

# Play & Learn



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## What's better than a slam?

When is playing in 1♦ better than bidding and making a slam? Read on and you will see. Your hand:

♠ 7 5   ♥ 10 9 7 6 4 2   ♦ 10 5   ♣ 10 9 2

The auction (you are South):

West	North	East	South
1♦	Dbl	Pass	?

You don't expect to be able to defeat 1♦, so you must take partner's double out, bidding even without a single high card. *Takeout* doubles are meant to be *taken out*. In doing so, doubler's partner has two jobs — choose the trump suit (or notrump) and show point count. Your clear choice for trump is hearts. With a weak hand, bid your chosen suit as cheaply as possible. You would jump with a hand of 9 to 11 points or bid game with opening count.

Don't even consider passing partner's takeout double when your right hand opponent passes. If you pass and West also passes, the contract is 1♦ doubled. If East-West make 1♦, the trick score for what the opponents bid is doubled to 40. The other side will earn plus 40 for the contract, plus 50 for making a part score and 50 for the "insult" of the double. Total score: plus 140.

Looking at your hand, you might think that's a better deal than your side bidding and going down a lot. But partner's double is unlimited. You could make 1♥ and get your own plus score.

Even more important, East-West might well make more than seven tricks — or even more, and the

score for overtricks escalate quickly. Doubled overtricks are 100 or 200 apiece depending on vulnerability. Suppose East-West are vulnerable and make nine tricks in 1♦ doubled. Their total score is 540 — the 140 we already calculated plus another 400 points for two vulnerable overtricks. Same hand, new auction:

West	North	East	South
1♦	Dbl	1♠	?

What call will you make? East has bid, so partner's double is no longer in effect and you are free to pass. Don't be too fast to pass when you are weak. You need only 6 total points to make a competitive 2♥ bid. Same hand, one more auction:

West	North	East	South
1♦	Dbl	Redbl	?

In standard bidding, redouble shows 10 or more points. Redoubling with all good hands can be awkward, so it's common for today's partnerships to allow responder some other options with a good hand (*e.g.*, a forcing bid of a new suit on the one level).

Getting technical for a moment, anything you say during the auction is a *call*. *Bids* are calls that combine a number from one to seven and a denomination (suit or notrump.) Pass, double and redouble are calls but they are not bids. *Bids remove the effect of a double or redouble. Pass does not.* Redouble can dramatically increase the effect of a double. The trick score for a bid is quadrupled and overtricks are worth 200 or 400 each depending

on vulnerability. The doubling side must escape this situation, so *advancer* (doubler's partner) or doubler must bid to remove the effect of the redouble. As advancer with a clear preference for hearts as trump, you should bid. Passing indicates a lack of preference and tells partner to choose the best escape.

Here's the deal that answers my original question. South dealt with both sides vulnerable.

♠ A J 2			
♥ K Q 8 5			
♦ J			
♣ K 8 6 5 3			
♠ 10 9 4 3			♠ K Q 8 6
♥ A J 3			♥ —
♦ K 8 6 4 2			♦ A Q 9 7 3
♣ A			♣ Q J 7 4
♠ 7 5			
♥ 10 9 7 6 4 2			
♦ 10 5			
♣ 10 9 2			

West	North	East	South
1♦	Dbl	Redbl	All Pass

South should have bid 1♥ but passed instead. Unfamiliar with this situation, North may not have realized passing would end the auction. North might have thought South had

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diamond length, but East–West have shown a minimum of about 23 combined high-card points. They are likely to be able to win seven tricks and could easily end up with overtricks. *When advancer passes a redouble, it's up to doubler to escape.* North had a cheap out with a 1♥ bid, but our North passed and the final contract was 1♦ redoubled, with overtricks valued at 400 each. The contract of 1♦ redoubled making six gave East–West a score of 2230 — much better than the spade slam they missed.

**Moral:** After partner makes a takeout double of a one-level suit opening bid and opener's partner redoubles, it's time to escape. All advancer needs to bid is length in an unbid suit — a clear choice for what should be trump. If advancer passes the redouble and opener also passes, the player who made the takeout double *must* bid. □