

Overcalling in the Protective Seat



(Balancing)

When your LHO bids at the 1 level, your partner passes, and your RHO passes, your opponents are quite likely to have around 20 points (15 + 5). If you have 7 points partner may have as many as 13 points but been unable to bid (e.g. an unbalanced hand with length in the opponent's suit, or a 4-3-3-3 hand). There is a good chance your opponents will make a part score of 70/80, or score -50, when you could have missed a part score at the 2 level – 90/110. You should strain to keep the bidding open, by 'borrowing a king' and adding 3 points to your hand. The requirements for overcalling in the pass-out seat are 3 points less than for a 2nd seat overcall.

Also, if the bidding goes: (1♥) – P – (2♥) – P – (P) then it is likely that the points are evenly split between both partnerships, and if your opponents have found an 8 card fit then your side should also have an 8 card fit. A good rule in competitive bidding is to try not to let your opponents play at a level equal to the number of trumps they hold. Once again, borrow a 'useful' king, swapping it for a small card of your choosing, and if the revised holding allows you to bid, do so.

1. Suit Overcall in the Protective Seat

At the one level: 7+ (10 points in 2nd or 3rd seat). With a 5 card suit it doesn't need suit quality. You may also overcall with a good 4 card suit (needs suit quality, i.e. SQT = 7+).

At the two level: 9+ (12 points in 2nd or 3rd seat). Must be a 5 card suit but it doesn't need suit quality.

(1♥) – P – (P) - ?

♠ 10 7 5 4 3
♥ 9 6
♦ K J 6
♣ A K J

Bid 1♠. Replace the ♠3 with ♠K. You now have an SQT of 7 (♠K & ♠10). Opener's partner is very weak. Partner may have a good hand with no 5 card suit and no Heart stop.

(1♥) – P – (P) - ?

♠ A J 7 5 4
♥ 9 5 4
♦ J 9 8
♣ 8 6

Bid 1♠. Your SQT = 7 but only 6 HCP. Add a King and you have the requisite 8+HCP for a 1 level overcall. If partner is weak and has just two spades then on the law of Total Tricks (bidding to the level of your fit) you should compete at the 1-level.

(1♥) – P – (P) - ?

♠ A Q 9 7 5 4
♥ 5
♦ 9 5 4
♣ K Q 5

Bid 2♠ (playing intermediate jump overcalls). Your SQT = 8, with 6 ½ losers and 11 HCP. You need an SQT of 9+ and 12-15 HCP for an intermediate jump overcall. Add a King and you have the requisite strength and shape. You only need partner to provide 2 tricks, or have less than nine losers, to make the contract. If you bid 1♠ opener may well rebid 2♥. Overcalling 2♠ should keep him quiet.

2. No Trump Overall in the Protective Seat

The 1NT overcall in 4th seat shows 12-15 HCP (not 15-18). It must have a good stopper in the opener's suit.

After (1♦) - P - (P) - ?

You can also double on a balanced hand that would bid 1NT but has no stopper in the opener's suit.

♠ J 8 4 ♥ 8 7 4 3 ♦ A J 9 ♣ A Q 8	Exchange ♥3 for ♥K and bid 1NT, showing 12-15 HCP. You could double, but your flat hand makes a suit contract less attractive (no trumpability in your hand).
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3. Takeout Double in the Protective Seat

You need three fewer points in 4th seat for a takeout double. There is no upper limit.

(1♥) - P - (P) - ?

♠ K J 8 3 ♥ 9 ♦ A 8 7 3 ♣ J 7 4 3	Only 9 HCP, but swop ♣3 for ♣K and you can double. You have 8 losers, and if partner has 8 losers (likely given opener's partner has passed) then you should be safe in a 2 level contract. Even going 1 off non-vulnerable is a good result if opener can make 1♥.
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4. Other Protective Bids

For the same reason that you should try to bid in 4th seat after an opening bid and two passes, you should also try and bid when the opponents have found a fit at the 2 level and there have been two passes.

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">South</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 2px;">East</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">1♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">P</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">2♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">P</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">P</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">?</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	South	West	North	East	1♥	P	2♥	P	P	?			North has a maximum of about 15 points (or he would have rebid 3♥) and South has a maximum of 9 points. A combined 24 points max., possibly only 12 + 6 = 18 points. So your side has at least 16 points, and may have 22 HCP.
South	West	North	East										
1♥	P	2♥	P										
P	?												

It is rarely right to let the opponents play in a fit at the 2 level. Make a takeout double or overcall. Partner will know you are weak as you did not originally bid over North's 1 level opening. If their side has an eight card fit it is likely that your side has an eight card fit in another suit. If you bid, maybe you will go down one trick or you maybe you will push them up to 3♥ which might go down. Both results will be better than passing and letting them make 2♥.

Responding to Partner's Protective Bid.

If partner makes a protective bid, you **MUST** deduct 3 points from your own hand before selecting your response; otherwise the partnership is likely to overbid.