



Play & Learn

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How an overcall impacts responder's bid

The past several articles have focused on simple non-jump overcalls after a one-level suit opening bid. Now it's time to see how these overcalls affect responder's bidding. Here are some guidelines:

1. Responder need not stretch to bid with a weak hand. Without an overcall, a weak responder keeps the bidding open to cater to the possibility that the partnership has enough for game opposite a maximum 21-point opening hand. An intervening overcall keeps the bidding open for opener, so responder can pass with nothing to say, but don't be a wimp. A minimum responder still bids with reason to bid.
2. Give high priority to supporting opener's major. A single raise still shows 6 to a mediocre 10 points. Our next column will be devoted to raising opener's major in competition.
3. A new suit by an unpassed responder is forcing. Responder's new-suit bid at the one level shows 6 or more points; at the two level, responder shows 10 or more points. This is another topic that merits its own column.

4. 1NT is still a weak response with an upper limit of 10 points, but remember you can pass with a hand that would have used 1NT to keep the bidding open even though the bid didn't feel good. Some partnerships retain the 6–10 point range after an overcall. Others prefer a 1NT response in competition to be constructive, showing 7 or 8 to 10 points. Discuss your style with partner.
5. A jump response of 2NT is invitational and shows 11–12 points plus a stopper in overcaller's suit. After a two-level overcall, the 2NT response shows 10–12 points. We lower the point range a little because responder has fewer options when the opponents have taken up more bidding room.
6. Responder can immediately bid 3NT with at least 13 points and overcaller's suit stopped. Before making any notrump response, recall that exploring for a major-suit fit is usually your top priority.

Let's look at some examples. The circled numbers indicate the guidelines that apply.

A) ♠976 ♥KQ7 ♦752 ♣K962

Pass if right-hand opponent (RHO) overcalls partner's 1♦ opening bid with 1♠, but respond 1NT if RHO overcalls 1♥ 4.

B) ♠973 ♥KQ1076 ♦87 ♣Q86

Bid 1♥ after RHO overcalls partner's 1♣ opening bid with 1♦. You aren't strong enough to bid 2♥ if RHO overcalls 1♠ 3.

C) ♠A97 ♥Q52 ♦1054 ♣KJ86

Bid 1NT if RHO overcalls partner's 1♦ opening with 1♠ 4. Your 10 points are just enough to respond 2NT if RHO overcalls 2♣ 5.

D) ♠AK32 ♥K52 ♦K105 ♣J86

Bid 1♠ if RHO overcalls partner's 1♣ opening with 1♦ 3. There's time to bid 3NT later. If RHO overcalls 1♠, bid 3NT 6.

E) ♠32 ♥Q52 ♦865 ♣K8632

You have no good bid and will pass if RHO overcalls partner's 1♦ bid with 1♠ 1. If partner had opened 1♥, your distribution gives you just enough to raise to 2♥ 2. ■