



Conventional Wisdom

www.acbl.org/play/conventionwisdom.html

Filling out the convention card — part 13

Say your right-hand opponent opens the bidding at the one level and you make a one-level overcall in a suit (for example, 1♣ by RHO, 1♥ by you); what kind of hand do you promise for this action? This section of the convention card deals with “one over one” overcalls and the responses to these competitive bids.

1 level

Use the spaces provided to describe the strength of your one-level overcalls. Write in the minimum and maximum number of HCP. A commonly used range is 6 to 17 HCP (but others are possible, of course). With less, you'd pass, and with more, you'd double first and then bid again to show a very strong hand. Note the word “usually” on the card. Your HCP range is meant to give the opponents a general idea of your overcall philosophy, but the range isn't carved in stone.

Often 4 cards

Most overcalls promise at least five cards in the suit. Rarely, an opportunity for a four-card overcall comes along. For example, RHO opens 1♣ and you hold: ♠A K Q J ♥6 ♦8 7 4 3 ♣7 4 3 2. A takeout double is inappropriate because of the singleton heart, but a 1♠ overcall is a standout, even though the suit is only four cards in length. If you make a habit of overcalling four-card suits, however, check the box so that the opponents know about this, too.

SIMPLE OVERCALL

1 level _____ to _____ HCP (usually)
 often 4 cards very light style
Responses
 New Suit: Forcing NConst NF
 Jump Raise: Forcing Inv. Weak

Very light style

Many players would venture a 1♥ overcall on a hand such as:
 ♠9 2 ♥K Q J 9 5 ♦8 7 6 5 ♣8 2
 despite its minimum high-card strength. Indeed, if your range is 6 to 17 HCP, this would be an example of rock-bottom minimum. If you like to risk even lighter overcalls on a regular basis, check the box marked “very light style.”

Jump raise

What does partner's jump raise in this auction mean?

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	1♥	Pass	3♥

Is it forcing? Invitational? Preemptive? Check the appropriate box.

Responses

New Suit

Say the auction begins:

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	1♥	Pass	2♥
Pass	?		

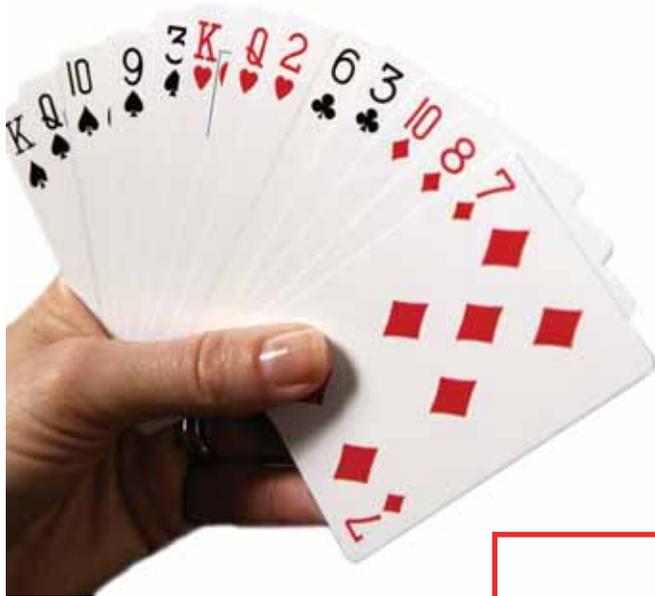
Partner's raise is, of course, not forcing because your overcall could be made on a weak hand. But what if partner bids a new suit instead, say, 2♣? Are you required to bid again? Put another way, is partner's bid forcing? If so, check the “Forcing” box. If it's non-forcing, check that box instead. If partner usually expects you to bid again except in cases where your overcall is a minimum and the hands are misfitting, check the “NConst” box (non-forcing, constructive).

Note that there is a line in RED at the bottom of this box. You may use this line to describe any other treatment that you and your partner agree upon. A good one to discuss is this: What does a jump cuebid mean? For example:

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	1♥	Pass	3♦

ALERT

The non-jump cuebid (2♦) is typically played as a general force by most players, but what about the jump cuebid (3♦)? Things such as this can be described on the RED line and they must be Alerted.



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JUMP OVERCALL

Strong Intermediate Weak

JUMP OVERCALL When your right-hand opponent opens with a suit-bid at the one level and you make a jump overcall, what kind of hand are you showing? Take a look at these auctions:

RHO	You
1 ♣	2 ♦, 2 ♥ or 2 ♠
1 ♦	2 ♥, 2 ♠ or 3 ♣
1 ♥	2 ♠, 3 ♣ or 3 ♦
1 ♠	3 ♣, 3 ♦ or 3 ♥

Most pairs treat these jumps as showing a weak hand with a long suit, something resembling a weak two-bid or an opening three-level preempt. If you play this way, check the “weak” box.

If you play that these jumps show strong or intermediate (opening values, but a long suit) hands, check the appropriate box and Alert the opponents.

Items in **RED** on the convention card require an Alert. If the opponents ask, you must disclose your agreements regarding the meaning of any Alertable call.



ALERT

OPENING PREEMPTS An opening bid on the three or four level typically promises a weak hand (below opening strength) with a long suit. A three-level bid normally suggests a seven-card suit, while a four-level bid suggests an eight-bagger. The texture of the long suit can be the deciding factor for some players on whether the hand qualifies for an opening preempt.

The “**Sound**,” “**Light**” and “**Very Light**” boxes help your opponents gauge your preempting philosophy. How are these different categories defined? There’s a certain subjectivity to these three classes; what’s light for one pair may be very light for another. Here is a guideline for determining which box you should select to best reflect your preempting style:

- If you follow the “rule of 500,” meaning that — if doubled — your suit is good enough that you expect to go down no more than two vulnerable or three not vulnerable, check the “Sound” box. This is the most conservative approach.
- If you preempt on most reasonable (*i.e.*, with some honor concentration) seven- or eight-card suits, select the “Light” box.
- If your style is to preempt even with a bad seven- or eight-card suit, or if you will preempt with fewer cards in the suit than is typically expected, check the “Very Light” box.

OPENING PREEMPTS

3/4-bids Sound Light Very Light

Conv./Resp. _____

Conv./Resp.

This line is used to describe either conventional uses for preempts or conventional responses to an opening preempt. (Note the **RED** color; Alerts are required.)

If you play, for example, that the opening bids of 4 ♣ and 4 ♦ are actually transfers to 4 ♥ and 4 ♠ respectively (a treatment called Namyats), indicate it here.

Another example: If you play that a 4 ♣ response to a preempt is ace-asking or key-card-asking, describe it on this line.



ALERT



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Natural

This is undoubtedly the least popular option among experienced players. When an opponent opens with a natural one-level bid, it's rare to hold a hand where you would want to bid two of the same suit as an offer to play in that strain, especially if the suit is a major.

A 1♣ or 1♦ opening may be made with three cards in the suit, so you might occasionally run into the situation where your RHO opens one of a minor and you have an opening hand with five or more cards in that minor with opening values. Using a 2♣ or a 2♦ cuebid of a 1♣ or a 1♦ opening, respectively, to show exactly that type of hand, however, isn't very productive, since (a) it doesn't happen very often and (b) there are other hand types that occur with greater frequency that you'd like to be able to describe.

If you do play that a direct cuebid is natural, however, you must Alert the opponents, since this is an unusual action. Check the appropriate **RED** box.

ALERT



Note that if the opponents use a system where a one-of-a-minor opening is artificial (such as a Precision 1♣ opening), using a direct 2♣ bid in the natural sense is completely reasonable. So if RHO opens with a strong, artificial 1♣, and your partnership has agreed that a 2♣ call in this case actually shows clubs, no Alert is required.

Strong T/O (Takeout)

In the early days of contract bridge, a direct cuebid was used to show a very powerful hand, something resembling a strong two-bid. Some players still prefer to use the direct cuebid to show a strong one-, two- or three-suiter. If you play this way, check the appropriate box. No Alert is required.

Note that this treatment is also rarely encountered in club and tournament play.

DIRECT CUEBID

Left-hand opponent opens one of a suit, and your partner bids two of the same suit. This is a direct cuebid — but what does it mean? Does the meaning change depending on whether the suit is a minor or a major? This section of the convention card allows your partnership to describe your agreements for these direct cuebids.

There are three commonly used interpretations that you can apply to your direct cuebids: natural, strong takeout or two-suited takeout (Michaels).

DIRECT CUEBID		
OVER:	Minor	Major
Natural	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong T/O	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michaels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Michaels

By far, the most popular use for the direct cuebid in duplicate bridge is the two-suited takeout. Specifically, the convention known as Michaels (after its inventor, the late Mike Michaels) is the treatment of choice.

Michaels works like this: a direct cuebid of a minor-suit opening shows a major two-suiter, 5-5 or longer. So the auction 1♣-(2♣) or 1♦-(2♦) shows a hand with five (or more) hearts and five (or more) spades. The strength requirements vary depending on partnership preferences.

After a major-suit opening, a direct cuebid shows five of the other major and a five-card minor. The sequence 1♠-(2♠), therefore, shows five hearts and an undisclosed five-card minor. If the partner of the cuebidder wants to know which minor, he bids 2NT and the Michaels bidder bids his minor suit.

No Alert is required. It's important to discuss continuations with your partner.



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Slam Conventions

This section allows you to briefly describe your conventional slam methods. Note that none of these treatments is Alertable, but you should offer to explain the meanings of these bids before the opening lead is made if your side declares.

vs Interference When the opponents interfere with your ace-asking (or key-card-asking) auctions, there are conventional methods available to combat the interference. Some of the most popular are listed here. Check any that apply.

DOPI An acronym that stands for “Double with none (0), Pass with one (1).” It works like this:

Partner	RHO	You	LHO
1♠	3♥	4NT	5♥
?			

The opponents are being pests. Your 4NT bid (say, regular Blackwood) was asking for aces, but LHO’s 5♥ bid has messed things up. DOPI can help. Partner can double with no aces or pass with one ace. (Partner bids 5♠ with two and 5NT with three.) This gives you the chance to double the opponents instead of being forced to bid a slam with an insufficient number of aces.

Gerber

This convention uses a jump to 4♣ after a natural notrump bid to ask for aces. For example,

You	Partner
1NT	4♣

or

You	Partner
2NT	4♣

In both cases, partner is asking for the number of aces you hold. The responses: 4♦ shows all or none, 4♥ shows one, 4♠ two and 4NT three.



This is a frequently misused convention. Many pairs treat any bid of 4♣ as Gerber, while others use it after a fit in a suit has been found (e.g., 1♠–3♠; 4♣). Your partnership can, of course, agree to play it in such a fashion, but you must explain your agreements after the auction if your side declares.

4NT: There are many ways to ask for aces and/or relevant high cards in an agreed suit. Check the box that applies.

Blackwood: Traditional Blackwood is one of the oldest conventional treatments. A bid of 4NT asks partner to reveal how many aces he or she holds. The responses: 5♣ shows all or none, 5♦ shows one, 5♥ two and 5♠ three.

RKC: Roman Key Card Blackwood is a popular 4NT variation that asks not only about the aces, but also about the king of the agreed suit. These five cards are referred to as key cards. The responses: 5♣ shows none or three, 5♦ shows one or four, 5♥ shows two or five without the queen of the agreed suit, 5♠ shows two or five with the queen.

1430: A refinement of RKC Blackwood is 1430 Blackwood. 4NT still asks for key cards, but the first two responses are reversed. Therefore, 5♣ shows one or four, 5♦ shows none or three. The last two steps are the same. The name comes from the number of key cards shown in the first two steps (14–30).

SLAM CONVENTIONS Gerber : 4NT: Blackwood RKC 1430

vs Interference: DOPI DEPO Level: _____ ROPI

DEPO Another way to cope with Blackwood interference. Double shows an even number of aces, pass shows an odd number.

ROPI An extension of DOPI. If an opponent doubles your ace-asking bid (usually 4NT), redouble shows no aces, pass shows one, etc.

Level: Some pairs have agreed to use DOPI and DEPO only at the five level. (If the opponents compete to the six level, DOPI and ROPI don’t apply.) Other pairs use DOPI if the opponents’ suit is lower-ranking, but DEPO if it’s higher-ranking. Write your agreement (if any) in the blank provided.

