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Using a Take-Out Double to compete. ACOL Version

VB#20 Year 1 Take-out Doubles Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 2S By: South
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 1
Dealer: West	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North		
	♠ Q954		
	♥ KJ86		
	♦ Q9		
	♣ AJ2		
West		East	
♠ 8		♠ AT7	
♥ AQ53		♥ T97	
♦ AKT76		♦ 84	
♣ T87		♣ Q9543	
	South		
	♠ KJ632		
	♥ 42		
	♦ J532		
	♣ K6		

This set of deals (and another set to be found elsewhere in this edition) is all about the *take-out Double*. The principle of the take-out Double is generally well understood – a low level Double asks partner to bid his best suit.

What's the problem then? Well, the "responder" to a take-out Double has to take care to bid with great accuracy. Firstly, he has a gun pointing at his temple – he cannot Pass the Double as the opponents are likely to make the contract, possibly with overtricks. This means he has to bid, even with a collection of used tram-tickets. Therefore, responder cannot make a minimum bid if he does have some values otherwise partner (the Doubler) will be in the dark.

These hands are designed to lead you safely through this minefield...

Hand 1: Bidding accurately opposite a take-out Double is fairly simple. The "rule" is not to make the same bid on very different hands.

Partners are delicate flowers and they need careful nurturing...

West	North	East	South
1♦	X	P	2♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ A

Bidding

This is a very straightforward hand. West (on your left) opens 1♦, North has a respectable but minimum take-out Double to which you (South) should respond 2♠ after East Passes. Not 1♠, note, which could be based on nothing, but a jump to 2♠, which shows about this sort of hand (8-11 points, give or take). On this layout this ends the auction; North has done his bit with a Double on a minimum hand so it would be foolish for him to bid on.

Now, you may say that bidding 2♠ instead of 1♠ has gained you nothing and – on this deal – that is probably true. However, on other deals partner will have an easy time assessing your values (and, more importantly, your lack of them) if you bid with clarity. If you respond 1♠ on this type of hand and also on, say,

♠ 10 6 3 2
♥ 7 4 2
♦ J 5 3 2
♣ Q 6

how is partner supposed to bid a good hand accurately?

Play

Anyway – onto the play of the dummy. Against 2♠ West starts off with three rounds of Diamonds (East having made a "come-on" signal by playing the ♦8 before the ♦4). This is awkward and demands that you ruff high in dummy to prevent a cheap over-ruff. As the cards lie you cannot avoid losing two trump tricks to East whether you ruff first with the ♠Q or the ♠9 – West can always regain the lead with the ♥A and lead yet another Diamond.


Still, losing two trump tricks is no disaster; all the defence can take is two Spades, one Heart and two Diamonds.



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VB#20 Year 1 Take-out Doubles Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 2C
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ AK73	
	♥ A953	
	♦ T4	
	♣ A72	
West		East
♠ T9		♠ Q8642
♥ KQJT		♥ 74
♦ AQ875		♦ K62
♣ QJ		♣ T84
	South	
	♠ J5	
	♥ 862	
	♦ J93	
	♣ K9653	

Anyone (almost!) can make game when you've got 26-plus points. Not every hand can be a game contract though, full of easy tricks. Often, you will have hands like this, a little skirmish for a part-score.

It has been said that two-level contracts are the hardest to make and the hardest to defeat.

West	North	East	South
1♦	X	P	2♣
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ K

Bidding

We all shudder when we have a poor hand and our partner makes a take-out Double; all we want to do is quietly Pass and leave the table. But as we know, you simply cannot Pass a take-out Double with no intervening bid.

Our partner's take-out Double on this deal is straight from the textbook. The shape is perfect, even *more* points than needed (cf Hand 1), and a serious desire to compete in any suit.

With no chance of a major fit, we look to our pathetic, ratty, sickly Club suit. We bid it at the cheapest possible level, showing 0-8 points or so. We might pray for East-West to bid again, but no such luck.

Anyway, in these cases, you should reflect and ask yourself "How much worse might my hand have been?" You have a five-card suit and you have 5 points. These features are not nothing. Indeed not. Ask yourself how you would have felt after the same auction with either of these hands:

♠ J 7 6
♥ J 4 2
♦ J 9 3
♣ 9 6 5 3

or – horror of horrors:

♠ 9 7 6
♥ 8 4 2
♦ 10 9 3 2
♣ 9 6 5

Now thank your lucky stars for a decent five-card suit and a King!

Anyway, after your 2♣ call North recognises a stop sign when we sees it, and Passes. (How does he know? It's the fact that we have made a minimum response and not jumped the bidding).

Play

When the opening lead of the ♥K (promising the ♥Q also) is made and dummy comes down we see a dummy that offers us a chance of making

the contract.

Our preliminary **Count** shows no Spade losers, two Hearts, two Diamonds (planning to ruff the third in dummy) and probably (well, definitely) one Club loser. We can make this if we have good timing. It will take us three rounds of trumps to get them all (with the 68% chance of a 3-2 split), but we must have one in dummy to ruff that Diamond with.

Our first order of business is to strip the dummy of Diamonds so we can ruff. At trick two we lead a Diamond.

We get our first surprise at trick three when West leads a Club. Wow! Good for them. The best advice we can give defenders is "*Look at the dummy, Dummy!*" and that's what West did. He saw that you were stripping the dummy (else why wouldn't you be pulling trumps?) in preparation to ruff Diamonds, so he decided to cut down on your ability to ruff by leading trumps.

When you regain the lead at trick four, you stick to your plan and get rid of dummy's last Diamond. At trick five, West leads another trump, but it's too little too late. You carefully retained your ♣K to get back to your hand and you ruff the Diamond.


The hand is over. You will get your ♠A K, and your remaining trumps after they take their trump trick. You make your contract.

Now, a couple of final words. **Trumping** in dummy and **Dumping** in dummy require two different strategies. Most of the time, you cannot afford to pull trumps till you **Trump** in dummy. If you are going to **Dump** in dummy, you *want* to pull trumps so "they" can't ruff your long suit.



Using a Take-Out Double to compete. ACOL Version

VB#20 Year 1 Take-out Doubles Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 3
Dealer: West	Vulnerable: E / W
Play this hand online!	

	North		
	♠ 7		
	♥ AT86		
	♦ A753		
	♣ K842		
West		East	
♠ AKQT8		♠ 9652	
♥ 9		♥ 743	
♦ J842		♦ T9	
♣ QJT		♣ A976	
	South		
	♠ J43		
	♥ KQJ52		
	♦ KQ6		
	♣ 53		

On the last deal you had to bid with a lousy hand. On this deal we show you the other side of the coin. By bidding accurately, you make sure you don't put pressure on your partner in the bidding.

In terms of dummy play, you have to focus on the timing of the hand for success.

West	North	East	South
1♠	X	2♣	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ A

Bidding

North's take-out Double of 1♠ is perfect. He only has 11 high card points, but reckons on something extra for the singleton in the opponents' suit. Notice what a brave soldier East is, not wanting to just roll over and play dead. He knows there's something of a Spade fit for his side so he raises his partner's suit just for nuisance value.

But we are not to be denied our game. We want to flog this dead horse a little longer:

When your partner makes a take-out Double your response must reflect both your length and your strength.

Were you to be foolish enough to bid a pathetic 3♥ your partner would/should Pass as he would assume you were merely *competing* over 2♣. By jumping to game, you are showing that you've got the point-count to be in game opposite a minimum opening bid. And would you look at your Hearts? Not bad, eh?

Play

West makes the expected high Spade lead and we pause to reflect. We have Spade losers in hand, two of which can be ruffed in dummy. We have no Diamond losers and two possible Club losers. In order to make this contract, we must ruff Spade losers. (What do we do with losers? We **Trump** them in dummy or **Dump** them on dummy's long suits).

When we plan to ruff losers, we need to be very aware of how many trumps are in the dummy's hand. We need to ruff two losers, so if we pull trumps in the expected three rounds, we'd only have one left and we'd now have **two** Heart losers to go with our two Clubs.

At trick two, West leads the ♣Q, and we know immediately our ♣K isn't worth the pasteboard he's printed on. Some food for thought: When an honour is trapped like that ♣K, make them work for it (unless you have a good reason – like the promotion of another card).

At trick four, we are finally in when we get to ruff a Club. We have a plan and we stick to it,

leading a Spade and ruffing on the table (in the *short trump hand*, note).

Now, here's what we want you to notice. At trick five we need to get back to the closed hand. We could do it with a Diamond, but it's much better to do it with a trump. We won't be giving up the lead and we'll be pulling some of theirs. If you can afford it, it's better to use trumps first for entries.

At trick six, we ruff our last losing Spade, and go about the business of pulling the rest of the outstanding Hearts. Then we are in a position to cash our winners and claim.


Job done.



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Using a Take-Out Double to compete. ACOL Version

VB#20 Year 1 Take-out Doubles Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ AJT2	
	♥ J983	
	♦ A6	
	♣ A84	
West		East
♠ K964		♠ Q8
♥ A5		♥ 74
♦ KQJT7		♦ 9842
♣ JT		♣ 97653
	South	
	♠ 753	
	♥ KQT62	
	♦ 53	
	♣ KQ2	

Another deal where we have to make a careful response to a take-out Double. After that it's a question of re-evaluation.

In terms of the card-play... you'd think with billions of possible hands, we'd never see the same thing twice, but there are certain card combinations we see over and over. We see an old friend in this hand that will help us make the contract.

Will you know him when you see him?

West	North	East	South
1♦	X	P	2♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ K

Bidding

North has an ideal hand for a take-out Double of a 1♦ opening bid with 14 good points and 4-4 in the majors. Our 2♥ response shows 8-11 points (give or take) and is *invitational*. (Note that a 1♥ response would be a travesty of a bid on those South cards)

Partner needs to know if it's 8, in which case game is not realistic, or 11. He bounces the buck back to us with a 3♥ raise. As we are near the top of the range we accept the invitation.

Play

Our **Count** and **Plan** reveals two possible Spade losers, one Heart and one Diamond. The only loser we can hope to get rid of is the Spade. We remember the 75% solution: When two honours are out against us, they generally split. If they split (or if they are both in the West hand), we will only lose one Spade trick, and if they are both in East, we'll lose two. We have a 75% chance of success, you can't ask for better odds than that. In fact, after West has opened the bidding there is a greater than 75% chance that he has a Spade honour.

We consider whether or not we should pull trumps first. In general, there are two reasons **not** to pull trumps. One is if you need to ruff in dummy and can't afford to shorten dummy's holding. The other is if pulling trumps would lose you the lead when you absolutely cannot afford to give it up. Neither condition appears here, so we plan to pull trumps, then attack Spades.

We take trick one with our ♦A, and go right after the trumps at trick two. At trick three, they harvest their other Diamond winner, and with nothing better to do, try a Club.

We can win that (anywhere) and pull the last of the trumps (we even get a favourable 2-2 split). Now it's time for the Spades. We lead from our hand up to the ♠10. The East honour takes the trick. We win the Club return in hand and play another Spade.

Dummy's ♠J holds, as we have every right to expect. The 4-2 Spade break is irrelevant – we have the rest of the tricks.


What a nifty little hand. A take-out Double and clear responses, plus meeting our old friend the 75% solution (aka *combination finesse*) brought home another contract.



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Using a Take-Out Double to compete. ACOL Version

VB#20 Year 1 Take-out Doubles Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ KQ32	
	♥ 95	
	♦ KJ6	
	♣ AKQJ	
West		East
♠ AT8		♠ J5
♥ AKQ63		♥ T872
♦ T98		♦ 7542
♣ 63		♣ T95
	South	
	♠ 9764	
	♥ J4	
	♦ AQ3	
	♣ 8742	

This deal may cause you to reappraise a poor hand.

Further, you're going to have to be careful with the declarer play. No change there, then...

West	North	East	South
1♥	X	P	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding

Our response to North's take-out Double of 1♥ should show both shape and point count (you've heard that before, we think). We have just 7 points, and our Spade suit is certainly nothing exciting, so we make the cheapest bid we can in Spades.

Somewhat surprisingly, partner jumps to 3♠. We haven't come up against this yet, so let's reason it through. Essentially **all** invitational bids say the same thing: If you are at the top of your previously-stated range, take us to the next bonus level. Now, for partner to be willing to play in game opposite our max of 6-7 (maybe a bad 8), he has to have 19+ points of his own.

We like our chances. We do have that lovely Diamond tenace in hand. In these cases it's worth asking yourself how much worse your hand might have been. In this case – a lot worse, so we are fully justified in advancing to game. **Go for it...**

Play

When dummy comes down we can see that North has a nice 19 points although his hand probably isn't worth as much as he thinks it is. Our preliminary **Count** shows some problems. We have two fast losers in Hearts and the Ace of trumps is AWOL as well, and thus we must bring the trump suit home for no more than one loser.

The bidding pretty much guarantees West holds the ♠A (if East has it then West has opened the bidding on peanuts and we are just going down in 4♠). If we can finesse twice from our hand up to the ♠K Q, we can make it. To succeed we need trumps 3-2 with West holding the ♠A.

What if we get a 4-1 trump split? Well, we will go down, but we will have given it the best shot.

So, tricks one and two, we take our punishment in Hearts. At trick three, look at West's dilemma. He looks at the dummy (highly recommended for defenders) and sees he cannot lead Spades. He knows they have one more sure

trick with the Ace of trumps, and figures if there is another trick, it has to be in Diamonds.

We smartly take the ♦10 switch in hand with the ♦A (just to give West hope his partner has the ♦Q), and at trick four, we take our first Spade finesse. West, of course, plays low and allows the ♠Q to win on the table. Trick five, back to our hand with another Diamond to lead another Spade *through* West. When East follows suit, we know we have the contract in the bag. We got our much needed 3-2 split.


West can have his trump trick when he wishes; the rest of the tricks are ours. Another winning hand, thanks to careful *planning*. Oh, and a little luck.



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Using a Take-Out Double to compete. ACOL Version

VB#20 Year 1 Take-out Doubles Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N By: South
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 6
Dealer: West	Vulnerable: E / W
Play this hand online!	

	North		
	♠ 53		
	♥ AQJ2		
	♦ KJT9		
	♣ Q93		
West		East	
♠ AQ8742		♠ T6	
♥ 85		♥ 7643	
♦ 2		♦ Q864	
♣ AJ42		♣ T76	
	South		
	♠ KJ9		
	♥ KT9		
	♦ A753		
	♣ K85		

You have two problems to untangle on this deal – firstly what you respond to partner's take-out Double and secondly exactly how to play the dummy.

This isn't straightforward – you may need to go and find your thinking-cap...

West	North	East	South
1♠	X	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ 7

As South you hold a flat 14 points and hear partner Double 1♠. You might (fleetingly) think of bidding Diamonds on your hand but to what level? 2♦ would be an absurd call (you would make that bid with nothing) and jumps to 3♦, 4♦ or 5♦ would land you in difficulty (the more so as partner's support for the suit may be only three cards).

The solution is to bid what you think you can make – and that is 3NT. You have the Spades securely stopped and you know that your partnership has sufficient values for this venture.

West leads his fourth-highest Spade against 3NT and you can count six top tricks (four Hearts and two Diamonds) plus a Spade after the lead. It appears that taking the Diamond finesse successfully will be sufficient (four Hearts, four Diamonds and a Spade) but there is a way of all but guaranteeing the contract.

Although West is strong favourite to hold the ♦Q – by virtue of his opening bid – the best play is to take the Diamond finesse *through* East. (Play the ♦K and run the ♦J). This will always guarantee three Diamond tricks even if West turns up with the ♦Q. (As it happens, though, declarer makes four Diamonds and his contract easily).

But if West were to win the ♦Q he could do nothing to damage 3NT. He couldn't lead another Spade without giving you a second Spade trick and anything else gives you time to set up the ninth trick in Clubs. It's another one of those heads-I-win-tails-you-lose plays and goes by the pleasing name of a *safety finesse*.

Note that West's opening bid makes it a near certainty that he holds the ♣A, by the way...