

Weak Jump Overcall



An overcall is the first bid made when the opponents have already opened the bidding. To make a standard overcall (e.g. your right hand opponent opens 1♥ and you bid 1♠) you need a five card suit and 8+ points at the one level and 10+ points at the two level. Of course, points aren't everything and you could bend these rules a little with a shortage in the suit or suits bid by the opponents or other distributional features. Don't be tempted to overcall with a four card suit - it will confuse your partner and double is a far better way to show an opening hand and four in a major.

Sometimes you will have a long suit but not many points and that is when you make a weak jump overcall - bidding one more than a simple overcall. An example hand would be:

♠ K Q J 8 5 4 2
♥ 7
♦ 9 2
♣ Q 9 4 2

With spades as trumps you could expect to make six tricks in spades and maybe one in clubs. You hope partner will be able to help out with a trick or two.

A weak jump overcall (WJO) hand is roughly equivalent to a Weak 2 bid opening, normally in the 6-10 point range, below the strength for a normal overcall. It shows 5-10 points with six+ cards in your suit. There is some overlap with a simple overcall (without the jump) which shows 8+ points. A weak jump overcall can have fewer points and will have a longer suit.

The auction might go:

| North | East | South | West |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1♥ | 2♠ | | |

The 2♠ weak jump overcall has two purposes. It gives your partner a good description of your hand so they can decide whether to support your suit. Length in the suit is less important for partner because you have already shown at least six in your hand. What partner needs is high cards (Aces and Kings) in the outside suits - if they assume 6 tricks in trumps then four other tricks should be good for game in a major.. The other purpose of this bid is to disrupt bidding by the opponents. Whatever South bids now can be misinterpreted by North. Is 3♥ a strong raise or just a competitive raise? How strong is 3 of a minor? Does 2NT show 6-9 points or 10-12 points? Does pass show nothing at all or a hand that would bid without the jump raise overcall?

A weak jump overcall is most effective if you are second to bid (as in the example above) or third to bid and partner has, of course, already passed.

For some hands you will have a choice between a weak jump overcall or a simple overcall. If partner has already passed you are unlikely to miss a game contract if you use a weak jump overcall. You might use a simple overcall, if you can, if you are vulnerable. Going two off is minus 200 and that means the opponents score better than they would in any contract below game. In many ways a weak jump overcall is similar to a 3 or 4 level pre-empt. Use it when you have a hand that would have opened with a pre-empt and the opponents have opened the bidding before you get the chance.