

Overcalls

Overcalls happen when your opponents bid before you do.

To play good Bridge, you have to have a systematic way to bid the right contract with *every* hand, no matter what opponents do to interfere.

You have to know and understand what your partner's overcalls and the subsequent responses mean -- you can't make it up as you go or 'mastermind' each situation.

This section explains our system of overcalling in normal and in exceptional situations.

Responses to an Overcall in a Suit

OK. Your partner made an overcall. Now what?

Remember the definition of an overcall - a weak to average hand with a good suit or suits. With a good hand, your partner would have doubled.

Raise -- Don't Explore. Your partner wants to hear support for his suit, not new suits from you. We raise with 6 HCP and four trumps or a trump honor (Queen or better) plus two other trumps (*or sometimes one plus an Ace or King.*). Otherwise, we pass and let the opponents finish their bidding.

If they quit at a low level, perhaps you can come in later to raise partner and also tempt your opponents to take the push.

· **If partner has made a weak jump overcall, either raise it or pass.**

Respect his judgment in making the bid. With a fit for his suit, a raise is almost a must as a preemptive tactic, regardless of points.

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>	
1♣	2♠	Dbl*	???	West almost <u>has</u> to bid 3♠, 4♠, 5♠ or 6♠.

· If partner made a Michaels or Unusual No Trump overcalls, he has bid two suits. Pick one.

With a fit in one or both of them, or with a fit in one and shortness in the other, make a preemptive call in one of your partner's suits, or pass and consider sacrificing later.

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
1♥	2♥	Dbl	??? West should bid 2♠ or 3♠ or 4♠ if at all possible.
1♥	2NT	3♥	??? West, bid 4♣ or 5♣ or 6♣ or Diamonds!

Responses to an Overcall If Third Hand Bid

· If third hand raised the opener, it may be quite weak.

An important consideration is whether or not opener's partner - third hand - has bid.

(*That's how you should bid, too*). Raise overcaller or bid a responsive double with appropriate cards.

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
1♥	2♣	2♥	???

West can raise Clubs with Kx or better and 6+ points. East shouldn't count on more than this. South may have only 3-5 points for his raise in this situation.

· If third hand bid other than to raise, there's not enough HCP in the deck for you to bid independently.

(Count them: 13 + 9 + 9 + ??) Perhaps someone is overbidding? Partner may be between two powerful hands, so bid only to preempt the opponents.

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
1♣	1♥	2♣	???

Both opponents are unlimited. East didn't promise much except Hearts because he didn't double or bid Notrump. West should raise Hearts or pass. (If East had Spades, he would have doubled for takeout.)

Responses to an Overcall If Third Hand Passed

When the third hand has passed, it usually means the hand belongs our way, and the challenge is to find the right level and suit. With a two level overcall, there's no problem.

However, the one level overcall may be quite light - 8 to 15 points is our range, so we have a system to find the right level and still compete when it may not be our hand.

We call it our **Overcall Response System**.

Our Overcall Response System

Don't Penalize Yourself. Our responses to suit overcalls are designed to avoid overbidding when overcaller has made a suit overcall with a minimum hand. There is good competitive value in making overcalls, but the subsequent bidding must not penalize such bids.

We normally bid **Limit Raises** - a jump raise to three of a major - with as little as 9 HCP. But, if overcaller also has about 9 HCP, we could go down a large amount if we jump to 3♠ / 3♥ after a simple overcall. So,

- **If the overcall is 1 or 2 of a suit over 1 of a suit, the following understandings apply.**

These bids are a vital part of our competitive arsenal. *(If you don't like these, that's OK -- but you must know what your partnership bids mean in these situation. Work out a reasonable system as soon as you start to play Duplicate.)*

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>	
1♣	1♥	P	???	West 's bids mean:

- 2♥ Normal (6 - 8 HCP with 3+ Hearts).
- 3♥ Preemptive raise with 4 - 5 Hearts and less than 7 HCP.
- 4♥ To play, even against a minimum dummy. May be preemptive or quite strong.
- 2♣ Limit Raise (9 - 11 HCP with 3 or 4 Hearts).
- 3♣ Strong Raise (12 - 15 HCP with 4+ Hearts).

1NT Not forcing - to play.

2NT Balanced (12 - 15 HCP with less than 3 Hearts).

3NT Balanced, to play.

1♠ or 2♦ Forcing 1 round

All other suit bids are preemptive -- not forcing and not very helpful to overcaller, who will probably pass.

2 Neat Cue Bids. As a result of using this overcall system, good things sometimes come up:

(1) An important bid for responder is a **Cue bid of opener's suit** (1♠ - 1♥ - P - 2♣). It's bid with the hand that would make a Limit Raise (9 - 11 HCP) if partner had opened. By making the cue bid instead, East can simply bid two of his/her major to indicate a minimum overcall, and the partnership won't be at an unmakeable 3 level contract. It also stops opener from rebidding his suit -- usually he'll double. Cue bids are NOT alertable, even though uses of them are so often conventional.

(2) **A Jump Cue bid** (3♣ rather than 2♣) is used to show a hand of opening strength and Heart support. However East may still bid 3♥ with a minimum overcall hand -- it may be only four long or in a weak hand.

Cue Bid Responses To A Major Suit Overcall

What Didn't He Bid? Remember the negative implications -- what partner *doesn't* bid when using the Overcall Response System. Often they are more important than the actual bid.

When good players have all these choices but don't bid, their partners can just about figure out their hand before the cards come down in dummy.

N	E	S	W	
1♣	1♥	P	2♣	A Limit Raise of Hearts by West.

East	West
♠ xx	♠ Jxx
♥ AKQxx	♥ Jxx
♦ Qxx	♦ Kxxx
♣ Jxx	♣ KQx

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
1♣	1♥	P	3♣

An opening strength Heart raise by West. (3♣) East can bail out at 3♥ or try 4♥

<i>East</i>	<i>West</i>
♠ xx	♠ Axx
♥ AKxxx	♥ QJx
♦ Qxx	♦ KJxxx
♣ Jxx	♣ Qx

<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>W</i>
1♦	1♥	2♦	3♦

A big Heart fit by West and 9+ points for partner.

1♥	2♣	P	2♥
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Not much of a push by West -- partner has an opener. It shows more than a 3♣ bid, however.

1♠	2♠	3♠	5♥
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A good (preemptive???) call by West - Michaels at work.

1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
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Not much of a raise, considering the other choices available to West. West should not have as much as 10 dummy points for this call. West might be willing to go to three Spades in competition. East shouldn't go to 3♠ without 12+ HCP.