

## Light Takeouts

Light Takeouts are a simplified version of the methods described in “Active Defensive Overcalls,” an article published by Kris Bhavnani in The Bridge World, sometime in the 1970s. They provide a way to get into and out of many auctions quickly with minimal risk, while thoroughly disrupting the opponents’ constructive bidding.

When the opponents open one of a suit, the following direct actions apply at any vulnerability:

1NT over 1♣, 1♦, 1♥	Light takeout: 8-13 HCP, exactly three spades or doubleton honor, and at least three cards in each unbid suit
1NT over 1♠	Light takeout: 8-13 HCP, at least three cards in each unbid suit
Cue bid of 1♣ 1♦ 1♥	Light takeout: 8-13 HCP, four or five spades, and at least three cards in each unbid suit
Cue bid of 1♠	Michaels (hearts and a minor)
Double	Italian-style power takeout double: 14+ HCP, can be balanced or off-shape
Overcall	Tends to be limited to 13 HCP but use your judgement

Here’s an example. RHO opens 1♣ and you have ♠KJxx ♥Kxx ♦Qxxx ♣xx. Playing standard defensive bidding, this is a rather poor takeout double that many players would pass if vulnerable. When you bid 2♣ as a light takeout, however, partner knows your hand is limited and won’t get carried away.

### ***If Responder Passes***

Advancer generally makes only one bid but can safely compete for a contract knowing that a light takeout bidder rarely makes a second bid. It’s usually done on double fit hands.

As advancer to a light takeout, you often know where the opponents’ fit is before they do and can pick it off by bidding their suit if you’re willing to play it undoubled. If you get doubled, you have to rescue yourself. The light takeout bidder must pass unless you redouble, which is always SOS.

The ethical ramifications of psyching the opponents’ suit are unclear. Expect good results to produce unhappy opponents and an occasional recorder memo.

Pass	To play. Advancer can rescue himself if doubled.
Suit	Systemically a natural bid showing length in the suit but may be a psyche if willing to play it undoubled.
Jump suit	Preemptive. For example: suppose the auction begins 1♣-2♣-pass. If you (advancer) have a spade fit or a long suit, you can be on the three-level or four-level (based on total tricks) before the opponents have any idea of whether to play the hand or defend.
Cue bid	Cards, forcing.
Notrump	Cards, invitational.

### ***If Responder Doubles***

Advancer bids:

Pass	SOS with no fit. Rescue yourself.
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XX	SOS with <i>exactly four hearts</i> .
Suit	Same as if there were no double.
Jump suit	Same as if there were no double.

### ***Advances to a 14+ HCP Takeout Double***

Power (off-shape) doubles work very well once you get used to them. Double followed by a notrump rebid is the same as a 15 to 18 1NT overcall. Advancer makes the same bids he would opposite a standard takeout double.

## **The Advantages of Light Takeouts**

The main benefit of light takeouts is that they get you into the auction quickly and out quickly without the risk of partner hanging you. Advancer can act knowing that the light takeout bidder's hand is limited. When we make a takeout double, however, advancer knows that it's based on cards rather than shape.

Light takeouts disrupt the opponents' constructive bidding methods and force them out of their comfort zone. They're often forced to make a critical play-or-defend decision before they have enough information. The extremely wide range of a natural opening bid makes it difficult for them. For example, an auction such as 1♠-1NT-X-3♦, where responder has six diamonds and is bidding on total tricks, forces them to make a decision with neither player having had a chance to limit his hand.

## **The Disadvantages of Light Takeouts**

They're very much anti-field at matchpoints. Expect unusual results.

They only work against good players. Bad players don't even look at your card or ask what they mean. They just bid whatever they would have otherwise. Responder, holding cards but unwilling to double the light takeout, often uses the "forcing stare," which means, "I have cards but I don't know what to do so bid something!" It's like other forms of UI. There's nothing you can do about it that doesn't involve unpleasantness.

You have to abandon Michaels except for 1♠-2♣.

They have to be pre-alerted. Some opponents think they're illegal and call the director, who then has to go find the convention chart and make a ruling. They have never been ruled illegal.

They irritate some opponents because there is no good defense. The defense we recommend is simple: "all strong sequences start with double."

The light takeout bidder's shape and HCP range may help the opponents place some cards and may eliminate the possibility of bad splits.

Once in a while you get hammered and have no place to play. But like weak notrumps, the good results vastly outweigh the bad ones.

# Examples

North Deals  
Both Vul

♠ A 7 6 5 2  
♥ K 5 3  
♦ Q J 10 6  
♣ 2

♠ K Q J  
♥ J 10 6  
♦ A 5  
♣ Q 10 9 7 3

N		E
W		
	S	

♠ 9 4  
♥ Q 9 7 4 2  
♦ 9 7  
♣ K 8 5 4

♠ 10 8 3  
♥ A 8  
♦ K 8 4 3 2  
♣ A J 6

NS 4♠; NS 4♦; NS 2N; EW 1♥; EW 1♣; Par +620

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♦
1NT <sup>1</sup>	?		
	1. Light Takeout		

Four of twelve N-S pairs got to 4♠ and made it. What descriptive bid can North make over 1NT? Would they get to 4♠ after a light takeout? Doubtful.

East Deals  
None Vul

♠ 9 6 5  
♥ K Q 10 7 5 4 2  
♦ A  
♣ 6 3

♠ 7  
♥ A 9 6 3  
♦ K 9 6 5  
♣ 10 5 4 2

N		E
W		
	S	

♠ K 10 3  
♥ J  
♦ Q J 10 4 3  
♣ Q 9 8 7

♠ A Q J 8 4 2  
♥ 8  
♦ 8 7 2  
♣ A K J

NS 6♠; NS 5♥; NS 1N; E 2♦; W 1♦; Par +980

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
1NT <sup>1</sup>	?		
	1. Light Takeout		

Ten of twelve N-S pairs bid and made game in a major. What descriptive bid can North make over 1NT? Would 2♥ be forcing? 3♥?

South Deals  
None Vul

♠ A Q 8 7  
♥ J  
♦ K Q 9 7 5  
♣ K 9 4

♠ J 10 4  
♥ A 10 5 4  
♦ A J 10 3  
♣ 10 6

N		E
W		
	S	

♠ 5 3  
♥ Q 8 7 6 3 2  
♦ 8  
♣ 8 7 5 2

♠ K 9 6 2  
♥ K 9  
♦ 6 4 2  
♣ A Q J 3

S 3N; S 5♦; NS 3♠; EW 3♥; N 4♦; NS 3♣; Par +300; EW 3♣; NS 2♥; NS 2♦; NS 2♣; Par -140

West	North	East	South
			1♣
1NT <sup>1</sup>	Dbl	?	
	1. Light Takeout		

Knowing the opponents have eight or nine spades and a game, advancer can bid 3♥ or 4♥ depending on the vulnerability. Bhavnani suggests 4♦, intending to run to 4♥. If they get to 4♠, the diamond ruff is the only way to beat it.

South Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ J 9  
♥ J 9 8 5  
♦ A Q 6 5  
♣ A 7 2

♠ K 10 7 5 3  
♥ A 10 7  
♦ J 10 8 3  
♣ 10

N		E
W		
	S	

♠ Q 8 6 2  
♥ Q 4 3  
♦ K 4  
♣ Q 9 8 4

♠ A 4  
♥ K 6 2  
♦ 9 7 2  
♣ K J 6 5 3

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♦	2♦ <sup>1</sup>	Dbl
3♠	Pass	Pass	?
	1. Light Takeout		

South has a tough decision and must pass to stay out of trouble.