

September 23rd - The 1NT Overcall

An Overcall of 1NT is a useful way of showing a strong, balanced hand when the opponents have opened the bidding. The auction might go like this:

North	East	South	West
1♠	1NT		

In this auction the 1NT bid by East shows:

- 15 - 17 points
- A balanced hand
- At least one stopper in spades, preferably two

If you had a shortage in spades and four hearts you would double instead. If you had a weaker hand with a five card suit then you would overcall.

Often the 1NT overcall ends the auction. The opener has shown, say, 13 points and the 1NT bid, say, 16 points so there aren't many left for the other two players.

In other cases **as long as both partners have agreed this** you can use the same conventions as you would if partner had opened 1NT. So:

- 2♣ means Stayman with 8-9 points at least
- 2♦ means transfer to hearts (any number of points)
- 2♥ means transfer to spades (also any number of points)
- 2NT means 8-9 points and invites partner to bid game with a maximum.

With 10+ points you can bid a game contract - either straight to 3NT or via red suit transfers.

Possible hands for a 1NT overcall when the opposition open 1♥:

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3
♠ A 9 8 ♥ Q J 6 3 ♦ A K 7 ♣ Q 10 9	♠ A J 8 7 ♥ K Q J ♦ 8 6 ♣ A Q 10 9	♠ J 10 3 2 ♥ A Q ♦ A K Q 9 2 ♣ 4 2
Perfectly balanced, two stops in hearts, 16 points. Will only need a little help from partner for 1NT - could even make it with only ♣J and ♦Q.	17 points. Let's hope our partner has four spades and enough points to try Stayman. Don't worry about the poor diamonds - you can't have everything and the likelihood of losing seven quick diamond tricks is small.	16 points and a bit off shape but with a heart lead I can see 7 tricks (two hearts, 5 diamonds) before the opposition get back in. There is also the possibility of a spade fit with partner.