Overcalls - by Ed L'Heureux

Overcall: Other side opens the bidding. Now you make a bid. This is an "overcall". **Why overcall?**

- **Compete:** Get in their way. Don't let them have an easy, quiet auction.
- **Suggest a lead:** Partner should lead a suit that you bid. If you have AK or KQ in a suit, this gets your side started with a good lead.
- **The hand might be yours:** Example: They can make 2H, but you can make 2S.

Cue Bid: Bid the opponent suit. Example: Pard bids 1H, opp bids 1S, you bid 2S. **Why cue bid?**

- **Show a stronger hand:** Simple raise shows 7-9. Cue bid shows support and 10+ points.
- **Prevent opponent's partner from showing support.**

Overcall 1 in a Suit:

- **Overcaller:**
  - **Good 5 card suit:** Should have a 5 card suit with 2+ face cards. Should be happy to have partner lead this suit.
  - **8+ points:** At the 1 level, can be much weaker than an opening bid.
- **Partner of Overcaller (called Advancer);**
  - **Raise with support:** Raise with 3+ card support and 6+ points.
  - **Pass without support:** Unless you have a strong hand willing to play NT.
  - **First Rule of Holes: "When in a hole, stop digging."** Don't fight partner. Don't bid another suit unless you are happy if partner rebids their suit.
  - **New suit not forcing:** Overcaller can pass a new suit that advancer bids. Any new suit should be a 5 card suit.
  - **Cue bid with support & 10+ points:** Keep in mind that overcaller might have only 8 points. If partner has 8 and you have 12, that's only 20, not enough for game

Overcall 2 in a Suit (without jumping, e.g. 1H by them – 2D by you):

- **Overcaller:**
  - **Good 5 card suit:** Should have a 5 card suit with 2+ face cards. Should be happy to have partner lead this suit.
  - **11+ points:** At the 2 level, should be close to a full opening bid.
- **Partner of Overcaller (called Advancer);**
  - **Same as above:** But advancer can take more liberties with bidding a new suit or bidding NT, since partner has 11+ points. New suit is still not forcing.
  - **Support still important:** The more you have support for partner's suit, the more you can compete to higher bidding levels.

Overcall 1 NT:

- **Overcaller:**
  - **15-18 points, balanced:** Like opening 1NT, but top end is 18 points.
  - **Stopper in their suit:** At least 1 stopper, preferably 2, in opponent's suit.
- **Partner of Overcaller (called Advancer);**
  - **Same as responding to 1NT opener:** Use Stayman and transfers. Same point ranges for inviting to game and bidding game.

After they Overcall:

- Your responder bids are essentially the same as without the overcall.

Law of Total Tricks (simple version):

- **The Law: In a suit contract, if you and partner have about half the points (e.g. 17 or 22), you can make as many tricks as you have combined trumps.**
- **Are they safe?** If they are in 2 something with 8 trump, they are likely to make.
- **Are they too high?** If they have 8 trump at the 3 level, they are likely down 1.
- **Are we safe?** If we have 9 trump, we are safe at the 3 level.
- **Down 1 is good bridge:** WIth only 8 trump, down 1 by you is often better than 2 of a major by them. They get 50 or 100 instead of 110.

Examples (Opponent's bids are shown in brackets):

1. **(1C)-1H:** Overcaller bids 1H. Shows 8+ points & a good 5+ card heart suit.
2. **(1C)-1D-(1S):** Overcaller bids 1D. Responder shows 6+ points & 4+ spades.
3. **(1C)-1H-(2D)-2H:** Overcaller bids 1H. Responder's 2D (2-level) bid shows 10+ points & usually 5 diamonds. Advancer with 3 card support competes to 2H, expects to make it.
4. **(1S)-2C-(2S)-3C:** Overcaller bids 2C. Shows 11+ points & a good 5+ card club suit. Responder 2S bid shows 6-9 points & 3 card spade support. Advancer with 6+ points & 3 card club support bids on to 3C. Might be down 1, but better than letting them make 2S.
5. **(1H)-1S-(2H)-2S-(3H):** A spirited auction with both sides competing for the contract. Both sides rate to have about 20 HCP. The final 3H bid will often be 1 trick too high. But they don't want to let you make 2S with your 8 card fit.
6. **(1S)-2C-(P)-2H-(P)-3C:** Overcaller bids 2C. Shows 11+ points & a good 5+ card club suit. Advancer bids 2H, a new suit. Shows a 5+ hearts. Overcaller does not like hearts, bids 3C. Advancer should not bid a new suit (hearts) without tolerance for overcaller's suit (clubs). Bidding 3H here would be digging the hole even deeper.
7. **(1S)-2C-(P)-2NT:** Overcaller bids 2C. Shows 11+ points & a good 5+ card club suit. Advancer bids 2NT. This shows about 12 points & stopper(s) in spades. Overcaller should pass with only 11-12, can bid 3NT with 13+.
8. **(1H)-P-(2H)-2S:** Person in 4th seat bids a 5+ card spade suit rather than let the opponents have an easy 2H contract. Should have a good suit and close to an opener for this bid.
9. **(1D)-1NT-(P)-2D-(P)-2H:** Overcaller bids 1NT, showing 15-18 HCP & diamonds well stopped. Advancer can use Stayman and Jacoby transfers (as shown here).
10. **(1D)-1NT-(P)-2C-(P)-2H-(P)-2NT:** Overcaller bids 1NT, showing 15-18 HCP & diamonds stopped. Advancer with 8-9 points uses Stayman to look for 4-4 major suit fit. Overcaller has 4 hearts. But advancer does not (has 4 spades), so advancer bids 2NT.