

Overcalls

If the opponents open the bidding and you bid, you are known as an **Overcaller**, and your partner is known as the **Advancer**

The objective of overcalling is to

- Compete for the contract
- Disrupt the opponent's auction
- Suggest the possibility of a sacrifice
- Suggest which suit to lead

Requirements for an overcall

- A good 5-card suit (preferably with two honours)
- Suit quality is important. K Q J 10 9 8 is a far better suit to overcall than Q 10 7 6 5 4. If you were overcalling with the second hand you should only do so with at least 12 HCP. The better the suit quality the fewer the hcp required outside the suit
- With a 6+ card suit you can make a pre-emptive jump overcall (see Lesson 6)
- With 16 + points you double first (see Lesson 7) and then bid your suit

Measuring suit quality

- **suit quality** is measured by taking the hcp in the suit, adding 1 if you have the 10, and add 1 for each card you have in the suit. For example Q 10 9 8 7 4 has a suit quality of 9 whereas AKJ76 has a suit quality of 13

Examples of Overcalling hands after a 1♣ opening

• ♠ AQ97	♠ 9752	♠ KJ	♠ QJ72	♠ 10964	♠ A85
• ♥ K976	♥ KJ9	♥ KQ42	♥ A643	♥ AK1085	♥ A10865
• ♦ A95	♦ AK985	♦ A1064	♦ Q965	♦ K64	♦ QJ64
• ♣ 74	♣ 6	♣ J97	♣ 2	♣ 64	♣ 7
Bid	X	X	Pass	X	X
					1♥

Advancing a Suit Overcall

Pass		denies a fit
Minimum raise	6 – 11	3 + card support
Jump raise	12 – 14	3 + card support, invitational
Bid game	15 +	3 + card support, but see the Law of Total Tricks (below)

If Advancer bids a new suit this is **not forcing**

If Advancer has no fit for partner and good stoppers in the opponent's suit they may bid

- 1 NT with 6 – 9
- 2 NT with 10 – 12
- 3 NT with 13+

Lesson 7

The Law of Total Tricks states that *“the total number of tricks available on a deal is equal to the total number of trump cards both sides hold in their respective best suits, where the total number of tricks is defined as the sum of the number of tricks available to each side if they could choose trumps”*.

By combining the Law with the scoring table, it can be argued that the following is quite often a winning strategy: *“Bid to a number of tricks equal to the number of trumps you and your partner hold (and no higher) in a competitive auction.”*

Example: if partner overcalls 1♥ and you have 5 hearts, your automatic response should be 4♥ irrespective of your points

N	S	N	E	S	W
♠ 3	♠ K4		1♣	1♥	-
♥ 108762	♥ AQJ54	4♥	-	-	-
♦ K1087	♦ J6532				
♣ 743	♣ A	4 hearts is down 1 whereas 4 spades makes			

1NT Overcall

Shows your normal 1 NT bid (15 – 18). You must have a **stopper** in their suit. A “stopper” in a suit is a card that will prevent the opponents from winning every trick in that suit: eg Ax, KJ10, or QJ10

Advancing a 1NT overcall

Advancing a 1 NT overcall uses the same bid structure as responding to a 1 NT opening

1♠ 2NT 1♦ 2NT 1♣ 2NT 1♥ 2NT

Responding after an overcall

When partner opens the bidding and the next player overcalls, if you bid you are actually overcalling the overcaller, and you can use the same tactics outlined above

- a double shows at least 4 cards in each of the two unbid suits
- the bid of a new suit shows a 5-card suit
- you can raise partner in the normal manner
- you can pre-emptively raise partner with a weak hand using the Law of Total Tricks
- you may bid No Trumps with at least one stopper in the opponent’s suit
- if the overcaller doubled a **redouble** XX shows at least 10 points
- lastly, with sufficient points for game and a flat distribution without a stopper in the opponent’s suit you can **Cue bid** the opponent’s suit asking partner to bid No Trumps if they have a stopper; if partner doesn’t have a stopper they either bid another 4-card suit or rebid their suit

Examples of Responding after an Overcall

♠ Q976	♠ Q1095	♠ 987	♠ K98	♠ Q107
♥ 64	♥ 6	♥ 94	♥ 1085	♥ KJ10
♦ K742	♦ Q1032	♦ KQJ65	♦ AK86	♦ K95
♣ K84	♣ A973	♣ A10	♣ QJ62	♣ A964
1♣ 1♥ X	1♠ 2♥ 3♠	1♣ 1♥ 2♦	1♣ 1♥ 2♥	1♣ 1♥ 3NT