

Introduction to bridge

Lesson 6: Bidding after your opponents open

Lesson 6 looks at bidding after your opponents have opened the bidding.

Why overcall?

When your opponents have opened it often pays to enter the bidding. A bid made after your opponents have opened the bidding is called an **overcall**.

You might overcall because:

- you have a good hand and want to compete
- you want to take up bidding space to make things more difficult for the opponents (you should be keen to overcall when your suit is spades!)
- you want to indicate a lead to partner should the hand on your left end up as declarer
- you want to sacrifice, conceding a penalty rather than letting the opponents make a contract.

What do you need to overcall a suit?

To overcall you need:

- a **good suit** and/or
- a **good hand**.

A good suit

An overcall promises a good **five card suit**, usually containing two honours. You might overcall with a suit that looks like this: AQJxx or KQxxx.

Suit quality is important - how many tricks can I count in this suit? Do I have good honours and intermediate cards (10s and 9s)?

Use the '**Suit Quality test**' as a guide - number of cards in the suit plus the number of honours in the suit = the level at which you can bid. This suit AQJxx has a suit quality of 8, meaning you can bid it at the 2 level.

A good hand

An overcall usually shows at least 12 HCP.

But you can overcall on fewer HCP if you have a good suit - **the better your suit the fewer HCP you need**.

But if **overcalling at the two level** you should have an opening hand (more or less) and a good 5-card major or 6-card minor suit, particularly when vulnerable.

Be more cautious when your side is vulnerable and your opponents are not. Also be cautious where both opponents have bid (the sandwich position)!

Don't overcall a suit bid by the opponents. Just pass and hope they get into trouble!

Responding to partner's suit overcall

As partner's bid shows a five card suit, you only need three-card support to raise partner's suit.

After partner overcalls:

- a single raise, or 1NT, shows 8-11TP (you have a fit so add your shortage points)
- a jump raise, or 2NT, shows 12-14TP
- a new suit shows a good five-card suit 8-14HCP (not forcing)
- a jump in a new suit shows 15+HCP (forcing).

If you have a weak hand and no support for partner's suit – **PASS**. Do not try to rescue your partner even if you have a void in their suit.

The 1NT overcall

Overcalling 1NT shows the same kind of hand as opening 1NT – **15-17 and balanced** but you **MUST have a stopper** in the suit bid by your opponents (a stopper is the A, or Kx or Qxx or Jxxx or better).

After your partner overcalls 1NT, you respond the same as you would if they had opened 1NT (see lesson 5).

The 'takeout' double

Sometimes you will have a hand that is not suitable for an overcall because you don't have a good five-card suit but your hand is too good to pass.

Your opponents have open 1H and you have the following:

AQ87
62
AK76
J89

With this type of hand, you can **double**.

A double shows 12+HCP and **at least three cards in the three unbid suits**. It asks partner to choose trumps. It is like bidding three suits at once. You **MUST** have not more than two cards in the suit bid by the opponents.

Responding to a takeout double

When partner doubles for takeout, it is your job to decide the contract. Do we have a fit in a major, can I bid NT and do we have enough total points for game?

If the player on right passes (the partner of the opening bidder) **YOU MUST BID**, even with no points.

- With **0-9TP** bid your suit at the cheapest level or bid 1NT with a stopper in the opponent's suit

- With **10-12TP** jump in your longest suit (preferably a major) or bid 2NT with a stopper
- With **13TP+** bid game or 3NT with a stopper.