

## LESSON 6: Overcalls

If opponents open the bidding and you bid - you are an overcaller. Your aims are different. You are trying to achieve one or more of the following:

- Obstruct the opponents' auction
- Suggest a lead to partner
- Win the contract (generally a part score contract)
- Make a profitable sacrifice

### Suit Overcalls

- A **good**\* 5+card suit
- At the 1-Level you need a **good**\* 5+ suit and 8+ points
- At the 2-level you need a **good** 5\*+ suit & 10+ points, or scoring 19+ on the Rule of 20  
\* *For guidance on what constitutes 'good', see SQOT below.*

### Suit Quality Test (SQOT)

- SQOT = number of cards in the suit + numbers of honours in the suit
- 10 counts as an honour if there is also a higher honour.
- **K J 9 7 5**: SQOT = 7; **Q 10 9 7 5 6**: SQOT = 8; **K 9 7 6 4 3 2** : SQOT = 8;
- A 1-Level overcall should have a SQOT of at least 7
- A 2-Level overcall should have a SQOT of at least 8

Note: the above are guidelines rather than rules:

Your right hand opponent opens 1♣:

i)	ii)	iii)
♠ AQ982	♠ KJ2	♠ AKJ942
♥ 1092	♥ J10643	♥ QJ5
♦ 82	♦ Q2	♦ K4
♣ Q82	♣ QJ3	♣ 6

- 1♠: Absolute minimum in terms of points (8) and SQOT (7) but the suit quality is good for a SQOT of 7 (the 9 and 8 could have been 4 and 3) and the suit is spades so opener's partner wants to respond in a new suit they will have to do so at the 2-level
- Pass: 10 HCP but mainly queens and jacks (not a trick in sight and as 7 count SQOTs go this could not be worse.
- 1♠: Bid at the lowest level even with a really good suit (SQOT = 9) and with good HCP (14).

## Responses to a Suit Overcall

### With support

- Pass denies a fit
- Minimum raise 6-11 3+ card support
- Jump Raise 12-14 invitational with 3+ card support
- Bid Game 15+ With 3+ card support

It is important to bid if you possibly can to make life difficult for your opponents. It is the trump suit that matters – the better the **fit**, the higher you can bid. With four card support and good shape (e.g. side suit singleton, especially if it's in opener's suit) you can raise partner's suit with 3+ HCP.

### Without support (after partner's 1-level overcall)

- Bid 1NT 10-12 and a stopper in opener's suit
- Bid 2NT 13-15 and a good stopper in opener's suit
- Bid 3NT 16+ and a good stopper in opener's suit

If partner overcalls at the 2-Level the HCP requirement is 2 points lower.

- Bid your own suit. This is a last resort, when you do not have support for partner's suit and your hand is not suitable for bidding No Trumps (lack of stoppers). You are in effect competing against your partner for the choice of trump suit. Only bid your suit provided you would have been happy to do so if partner had not overcalled (see above).

## Overcalling in No Trumps

### Requirement for making a 1NT Overcall

- 16-18 HCP (or a 'good 15 HCP)
- A balanced hand
- Must have at least one good stopper (preferably two) in their suit – a stopper shows a trick (e.g. Axx, KQx, QJ10)

### Responses to partner's 1NT Overcall

#### Balanced hands:

Pass	0-7	no Game
2NT	8	invitational to 3NT
3NT	9+	bid Game

#### Unbalanced hands:

2♣/2♦/2♥/2♠	0-7	5+ card suit
3♥/3♠	8+	game force with exactly a 5 card suit (opener will choose 3NT or 4♥/4♠)
3♣/3♦	6-7	6+ card suit and inviting to game NB: if you have a 5 card minor 8+HCP, bid 3NT
4♥/4♠	8+	game with 6+ suit