

## 6 Cases in Which Even "Low-Level" DOUBLES Are "DOUBLES for Penalty"

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In order to make things starkly clear, in all the following auctions, presume that you and Partner are not Vulnerable, but Opponents are Vulnerable.

There are many ways in which Partners may misinterpret a Partner's bid, and thereby steer the bidding train disastrously off the tracks! But perhaps the 2 most egregious misinterpretation errors are when (1) one Partner makes a "not-for-Penalty **DOUBLE**" which the other Partner interprets as being a "**DOUBLE** for Penalty", or (2) one Partner makes a "**DOUBLE** for penalty" which the other Partner interprets as being a "not-for-Penalty **DOUBLE**". To studiously avoid these bridge trainwrecks, most Partners adopt a very strict boundary about which DOUBLES are "**DOUBLES** for Penalty". For example, less experienced bridge players may say, "Any **DOUBLE** at any level above 3S is always a "**DOUBLE** for Penalty".

However, "**DOUBLES** for Penalty" can be usefully invoked against lower-level bids, as long as Partners can be absolutely positive that they both completely understand what their clear lower-level boundaries for Penalty DOUBLES are. Boundaries for lower-level "DOUBLES for Penalty" are not set at a particular bid level, and *instead* are based on particular, specific, clear bidding sequences. Here 5 such *bidding sequence boundaries* are discussed. Of course, Partners might elect to play only a subset of these 5 choices! These bidding sequence boundaries are among

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<sup>1</sup> As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Journal, [https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA\\_1\\_24.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf), Esther in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! This article was instead really written by Bruce Thompson.

those discussed by Marilyn Hemenway in her play only a subset of these 5 choices! These bidding sequence boundaries are among those discussed by Marilyn Hemenway in her 2006 article, "Whatever Happened to Penalty Doubles?"<sup>2</sup>

1. If you or Partner opened 1D, 1H or 1S, the Opponent PASSES, and Responder bid a *lower-ranking* Suit at the 2 level, if you and Partner are playing "2 Over 1",<sup>3</sup> any **DOUBLE** of an Opponent's Overcall is a "**DOUBLE for Penalty**".
2. The **DOUBLE** by Partner (or you) of any **NT** Overcall of your (or Partner's) Suit bid made at any level is **always** a "**DOUBLE for Penalty**" as long as the Partner making the **DOUBLE** is not a PASSED Hand.

<b>YOU</b>		<b>PARTNER</b>		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
1S	1NT	<b>DOUBLE</b>		<b>Penalty?</b>
				<b>YES</b>

<b>PARTNER</b>		<b>YOU</b>		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
PASS	PASS	1H	1NT	<b>Penalty?</b>
<b>DOUBLE</b>				<b>NO</b>

3. If either you or Partner made a strong **NT** bid during the auction, any subsequent **DOUBLE** of any bid at any level by you or Partner is a "**DOUBLE for Penalty**".

<b>PARTNER</b>		<b>YOU</b>		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
PASS	PASS	1NT	2H	<b>Penalty?</b>
<b>DOUBLE</b>				<b>YES</b>

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<sup>2</sup> See: [https://omahabridge.org/Library/mh What Happened to Penalty Doubles.pdf](https://omahabridge.org/Library/mh%20What%20Happened%20to%20Penalty%20Doubles.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "Convention #1: '2 Over 1'": [https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/2 over 1.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/2%20over%201.pdf)

PARTNER		<b>YOU</b>		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
1NT	2H	PASS	PASS	
<b>DOUBLE</b>				<b>Penalty?</b>
				<b>YES</b>

PARTNER		<b>YOU</b>		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
1S	PASS	1NT	2H	
<b>DOUBLE</b>				<b>Penalty?</b>
				<b>NO</b>

4. Any "out of the blue" **DOUBLE** by you or Partner having previously PASSEd at every turn at any level 3C or higher is a "DOUBLE for Penalty".

PARTNER		<b>YOU</b>		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
PASS	1D	PASS	1S	
PASS	2H	PASS	3H	
<b>DOUBLE</b>				<b>Penalty?</b>
				<b>YES</b>

5. If either you or Partner made a "Penalty Pass" of the other's "Takeout/Demand" **DOUBLE**, any **DOUBLE** at any level is a "DOUBLE for Penalty".

PARTNER		<b>YOU</b>		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
PASS	2H	DOUBLE	PASS	
PASS	2S	PASS	PASS	
				<b>Penalty?</b>
				<b>YES</b>

6. If either you or Partner made a preemptive Suit bid at any level, and later in the auction you or Partner **DOUBLE**, the **DOUBLE** is always a "**DOUBLE for Penalty**".

PARTNER		YOU	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2 <b>H</b>	PASS	PASS	2 <b>S</b>
<b>DOUBLE</b>			<b>Penalty?</b>
			<b>YES</b>

PARTNER		YOU	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2 <b>S</b>	PASS
PASS	3 <b>D</b>	PASS	PASS
<b>DOUBLE</b>			<b>Penalty?</b>
			<b>YES</b>