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Most folks have a general idea what a takeout double is about, but there are some misconceptions about the bid that result in really bad results. In general, a direct double of RHO's opening suit bid by an unpassed hand shows roughly an opening hand or better, and support for the other three suits. When opener's suit is a major, a takeout double almost promises 4 of the other major. Over a minor opening, a takeout double should promise at least 7 cards in the majors, but 4-4 in the majors is far too restrictive.

A major misunderstanding that more than a few players have is to double RHO's opening 1 bid whenever they have 13 or more points, regardless of their distribution. This is **WRONG**, wrong, wrong, and will lead to some really disastrous results. There is no requirement to take action just to show your nice hand. You should take action when you have an opening hand or better and appropriate distribution. It is OK to pass and await developments if your shape is wrong for an immediate double.

A second serious misunderstanding involves what it means when takeout doubler bids his own suit on his second bid. This action promises a big hand (17 or more). As we will see, these two misunderstandings combined can lead to some epic disasters.

Examples of hands to make takeout doubles

S - KJxx H - xx D - Axxx C -KQxx, over 1H double, but over 1C pass. If you double 1C, and partner bids hearts, what are you going to do then?

S - KJxx H - Axx D - Axxx C - Kx, over 1C double. It's true you might end up in a weak 4-3 fit, but your ruffing value in clubs will be a real asset. The chance to find a 4-4 spade fit or a 5-3 heart fit makes this risk worthwhile.

S - KJxx H - KQxx D - Axxx C - x over 1C double, but over 1H or 1S PASS. What are you going to do when partner bids 2C? If you pass now, and LHO also passes, if partner has anything they will balance in some way. If the auction goes 1H P P P, it unlikely that your side has missed anything, assuming partner understands the need to balance when he has some stuff.

With a really big hand (17 or more) double and then bid your suit (or NT if you are balanced with stoppers.

S - AKJxxx H - Ax D - AKxx C - x over 1C, 1D, or 1H double, then rebid spades

S - KJxx H - KQx D - AKxx C - Kx over 1H, double, then rebid NT

Now as an example of just how badly things can go when we double just because we have 13 points, consider the following hand:

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>
S - xx	S - Qxxx
H - KJxx	H - xx
D - Axx	D - Qxx
C - KQxx	C - Jxxx

The Auction

South West North East

1C X Pass 1S

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If West is disciplined, they will pass 1S. How do you think E will enjoy playing in their weak 4-2 fit? You can bet that the next time West doubles for takeout, East will remember this. In practice, West, realizing his predicament, will bid something like 2H in an attempt to escape the web he wove for himself. East, remembering that doubling and then bidding their own suit shows a very big hand and is forcing, will probably end up bidding some number of notrump and going for a big number when North South probably don't have a game. East will remember that too. The negative effects on their partnership trust will last a long time.

Now, with the same hands, suppose West has the discipline to pass 1C in tempo. Neither side has a fit, and North South will probably go down 1 in some contract, maybe more if they don't have the discipline to get out early. Now isn't that better than going for a number?

I cannot emphasize enough that you do not have to bid when the opponents have opened "just to show partner that you have thirteen points". If you don't have the right shape, pass and await developments!

Note also that if East actually has a little better hand with hearts, North South will have a spade fit. If NS rest in 2 spades, East West should know they also have a fit, and the partner in the pass out seat can make a balancing double to prevent N/S from resting in their comfortable 2 spades.