

July 29th - When Partner Overcalls

Let's take this as an example - you are West:

North	East	South	West
1♠	2♣	Pass	

Your partner has shown 10+ points and at least 5 clubs. To overcall at the one level you need 8+ points. To overcall at the two level you need a couple more points. I strongly recommend that when you overcall you have five cards in the suit.

It looks like the South hand is weak as it can't support spades or double to show hearts and diamonds.

Your options are:

Pass

If your hand has fewer than three clubs and fewer than six points you should pass.

Double

This is a negative double showing that you have something like 5-4 in the unbid suits (hearts and diamonds), 6+ points and a shortage in clubs and spades.

2NT

This is showing you have 13-14 points, a good stop in spades (A or Kx or better), fewer than four clubs and some sort of stop in the red suits (could be Qxx or Jxxx). You are seriously interested in playing in 3NT if partner has more than a minimum. If the auction allows you to bid 1NT this shows 9-12 points.

Bidding a different suit

This shows two things:

- A good suit - six cards or five very good ones
- 8+ points

You could try this if your suit is a major and partner has bid a minor. Don't bid a poor suit or hand just because you are weak in the suit bid by partner. Introducing a new suit shows that you believe your side should be playing the hand.

Supporting Clubs

You don't need four in the suit because partner has promised five so you can support with just three cards. As you have a fit with partner's suit you can add on shortage points. With 6-9 points you can raise to 3 clubs. This has to be a sound bid. If you pass then partner has to make eight tricks but if you bid this increases to nine. One of the opposition has opened the bidding so that is about 13 points they hold - this means that game in a minor is unlikely. On the flip side if you bid then North may well be put off from bidding again. So pass is an option with a weak hand even with 3+ clubs.

With 10+ points bid four clubs to suggest game. Don't forget that 3NT scores the same as 5♣ and it is easier to make nine tricks than eleven, so consider 3NT before bidding four clubs.

Finally, in all of these situations you must be a little bit more careful if you are vulnerable.