥ K764
♦ A54
♣ 865

One final example. What do you think opener and responder should have for this auction...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♠	dble	pass	2♠
pass	3♣	pass	3♥
pass	3NT	pass	end

Assume the double shows four or five hearts. Opener has forced to game, bid hearts, but allowed partner to play in 3NT despite knowing partner must have four hearts. Of course, it's possible that opener is deliberately rejecting the 4-4 fit with weak trumps and spade values. More likely, however is that opener has only *three* hearts.

Responder knows there is no need to raise to 4♥ immediately just because he has four hearts - he has already shown these. So he will usually bid 3NT with a spade stop, in case partner only has three hearts and thinks clubs will run. Most likely, the hands are something like...

North	South
♠ A94	♠ 1063
♥ K963	♥ AJ4
♦ J52	♦ A3
♣ J64	♣ AKQ53

If opener has in fact got four good hearts and is slam interested, say

♠ 106
♥ AQ42
♦ A3
♣ AK1053

he will bid 4♥, or 4♦ over partner's 3NT to show this sort of hand.

Showing strength at the three level - opposite a take-out double

The real problems in responding to take-out doubles come at the three level, when you do *not* have enough to game-force. It can be very difficult to show extra values without pushing the bidding up too high.

Say the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	pass	?

and you hold

♠ 76
♥ A
♦ KQ653
♣ AQ1074

Nothing simpler. You jump to 3♣ to show your second suit and a good hand. But what if the auction starts...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	2♠	?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
2♠	dble	pass	?

On the first auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	2♠	?

you may feel there's no problem. Bid 3♣ again to show the same hand. But what would you do with, say...?

♠ 76
♥ 5
♦ AK653
♣ KJ1074

Don't you want to bid to 3♣ on this hand also? Even if partner has some rubbish like

♠ A53
♥ Q9764
♦ 72
♣ Q65

3♣ is a hot favourite, while you have no defense to 2♠.

And how about...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
2♠	dble	pass	?

Remember, partner doesn't really need a much better hand to double over 2♠ than over 1♠. You can't force to game on

(a) ♠ 76
♥ A
♦ KQ653
♣ AQ1074

opposite what might be

♠ A5
♥ Q10764
♦ 1072
♣ J65

Yet you don't want partner to think (when you bid 3♣) that you only have something like

(b) ♠ 76
♥ 5
♦ AK653
♣ KJ1074

lest he actually hold

♠ J53
♥ Q764
♦ A7
♣ K653

which is a game opposite the stronger hand (a). And this is by no means the most difficult such three level auction.

The truth is, you're balanced on a knife-edge at the three level. Show too much strength, and you go minus when the hand is yours. Don't show enough, and you miss a game. It's just too important a level to guess at randomly, when you're short of space (Which is, or course, why we recommended in chapter 3 that your WJOs to 2♥, 2♠, 3♣, etc. should be as frequent and as random (!) as possible.)

The answer is to employ a bid of 2NT is a non-natural way. This has been done for many years by bridge-players. It started, we believe, with a device known as *Lebensohl*, for use in auctions starting

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	2♥ / 2♠	?

The original idea was that a direct bid of, say, 3♦ would be forcing; while if you wanted simply to compete in diamonds, you would bid 2NT. This would force partner (the 1NT opener) to bid 3♣. If your suit was clubs, you could now pass. With diamonds, you simply bid 3♦ and partner would pass.

The idea of differentiating between various strengths at the three level has been refined and extended to all sorts of auctions. We believe that it is more important to use 2NT to show a particular type of *fit-hand* in most contested sequences opposite partner's opening bid or overcall (see chapter 2). There are auctions, however, where we think 2NT is best used to distinguish different strengths. The most important of these is opposite a take-out double.

It does not matter whether it is your RHO or your LHO who has forced you to bid at the three level. In either instance, we suggest you play 2NT (generally) as showing a *weaker competitive* hand, while a direct suit-bid at the three level be played as strictly *invitational*.

Let us look at this method in its purest form. Say the auction begins

West	North	East	South
2♠	dble	pass	?

Unless you are happy to pass out 2♠ doubled, you must bid - even on a yarborough. But what if you have a 10-count? Surely it can't be right to bid, say, 3♣ on both

♠ Q65	♠ A65
♥ 743	♥ 743
♦ 63	♦ Q6
♣ J9762	♣ KJ962

The answer is to bid 2NT on the first hand, showing weakness (initially). Partner will generally bid 3♣ and you will pass this. On the second hand, however, you bid a direct 3♣. Partner knows now that you have 7-11 HCP, and can bid accordingly. (If you are even stronger you must bid a game or cue 3♠ to ask partner to describe his hand further.)

We will refer to this use of 2NT as 'Lebensohl', even though the original convention was limited to auctions where partner had opened 1NT.

To return to our first auctions

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	2♠	?

and

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
2♠	dble	pass	?

the same logic applies. A direct bid of 3♣, 3♦, or 3♥ is very invitational, showing extra values. With a weaker hand, start 2NT. Partner will generally bid 3♣ or 3♦, non-forcing. You will then complete the description of your hand if appropriate - often by passing.

Here are some examples on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	2♠	?

(though the situation is very little different, if it is your LHO who has bid 2♠)

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 74	♠ 1063	-	-	-	1♦
♥ A9653	♥ AJ4	1♠	dble	2♠	2NT
♦ J5	♦ A3	pass	3♣	pass	3♦
♣ Q1073	♣ AKQ53	pass	pass	pass	

Responder bids 3♣ in case opener has a minor two-suiter. Opener, however, shows a single-suited hand without extras - over which responder has an easy pass. (In this case, the final result is unaffected by playing a Lebensohl 2NT.)

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 753	♠ A6	-	-	-	1♦
♥ A1065	♥ J7	1♠	dble	2♠	3♦
♦ 52	♦ AKJ1064	pass	pass	pass	
♣ QJ97	♣ K52				

3♦ shows a good hand, but responder has nothing to say.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ J74	♠ A6	-	-	-	1♦
♥ KQ653	♥ 7	1♠	dble	2♠	2NT
♦ 952	♦ KJ1064	pass	3♦	pass	end
♣ Q7	♣ KJ1052				

Responder bids 3♦ rather than 3♣, because he would rather play in opener's first suit (if he has both minors). In other words, he is giving preference on the assumption that partner would pass a 3♣ bid.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 74	♠ J65	-	-	-	1♦
♥ AJ65	♥ KQ74	1♠	dble	2♠	3♥
♦ Q5	♦ AKJ64	pass	4♥	pass	end
♣ Q10743	♣ 5				

Opener's 3♥ (showing extra values) is aggressive, but well-judged. After all, 4♥ is reasonable opposite as little as

♠ 74
♥ A6532
♦ 53
♣ 7432

Responder has an easy 4♥ bid now, and the good game is reached.

North	South
♠ 743	♠ A6
♥ A1065	♥ 74
♦ K5	♦ AQ106432
♣ J974	♣ K5

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	2♠	3♦
pass	3♠	pass	3NT
pass	pass	pass	

Over 3♦, responder must try for 3NT with the king of diamonds and a quick trick outside. When partner admits to a spade stop, all is well.

Let's try another sequence:

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	2♥
2♠	dble	pass	?

Again, a bid of 2NT shows minimum values, while a direct bid of 3♣, 3♦, or 3♥ shows a better hand.

However, this is an auction where if you hold a four-card minor as the overcaller, you can be fairly sure you have a good fit with partner. Also, your range is in practice going to be limited, with everyone bidding. This means that it is almost always right to bid a direct 3♣/3♦ if you hold four cards in that suit. Of course, if you have a four-card minor on this sequence, you will very likely be 6-4, so your playing strength is likely to justify a 3♣/3♦ anyway.

How would you bid as South, on the auction

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	2♥
2♠	dble	pass	?

holding...?

(a) ♠ A6
♥ AQJ1053
♦ K107
♣ 42

3♥. Even opposite a small singleton, you want to encourage partner to bid a game with, say,

♠ 752
♥ 4
♦ AJ64
♣ KQ763

(b) ♠ K6
♥ AQ9532
♦ 7
♣ Q1042

3♣. About minimum in terms of HCP, but an excellent offensive hand in clubs. You might well have a game on opposite, say

♠ 752
♥ 5
♦ AJ64
♣ KJ763

Certainly you want partner to compete to 4♣ over 3♠, if he has

♠ 75
♥ 4
♦ QJ1064
♣ KJ763

(c) ♠ K64
♥ KQ9532
♦ AJ7
♣ 4

2NT (and then 3♦ over 3♣). You are not offensively strong enough for a direct 3♦. If the enemy bid to 3♠, you certainly don't want partner bidding again. In fact, you quite fancy doubling! Note (and see next section): if partner has something like

♠ J7
♥ 104
♦ Q1064
♣ KQ763

he will bid 3♥ over

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	2♥
2♠	dble	pass	2NT
pass	3♣	pass	3♦
pass	?		

'Scrambling'

By this time, it may have occurred to some of you that showing strength is often a very *low* priority opposite partner's take-out double. So surely it doesn't make sense to employ a Lebensohl 2NT in these auctions? Quite. Let's take an extreme example:

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	pass
1♠	pass	2♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

The chances of your side ever wanting to bid beyond the three level on this auction are infinitesimal. Your partner may well have already done too much! What you really want is simply to push the enemy one level higher - then you can both relax, perhaps having indicated a good lead.

Meanwhile your aim is clear: *find your best fit*. The last thing you want is to have to guess which four-card suit to bid opposite the double. That is the way to lose -300/-500. What do you do, on this sequence, holding...?

♠ A76
♥ K643
♦ Q5
♣ J974

Bid 3♣, and pull it to 3♥ if doubled!? Perhaps partner has

♠ 54
♥ A105
♦ K1043
♣ Q1065

3♣ doubled, down one, is probably 'par' on the board. 3♥ doubled certainly isn't!

No. You don't bid 3♣. You bid 2NT. This bid says nothing about the strength of your hand - simply that you would rather partner choose the strain. It's not really a convention (although we shall refer to it as a 'scrambling 2NT'). It is simply common sense. What else can it logically mean? In fact, good players have been using 2NT to scramble in obvious auctions for over 30 years.

So *when* is 2NT a 'scramble' opposite a take-out double? The answer is: *when it should be!* This is not as redundant as it sounds, for it will usually be obvious when you should use 2NT to help find the best fit, rather than to distinguish different strengths.

Fortunately, however, simple rules will avoid any ambiguity. They may slightly constrain the free-flowing use of cooperative judgement and table-presence in borderline situations, but in our experience it's better to be safe...

Generally, then, 2NT is Lebensohl in response to a take-out double. It is always so when your opponents bid over the double - as in, say

West	North	East	South
1♥	dble	2♥	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	pass
1♠	dble	2♠	?

Now you do not have to bid on a weak hand, and with fair values but no clear strain, you will simply make a take-out double yourself.

If, however, *the enemy has bid to 2♥/2♠*, your *partner makes a take-out double* and your *RHO passes* - 2NT is scrambling in the following, and only the following three situations:

(a) In strictly protective auctions

That is, when partner is reopening after the enemy have had the auction to themselves. For example

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	2♥	pass
pass	dble	pass	2NT

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	pass
2♣	pass	2♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	2NT

also

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♣	pass
2♠	dble	pass	2NT

where both you and your partner have denied a good hand.

But not in an auction like

West	North	East	South
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
2♠	dble	pass	?

where the second-round double should show a good hand with length in clubs and spade shortness - say

♠ 7	♠ 7
♥ AJ65	♥ KQ65
♦ KQ74	♦ A107
♣ AQ64	♣ AJ643

On this auction, you want partner to be able to invite game.

(b) When you or your partner has bid 1NT

For example:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
2♠	dble	pass	2NT

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	2♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	2NT

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♥	1NT
2♥	dble	pass	2NT

In these auctions, one of you has gone so far towards limiting your high-card strength by bidding 1NT, that a Lebensohl 2NT would be redundant. And it is more efficient to use 2NT to help find the best strain than as a natural bid.

(c) When responder to the double has already had one chance to bid a Lebensohl 2NT

For example:

West	North	East	South
1♠	dble	2♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

The logic is that you do not need two chances to show a single-suited hand without much strength. If you weren't able to do so on the previous round, it is now more likely that finding the right strain is your priority.

Say, on this auction, you hold

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ J65	♠ J65	♠ J65
♥ K74	♥ 743	♥ J743
♦ 6	♦ 64	♦ 64
♣ Q109873	♣ QJ987	♣ Q987

What do you bid over...?

West	North	East	South
1♠	dble	2♠	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

With hand (a), you might want to bid a 'good' (that is, 'direct') 3♣ now. You can't. But so what? Surely you will have already bid 2NT on the previous round - to show a one-suited, fairly offensive hand, without the high-card values for the three level (i.e. about 4-7 HCP).

Holding hand (b), you will clearly pass on the first round, and now you can bid 3♣ to show your suit.

With hand (c), you were not strong enough for a take-out (responsive) double on the previous round (which would have guaranteed at least a fair 7-count). Now you want partner to choose the strain. Bid 2NT - and if partner bids 3♦, pull it to 3♥, playing him to be 2-4-4-3, 2-4-5-2, or 1-4-5-3.

The same rule applies to an auction like

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♥	1♠	2♥	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

though you will have to wait a page or two to discover why opener could have bid a Lebensohl 2NT directly over 2♥.

Before we leave the topic of responding to a take-out double at the three level, consider the following miscellaneous auctions. What have the take-out doubler and his partner shown?

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
2♠	pass	pass	dble
pass	2NT	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	pass	pass	

Over the second take-out double, 2NT is a scramble ('no second chance' rule). 3♣ is a natural bid, suggesting clubs as a strain. 3♦ rejects clubs and offers a choice of the red suits (with just diamonds, remember, he would have bid 3♦ directly over the second double). 3♥ simply shows a preference for that suit over diamonds.

Typical shapes? Perhaps 1-4-3-5 for South, and 3-4-4-2 or 4-4-4-1 for North.

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	2♠	dble
pass	2NT	pass	3♦
pass	3♥	pass	end

Again a scramble 2NT (rule b). 3♦ says: 'I don't fancy clubs as a strain; let's try a red suit.' (You know partner must have a fit for at least one red suit to bid 2NT). 3♥ is natural preference (implying that you probably have clubs as well).

Most likely shapes Opener: 3-4-2-4/2-4-3-4; responder: 2-4-4-3 or 2-4-5-2.

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
2♠	pass	pass	dble
pass	2NT	pass	3♣
pass	3♥	pass	end

Yet another scramble sequence (rule a, protective auction), but something doesn't add up. What has North got? When he bid 2NT he should have been offering a choice of at least two strains, but now he appears to have rejected both clubs and diamonds, and to be insisting on hearts. Why didn't he just bid 3♥ directly over the double?

In fact, *he is showing weakness*. The point is that when you want to play in the *most expensive suit* opposite a take-out double in a scramble situation, you have *two ways* of arriving there. You can either bid 3♥ (assuming the enemy suit is spades) - 3♦ (if the enemy suit is hearts) - *directly*, or you can bid 2NT first, and simply pull partner's response to 3♥ (or 3♦, if the opponents' suit is hearts).

The obvious (only) way to make use of this choice is in order to distinguish strength. In other words, to use 2NT as Lebensohl in a scramble sequence. Compare this auction:

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	2♦	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

This is not really a scramble sequence, since they only apply if the enemy suit is a major, but it is a *protective* sequence. They only reason 2NT would be *Lebensohl* in this auction is that it cannot be *offering a choice!* It is, in effect, choosing clubs. Therefore it might as well show weakness, while a direct bid of 3♣ would show a maximum hand for the bidding to date.

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
2♠	pass	pass	dble
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
pass	pass	pass	

Again, a scramble sequence - in theory (rule c). But the 3♥ bidder is still able to make a small show of strength, because he could have gone via 2NT and still ended up in 3♥. The doubler is perhaps only able to bid a game in the light of partner's optimism. Say the doubler holds

♠ A
♥ A643
♦ AQJ75
♣ K64

Clearly, it would be foolish to raise 3♥ to game if partner could have a yarborough (not unlikely on this auction). But when partner shows some useful values, game is a reasonable prospect. Perhaps partner has something like

♠ 10743
♥ J10752
♦ 64
♣ Q5

- obviously not enough to act on the previous round, but definitely worth a show of strength now.

(5)

West	North	East	South
1♠	pass	2♠	dble
pass	2NT	pass	3♦
pass	pass	pass	

This time we have a Lebensohl sequence. Thus the 2NT bid is simply a show of weakness (with some final destination in mind). 3♦ is a slightly surprising bid - what if partner has a weak single-suited hand with clubs? We shall be discussing auctions where a take-out doubler pulls partner's response to a new suit later in this chapter. For the moment, note simply that the doubler is here showing something like

♠ 6
♥ AQ105
♦ KQ10643
♣ A5

(6)

West	North	East	South
1♠	pass	2♠	dble
pass	2NT	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	pass	pass	

Another Lebensohl sequence. 2NT showed weakness; 3♣ was the expected response, allowing for partner to pass with clubs. 3♦ says: 'This is my suit'. So what does 3♥ show?? You'll have to wait for the next section. But what it *doesn't* show is a minimum 2-4-2-5 shape (or similar). In that case you must live with 3♦ - it may well be your best spot anyway.

(7)

West	North	East	South
1♣	pass	2♣	dble
pass	2NT	pass	end

Has the doubler passed an artificial bid? No. In this auction 2NT is *natural*. You cannot Lebensohl or scramble when the enemy's suit is clubs.

Showing strength at the three level - opener's second bid (and beyond)

Consider this auction

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♥	1♠	2♥	?

and compare it with the auction

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	2♠	?

Opener is in an almost identical situation, is he not? We won't rehearse the arguments demonstrating that it is crucial for him to be able to distinguish between: (a) a purely competitive bid at the three level; and (b) a stronger, invitational bid at the same level. Suffice it to say, if they are valid for auction (2), they must also be valid for auction (1).

In fact, we strongly advise you to extend your use of the Lebensohl 2NT to any non-fit auction where opener's second bid is over a call of 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ by his RHO - unless responder has bid a new suit at the two level. Thus the following sequences would be covered:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	1NT	2♠	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	pass	2♠	?

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♥	2♠	?

but not

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♠	2♦	2♠	?

In this last sequence, 2NT is best played as natural, showing a spade stop and a partial diamond fit in a fairly minimum hand - say,

♠ K10
♥ K965
♦ K4
♣ A10763

There's no such thing as a purely competitive hand opposite partner's new suit at the two level. If you had more in spades, you would pass, or bid 3NT. With more in diamonds you would raise.

In the first three sequences, however, 2NT would show a hand that wants to compete, usually with fairly short spades (otherwise you can't wait until partner protects, and be happy defending if he doesn't). A direct bid of 3♣, say, would show extras and be invitational.

Take auction 1,

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	1NT	2♠	?

as an example. Say you hold

(a) ♠ 6
♥ AJ1074
♦ Q5
♣ KJ963

(b) ♠ 6
♥ AJ1074
♦ A5
♣ KQ963

Need we say more...?

Or consider your action on this hand from a recent tournament. You hold

♠ 965
♥ K743
♦ J653
♣ Q5

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♥	pass
2♥	3♣	pass	?

One of your authors held this hand and bid 3NT - would you? You should. For partner will have something like (his actual hand)

♠ AK7
♥ 6
♦ Q4
♣ AKJ8743

You knew he would have bid a Lebensohl 2NT if he had, say,

♠ AK7
♥ 5
♦ Q4
♣ KJ98432

One point to note is that you should not generally bid a Lebensohl 2NT when you have a good fit with partner's bid suit - 'support with support'. Thus, in the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♥	2♠	?

you should try to bid 3♥ (or 4♥) if you have four-card support for partner. This is not to say that a bid of 2NT denies four hearts - rather that it will only include four hearts in a fairly defensive minimum hand say

♠ K65
♥ Q742
♦ A653
♣ K5

What you want to avoid is an auction like

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♥	2♠	2NT
3♠	pass	pass	?

where you have a reasonably offensive hand with undisclosed four-card support for what might be a five- or six-card suit (remember, the more hearts partner has, the more sure he will be that you have clubs or lots of diamonds!).

If you play a weak no-trump, it is perhaps best to make a strict rule that you cannot have four-card support to bid 2NT in this sort of auction.

The situation is different over, say,

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♠	dble	2♠	?

since partner usually has only got *four* hearts in this sequence. Thus there is no need to bid at all with four-card support in a minimum offensive hand (remember the Law of Total Tricks from chapter 1?). Similarly, there is no need to worry about having bid 2NT if the enemy compete to 3♠. Unless partner has considerable

extra values (in which case he will act), you should be happy to defend, rather than bid to the four level on an eight-card fit.

You can, in fact, extend the use of a Lebensohl 2NT to *responder's* second bid. An example auction:

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	pass	1♥
1♠	2♣	2♠	?

of course, you might play 2NT as natural in this sort of sequence. Probably better, however, to use it as Lebensohl. If, then, you bid a direct 3♣ or 3♥, you will be showing a fair invitational hand, opposite which partner can freely raise to game. Which means you do not have to pass (or get too high) when you hold a hand like

♠ 64	♠ 5
♥ A7632	♥ KJ108643
♦ Q54	♦ K54
♣ J63	♣ 63

Simply bid 2NT. Then you will pass partner's 3♣ bid on the first hand, and convert it to 3♥ on the second.

Although it is possible to extend the use of a Lebensohl 2NT still further, we do not recommend that you do so. If partner has not made a take-out double, not opened/overcalled 1NT (see below), 2NT should only be played as Lebensohl over RHO's bid of 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠ in a non-fit auction: (a) at the opening bidder's second turn; and (b) at the second turn of responder to the opening bid. Not at any later stage of the auction, or by the overcalling side.

Showing strength at the three level - other auctions

There are at least two other types of auction where it seems right to use 2NT to distinguish strength at the three level. The first of these is when partner has opened 1NT and your RHO has overcalled - the original territory of the Lebensohl 2NT. There are many versions of this much-loved convention in use. We'll leave you to pick your own.

The other type of sequence worth a mention now is when you are bidding opposite a penalty double of 1NT. If the auction

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♥	?

you may or may not be in a forcing pass situation. In either event, it is surely right to play 2NT as showing a weak one-suited hand in a minor. A direct 3♣/3♦ can then guarantee some values.

One last thought on Lebensohl auctions. Since a Lebensohl 2NT is forcing, shouldn't we give a meaning to a sequence like...?

West	North	East	South
2♠	dble	pass	2NT
pass	3♣	pass	3♠/3NT

You might be able to think of something more clever, but one reasonably effective idea is: (a) 3NT (via 2NT) should be natural, but *express doubt* about the strength of your holding in the enemy suit - e.g. in the auction above, one spade stop; (b) *cue* (via 2NT) should *offer a choice of 3NT/four-major* - e.g., in the above sequence, a hand like

♠ KQ6
♥ A1053
♦ K652
♣ J4

If you've found this section tough going, don't worry. It's a lot to take in at one go, if it's all new to you. Just try initially to understand the underlying principles. One thing we guarantee. If you are your partner decide to play these methods, you'll have fun when they turn up. And you'll find yourself faced with fewer awkward guesses - which means you'll get better results.

Doubling and then bidding a suit

In this section we intend to focus on only one type of sequence. Yet it seems to cause endless problems.

Say you make a take-out double; partner responds by bidding one of the suits you have (in theory) got; now you remove to a different suit. What are you showing?

These are the sort of auctions we are talking about:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♠

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♠	dble
pass	3♣	pass	3♦

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♦

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♠

(5)

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	dble
pass	2♠	pass	3♣

(6)

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♣	dble
pass	2♥	pass	3♦

(7)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♣	pass	3♣	dble
pass	3♦	pass	3♥

(8)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	1♠	3♣	dble
pass	3♦	pass	3♥

A choice of two interpretations

There are only two logical meanings for the doubler's subsequent new suit bid:

(a) a scramble - that is, an attempt to find a better strain than the one suggested by partner; or

(b) a good, one-suited hand ('GOSH') - too strong (or otherwise unsuitable) for a direct bid of your suit.

Auction (4), above,

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♠

introduces a novel twist. This time the doubler is not pulling to a *new* suit, but back to an old one. If he wanted to support partner's spades, why didn't he do so directly? We shall consider such sequences in due course.

For the more normal situation, let us return to auctions (1) and (2) above, as examples. In the first sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♠

most players would agree that the 2♠ bid shows a single-suited hand with spades that was too strong for a one-level overcall (a GOSH) - say,

♠ AQJ1074
♥ A6
♦ KQJ
♣ 52

What of the second auction...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♠	dble
pass	3♣	pass	3♦

This time most pairs would play the sequence as showing a non-forcing hand with five or more diamonds, four hearts and without three clubs. (Let us ignore, for the moment, whether it should show extra strength.) In other words, something like

♠ 65
♥ KQ74
♦ AKJ105
♣ Q2

You see the difference? Fairly fundamental, is it not? So when is your new suit a scramble, and when does it show a GOSH? Amongst top pairs there is no clear consensus, even in some of the commonest sequences. While many non-expert, and even some expert partnerships seem far from sure between themselves what all these auctions should mean!

There are two underlying theoretical propositions that often conflict. One is that take-out doubles should always be shape-suitable. This means that you never need to pull partner's response with an 'adequate holding' in the suit - your holding is always adequate.

The other school holds that the take-out double should be used as flexibly as possible, and thus the continuations should also be flexible - that is scrambling.

Consider this sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♥

In America this would tend to show a GOSH. In Italy, this same sequence would be far more likely to show a 4-5-2-2 hand - something like

♠ KQ65
♥ AJ743
♦ A6
♣ J2

Now, either method is playable. As always, your priority must be to ensure that you and your partner known what you're doing - rather than to play one method in preference to the other. Nevertheless, we shall attempt to provide some guidelines that you may find it useful to adopt.

First, some general observations.

(a) If you can bid a new suit, natural and forcing, or show a GOSH in any other way, then you can't show it via a take-out double.

For example, assuming you play the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♠	2♥

as showing a heart suit, forcing one round, then the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♠	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♥

cannot show a GOSH - whatever else it shows.

(b) You must always be prepared for the most inconvenient response.

Consider this auction:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♦

What does 2♦ show? If you think it ought to show a GOSH in diamonds - think again. Say the auction has started

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
pass	2♥	pass	?

What would you have done? 2♥ promises no more strength than 2♣ did on the actual sequence. Presumably you would have now bid 3♦. Well, if you were prepared to bid 3♦ over

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
pass	2♥	pass	?

you should be prepared to bid 3♦ over

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
pass	2♣	pass	?

Therefore, 2♦ - whatever else it shows - should (logically) not show a GOSH.

Compare this sequence

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♣	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♥

Again, it is logically inconsistent for 2♥ to show a GOSH.

What would you have done over

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♣	dble
pass	2♠	pass	?

(c) If there's any doubt, it's probably a scramble sequence!

This isn't especially helpful, as 'rules' go. The point we want to make is simply that it is the *exception* for the doubler's new suit to indicate a GOSH. There is a good reason for this. The sort of one-suited hand that is too strong to bid directly just doesn't turn up very often!

Anyway, so much for general guidelines. Let's turn to specific situations. The analysis naturally falls into four parts, each of which has its own logic.

When the take-out double is over an opening bid

Two 'rules' will allow you to bid effectively in this very troubled area.

(1) Don't double on one-suited hands over preemptive openings.

You're under quite enough pressure when the enemy has preempted, without making matters worse by trying to get too cute on one-suited hands. Just bid your suit. Jump if necessary. (WJOs don't apply over preempts.)

Your take-out double sequences must be kept as *flexible* as possible. Thus, for instance,

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♠	dble
pass	3♦	pass	3♥

should show a five-card suit, four or more clubs and no great diamond fit. Something like

♠ 65
♥ AK743
♦ A2
♣ AQJ5

A direct overcall of 3♥ would be wrong - your suit is not good enough. You need to be much more flexible with this hand. Yet why miss out on 4♥ opposite, say...?

♠ Q4
♥ 1096
♦ KJ953
♣ K64

or even 5♣, opposite...?

♠ 43
♥ 65
♦ KQ653
♣ K1064

Similarly, how about...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♦	dble
pass	3♥	pass	4♣

This should be a hand like

♠ KQ106
♥ A5
♦ 3
♣ AKJ742

Is there any reason partner can't have...?

♠ J952	or	♠ A5
♥ J1063		♥ 76432
♦ 742		♦ 74
♣ 83		♣ 8653

(2) Over a non-preemptive opening, you only show a GOSH opposite a minimum response, if you make a new-suit bid that would have been a jump overcall of the opening bid.

Say the opening bid on your right is 1♥ and you double: If over 1♠ from partner you bid 2♣/2♦, it is a scramble; while 3♣/3♦ is a GOSH. Over 2♣/2♦ from partner, 2♠ is a GOSH.

Some example hands:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♦

♠ J5
♥ AJ103
♦ KQ752
♣ K4

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♥

a GOSH

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♣[1]	dble
pass	2♥	pass	2♠

[1] Precision

♠ K7652
♥ A4
♦ KQ63
♣ A5

At this point, we must look at *how much strength you need for these various bids.*

First, to double an opening bid with a GOSH. Consider: you sit over the dealer. The auction has started

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	?

You hold:

(a) ♠ AQJ74	(b) ♠ AKJ743	(c) ♠ A7	(d) ♠ Q7
♥ A65	♥ K6	♥ 65	♥ K65
♦ KQ76	♦ A76	♦ K7	♦ A
♣ 8	♣ 85	♣ AK109853	♣ AQJ8532

There is no question that 30 years ago, none of these hands would have proceeded via a simple overcall of 1♠ or 2♣. The last three may very well have started with a *strong jump overcall* (SJO). Hand (a) (and perhaps (b)) would have started with a *double.*

You are, of course, far too sensible to be playing SJO's. But you do have a take-out double available. Should you use it? We say '*no*'. We recommend that you make a simple overcall of 1♠ or 2♣ on these hands.

This style is becoming increasingly popular - particularly amongst top players. The reason is that the pathological fear of 'missing a game', that used to govern players' thinking in situations like this, has been put in proper perspective.

There is no doubt that if you make a simple overcall on a hand like the ones we are looking at, you run the risk of missing a game. But there are two things to be said to that.

First, *the risk is not great*. You will be surprised how infrequently the auction will end with your overcall. The enemy will be very loath to pass you out unless they have defensive misfitting hands. Also partner will be able to raise you on very slender values if you have a fit - and you thought our methods for showing preemptive raises were purely destructive! In short, you will not often play the hand in your two-level overcall, and almost never in your one-level overcall. If you do, it will usually be an acceptable spot.

Secondly, *consider the gains.* These are twofold. If you have overcalled, and not been passed out when game is on, you will be in much better control of the auction. You have got your long suit across, and you are able to show extra strength later if you wish - either by rebidding your suit, bidding a second suit or by making a take-out double.

Also, your side will be much better placed if your take-out double on the first round guarantees a shape-suitable hand (or a huge one-suiter). Here's just one example, on the auction

Game all

West	North	East	South
1♥	dble	2♥	?

You hold

♠ Q10964
♥ A73
♦ J962
♣ 4

4♠ is not much of an overbid, but you content yourself with 3♠. You are surprised that partner, when it is his turn to bid, is in soul-searching and red-faced counsel with himself. Well, perhaps he has

♠ A7
♥ 65
♦ K7
♣ AK109853

You can appreciate his problem. It might be right to play the hand in 3NT, 4♣, 5♣, 4♠ - even 3♠. In practice, you're likely to end up going off in 4♠ - maybe doubled.

If you keep your doubles *shape-suitable* (that is to say, they contain support for all the unbid suits), this sort of unseemly squirming can be avoided.

Of course, there is a limit to everything. Sometimes you must make a take-out double with a one-suited hand - though don't forget the 'pressure' advantages of jumping straight to game, if appropriate. We make the following suggestions. Only double on a GOSH if

(a) you have eight or more playing tricks, and a suit you could overcall at the one level; or

(b) you have nine or more playing tricks, and a suit you can't overcall at the one level.

The reasons for this distinction are not that complex. First, a two-level overcall guarantees a lot more strength than an overcall at the one level. Thus, it is a lot easier to 'catch up' and show a strong hand, if you have started with a two-level overcall.

Secondly, if you are going to double on a GOSH, you should be able to introduce your suit if LHO makes a simple raise. If you are not strong enough to introduce your suit over, say,

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	dble
2♥	pass	pass	?

then you must start with an overcall. In this sequence, then, you obviously need a better hand if your GOSH is in a minor than if it is in spades.

Here are some GOSHs on which it is right to start with a double, on the auction

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
♠ KQJ974	♠ Q7	♠ AQJ	♠ 74
♥ AJ8	♥ AK108632	♥ 86	♥ AQJ
♦ K7	♦ 7	♦ A7	♦ A
♣ A6	♣ AQ10	♣ AKQJ65	♣ KQJ6532

Showing extra strength by scrambling

Now we turn to consider how many extra values you need (if any), when you pull partner's response to a new suit in a scramble situation. The 'rule' is simple and logical. *You promise extra strength on to the extent that you are likely to raise the level of the auction*.

Consider the following sequences:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♦

In sequence (1), you are essentially offering a choice of 2♦ or 2♥. In other words, you are not likely to push the bidding beyond the two level - which is where you are already. Thus you need no more strength than is required for a more three-suited double. Something like

♠ 64
♥ KJ107
♦ AQ1095
♣ K3

is a reasonable minimum.

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♥

On this sequence your shape will be something like 1-5-3-4, 1-5-2-5 or 2-5-2-4. This time, partner may well be forced to bid to the three level, if he has short hearts. Thus, a hand like

♠ 6
♥ AJ742
♦ 1053
♣ AQ103

is not strong enough for these actions. By all means double, if you wish, but if partner responds 2♦, you must pass. More normal for the above sequence would be, say,

♠ 6
♥ AK742
♦ J53
♣ AQJ3

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	-	2♦	dble
pass	2♠	pass	3♣

Now you are *forcing* the bidding to the three level opposite what might be an ill-fitting hand with little strength. You must therefore have a lot of playing strength yourself. Something like

♠ KJ
♥ KJ106
♦ 5
♣ AQJ743

would be about right.

Incidentally, if you're wondering why we both doubling with this hand (rather than bidding a direct 3♣), consider what might happen if partner has, say,

♠ Q64
♥ Q7532
♦ Q743
♣ 6

Here are some further examples. Say you hold

♠ AJ763
♥ K104
♦ 5
♣ AJ62

on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♦	dble
pass	3♥	pass	?

You are not nearly strong enough to pull to 3♠ at this point, forcing partner to the four level if he has short spades.

So how about

♠ AJ976
♥ K4
♦ 53
♣ AQ62

on the same auction? Again, you are not nearly strong enough for the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♦	dble
pass	3♥	pass	3♠

but this time it would be fairly random to pass the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♦	dble
pass	3♥	pass	?

Thus you are forced either to bid 3♠ directly (dodgy), or to pass over 3♦ (wet).

Exactly the same principles apply when the take-out double is made at other stages of the auction. Compare the following two sequences:

(1)

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♣	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♥

(2)

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦	dble
pass	2♠	pass	3♣

In the first, the doubler is offering a choice of 2♥ or 2♠ on a 2-5-3-3 hand (or similar). The bidding is expected to stay at the two level. Thus he needs no more strength than if he were prepared to pass partner's 2♦.

On the second auction, however, the doubler is forcing the bidding to the three level opposite a hand that is unlikely to contain a particularly good fit. His playing strength should be substantial. A minimum hand for this sequence will look something like

♠ Q	or	♠ 6
♥ KQ74		♥ A10743
♦ 63		♦ 6
♣ KJ10762		♣ QJ9762

When the take-out double is over an overcall

This is the simplest position by far. You never have a GOSH to double RHO's overcall - you can simply bid your suit forcing.

Of course, the normal considerations apply with regard to promising extra strength. Here are some example sequences. Try to imagine a typical hand for responder in each auction, before reading our suggestions.

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	dble
pass	2♣	pass	2♦

is fairly straightforward. Responder is likely to be 3-2-5-3 with offensive values (probably three small spades, or Axx).

Something like

♠ 653
♥ Q4
♦ KJ1062
♣ K104

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	2♦	dble
pass	2♥	pass	2♠

is less obvious. Certainly responder has five spades, and does not have four hearts. He also needs extra values, lest opener be forced to retreat to 3♣. Probably a hand like

♠ KJ1065
♥ A43
♦ 62
♣ J43

Too good / too short in diamonds to pass, but not strong enough for a direct (forcing) 2♠, which may well be the best final contract!

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♥

is similar. Responder should probably be 5-5 in hearts and clubs - say,

♠ 65
♥ KJ843
♦ J
♣ A10943

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♠

is the odd one out. Responder is not pulling to a new suit, but rather back to opener's first suit. What's he got? Logically he will usually have three spades, though exceptionally he might be, say,

♠ KJ
♥ AQ104
♦ 642
♣ 7643

so why didn't he simply raise directly? The reason is that *his values are very concentrated in the unbid suits.* He may also have five hearts, and have been planning to raise partner's 2♥ response. A typical hand would be

♠ 653
♥ QJ104
♦ KJ96
♣ 43

So what do you achieve by bidding like this? First, if partner ends up on lead (very unlikely on this sequence), he is likely to lead a red suit - which is what you want. While if *you* are on lead, it may help partner find the best switch at trick two. This consideration is of limited significance when you are facing the opening bid (as here), but it is of the first importance if you are opposite an overcall. Thus, if you hold the same hand on the sequence

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♣	?

it is imperative that you double. With only three-card support, one of your top priorities is to steer partner toward a red-suit lead. A bid of 2♠ would have the reverse effect.

Secondly, you will often be better placed in the subsequent auction. If this continues

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♣	dble
3♣	?		

it is not unlikely that your side only wants to compete to the three level if partner has a four-card red suit. If you double, it will be easier for partner to bid his second suit or make a take-out (responsive) double. It may be that 3♦ or 3♥ makes, while 3♠ doesn't. Perhaps partner has

♠ AK742
♥ K963
♦ Q10
♣ J7

in which case 3♥ is a much safer contract than 3♠, particularly on repeated club leads, or if either major breaks 4-1.

The necessity to prepare for the subsequent auction in these sequences has much more common application *opposite a two-level overcall*. We have looked before in this chapter at the sequence

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	dble

and we said you should double with a hand like

♠ 64	or	♠ A6
♥ Q3		♥ 103
♦ K10762		♦ K762
♣ QJ84		♣ Q9432

Now if partner's overcall contains a fair six-card suit (which should usually be the case), you may feel that a direct raise in hearts is appropriate. The trouble is, partner will expect you to have, say,

♠ 64
♥ Q103
♦ A7632
♣ 432

for your direct support bid (2NT in this auction). It is thus dangerous to raise hearts directly with a 2-2-5-4 /2-2-4-5 hand, lest partner be encouraged to over-compete.

But this does not mean that you never play in hearts unless the overcaller can rebid his suit. If he responds to your double by bidding your five-card minor, you will normally pass or raise/cue-bid. But if he responds in your four-card minor, you will probably take him back to hearts. Certainly if he responds 2NT (Lebensohl), which would tend to deny a four-card minor (see earlier), you will not let partner play in your four-card suit. Say you hold one of the hands above

♠ A6
♥ 103
♦ K762
♣ Q9432

on the auction

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	dble
pass	2NT	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	?

you must bid 3♥. Partner is probably 2-6-3-2 or 3-6-3-1.

Most importantly, however, if the auction continues

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	dble
3♠	?		

partner will not be tempted to bid without a four-card minor. It comes to this: double conveys your ODR more efficiently than 2NT (or 3♥). Also partner might find successfully aggressive minor-suit lead against a spade contract.

When the take-out double is opposite an overcall

This is the most awkward situation. It is all too easy to see why. First, your direct new suit bid (if natural) is *never forcing*. Thus in auctions like

(1)

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	2♦	2♠

(2)

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	1♠	2♦

the last bid is natural, constructive, but not forcing.

Secondly - and even worse - your direct suit bid is often *not even natural!* Remember FNJs?! Here are two example sequences, where you are unable to make a natural bid in clubs:

(1)

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

(2)

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	dble	?

We are not going to try your patience by restating the advantages of playing FNJs in such sequences. We shall only remind you of two things. First, with the other three players having bid (two of them unlimited), you will very rarely have a hand so good that immediate strong action is called for.

Secondly, if you have no fit for partner and have fewer than four cards in one of the unbid suits, your GOSH will generally contain some length in the enemy suit (three is normal). This means you can *afford* to wait on most hands. Unless partner is minimum with no shortage in the opponents' suit, he will reopen - usually with a double. And remember, you can generally show strength opposite that double by not going via a Lebensohl 2NT.

So where does all this leave us? You must not allow your methods to become inflexible through fear of not being able to deal with one particular hand-type that occurs very infrequently (the GOSH). Much more important to be able to compete effectively on the very common 'scramble' hands.

Some examples:

(1)

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♣	dble
pass	2♦	pass	2♥

♠ A5
♥ QJ963
♦ Q104
♣ 752

(2)

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦	dble
pass	2♠	pass	3♣

♠ 10
♥ KJ963
♦ 4
♣ KQ8752

(3)

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	3♣	dble
pass	3♦	pass	3♥

♠ KJ1065
♥ 963
♦ AQ5
♣ 74

(4)

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♦	2♥	dble
pass	2♠	pass	3♣

?

Something of an exception. The doubler should promise four spades (see above), so he is not scrambling on a 3-2-2-6 hand. Rather he is making a non-forcing game-try with a hand like

♠ Q653
♥ 96
♦ 5
♣ AKJ974

'Non-forcing', because partner might well have

♠ A104
♥ A7
♦ KJ10763
♣ 105

So what about those GOSHs that you can't bid naturally, yet can't bear to pass? Here are some examples of what we mean.

(1)

♠ 105
♥ AQJ1098
♦ A6
♣ Q73

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦ / 3♦	?

(2)

♠ 542
♥ J
♦ AKJ632
♣ K74

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

(3)

♠ AQ4
♥ 7
♦ 63
♣ KQJ10743

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♦	2♥	?

(4)

♠ AKJ1054
♥ 73
♦ A62
♣ Q7

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	2♦	?

First, some general reflections. If your GOSH is in a higher-ranking suit than partner's, you can always jump directly to game in your suit - as you can if you are able to jump to five-minor opposite a major-suit overcall. Thus, on auction (4),

♠ AKJ1054
♥ 73
♦ A62
♣ Q7

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	2♦	?

a direct bid of 4♠ would be to play. Or you could double, and pull partner's 2♥, 2NT, 3♣ response to 3♠ - which has to be a GOSH.

If your suit is lower-ranking than partner's, however, all jumps to the four level (or even to 5♣ opposite a diamond overcall) are fit-showing. You have the following options on such hands:

(a) *pass*, and hope partner will keep the auction alive if it is right;

(b) *bid your suit non-forcing*, if available;

(c) *double*, and hope to 'control' the auction.

Let's apply these choices to the example hands we gave above.

(1)

♠ 105
♥ AQJ1098
♦ A6
♣ Q73

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦ / 3♦	?

If RHO has bid 2♦, one option is to bid a non-forcing 2♥. If he has bid 3♦, your 3♥ bid would be a FNJ.

First, let us assume the auction has started

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	3♦	?

Passing is very dangerous. You only have two diamonds, so partner might well have a couple himself. Also, partner has only made a one-level overcall, and might not have the strength to reopen at the three-level, even if he is short in diamonds. So you must double, seeking to control the auction.

Let us look at possible continuations.

(a)

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	3♦	dble
pass	3♠	pass	?

Bid 4♥. Partner will know you are predominantly one-suited. Why? Because you would bid 4♦ to offer him a choice of major-suit games, or 4♣ to scramble with a heart-club two-suiter.

(b)

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	3♦	dble
pass	4♣	pass	?

Again, bid 4♥. Again partner will play you for a GOSH. Again you would have bid 4♦ to offer a choice of major-suit games - initially. (If the auction continues, say

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	3♦	dble
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	4♠	pass	5♣

you are showing a slam try in clubs.)

(c)

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	3♦	dble
pass	4♠	pass	?

Pass. Not what you were hoping for but it might well be your best spot. Importantly, partner should make some allowances for the fact that you might have a GOSH in hearts. He should only bid 4♠ if he is very one-suited. With, say,

♠ AQ9763
♥ 652
♦ 5
♣ AJ10

he should bid 4♦ and pass if you bid 4♥.

(d)

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	3♦	dble
4♦	pass	pass	?

Bid 4♥. Obviously a GOSH: with partner unable to act over 4♦, you would always make a second take-out double with the scramble type of hand.

Now let's say the auction has started

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♦	?

This time you could bid 2♥. In fact, it's probably still right for you to start with a double. The factors to consider are:

(a) your *strength*; obviously the stronger you are, the less you want to make a non-forcing bid;

(b) your *number of cards in partner's suit*; with a doubleton, you can stand partner jumping about in his suit opposite your double; you need to be more wary with a singleton or void!

(c) your *number of cards in the enemy suit*; the fewer you have, the more partner rates to have; therefore, with two or fewer it is often right to take forceful action yourself. If you have three or four, it is safer to pass or make a non-forcing bid, for partner will not usually let the auction die.

In this light, if you held

♠ 5
♥ AQJ1098
♦ A106
♣ Q73

it would be better to bid 2♥ (even to pass with crossed fingers), rather than to double on the above auction.

(2)

♠ 542
♥ J
♦ AKJ632
♣ K74

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

You may recognize this problem from chapter 2. We said then than it was right to double. Let's check on the continuations. If partner bids 2NT (Lebensohl), you will bid 3♦. This initially shows a scramble hand, like

♠ 542
♥ J6
♦ KQ1063
♣ Q74

If partner passes, that's fine. If he bids 3♥, you can choose between pass and a non-forcing, constructive 4♦. On this hand pass looks right. But if you hand (hand (b))

♠ 542
♥ 6
♦ AQJ10632
♣ A7

4♦ is better.

If partner responds 3♣ ('good'), you have a choice between 3♠, showing a game-forcing hand usually based on a diamond suit or a good club fit, 3♦ (non-forcing scramble initially), and 4♦ (natural, GOSH, forcing). With the first hand, 3♠ is probably right. On hand (b), 4♦ seems appropriate.

If partner responds 3♥, you can bid 4♦ (GOSH, forcing), or simply raise to 4♥. And if partner bids 3♦, start opening champagne!

(3) ♠ AQ4
♥ 7
♦ 63
♣ KQJ10743

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♦	2♥	?

The first think that should strike you is your heart shortness. *You must bid.* If you do not, your next task may well be to play at trick one. 3♣, 4♣, and 5♣ would show a fit, so you are forced to double. Your basic plan is to bid 4♣ or 5♣ on the next round. You may have an interesting (!) auction if partner jumps about in spades - better that than pass out 2♥ opposite

♠ K65
♥ 1064
♦ AQ9852
♣ 5

It's a bit of a messy area, and 'rules' are different to frame. Just note the following, however, and you should be OK.

(a) *Plan ahead.* Consider what the likely continuations are if you double; and decide how likely it is that the auction will die if you pass or make a non-forcing bid.

(b) *If you double and then bid a new suit, it's always a scramble if it can be.* This is part of planning ahead, of course.

(c) *Don't be over-afraid to defend, unless you are fairly confident of making game.* If the opponents have found a good fit, 3NT is unlikely to be on; and five-minor is always a difficult target when both opponents can bid - particularly if partner is unable to reopen after your pass. Only when you have a GOSH in hearts and partner has overcalled in spades is missing a game likely to be of concern to you.

(d) *Be aware, as the overcaller, that partner might have a GOSH. In particular, remember the use on cue-bids from both sides to locate the best game.* See, for instance, example hand (1) above.

Opener doubles at his second turn

This isn't quite the same. The doubler has *already* bid his longest suit. That means that everything is much simpler. Continuations are natural and common sense. We shall give the two auctions from the start of this section as examples.

(1) ♠ AKJ94
♥ KQ963
♦ A4
♣ 7

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
2♣	pass	3♣	dble
pass	3♦	pass	3♥

So why double in the first place? Why not bid a direct 3♥? Simply because partner might have had

♠ 65
♥ 74
♦ K7632
♣ QJ96

A direct 3♥ should show a much higher ODR. Something like

♠ KQ10432
♥ KQJ63
♦ Q4
♣ -

(2) ♠ AQ4
♥ KQ10962
♦ A5
♣ 76

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	1♠	3♣	dble
pass	3♦	pass	3♥

NOTE: We haven't exhausted this subject. For instance, what if partner makes a jump response to the double? But enough is enough! Don't lose sight of the overall picture. Which is: stay as flexible as possible when competing in a 'non-fit' auction. And make the fullest use of the take-out double as your most valuable weapon.

Doubling for penalties - Forcing passes in non-fit auctions

By now, some of you are wondering if you can ever get your hands on the enemy with a penalty double. You can. In this section we shall find out when.

It used to be the case that a pair would decide which doubles *not* to play for penalties. In fact, it is much more sensible to go about matters the other way round. Provided you don't get side-tracked into defining take-out doubles as 'sputnik', 'responsive', 'exclusionary', etc., the basic rule can be stated as follows: *all doubles are take-out until you've found a fit*.

You need only remember what the purpose is of making a take-out double: *to find a fit*. If you've already found one, there is no further use for take-out doubles.

Let's start with the simplest of sequences:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	2♥	3♣	dble

Penalties. No need to look for a fit, you've already found one - hearts. Similarly, in the auction

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♥
1♠	3♥	3♠	dble

Auctions where there is no further need for take-out doubles

There is more than one way to find a fit, however. Frequently the auction goes in such a way that your side has (in effect) found its 'fit' without bidding and supporting the same suit.

We put the word 'fit' in inverted commas because often there is no guarantee that the 'fit' you find is a good one. Sometimes it is not even certain that you do not have a better fit elsewhere. Nonetheless, in auctions like the following, you are *deemed* to have found your 'fit'.

(1)

West	North	East	South
1♣	dble	pass	2♠

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	4♥

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	2♥	pass	pass

As we shall see, so much more the case for penalty doubles if this 'fit' is inadequate.

Perhaps it is misleading to speak of these sequences as 'fit' auctions. Indeed, if one player later doubles for penalties, it is generally in the hope that the auction is a partial *misfit*. The point is this: it is sensible to assume on such sequences that *there is no point in looking for another fit*. Thus a further *take-out* double would be redundant.

Let us look more closely at these auctions where it is right to assume you have found your best fit, even though no suit has been bid and supported.

(a) One player has made a take-out double, and his partner has responded

First, a simple case.

West	North	East	South
1♥	dble	pass	2♠
3♥	pass	pass	dble

You have found a spade fit almost as surely in this auction as if you had both bid the suit. So the second double is for penalties. This is because the double of 1♥ promises support for all the unbid suits (unless based on a GOSH). Of course, it is possible that your spade fit is only 4-3 - in fact, you hope so when you double 3♥. All the bigger penalty you will get!

What about this?

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	dble
pass	1♠	2♥	dble

Again penalties. 'What!?' we hear you demand. 'How can we make a take-out double of 1♥, then a penalty double of 2♥?'

Well, 'yes' ... and 'no'.

We could reply that the doubler was planning to rebid in no-trumps with a balanced 20-count (and certainly he would double 2♥, if that is what he's got). But you can go grey waiting for such an opportunity. No, we agree that the doubler should be played to hold more normal take-out shape.

So, how can he want to double 2♥ for penalties? Well, all he's saying is: 'In the light of the bidding so far, my hand is very defensive.' Which translates as: 'I have extra values; I have only three spades, and may have a heart trick.'

Perhaps the full deal is

Game all
Dealer East

	♠ KQ62 ♥ J953 ♦ 106 ♣ J74	
♠ 1073 ♥ 6 ♦ 9532 ♣ K8532	N W E S	♠ A95 ♥ AQ10842 ♦ QJ7 ♣ 10
	♠ J84 ♥ K7 ♦ AK84 ♣ AQ96	

Where do North-South want to play? 2♠ off one? Or 2♥ doubled for +500 / +800.

Of course, partner will not always have such a defensive hand. He may instead have

♠ K10962
♥ 53
♦ 652
♣ 743

in which case he will bid 2♠. Or

♠ A762
♥ 53
♦ Q1065
♣ J74

with which he will bid a ‘good’ 3♦.

Anyway the point is this. What we choose to call a ‘penalty’ double does not say: ‘I want to defend, whatever your hand is.’ But rather: ‘I have excellent defense in the context of the auction.’ Of course, the two come to the same thing in many auctions, *when partner’s shape is fairly limited or yours is not*. Thus, in a sequence like

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	3♥	3♠	dble

partner will only pull your double if he is bored with your company.

But when your shape and ODR is fairly limited and your partner’s is not - as in

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	dble
pass	1♠	2♥	?

you can double to say: ‘I have extra values and a lower ODR than I might have.’ Partner is expected to pull such a double if he has a reasonable ODR for the bidding to date. If, however, his hand is very defensive...

We could start speaking of ‘defensive’ doubles, instead of penalty doubles - but why change the habit of a life-time?

Let’s look at some more sequences.

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♠	dble
2♠	3♣	3♠	dble

Again, you are presumed to have found your best fit - though, having doubled 3♠, partner now rates to have only a doubleton or singleton club. His second double is penalties. That doesn’t mean as the 1♣ opener you shouldn’t pull it with

♠ -
♥ A64
♦ QJ5
♣ KQ109863

But if you have a more normal hand - say,

♠ 7
♥ A6
♦ KJ5
♣ AJ106532

you should pass. Partner probably has something like

♠ Q106
♥ K753
♦ A8762
♣ 4

Almost the same sequence:

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♠	dble
2♠	2NT[1]	3♠	dble

[1] Lebensohl

Again you are assumed to have found your best fit - but this time only partner knows what it is! Nonetheless, your second double is still for penalties. If, instead, you want to compete the hand further, you must bid 4♣. If partner was planning to pull

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♠	dble
2♠	2NT	pass	3♣
pass	?		

to 3♦ / 3♥, he will now pull 4♣ accordingly.

Compare the sequence

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	dble
pass	2NT	3♥	dble

Same again. The doubler is showing good defense, though he expects partner to pull with very high ODR for the auction to date.

What about when partner's 2NT bid is a scramble, rather than Lebensohl? As in...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	dble
2♠	pass	pass	dble
pass	2NT	3♠	dble

A little different this time. The doubler should have a very good all-round hand. He will not normally have spade tricks, but he expects partner to pass out the double with a balanced hand. While if the 2NT bidder actually holds

♠ 74
♥ J10865
♦ J9742
♣ 5

he will pull the third double to 4♥. A likely hand for the doubler? Maybe

♠ 6
♥ AQ74
♦ AQ3
♣ AK643

(b) Partner has jumped to show a single-suited hand

A simple example:

West	North	East	South
1♥	3♠	4♥	dble

Penalties. When your partner has jumped preemptively, there doesn't seem much point in looking for a fit in another suit. So take-out doubles are redundant. Again, it is assumed partner has located your best fit. Of course, when you double subsequently, it is likely this 'fit' is not extensive.

The same is true if the single-suited hand could be strong - as in

West	North	East	South
-	4♥	4♠	dble

Note: if you are going to play the methods we recommended in chapter 3, remember an exception to this situation is when partner has made a WJO of 2♥ / 2♠ in a sequence like

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♠	3♣	dble

or

West	North	East	South
1♣	2♥	3♣	dble

(c) The opponents protect your auction

Say the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	pass		

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	pass

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	pass

In these auctions nobody has supported a suit (although in the second responder gave a preference). Yet you are assumed to have found your best fit (or to have decided you haven't got one and tried no-trumps). Thus if the enemy start bidding, *doubles are penalties, by opener or responder*.

Again, it is not so much that a good fit is already guaranteed - quite the contrary. It is simple that it seems foolish to start looking at this late stage for a different fit.

This is not the case if an opening bid is passed round to a fourth-seat protection. If the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	pass	1♠	dble

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	pass	dble	pass
2♣	dble		

there is no reason to assume that hearts is your best fit. Responder's pass on the first round simply shows a weak hand, not any love of hearts (the reverse, if anything). On the second sequence, for instance, responder is now showing something like

♠ Q963
♥ J5
♦ J10742
♣ 65

Other obvious situations

There are also some rather clear-cut *non-fit* auctions where doubles are for penalties. These can be categorized as follows.

(a) When your side protects

Consider this auction:

West	North	East	South
1♠	pass	2♠	pass
pass	dble	3♠	dble

If the enemy open the bidding, respond, and then die, you will sometimes want to protect - either with a double or a suit bid. You are usually sticking your neck out a bit. The last thing you want is partner raising you - still less competing again in some other way.

In fact, when you protect, you usually hope simply to push the opponents up a level (as in the above sequence). If you succeed, a double by your side should clearly be for penalties.

Again, this does not apply when the 'protection' is in fourth seat after an opening bid. In such auctions there is very little indication whose hand it is. The enemy are just as likely to want to push *you* to the three level as the reverse. Thus, in the following sequence, the final double is for take-out:

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	pass
pass	dble	3♣	dble

(b) Your side has already made a penalty double or penalty pass

As we shall see below, there is one exception to this rule, which is when the enemy has been doubled in their opening / overcall of 1NT.

Otherwise, if you have already doubled one contract for penalties, subsequent doubles should also be for blood. Some examples:

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	2♥
2♠	dble	3♣	dble

(2)

West	North	East	South
1♥	dble	pass	1♠
2♣	dble	2♥	dble

(3)

West	North	East	South
2♥	pass	pass	dble
pass	pass	3♦	dble

In the third auction, the first double was take-out. But it was 'converted' by partner's subsequent pass for penalties. Thus the second double is also for penalties.

(c) Most 'delayed' doubles

What we are talking about here is when your RHO bids, you pass, and then you subsequently double another bid by your RHO. There are three variables to consider: (a) what was RHO's first bid - an opening, overcall, response? (b) was RHO's second bid in the same suit? (c) did your partner take any positive action after your pass?

Let's look at some auctions.

(1)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
1♠	pass	2♥	dble

This is penalties. The logic is simple: if you couldn't make a take-out double of 1♥, you can't now wish to make a take-out double of 2♥ in a non-protective position. All you can logically have is a good hand with too many hearts to bid over 1♥, and too many points to pass now. Say

♠ 6	or	♠ A5
♥ AJ104		♥ KQ1063
♦ AQ63		♦ A63
♣ KQ95		♣ Q105

(2)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
1♠	pass	2♣	dble

This time RHO has rebid in a different suit. Again your double shows you have a good hand with long hearts. But it should also say something about clubs. It does. It is *take-out* of clubs. Something like

♠ A65	or	♠ 65
♥ AK1063		♥ AQ632
♦ KQ106		♦ AKJ6
♣ 5		♣ K5

If you have a good holding in clubs also, you have to pass again. Perhaps LHO will give preference to hearts (in which case you can now double for penalties), or partner might reopen with a double.

(3)

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
pass	dble	2♥	dble

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
1♠	2♦	2♥	dble

In both these auctions partner has taken some positive action. Do you not feel that a take-out double is now considerably more useful? In any event, there are good chances partner will reopen with a double over

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
pass	dble	2♥	pass
pass	?		

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
1♠	2♦	2♥	pass
pass	?		

if you have long hearts.

If you have a reasonably offensive hand, however, on this type of auction, you must be able to express it at once. On the first sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
pass	dble	2♥	dble

you might hold

♠ K64
♥ J5
♦ Q1073
♣ A653

While on the second

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♥	pass
1♠	2♦	2♥	dble

perhaps you've got

♠ A643
♥ 543
♦ K3
♣ Q1096

(4)

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	1♠	pass
2♠	pass	pass	dble

or

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♥	pass
2♣	pass	2♥	dble

In the first sequence, it would not be foolish to play double as take-out. Nonetheless, for simplicity's sake, the following general rule can be applied:

whenever you pass over an overcall, and then subsequently double, you show a penalty double of the overcaller's suit.

This is more obviously correct in the second sequence, and mandatory in an auction like

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♦	pass
pass	2♥	3♦	dble

Again, if RHO's second bid is in a different suit, your double on the second round shows a penalty double of his *first* suit - take-out of the second. Thus on the auction

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	1♠	pass
pass	2♣	2♥	dble

you might have

♠ AJ963
♥ 52
♦ AK73
♣ 54

but you will not hold

♠ AJ963
♥ KQ105
♦ A7
♣ 54

With this hand you must either pass again, and hope partner protects or that LHO prefers spades - or you can bid 3NT, if you've got cold feet.

(5)

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♣	2♦	pass
2♥	pass	3♦	dble

or

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	1♠	pass
1NT	2♥	2♠	dble

or

West	North	East	South
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
2♣	pass	2♠	dble

Exactly the same 'rule' should be applied when your RHO is responder, as when he was the overcaller. Thus these three doubles are all for penalties. Again, it is irrelevant whether partner has acted on the second round, or at all.

Putting all the above together, we may say:

a delayed double is for penalties of RHO's first suit (take-out of his second suit, if relevant), except when RHO was the opening bidder and partner has taken positive action on the first round.

(d) Partner has made a take-out double, then RHO bids one of the unbid suits

As in

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	dble	2♣	dble

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♥
1♠	dble	2♣	dble

West	North	East	South
1♥	dble	1♠	dble

In all these auctions, partner was hoping *you* could bid the suit your RHO has just bid. It seems clear that you should be able to double that bid for penalties - particularly as RHO will sometime psyche in these positions.

What about this auction ...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	dble	2♣	dble

There is some case for playing this double as take-out, if your agreement is that the double over 1♠ was anchored specifically to hearts, rather than to both unbid suits. The same logic would apply to

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
2♣	dble	2♦	dble

One to discuss.

(e) RHO bids a new suit opposite a preempt

As in

West	North	East	South
3♦	pass	3♠	dble

West	North	East	South
2♥	pass	3♣	dble

Simply a standard position for psyching. Therefore a standard position for psyche-exposing. Double shows the suit bid by your RHO.

(f) Partner has severely limited his hand in some other way

Obviously, if you know partner's distribution quite narrowly, a take-out double is unnecessary. The two most regularly occurring types of sequence that fall into this category are: (a) partner has shown a specific two-suiter; and (b) partner has shown weakness opposite a penalty try.

An example of the first:

West	North	East	South
1♠	2NT	3♠	dble

(where 2NT showed a minor two-suiter).

Two examples of the second:

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	dble	redble
2♣	2♥	3♣	dble

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	dble
2♦	2♠	3♦	dble

When pass is forcing in non-fit auctions

There are various types of sequence where you might find yourself in a forcing pass situation before you and your partner have found a fit.

(a) In some you will be *game-forced*, in which case a pass will be forcing over any enemy action. Say you play the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
pass	2♣		

as game-forcing; or (if you don't like that)

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
pass	2♠		

In either instance, if the next bid (from the enemy) is 3♦ - or 5♦ for that matter - opener's pass will be forcing. That is to say, it forces responder to double or bid (see chapter 2).

(b) In other auctions the bidding will be *forced to a certain level*, in which case a pass will only be forcing over enemy action below that level. Say you play the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	2♣		

as forcing to 2NT. If East butts in with a bid of 2♥ / 2♠, opener can make a forcing pass.

(c) Finally, there are auctions where *you are expressly looking for a penalty*. These are sequences where your side is not forced (itself) to any particular level, but you still decide that you shouldn't allow the opponents to buy the contract undoubled - at least up to a point.

There are, basically, two common such situations. One when you double a 1NT opening or overcall; the other when you redouble after partner's opening bid is doubled.

Take the auction

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♦	?

Nearly all good pairs have an agreement that if they double 1NT for penalties, they should not allow the enemy to declare 2♦ undoubled thereafter.

Similarly, good players would not recognize the sequences

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dble	redble	1♠	end

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
dble	redble	2♣	end

as permissible. They would play that opener's pass over 1♠/2♣ was forcing partner to act.

There are two preliminary considerations in these 'looking for penalties' sequences. The first is: *how far is pass forcing?* The second is: *can either player 'cancel' the forcing pass nature of the auction by showing weakness?*

Say your RHO opens a weak NT (12-14), and you double to show a good hand (usually 15+ HCP). Now your LHO bids. Is partner's pass always forcing?

The point is that the doubler often does not know the hand belongs to his side, though he obviously hopes so. If he has 16 HCP and his partner has 2 HCP, it is clearly wrong to be forced to act over 3♠, say.

Most pairs draw the line at 2♦, or 2♥, or 2♠. It's not terribly important, though we play

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♥	pass

as *forcing*, but

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♠	pass

as *non-forcing*.

If the auction starts

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1NT	dble		

or

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
dble	redble		

it seems sensible that opener's pass should be forcing over any bid by his RHO. For this time, the double of 1NT and the redouble of 1♦ are made on the basis of *known combined* strength. You do not *hope* the hand is yours; you are announcing it is a *fact*.

So far, so good. But what of the following auctions...?

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	dble
2♦	2♥	3♦	?

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	dble	redble
pass	2♥	2♠	?

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	1NT	dble
pass	2♣	pass	pass
2♥	pass	pass	?

In all three sequences your side (North-South) started by announcing defensive strength. Each time, however, your partner 'rescued' the enemy by making an immediate non-forcing bid in front of you.

As we shall see, he is showing weakness by doing this. He is limiting his hand and saying that he is not that interested in looking for a penalty. Are you forced to bid? Would your pass be forcing in the first two auctions?

The answers are: 'no'. You're back to square one in terms of announcing ownership of the hand. All your bids are natural, and doubles are for penalties since partner has limited his hand very narrowly (see above).

The same applies in a sequence like

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	pass	2♣
dble	2♦	2♥	?

Partner's 2♦ bid was an expression of one-suited weakness (in the context of an opening bid). Pass (from you) is natural, non-forcing; double would be punitive.

Note: don't confuse an auction like

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	dble	redble
pass	pass	1♠	pass
2♣	2♥	3♣	

If opener wants to show weakness, he must do so *immediately* - that is, at his second turn. Once he passes opposite the redouble, the forcing pass auction is permanent. When he bids 2♥, then, he is simply showing no desire to defend 2♣ doubled, fair offensive values and an extra heart (or two).

What is double, when pass is forcing?

OK. Now we know when pass is forcing in non-fit auctions. So, what does it mean? And what does double mean when you could make a forcing pass?

The second question must be answered first. What does the final double say in auctions like...?

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♣	dble

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
dble	redble	2♦	dble

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
pass	2♣[1]	2♥	dble

[1] assume 2♣ forced to 2NT

You might be surprised to hear that it doesn't really matter. There are good arguments both for playing these doubles as take-out and for playing them as penalties. In fact, your authors do not agree on some sequences!

The advantage in playing penalty doubles is simply that you can double your opponents a bit more often. The disadvantage is that it makes it harder to express your distribution if you don't want to penalize the enemy, and thus harder to gauge the extent of your fit.

What we shall suggest is a compromise. Partly so that you can see both sides of the story and understand the implications of each method; partly because it may be the right answer!

We suggest that - generally - you play double as *penalties* when pass is forcing. But we make an exception of the sequence

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♣/2♦/2♥	dble

When you double 1NT, partner's distribution and strength are quite unlimited. Thus it is right to play take-out doubles in the subsequent auction, since you might well have a good fit that is not obvious to either player.

In all other sequences, however, (a) you have heard partner limit his distribution partially before you double or redouble, therefore you are unlikely to miss a good fit; (b) you have reason to feel confident that the hand belongs to your side. Whether these considerations are sufficient to determine the issue in favour of penalty doubles is debatable, but they certainly argue in that direction.

Anyway, more important is how to use these two methods.

The meaning of a forcing pass

The message conveyed by a forcing pass in these non-fit auctions depends on what a double would mean.

(a) If a double would be for *penalties*, then a pass initially suggests to partner that your side defend (doubled). You are not strong enough defensively to double yourself, but you are happy to defend if partner can double.

(b) If a double would be for *take-out*, a pass initially shows a penalty double. You expect partner to reopen with a double (unless he would have pulled a penalty double, had you one available).

In either event, you may, in fact, be planning to *pull* partner's double to a suit bid. Your new-suit bid over partner' double shows *extra strength (PFA)*.

If you're feeling bewildered, don't worry. A few example will make everything clear (we hope!).

Doubles for take-out

Say the auction, at Love all starts

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♥	?

and that you play pass would be forcing over 2♥, and double would be take-out. What would you bid holding...?

(a) ♠ Q654
♥ 73
♦ K105
♣ J762

Double. Perfect. If partner has a good heart holding, he will pass out 2♥ doubled. Otherwise he will bid his best suit (Lebensohl 2NT applies).

(b) ♠ J6
♥ KJ64
♦ K762
♣ 743

Pass. Forcing. You expect partner to reopen with a double, which you will pass out. If he does not, it's because he doesn't want to defend 2♥ doubled opposite this sort of hand.

(c) ♠ Q10652
♥ 62
♦ J54
♣ 762

2♠. Don't get obsessed with looking for a penalty. Yes, double (take-out) will work better if partner has

♠ A
♥ KJ94
♦ AK76
♣ KQ83

but he'll also leave it in with

♠ KJ3
♥ KQ10
♦ A763
♣ A83

- more normal, and 2♥ will make the same eight tricks as 2♠.

(d) ♠ AQ1063
♥ 4
♦ J64
♣ 7632

Pass. An example of an important principle common to all forcing-pass auctions, that we have met before - the principle of fast arrival (PFA). You expect partner to reopen with a double to say he is happy to defend 2♥ doubled opposite hand (b), above. If he bids (3♦, say), so much the better! Over

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♥	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

you will bid 2♠. This shows *fair values*, though it is non-forcing.

Whenever there are two ways of bidding to the same place, a direct bid is *weaker* than starting with a forcing pass. Compare, say,

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dble	redble	2♣	2♥

which shows weakness, with

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dble	redble	2♣	pass
pass	dble	pass	2♥

where opener is showing a fair hand with six (plus) hearts and no desire to defend 2♣ doubled.

Back to

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♥	?

(e) ♠ 65
♥ 653
♦ J74
♣ Q10962

2NT. Lebensohl. Again you must bid immediately to show weakness. It is sensible to use a Lebensohl 2NT in these sequences.

(f) ♠ 65
♥ 6
♦ J764
♣ AQ10962

3♣. Invitational. You might think it is right to pass and then bid 3♣ over partner's double. Certainly playable. But why not reserve the sequences where you pull partner's double to a three-level suit as *game-forcing?*

(g) ♠ 1065
♥ 63
♦ Q1062
♣ J854

Pass. An exception to the rule that says 'bid directly with weakness'. The point is that you are ready for anything partner can throw at you. If he doubles, you will bid 2NT (scramble) to show a weak hand playable in either minor. (You can't have better values, otherwise you would have doubled yourself on the first round.) This way you don't have to guess a minor suit directly. Equally important, the auction might continue

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♥	pass
pass	2♠	pass	?

Down goes the dummy.

(h) ♠ Q1065
♥ 7
♦ Q106
♣ J9643

A difficult one. Depends a bit on the form of scoring and vulnerability. If it's matchpoints and the enemy are vulnerable, partner will be eager to pass out a double - so you should probably bid 2♠ or 2NT (though obviously the potential gain is greater if you can beat 2♥ doubled a trick). If it's teams, or the enemy are not vulnerable, then we'd risk a double. Partner won't pass it out lightly, and you're more likely to get to the right strain.

Note: if the auction starts

West	North	East	South
1NT	dble	2♠	?

and a pass would be non-forcing, you can obviously pass with a pile of rubbish. However, double would still be for take-out (no fit found yet), so if you have a hand like

♠ Q1094
♥ A65
♦ K3
♣ 7542

you must pass and hope partner can reopen with a double. 2NT from you would be Lebensohl on a hand like

♠ 43
♥ J65
♦ Q3
♣ Q109754

while a direct bid at the three level would be very invitational, but not forcing.

Doubles for penalty

If you are playing doubles as penalty, it is easier. Double is a statement of punitive intent. Pass is a hand that hopes partner can cooperate in punishing the enemy (initially). And PFA applies. (As does Lebensohl 2NT, when relevant). Some examples.

(a) ♠ J54
♥ 643
♦ AK752
♣ A4

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
dble	redble	1♠	?

Pass. Not quite enough spades to double at the one level. But if partner wants to swing the axe, you'll turn up at the ceremony expecting blood to be spilt.

(b) ♠ 5
♥ A64
♦ AQ752
♣ KJ43

Game all

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
dble	redble	1♠	?

Pass. You expect partner to double, and you will then bid 2♣. You can't do so directly, since that would show more like

♠ 5
♥ A6
♦ KJ975
♣ K10943

(c) ♠ A4
♥ KQ109643
♦ K7
♣ 43

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dble	redble	1♠	?

3♥. Non-forcing, with a high ODR and a good suit. Compare...

(d) ♠ A4
♥ AQJ9643
♦ A7
♣ 43

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
dble	redble	1♠	?

Pass. Then 3♥, forcing, on the next round.

(e) ♠ AQ653
♥ KJ4
♦ A76
♣ 53

E/W vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
pass	2♣	2♥	?

Double. How dare they!?

(f) ♠ K1065
♥ AJ843
♦ 7
♣ A53

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	2♣[1]	4♦	?

[1] game-forcing

A good advertisement for playing take-out doubles in these sequences! Remember, there is no point in passing, unless you intend passing out 4♦ doubled; for if you bid 4♥/4♠ over

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
pass	2♣	4♦	pass
pass	dble	pass	?

all you do is show extra values. You might bid 4♠ directly, or you might make an agreement that PFA doesn't apply at the four level in these auctions...

Over to partner

Now from the other point of view...

(a) ♠ A65
♥ 74
♦ AQJ6
♣ KQJ5

N/S vuln.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	dble
2♥	pass	pass	?

Double. Remember, this only says you are happy to defend if partner has a penalty holding (usually four cards).

(b) ♠ A106
♥ K7
♦ A964
♣ KQ53

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	dble
2♦	pass	pass	?

Double. Yes, it's for take-out and you want to defend. You hope partner has the same idea, but even if he doesn't, you still can't pass. Partner may have

♠ KJ7543
♥ A653
♦ -
♣ J64

(c) ♠ Q65
♥ A743
♦ A64
♣ 532

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	dble	redble
2♠	pass	pass	?

Double. Penalties. Remember, partner has expressed an interest in defending.

Finally, an auction that draws together several strands from this section:

♠ AQ63
♥ KQ105
♦ J4
♣ A72

Love all

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	dble
2♣	pass	pass	dble
redble	pass	2♦	?

Pass. Forcing. (Double would be penalties.) Let's go through the auction step by step. Partner's pass over 2♣ was forcing. Your double was simply saying: 'If you have a penalty double of 2♣, that's fine by me.' LHO redoubled for rescue, and partner passed to show he did indeed have a penalty double of 2♣.

Since your side has now passed out a double for penalties (albeit redoubled by the enemy), all further doubles by you and partner are for penalties.

Summary

It's difficult to write a satisfactory conclusion to this chapter, because so much varied ground has been covered. Instead, we shall leave you with a few oracular aphorisms:

- *Never lose sight of your ODR.*
- *Make sure you can declare when it is right to declare.*
- *Don't worry about defending and beating an undoubled contract - a small plus score is better than no plus score.*
- *Above all, stay flexible.*

How can you go wrong now?

Conclusion

And so to the end. We have covered a lot of ground - the entire scope of partnership bidding in the contested (and potentially contested) auction.

Let us emphasize again the standard by which we would wish you to judge this book. If you have understood the basic principles, if you appreciate the success and enjoyment you can achieve by exploiting the opportunities for partnership cooperation in the auction - then this book has fulfilled its authors' design.

We repeat: this is not a 'system' book. If you choose not to incorporate into your methods a single bid that may be described as 'artificial', you can still be a good partnership bidder.

If you are your partners wish you be excellent partnership bidders, however, you will probably have to accept that the 'standard' meanings of bids refer only to those usages that gained popular currency about 30 years ago. There is nothing more 'natural' about the sequence

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♦	4♣

indicating a strong single-suiter, than a hand with spade support and a club suit. It is simply that the former meaning became established before anybody gave much thought to other possible uses of the bid.

This does not meant that you need to ascribe the particular meanings to sequences that we suggest in this book. Far more important is that you reconsider from first principles what your 'partnership' priorities are in various sorts of auction. Then have the courage of your convictions to analyse the possible uses of different bids in line with these priorities.

One last thought directed to those of you who have found parts of the book difficult to assimilate: just try to understand the fundamental principles of each section; don't worry too much about trying to take on board specific suggested methods.

In our experience - unlike the finer points of cardplay, which tend to remain elusive (in practice) to non-experts - the principles of partnership bidding are, in fact, readily accessible to any bridge players who are not beginners.

Also unlike the finer points of cardplay, partnership bidding skills are much easier to 'bring to the table'. With a little patience, you will discover a speedy and dramatic improvement in your success and enjoyment at the game.