



St Annes Bridge Club

Lytham St Annes



Competitive bidding - overcalls

Simple Overcalls

When a player opens the bidding, he has hopes that it will be the start of a dialogue with his partner that will result in them arriving at game or even slam. When a player, after the opponents open, enters the bidding with an overcall, he may hope to outbid them and buy the final contract (which he may not expect to make).

Almost equally important, however, is that the player making the overcall may disrupt the opponents' bidding sequence and make it difficult for them to arrive at the right final contract.

For an overcall, playing strength (i.e. the ability to take tricks with your suit as trumps) becomes more important than points or high cards. The strength of the suit bid is rather more important than when you are opening the bidding. The better the suit, the more likely it is that you have a sound overcall. In fact, a strong suit is practically enough in itself to make an overcall.

Also, the weaker you are (in terms of points) the more likely it is that you will eventually be outbid by the opponents and that your side will end up defending. In this situation, it is even more important that your suit is good, because if partner is on lead (which he will be half the time when your side is defending) he is very likely to start by leading your suit.

Overcall Requirements

- Overcall requirements are based on 'Suit Quality':

Suit Quality = numbers of honour card in suit + suit length

- A one level overcall needs Suit Quality of 7 and promises at least 8 points and a good 5+ card suit (e.g. 2 honours + 5 cards = 7)
- A two level overcall needs Suit Quality of 8 and promises at least 10 points and a good 6+ card suit (or very good 5 card suit) e.g. 2 honours + 6 cards = 8)

Overcalls

In each case the opponent on your right has opened. Should you overcall?

♠ K Q 10 9 6
♥ 6 5 2
♦ 7 4
♣ K 10 8

♠ K 5 4 3 2
♥ K 8 5
♦ Q 3 2
♣ Q J

♠ 8 5
♥ A 2
♦ K 10 2
♣ K Q J 9 8 7

♠ K Q 10 9 6
♥ 6 5 2
♦ 7 4
♣ K 10 8

The opponent opens 1♣. Should you overcall 1♠?

Verdict: overcall 1♠

This represents a sound overcall of 1♠. The suit is good, and if we end up defending we would be happy for partner to start by leading the spades.

In addition, we have made a bid that may well inconvenience the opponents, for responder may have been ready to bid 1♦ or 1♥, and neither of these bids is now available.

♠ K 5 4 3 2

♥ K 8 5

♦ Q 3 2

♣ Q J

Over 1♣, do we overcall 1♠?

Verdict: do not overcall. Pass.

This hand is stronger than hand (i) in points, but is a rather poor overcall. Firstly the suit is weak : if our side ends up defending, we would be worried that partner will get off to a bad start by leading a spade from, say, ♠ J 6 which will probably help declarer more than us.

And we may deter partner from his natural lead when we can supply help in any other suit he may choose to lead. Finally, the hand is less strong than it looks: the bare Q J of clubs is possibly worth nothing if opener's values include a suit headed by the ♣ A K

♠ 8 5

♥ A 2

♦ K 10 2

♣ K Q J 9 8 7

Do we bid 2♣ over 1♥?

Verdict: overcall 2♣

Your hand has 13 points but more importantly a solid 6 card suit. Your bid stops the opposition responding one spade. You would be happy for partner to lead this suit.

Simple Overcalls: summary

When considering an overcall, remember the following points:

- The hand need not have opening bid values. A decent suit plus a high card outside is enough at the 1-level, but rather more at the 2-level (i.e. approaching opening values).
- We should be more inclined to overcall if it takes up the opponents' bidding space. A 1♠ overcall is more of a nuisance against a 1♣ opening than if they have opened 1♥ as they are deprived of two potential responses at the 1-level
- An important factor is the quality of the suit. It is better to overcall 1♠ on ♠ K Q J 10 9 8 and nothing else than a flat 15 point hand with ♠ J 5 4 3 2 and assorted high cards!

Responding to simple overcalls

Basic principles:

Since partner has overcalled he may be weak on points therefore be positive and aggressive with a fit in his suit cautious without eg:

- Support with three or more cards, raises as normal
- Bid No Trumps only if you can stop the opponents suit more points needed than normal. 1 NT = 9-12, 2NT =13-14
- Bidding a new suit - must be good suit (6+).
Bid is not forcing.

West	North	East	South (you)
1♣	1♥	pass	?

♠	K 5
♥	A 6 5 2
♦	K 10 7 4
♣	6 5 4

3♥

♠	K Q J 6 3 2
♥	5 2
♦	A 8 5
♣	J 6

1♠

West	North	East	South (you)
1♣	1♥	pass	?

♠	10 9 6
♥	Q 8 4
♦	K J 10 6 5
♣	Q 6

2♥ (not 2♦)

♠	A Q 2
♥	10 4
♦	Q 10 9 3
♣	K 10 3 2

1 NT

Responding to a Two Level Overcall in a Minor

Two level overcall is based on 10+ points and probably 6 card suit.

West	North	East	South (you)
1 ♥	2 ♣	pass	?

♠	7 4 3 2
♥	A Q 2
♦	K 7 6
♣	Q 6 5

2 NT

♠	7 4 3 2
♥	A Q 2
♦	A J 6
♣	Q 6 5

3 NT

Responding to a Two Level Overcall in a Minor

West	North	East	South (you)
1 ♥	2 ♣	pass	?

♠	7 2
♥	A Q 3 2
♦	A J 7 6
♣	Q 6 5

3 NT

♠	A Q 2
♥	7 4 3 2
♦	K 7 6
♣	Q 6 5

3 ♣

Responding to a Two Level Overcall in a Major

West	North	East	South (you)
1 ♠	2 ♥	pass	?

♠	A Q 2
♥	Q 6 5
♦	K 7 6
♣	7 4 3 2

3 ♥

♠	A Q 2
♥	Q 6 5
♦	A J 6
♣	7 4 3 2

4 ♥

Responding to a Two Level Overcall in a Major

West	North	East	South (you)
1 ♠	2 ♥	pass	?

♠	A Q 3 2
♥	Q 6 5
♦	A J 7 6
♣	7 2

4 ♥

♠	A Q 2
♥	6 5
♦	A K 7 6
♣	Q 4 3 2

3 NT

Suit Overcall Recap

A one level overcall shows at least 8 points and a good 5+ card suit

A two level overcall shows at least 10 points and a good 6+ card suit (or very good 5 card suit)

Good means at least 2 honours

If you have a fit (3+) for partners overcall respond aggressively if not be cautious

Consider vulnerability.

HAND 1

West

♠ A J 5
♥ A 10 6
♦ 10 6 5
♣ A J 8 7

2 C

3 NT

North

♠ 8 6
♥ Q J 9 8 4
♦ 8 2
♣ Q 10 3 2

pass

pass

pass

East

♠ 7 4 2
♥ K 5
♦ A Q J 9 4 3
♣ K 5

South

♠ K Q 10 9 3
♥ 7 3 2
♦ K 7
♣ 9 6 4

1 S

pass

pass

1 D

2 D

pass

HAND 2

North

♠	A K 7	3 H
♥	Q 10 6 4	pass
♦	8 7	
♣	J 10 9 3	

West

♠	8 5 4
♥	8 2
♦	K 9 4 3
♣	8 6 5 4

pass

pass

East

♠	Q 6 3 2
♥	K 5
♦	A Q J 10 2
♣	K 2

1 D

pass

pass

South

♠	J 10 9	
♥	A J 9 7 3	
♦	6 5	1 H
♣	A Q 7	4 H

HAND 3

West

♠ 6
♥ A J 8 7
♦ K Q 5 4
♣ J 8 6 2

pass

1 NT

pass

North

♠ K 9 3 2
♥ Q 9 6
♦ A J 10 8 7
♣ A

1 D

pass

pass

East

♠ A J 8 7 4
♥ K 5
♦ 2
♣ Q 10 9 4 3

1 S

2 C

South

♠ Q 10 5
♥ 10 4 3 2
♦ 9 6 3
♣ K 7 5

pass

pass

pass

HAND 4

North

♠ K J 10 6 3

♥ K J 3 2

♦ 3

♣ A 4 3

1 S

2 H

pass

West

♠ A 9 8 7

♥ 6 5

♦ Q 2

♣ K Q J 7 5

1 C

pass

pass

East

♠ Q 4 2

♥ 8 7 4

♦ J 10 7 6

♣ 10 9 6

pass

pass

pass

South

♠ 5

♥ A Q 10 9

♦ A K 9 8 5 4

♣ 8 2

2 D

4 H

Homework

- Read pg 77-83