

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:

- Win the contract (generally a part score contract)
- Obstruct the opponents
- Suggest a lead to partner

Suit Overcalls

- - A **good** 5+card suit (generally a minimum of 2 honours)
 - At the 1-Level you need a **good*** 5+ suit and 8+ points
 - At the 2-level you need a **good** 5*+ suit and 10+ points
- * 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

- i) 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
- ii) Pass: 10 HCP but mainly queens and jacks (not a trick in sight and as 7 count SQOTs go this could not be worse.
- iii) 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.

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

1NT Overcall

- 16-18 HCP
- Must have at least one good stopper (preferably two) in their suit – a stopper shows a trick (e.g. Axx, KQx, QJ10)
- N.B. do not overcall 1NT with 12-14 – you need at least 16 HCP or a 'good' 15 HCP.

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