

**Slide 1:**

No notes

**Slide 2:**

I'm a big Nintendo fan, and you may or may not know about Bowser here. He likes wielding an axe and being a difficult opponent for Super Mario.

Bowser and I are going to teach you how "wield the axe" (with the double card) and be a difficult opponent (at the bridge table).

I also stream bridge content on Twitch.tv under the name RasernKoop. You'll see me participate in a monthly bridge community event called the Bean Cup where I analyze my bidding and play in some difficult contracts.

Feel free to give me a follow!

**Slides 3-4:**

No notes

**Slide 5:**

Take the Money: 620 vs 500 is a 4 imp loss, but -100 vs +500 is a 12 imp loss!

**Slides 6-14:**

No notes

**Slide 15:**

This rule is a little controversial, but I believe it holds water because a forcing pass situation is set up.

Yes, I have seen people overcall 2h on just AKTxxx in 2/1 just to direct a lead. "I'm nonvulnerable" they say...

**Slide 16:**

No notes

**Slide 17:**

Construction notes:

Give North a 10 to 12 point hand with KQTx in hearts. They may back in thinking they have a fit with partner. They do, but bad breaks needs to be punished.

You might even construct a layout where doubling in the east hand with just 3 hearts is correct!

**Slide 18:**

Your partnership may treat this double as “responsive” showing the other two suits. That’s OK, but I feel you need to protect yourself from this situation.

This treatment is much more popular with Europeans. I tend to agree with them.

NOTE: Bidding 2M instead of doubling is natural and should show a 6-card suit or a good 5 card suit. The only cuebid is the opener’s suit.

**Slide 19:**

No notes

**Slide 20:**

One sequence NOT on this slide is 1N – (2y) – X. Depending on the meaning of the enemy bid and your methods of what the X means, I suggest this create a forcing pass. Discuss with your partner.

**Slide 21-25:**

No notes

**Slide 26:**

This hand from the March 2026 Realbridge Bidding Contest. 12 panel members bid 5c, 7 bid 3N and 3 bid 4c. I’m going to be controversial and say this is a huge mistake. Only 2 panel members supported my choice of passing partner’s double.

Partner held KTxxx/xxxx/Ax/Kx so 5c is down 1 on a trump lead. 3N makes for +400, but you get an EASY +500 for passing.

Rob Brady, James Holzhauser, and I agree this is a hand you take a shot on leaving in. If your diamonds and hearts were switched, converting the double is automatic.

**Slide 27:**

For the astute people in the audience, who can tell me why double here is penalty?

That's right, E/W have settled into their 2d contract, so any double at that point is penalty.

**Slide 28:**

This slide and the next example are the rare cases where I advocate a penalty double of a willfully bid game.

All other doubles of game or slam are lead directing (which isn't covered in this lecture).

**Slide 29:**

This deal in a Spingold match by Matthew Granovetter was covered in the February 2026 ACBL article.

The enterprising double netted +500. Partner held x/Kxxx/AKxxx/KTx (2 trumps, AKd, Kh)

**Slide 30:**

As alluded to on the previous slide the "specific situations" are lead directing doubles, and when you can count enough tricks or anticipate ruffs.

**Slide 31:**

No notes

**Slide 32:**

Also from the February 2026 issue of the bridge bulletin.

West elected to double and it didn't end well. North shrugged their shoulders and ran to 6N which MADE!

**Slide 33-35:**

No notes

**Slide 36-37:**

From the 1987 North American team trials by Richard Pavlicek. "Penalty Double Clues Winning Play" <https://rpbridge.net/7c47.htm>

At the table, east chose a double. This BACKFIRED. On the heart 10 lead, the spade K was OVERTAKEN by the A. A club to the Q, Club A, and club ruff established the suit. A diamond was led to the K, and west went up with the A to lead a spade to force dummy. East had more trumps than dummy or declarer, but declarer was able to keep control. A good club was led. If east ruffed low, declarer would overruff. If he discarded, south would too and repeat this. East elected to ruff high (south pitching a diamond). The spade return was ruffed in dummy, and from there only 1 more trick was lost. At the other table, the same contract was not doubled. Declarer played for a 3-2 trump break and went down.

**Slide 38-39:**

From the 1987 Vanderbilt Knockout Teams. "Low-Level Double Reaps Bonanza" <https://rpbridge.net/7c39.htm>

South had poor judgment in bidding 1N. He was unfavorable and his partner was a passed hand. Plus his 15 could was very sketchy.

West led the singleton heart to the A. East shifted to the spade T, J, K. West returned a spade to South's A. A club was led to the T and Q. East returned the heart Q, K, ruff. West returned a spade for East to ruff. The heart J was cashed (West discarding a diamond). East continued hearts, and South ruffed with the Kc. West did not overruff this, and discarded a spade to promote his 9c. South hoped the remaining trumps would fall together and led a club to West's 9. West cashed the Ac and led a spade to force declarer to ruff with his last trump. East won the last two tricks with the diamond A and the 5<sup>th</sup> heart. Declarer won 3 tricks (Spade A, Kc, and a spade ruff). Down 5 -1400 on a partscore deal.

**Slide 40-41:**

This is a deal from How the Experts Win at Bridge, but pretend it is at a regional top flight event. I constructed the deal, but the hand is from the book.

The opponents have entered into our auction unfavorable with an unsafe suit. TIME FOR PUNISHMENT!

The partnership is short in each other's suits, and we control the key Ad to allow a cross ruff for additional tricks.

On the As and a second spade lead, the defense can establish a cross ruff for down three! East just has to be careful to rise Ah and start the cross ruff so declarer can't steal a heart trick.

**Slide 42-43:**

This is also a deal from "How to Win at Bridge". Again, we're in a top flight pairs regional event.

Good fitting hands with extreme distribution are worth the 5-level risk. The opponents are favorable and the penalty you will collect won't be enough.

You are the one short in diamonds, so you must act here. Passing to partner will likely lead to 5dx. Also note we are not strong enough to suggest slam via a "pass and pull."

You can make +650 and the opponents can sacrifice for -500.

**Slide 44 - 45:**

Another deal from How to Win at Bridge. So a regional pairs event right?

Your 15HCP points are a trap! Instead assess your trick taking power, which isn't very good! Your partner has NOTHING on this auction. Are you sure you're getting both the AK of hearts and 2 trump tricks for that greedy +200? This isn't your deal. An expert has the power to REDOUBLE YOU to really make you pay for doubting their skill.

Declarer will ruff your second heart and you're going to regret your double from there! A low trump goes to the T to remove east's trump. Then declarer will simply cash diamonds pitching clubs off dummy. You can choose your fate. Ruff and get overruffed by dummy, spade to the A, and you just get your Ks from there, or discard two clubs and face the same problem when declarer cashes the Ac and leads a low club to the now void dummy. Declarer will make a redoubled overtrick!

To really drive the point home, this deal in the book is taken from a TEAMS event, but the same points apply at pairs. Trying to turn +100 into +200 for a measly 3 IMP gain proved to be a disaster! The difference between -650 and -1480 is a 13 IMP swing!

**Slide 46-47:**

Another hand from How to Win at Bridge. We're in the NABC+ Pairs this time. Again, I constructed the deal, but the hand is from the book.

Partner doesn't like your clubs, you don't like their hearts. The deal is a misfit, and your opponent bid 3 times with no support from their partner. They stepped in it!

Stand your ground and prove you won't be pushed around. Go for the "magic +200". Don't chicken out now just because you'd double them into game!

**Slide 48-49:**

Deal From: 2023 Semi-Finals of the Bermuda Bowl. Analysis from Rob Brady's youtube channel.

Double at the table did NOT work out well. Declarer was able to survive repeated diamond leads by knocking out the heart and club aces. After running trumps and playing a spade to the A and a spade finesse against east, the Ks was ultimately able to squeeze west in the red suits for +750. All the bidding gave declarer a blueprint to the hand. East was partially at fault for bidding so much on a weak hand!

**Slide 50-51:**

From the Semi-Finals of the 2025 Vanderbilt. Analysis from Rob Brady's youtube channel.

2N likely was not intended as natural, it was intended as take out. Remember! A double here would be penalty because we have settled in our contract, so that option is NOT available as takeout! It worked out tremendously when north showed up with 2 spade stoppers and passed! A double would backfire drastically with spades and diamonds splitting 3-3. On poor defense, this can make! The club finesse is possible to take if a diamond ruff is allowed, or north gets accidentally endplayed to lead a club, so 2s may make.

2N was completely untouchable! +120 would beat 2sx -1.

**Slides 52-53:**

No notes