

DSI, partner... DSI!

Among bridge players, some are naturally adept at declarer play, while others find bidding easier; in particular, those who are comfortable learning new languages quickly discover that bidding is really nothing more than another language.

And as with most languages, bidding is comprised of statements, questions, and commands; and bidding “conventions” are really nothing more than idioms, understood by native speakers, but otherwise, incomprehensible.

With this in mind, we often find ourselves holding a good hand, but without a dominant suit. When this occurs, and we are engaged in a competitive auction (the opponents have bid), we would like to find a way to show our values (and our dilemma) to our partner, and to request our partner to “Do Something Intelligent” (DSI).

There are two easy ways to make this type of request: (1) you can make a “low-level” double, or (2) you can “cue-bid” the opponents’ suit.

What constitutes a “low-level” double? This depends upon your partnership agreement, but most players would assume a double of the opponents’ bid below the three-level would apply... beyond that, it should be discussed beforehand with your partner. Such doubles will convey a sense of the value of your hand, and request partner to take some appropriate action (DSI). Of course, it is possible that partner may elect to pass this double and defend the contract.

As conventions, many low-level doubles have specific names:

- Takeout doubles
- Negative doubles
- Responsive doubles
- Support doubles
- Rosenkranz doubles
- Balancing doubles

... each with their own suggestions of distribution and strength, but they are all, essentially, requests for partner to exercise good judgment and act accordingly.

“Cue-bidding” a suit that the opponents have bid naturally is another method to request partner to get involved in the auction... the major difference is that it is clear that partner can NEVER pass this type of bid. Some particular cue-bids have more precise implications, but they all fall into the category of DSI.

Discuss this with your regular partner; (if you don’t have a regular partnership, this would be a good time to establish one...). And the next time you are in a competitive auction and it is not clear what action you should take, try asking a question instead of making a statement; it will frequently render better results, and will strengthen your partnership.