



Play & Learn

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Advancer raises partner's two-level overcall

Advancer's bids to show support for overcaller's suit are slightly different after a two-level overcall than they are after a one-level overcall. There is less room to show all possible raises. The less room you have to communicate, the less precise your bidding is. For example, after partner overcalls a 1♠ opening bid with 2♥, we suggest using all these bids as raises if opener's partner (responder), passes:

- Cuebid opener's suit (2♠ in this example)
- Jump raise (4♥ here)
- Raise to the three level (3♥ here)

Based on suggestions given in previous articles in this series, what do you think each of the above bids shows over partner's 2♥ overcall?

A cuebid still shows a limit raise or better (a good 10 or more points and a fit). Assuming responder passes, advancer bids 2♠ with either of these hands:

- (1) ♠76 ♥Q97 ♦AQ84 ♣K542
 (2) ♠762 ♥Q973 ♦KQJ ♣AQ4.

We make light overcalls only on the one level, so partner's two-level overcall shows a hand worth opening. After a 2♠ cuebid, overcaller signs off in 3♥ with a bare opening hand that isn't strong enough for game opposite a limit raise. With a hand that would accept an invitation, overcaller wants to be in game and bids 4♥.

When there is room to bid a new suit, your partnership can decide what it shows. It's certainly forcing. Opener

might have doubt about the correct denomination or the correct level. When a cuebid is used to raise a minor-suit overcall, 3NT might be your best game, so overcaller's new suit bid could show stoppers.

A jump raise to 4♥ is still a weak distributional raise with no slam interest.

A raise of a 2♥ overcall to 3♥ shows less than a limit raise but how much less?

Your partnership might choose to use two different ranges for the single raise depending on whether responder passed or not. Consider South's purpose in raising in this auction:

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	Pass	3♥

South's raise makes it more difficult for West to take a second bid, especially because East has done nothing to encourage it. Should 3♥ be a mild invitation to 4♥? If so, remember that North probably has no more than 17 or 18 points. South would need a hand where there is a chance for game opposite that much. Your partnership might agree that advancer's free raise of a two-level overcall shows 8 to an average 10 points. With 6 or 7 points, game is unlikely, so pass.

If responder raises opener's suit, consider how the situation changes. What competitive issue discussed in previous articles arises in the following auction?

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥

When both sides have a fit, we hate to let our opponents play at the two level. If South passes with a heart fit and 6 or 7 points, North doesn't know about the heart fit and might find it difficult to act. Many players will have South raise with only 6 points in this situation (depending on vulnerability) rather than risk letting the opponents play in their fit at the two level.

Look at the effect of a cuebid by South in a similar auction.

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♠

East's raise was nasty! We've been using the cuebid raise of an overcall to show a limit raise or better, but that was when overcaller had the option of signing off below game in your agreed suit. After responder's 2♠ raise, a cuebid of 3♠ forces you to four of your suit. To do that, advancer should have enough strength to make game a good proposition.

After partner's two-level overcall and responder's raise of opener's suit, a possible agreement is:

- Bid three of overcaller's suit with 6 points up to a bad 11.
- Cuebid with 12 or more points.
- Raise a major-suit overcall to game with a distributional hand. Your hand might be weak with five trumps, but it could also have only four trumps and as much as 11 or 12 points including several shortness points. ■