

Overcalls Handout

If opponents open the bidding and you bid - you are an overcaller.
Your aims are different to opener's. You are trying to:

- Win a makeable contract (generally a part score contract)
- Win a contract not expecting to make but seeking a profitable sacrifice
- Obstruct the opponents
- Suggest a lead to partner

The most important single factor in determining whether your hand is good enough to make a suit overcall is the quality of the overcall suit. A good 'Rule of Thumb' for assessment is the Suit Quality Overcall 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**;

Guidelines for deciding whether your hand is worth an overcall

- A **good 5+card suit**, (generally a minimum of 2 honours), 8+ HCP and SQOT = 7+
- A **2-level non-jump overcall** should have close to opening values on the Rule of 20, a **SQOT of 8+**, and a good 6 card suit (e.g. KQ10732) or a very good 5+ suit (e.g. AKQ107)
- Make a **2 level Weak Jump Overcall (WJO)**: (1♥) - 2♠ with ~5-10 HCP and a good 6+ card Suit, **SQOT = 8+** (just as you would bid if opening a Weak 2♠).
- Make a **3 level Weak Jump Overcall (WJO)**: (1♠) - 3♦ with ~5-10 HCP and a good 7+ card suit, **SQOT = 9+**.
- Click here for a separate handout on Weak Jump Overcalls:
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/15ed9f_0464dacdce9d4d7896fe6328854b47de.pdf

Overcalling the opponent's opening 1NT

- Your overcall will be at the 2-level so the requirements are the same as if you were making a non-jump 2 level overcall of an opening 1 level suit bid.

Overcalling in a suit with strong hands

- The strength required for a simple (non-jump) overcall ranges from 7-8 points up to around 16-17 points. With a stronger hand (a rare occurrence) overcaller should double first (partner will think at first that it is a takeout double), and follow up by bidding their suit at the cheapest available level. The strength required is subject to partnership agreement, but a good guideline is to double – then bid with 18+ points with a good 5 card suit and with 16+ points and a good 6+ card suit.

Responses to a Suit Overcall

With 3+ card support

- With fewer than 10 HCP, bid to the level of your fit. Ignore your point count!!! Add partner's assumed cards to yours (assume 6 if partner has overcalled at the 2-level), and bid to the level of your combined holding
 - If the combined holding is 9 cards, bid at the 3 level (bidding to make 9 tricks)
With a completely flat hand, 4333, bid to one less than the level of the fit, because you have no ruffing opportunities in what will be the shorter trump hand.

Continuations by overcaller

If you have overcalled in a suit in which you hold more than 5 cards and partner raises to the level of the **presumed** fit, you should normally extend the pre-empt by bidding to the level of the **known** fit. So if you overcall 1♠ with a 6 card suit and partner raises to 2♠ (showing 3 card support) then you should raise to 3♠, since you know that the partnership has a 9 card fit.

- With 10+ HCP and 3+ card support, DO NOT bid partner's suit – bid the opponents' suit, a conventional bid that alerts your partner to the possibility that the rightful contract belongs to your side and that the partnership should switch from spoiling tactics to constructive bidding in search of a making contract. This bid is called an 'Unassuming Cue Bid' (UCB).

Click here for a separate UCB handout: https://98df24e2-0a8d-40e9-8b52-336e46edc803.filesusr.com/ugd/15ed9f_23731070e67b44e4a44dc6d11d25f1ed.pdf

Responding in No Trumps

With less than three cards in partner's suit and balanced hand or a hand suitable for NT (e.g. long minor and stoppers in unbid suits.):

- 0-8: Pass
- 9-12: 1NT
- 13-14: 2NT
- 15+: 3NT

For NT bids you must have a stopper in the opponent's suit.

Responding in your own suit

With fewer than 3 cards in partner's suit and an unbalanced hand:

- 0-8 points: Pass
- 9+ points: Bid your own 6 card suit or a good 5 card suit that satisfies SQOT for the level at which you are responding. Partner may pass this bid or continue bidding if he is maximum for his overcall.

Overcalling in No Trumps

1NT Overcall

- 16-18/19 HCP (or a GOOD 15+ HCP).
- Must have a stopper in the opponents' suit – a stopper shows a trick (e.g. Axx, KQx, QJ10)
- N.B. do not overcall 1NT with 12-14! You need 16-18 HCP.

Responses to a 1NT Overcall

Most improver+ partnerships play Stayman and Transfers in response to a 1NT overcall. This is known as “Systems ON”. Point ranges are 4 points lower than when responding to an opening 1NT (12-14). If you have not discussed / agreed this with your partner, assume “Systems OFF”.

Balanced hands – No 5 card major:

Pass	0-6	No Game
2NT	7-8	No 4 card major, invitational to 3NT
2♣	7-8	Stayman (with a 4 card major)
3NT	9+	Bid Game

Unbalanced hands:

Pass	0-6	5+ card minor
2NT	7-8	5+ card minor
3NT	9+	5+ card minor
2♦/2♥	0+	Transfer to 2♥/2♠

Overcalling in NO Trumps with 19/20+ points

15/16 - 18 HCP: simple 1NT overcall; 19+ HCP: Double-then Bid No Trumps at the cheapest available level