

# Bidding Over One Spade and OBAR

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Playing 2/1 what competitive bidding options do you have when the opponents have opened 1♠ at the one-level or after the opponents have bid and raised a major suit? What are the advantages and disadvantages of entering the auction?

In general, there are more advantages than disadvantages for entering a bridge auction; however, there are risks and more importantly hand strength and bidding strategies effect one's decision on whether to bid, double, or pass.

For example, if the opponents enter the bidding by opening a minor suit, one may still enter the auction with a 1-level with a suit bid. This is not the case if the opponents' bid is 1♠ since now one must bid at the 2-level. In addition, entering the bidding after the opponents have found major suit fit is dangerous. And once an opponent has opened the bidding, you also need to re-evaluate your hand by taking onto account the opponents bid suit.

Strength of bridge hands in the direct seat after the opponents have made a suit bid may be divided into three regions:

Weak	< 12 adjusted Honor, Length and Distribution points (ADP)
One-level Overcall	13-18ADP
Two-level Overcall	15-18ADP
Strong	19+ADP

A 1-level overcall suit bid shows a 5-card suit with 13-18ADP while a 2-level bid shows a 5-card suit with 15-18ADP and depends upon suit quality and distribution. A normal takeout double shows 3-card support in the unbid suits with 15+ADP. A power double requires 19+ ADP.

Another option is to use conventions like Michaels Cue bid, Equal Level Conversion Double, Unusual 2NT and others.

After the opponents have bid and raised a major, we know that they have at least an 8-card major suit fit, and we know from the Law of Total tricks that in a competitive auction that it is safe to bid to the 3-level if the level of your bid plus the level of the opponents bid suit does not exceed the 3-level provided both pairs have found a fit.

Over 1♥-2♥, one may safely bid to 3♠/3♣/3♦ and the over 1♠-2♠, one may safely bid 3♣/3♦/3♥ provided both sides have found an 8-card fit in their respective suits. Why? For two 8-card fits,  $8+8=6-11 \leq 5=2+3$  or the sum of the bids by the Law of Total Tricks. With a higher-level bid, you risk being doubled which is very dangerous if you are vulnerable and the opponents are not.

After the opponents have found major suit fit, depending upon your ADP, one may bid, double or pass. With extreme shortness in the opponent's suit Marty Bergen used a mnemonic called OBAR (**O**pponents **B**id **A**nd **R**aise) when the opposition takes action in the balance seat. Of course, OBAR will work best with extreme shortness (S/V) in the opponent's suit or when you have a long 6-card suit with strength in the suit and fails with flatter hands like 5332 and 4432.

One may also use OBAR over the minor suit bids: 1m-2m provided the 2-level inverted minor bid shows only 10+ points and is not the criss-cross inverted bid which shows GF values. Again, you may bid, pass, or double.

### **Bidding Over 1♠**

Before making a bid, count your hand using **HL** points (High Cards and Suit Length) making sure to adjust for any length or shortness in spades, your **ADP**. You must adjust:

- (1) Deduct 1/2/3 points for 3/4/5-cards in spades
- (2) Add 2-points for any singleton and 4-points for any void but increase these values by +1 if they are in spades (to 3/5).
- (3) Deduct -1 for any isolated Kx or if holding the K of spades and add +1 if holding the Q of spades
- (4) Deduct -1 point if holding Two Doubletons (no adjustment for on doubleton).

Over the bid of 1♠, consider the following hands.

Hand (1): ♠Kxxx ♥AK10xx ♦x ♣KQx

You have  $3+8+1L+5=17$ HL points -1 for spade K - 2 for 4-spades +2 for singleton = 16ADP. You are in the 2-level range so bid 2♥. With 19+ you would double and bid hearts and if say you were 5-5 in the minors you would make the unusual 2NT bid for the two lowest suits.

Hand (2): ♠xxx ♥AQx ♦A10xxx ♣xxx

You have  $11+1L-1$  No K = 11HL-1 for 3spades = 10ADP. You are weak so pass.

Hand (3): ♠xxx ♥Axxxxxx ♦Kx ♣x

You have  $4.5+4L+3-1$  no Queen = 10.5HL - 3 for 3-spades + 2 for singleton = 9.5ADP. Clearly, pass.

Hand (4): ♠AQx ♥Kxx ♦Kxx ♣QJxx

You have  $4.5+2+6+3-1$  for 4333 = 14.5HL-1 for 3 spades -2 for lone Ks=11.5ADP. With spades stopped only once and poor shape, pass better to defend.

### **OBAR**

When using OBAR you are normally in the weak or moderate range for a bid. After the bid 1♥-2♥, consider the following hands.

Hand (1): ♠KQJxx ♥x ♦Qxxx ♣xxx.

You have  $6+1Q+1L+1.5=9.5HL+3$  for Heart Singleton 12.5ADP so bid 2♠. With only 4-spades and 11.5ADP you would double.

Hand (2): ♠xxx ♥xx ♦AQJ10xx ♣xx.

You have  $10HL -1$  for two doubletons =9.0ADP points with so bid 3♦.

Hand (3): ♠Axx ♥Kx ♦QJxxx ♣Kx.

You have  $7.5+3+1L+3=14.5HL=14ADP$  with no attractive bid except to double. If partner bids 3♣ or 2♥, you will bid 3♦ playing the Equal Level Conversion Double (ELCD) convention. Not playing this convention you do not have a bid.