

Responding to 1NT with weak hands

Playing a Weak NT is risky but, for Duplicate Pairs, undoubtedly worth it. It is an effective mini-pre-empt, and a fine way to describe a modest opening hand. However, when your opponents have the majority of points, they will be seeking to defend, and you need to be aware of escapes from 1NT.

Even when an opponent has not yet doubled, with a very weak hand, you should take evasive action immediately.

This will make it harder for your opponents to judge whether to double you or how far they should compete.

Partner opens 1NT; RHO passes. You hold:

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|------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| a) ♠ J7543 | b) ♠ 7543 | c) ♠ Q7 | d) ♠ 85 |
| ♥ 973 | ♥ J83 | ♥ 5 | ♥ 9642 |
| ♦ 8 | ♦ 9865 | ♦ 86532 | ♦ 8752 |
| ♣ J875 | ♣ 62 | ♣ 10853 | ♣ 943 |

- a) a standard Weak take-out, via a Transfer
- b) holding such a weak hand, escape before being doubled. Use Stayman and pass any response.
- c) pass now, and bid 2D naturally if 1NT is doubled.
- d) holding such a weak hand, escape before being doubled. Bid Stayman, or 2D as a Transfer to hearts.

Responding to 1NT when it has been doubled

We play a fully natural method, with no conventional rescues. Stayman and Transfers are cancelled.

- ⚙ If you pass over 1NT doubled, you show 3-9pts, balanced hand. You not think that you can improve the contract.
- ⚙ 2D, 2H, and 2S are natural, showing a 5-card suit but, on occasion, showing only 4-cards.
- ⚙ 2C should be alerted as sometimes showing only a 3-card suit, but is usually natural as above.
- ⚙ Redouble shows a relatively balanced hand with 10pts+. You wish to play in 1NTXX or, when the opponents run, you wish your partner to double for penalties; any subsequent double by you is for penalties.

1NT Opener’s Action having been doubled

If responder bids a suit, you assume five of them and you pass.

If responder bids two suits and both are doubled by the opposition, you must pass, remembering that:

- ⚙ You can never return partner, at a higher level, to a suit in which she has already been doubled for penalties.

If partner passes the double, you have a further competitive option available:

1NT Opener’s Consultative Redouble

If you have opened 1NT with a 5-card minor, when you are doubled in 1NT and you partner passes (indicating 3-9pts and a balanced hand), you can opt to Redouble.

- a) if responder is maximum with 8-9pts, she can pass, aiming to play – and make – 1NT redoubled;
- b) if responder holds 3-7pts, she bids 2C. If this is opener’s minor, she passes. If not, she corrects to 2D.

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|----|---------|--------|----|---------|--------|----|
| a) | ♠ A95 | ♠ 862 | b) | ♠ A63 | ♠ J952 | |
| | ♥ 102 | ♥ QJ54 | | ♥ 97 | ♥ 643 | |
| | ♦ A63 | ♦ J105 | | ♦ QJ954 | ♦ K85 | |
| | ♣ AJ874 | ♣ KQ3 | | ♣ KQ4 | ♣ J74 | |
| | 1NT | Dbl | NB | 1NT | Dbl | NB |
| | Rdbl | NB | NB | Rdbl | NB | 2C |
| | | | | 2D | | |

Double of 1NT by passed hand

Since we – very sensibly – do not open with 12 or poor 13pt 4-4-4-1 hands, there is a danger that, if the opponents open 1NT, we can be barraged out of a 4-4 fit. Therefore, having passed with a 4-4-4-1 hand, if you subsequently double an opponent’s 1NT opening bid, this shows 4-4-4-1 with 12/13pts.

Partner responds as if to a Scramble – bidding 4-/5card suits in ascending order, until a fit is (hopefully) found.