

“Lead-Directing” Doubles

Every now and then, during the auction, one Player realizes that his/her Partner is likely to be on lead. This Player, after viewing his/her cards, realizes that when, and if, his/her Partner were to eventually be on lead, Partner could lead a particular suit at trick #1 which would have the effect of potentially producing the best score for their Partnership by either: (1) minimizing the tricks achieved by the Declarer, (2) maximizing the tricks developed for the Defense, or, (3) even actually defeating the presumed, final contract. When this occurs, the Defender, if given the opportunity, makes a “*double*” which directs his/her Partner to the desired suit to be led; i.e., that one preferred by the Player signaling.

This is the, so-called, “**Lead-Directing” Double**.

A “**Lead-Directing” Double**, subject to Partnership understanding, is a “*double*”, by either Defender, which encourages a particular, **unusual suit** to be led on defense; i.e., either the lead of the opening Defender’s bid suit, a lead of the Doubler’s bid suit, the first suit bid by the Dummy, or the suit of an artificial bid or cue-bid, just made by one of the Opponents.

“**Lead-Directing” Doubles**, proven through experience, have become one of the cornerstones in the arsenal of the defending side. It may not always be feasible for the Partner to tell which lead from amongst several possible suits is best, but at the very least, Partner must listen for a “**Lead-Directing” Double**, and, when it occurs, make the attempt to discern which suit his/her Partner favors, based upon the following principles and guidelines:

“**Lead-Directing” Doubles are applicable during four main bidding circumstances:** (1) Leads against the Opponent’s voluntarily-bid suit Slam; i.e., a Slam which is bid to make, (2) Leads of a suit used by an Opponent as an artificial bid or a cue-bid, (3) Leads against a final 3-NT contract, and lastly, (4) Leads which are made during two additional, miscellaneous, bidding circumstances.

(1) A “Double” Following a Voluntarily-Bid, Suit Slam, Bid Either To Make, or, Conversely, One Obviously Bid to Sacrifice

(A) A “*double*,” of a Slam, one bid to make, is a “**Lightner” Double**, a special “**Lead-Directing” Double**. It asks Partner to make an *unusual* lead, the most common interpretation being to lead a suit other than the Trump suit, bid by one of the Opponent’s, i.e., most often, the first side suit bid by the Dummy. Of course, if a Defender can defeat a Slam contract notwithstanding Partner’s opening lead, the Defender should “*double*” anyway, irrespective of which Defender is on lead. There are two main bidding scenarios when one makes a lead-directing “**Lightner” Double**.

(a) “**Doubling**” a Slam when neither Defender has bid a suit calls for an unusual lead, *not* a Trump, and *not* an un-bid suit. If it’s a close call, the first suit bid by the Dummy is favored.

(b) “**Doubling**” a Slam where one or both of the Defenders have bid, forbids the lead of any suit(s) the Partnership has bid, as well as, of course, a Trump. Once again, an unusual lead of the first suit bid by the Dummy is favored.

(B) On occasion, the Opponents may bid a Slam as a **sacrifice**. “**Doubling**” a sacrificial Slam, purposely bid by an Opponent with intent *not to make*, does *not* call for any particular lead. A “*double*,” made under these circumstances, is, therefore, *not* a “**Lead-Directing” Double**, rather it is a “**Penalty Double**,” pure and simple!

(2) A “Double” Following an Opponent’s Artificial Bid or Cue-Bid

A “double” *following* any artificial bid or cue-bid by an Opponent is perhaps the most frequent bidding circumstance for the use of a “**Lead-Directing**” Double. This includes, but is not limited to, the following bidding circumstances: (a) following an Opponent’s Stayman “2C” call, when seeking an 8-card Major suit “**Golden Fit**;” (b) following a “**Jacoby Transfer**” bid by a responding Opponent whose Partner has made a 1-NT or 2-NT opening call; (c) following a “**Western Cue-Bid**” by an Opponent seeking Partner’s assistance for a stopper in the artificial suit for a potential, final, No-Trump contract; (d) following a response to the Gerber “4C,” or the Blackwood “4-NT” Ace-asking conventions; (e) following a 4th-Suit, Game-Forcing bid; (f) following a Cue-Bid showing first-round control of a suit during a bidding sequence seeking an anticipated, sought-after, Slam-level contract; (g) following a double jump-shift, “**Splinter**” bid; (h) following responses to an opening, strong, artificial and forcing “2C” bid; (i) following a Cue-Bid, in competition, showing a limit-raise or better by an Opponent Responder, evidencing support for his/her Partner’s opening bid of one-of-a-suit; (j) following a conventional “**Drury**” response to a 3rd-seat Major suit opening bid by a responding Opponent seeking whether or not his/her Partner holds a full opening count; (k) and, lastly, following a “**Bergen**” response by an Opponent showing a limit-raise or better in support of his/her Partner’s Major suit opening.

Alternatively, by inference, Partner’s *failure to “double”* any artificial bid or cue-bid made by an Opponent, is also informative, in that it shows that Partner holds *no specific* interest from his/her singular perspective in having Partner lead the suit bid by the Opponent. Partner can, therefore, rule out the specific need to lead that particular suit, unless he/she chooses to do so anyway.

When making a “Lead-Directing” Double, one’s suit-quality in that suit is very important, especially when making a low-level, “Lead-Directing” Double!

Remember, the lower the bidding level of the Opponent’s artificial bid or cue-bid, (for example, a “double” of a Stayman “2C” or a “double” of a Jacoby Transfer Bid, either one following a 1-NT opening bid by the Opponent’s Partner, the ability to make a safe “Lead-Directing” Double requires a holding of 5 (+) cards and at least two or three of, the top five honors, such as KQT86. Absent this strong a holding in the suit that is “doubled,” the Opponents can possibly “re-double,” thereby achieving an elevated score from what would otherwise have been forthcoming, absent the “Lead-Directing” Double. Alternatively, a “double” of a higher-level cue-bid or artificial bid, during a Slam-seeking auction, for example, does *not* require as long and/or strong a suit. One possibility is that it might show a void and the holding of an outside Ace or King.

(3) A “Double” of a 3-NT Contract

Against a 3-NT contract, there are five bidding scenarios when a Defender may choose to make a “Lead-Directing” Double. The selection of the lead desired by the Doubler is dependant upon the bidding.

(A) When no suit(s) has (have) been bid by either side, the “double” calls for the lead of a suit (usually the shortest Major) in which the Partner on lead holds no honors,

(B) When neither Defender has bid, but Dummy has bid one or two suits, the “double” calls for a lead of Dummy’s first-bid suit,

(C) When the Defender who has opened or overcalled at the 1-Level makes the “double,” the “double” calls for the lead of the suit bid by that Defender,

(D) When one Defender bids a suit and the Defender’s Partner “doubles,” unless the “doubling” Partner has supported Partner’s bid suit, it calls for the lead of Dummy’s first bid suit, and lastly,

(E) When each Defender has bid a different suit, the “double” calls for the lead of Partner’s bid suit, *not* the suit bid by the one who “doubles.”

(4) Two, Miscellaneous, “Lead-Directing” Doubles

(A) A “*double*” of a **6-NT** contract calls for the lead of **the first suit bid by the Dummy**.

(B) A “*double*” made below the Slam bidding level, by a “*previously-passed*” Defender, asks for a lead of **the suit bid by the Doubler’s right-hand Opponent (RHO)**.

	<u>North</u>	
	1D/3-NT/Pass	
<u>West</u>		<u>East (Dealer)</u>
Pass/Pass/Pass		Pass/Pass/”Double”
	<u>South</u>	
	Pass/2-NT/Pass	

Had East, a “*previously-passed*” Player, desired to make a “**Take-Out**” **Double**, he/she would have made it on his/her second opportunity to bid. Not having done so, and apparently, finding the Opponent’s in a final **3-NT** contract, East now hopes to set the contract, if, and only if, West were to lead a **Diamond**, the suit first bid by East’s (the Doubler’s) right-hand Opponent (RHO). East’s “*double*” is, therefore, clearly a “**Lead-Directing Double**” asking for a Diamond lead by West.

Learning, practicing, and then employing the use of “**Lead-Directing**” **Doubles** should be a goal of every Bridge Partnership. Incorporating them into one’s Game holds immeasurable benefit, as well as a potential, expanded enjoyment of the Game. Information shared through the use of “**Lead-Directing**” **Doubles**, can, and will, prove to be an invaluable, defensive tool.

