

Bidding Basics

Our partner has overcalled



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In this issue, we will be responding to partner's overcall. The modern term for this position is "advancer." "Advancing" an overcall is similar to responding to partner's opening bid. When partner opens, he has approximately 12–20 HCP. When partner overcalls, he has approximately 8–17 HCP (if at the two level or higher, more like 12–17 HCP). When partner overcalls, we expect at least a five-card suit.

Because of the difference in range and length (from, say, a 1♣ opening), the schedule of responses is a little different. Also, there is no "one way" to play, but I am showing the most common way, or certainly one of several playable ways. Partnership agreement is required.

Let's start with a sample auction of a 1♣ opening by the opponents and a 1♥ overcall by partner: 1♣–1♥–(Pass)–?

Pass = 0–8. You don't have to bid after partner's overcall. Pass with:

♠A762 ♥63 ♦Q1074 ♣J63
♠K2 ♥74 ♦K762 ♣87642.

With both of those hands, you would have responded 1NT to a 1♥ opening.

1♠ = Five-plus spades, nonforcing. Some players treat a new suit as forcing, especially at the two level, but you have to agree on something, and this is a playable suggestion. Notice that changing suit requires at least five cards. Bid 1♠ with:

♠AQ1063 ♥A9 ♦Q762 ♣74
♠KQJ1063 ♥9 ♦K107 ♣J74.

1NT = 8–12 and their suit stopped. Respond ("advance") 1NT with:

♠KJ9 ♥9 ♦K762 ♣K10762
♠QJ9 ♥Q9 ♦10762 ♣K1074.

2♣ = Cuebid (artificial) showing at least 10-plus points in support of hearts. Examples:

♠Q9 ♥A74 ♦AQ762 ♣J74
♠AQ9 ♥A8642 ♦AK2 ♣74.

2♦ = Five-plus diamonds, nonforcing. Some players treat a change of suit as forcing, especially at the two level, but you have to agree on something, and this is a playable suggestion. Bid 2♦ with:

♠762 ♥9 ♦AQJ63 ♣K742
♠Q762 ♥63 ♦AK10842 ♣7.

2♥ = Three-plus hearts, approximately 6–10 – like raising a 1♥ opening. Advance to 2♥ with:

♠K762 ♥K74 ♦K63 ♣762
♠74 ♥AJ9 ♦Q1063 ♣J1074.

2♠ = Five-plus spades, forcing. This jump also can be played in other ways. Since we are defining a new suit at the one level as nonforcing, we will define a jump to a new suit as forcing. Bid 1♠ with a so-so hand. Bid 2♠ with:

♠AQJ107 ♥9 ♦AK74 ♣A63
♠KQJ1074 ♥K2 ♦KQ9 ♣K2.

Again, there is no "standard" here – I am just trying to provide something simple and playable.

2NT = 12–14 and their suit stopped. Advance 2NT with:

♠K63 ♥Q9 ♦KQ74 ♣K1063
♠AJ9 ♥74 ♦KQ63 ♣QJ107.

3♣ = Jump cuebid. Down the road you can define this (or Google "mixed raise").

3♦ = Same as 2♦ but forcing (not a likely bid to make).

3♥ = Four-plus hearts, weak. In modern bridge, jump raises are weak; cuebid 2♣ with a limit or better raise. Jump to 3♥ with:

♠762 ♥Q1074 ♦9 ♣K10762
♠74 ♥KQ103 ♦108642 ♣74.

3NT = 15–17 and their suit stopped. Jump to 3NT with:

♠KQ10 ♥J2 ♦AQ65 ♣QJ103
♠AQ9 ♥A9 ♦J1074 ♣KQ87.

4♥ = Usually five trumps, but no slam interest. Jump to 4♥ with:

♠A74 ♥Q10762 ♦9 ♣8642
♠9 ♥K8642 ♦A8642 ♣74.

After partner's two-level overcall

Note that a two-level overcall is not some junky hand with a lousy suit. The requirement is roughly an opening bid and a decent suit. Our advances have the same meaning as after a one-level overcall, but we are facing a better hand, so we don't need as much to look for game. After (1♠)–2♥:

Pass with:

♠Q74 ♥9 ♦K762 ♣Q8642.

Yes, partner has an OK hand, but where are we going?

Cuebid 2♠ (limit raise or better) with:
♠762 ♥KQ9 ♦AQ74 ♣Q74.

Bid 2NT (natural, invitational) with:
♠AQ9 ♥Q9 ♦J1074 ♣Q762.

Bid three of a minor with a good hand and a decent five-plus card suit (forcing).

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Raise to 3♥ (invitational) with:

♠762 ♥KJ74 ♦74 ♣A762.

Bid 3NT with:

♠KQ107 ♥J9 ♦KJ74 ♣KJ9.

Raise to 4♥ with:

♠74 ♥A8642 ♦74 ♣A1074.

After notrump overcalls

Systems on. If partner makes a natural notrump overcall, respond as if he opened that number of notrump (2♣ or 3♣ for Stayman and Jacoby transfers).

Example: (2♠)–2NT–(Pass):

3♣ = Stayman

3♦/3♥ = Transfer.

After two-suited overcalls

If partner shows minors, choose your longest minor (bid clubs with equal length). Jumps below game are weak. If partner uses Michaels, pick one of his suits (or bid notrump to ask him for his minor). Jumps below game are weak. For example, after (1♥)–2♥–(Pass), bid 2♠ with:

♠762 ♥KQ762 ♦Q74 ♣74;

bid 2NT (what's your minor) with:

♠9 ♥J87642 ♦J74 ♣J74;

bid 3♠ (weak) with:

♠Q1074 ♥KQ762 ♦9 ♣762;

bid 4♠ with:

♠AQ74 ♥A762 ♦Q762 ♣7.

Bidding Basics Quiz

What is your call after (1♦)–1♠–(Pass) with:

- 1) ♠54 ♥AQJ108 ♦A654 ♣86
- 2) ♠Q102 ♥2 ♦J765 ♣K10765

What is your call after (1♠)–2♥–(Pass) with:

- 3) ♠10876 ♥AQ2 ♦A2 ♣10765
- 4) ♠KJ9 ♥K2 ♦Q1076 ♣AJ32

What is your call after (2♥)–2♠–(3♣) with:

- 5) ♠8 ♥10876 ♦K76 ♣Q9876
- 6) ♠KJ62 ♥8765 ♦J876 ♣2

What is your call after (1♠)–1NT–(Pass) with:

- 7) ♠76 ♥Q108762 ♦86 ♣AJ10
- 8) ♠J1097 ♥J1076 ♦J8762 ♣–

Bidding Basics Quiz Answers

- 1) 2♥. We defined it as nonforcing, but that's fine.
- 2) 2♠. Remember to support with support.
- 3) 2♠. Limit raise or better.
- 4) 3NT. Worth game facing a two-level overcall.
- 5) Pass. Even if double were penalty, you'd need more.
- 6) 3♠. Enough in support to make this raise.
- 7) 2♦. Transfer to hearts and then invite with 3♥ (or, you could insist on game).
- 8) 2♣. Stayman, and pass whatever partner bids.