

## WHEN PARTNER OVERCALLS

Don't you just hate it when the three people ahead of you have bid and you find yourself with some values that you'd like to show? You are in position to "advance" the bidding if you decide to enter the auction at this point. In bridge terms we have (1) the opener, (2) the overcaller, (3) the responder, and now (4) the advancer.....everyone at the table has a designation and they are all merrily bidding away. Or perhaps the responder passes but you still want to show your values. The important question at this moment is just how to do that? After all you like to bid too!

You could have a wide range of values as we all know that not only are opening bids on the light side today but so are the overcalls. It's particularly irritating when everyone else has bid and you could perhaps have the best hand at the table.

The following are offered as guidelines, but remember that it's always safer to bid with a fit than without one! And always keep in mind your partner's style in overcalling.....some people overcall very light while others believe that they should have a decent hand. A one- level overcall has a wide range of possibilities but an overcall at the two level should show a much better hand... at least 10 HCP's and a good suit.

Easy things first.

After Partner overcalls at the one level: (range 7+ to 17 or thereabouts\*)

When you have a fit consider doing one of the following:

Raise much as you would an opening bid in that suit, i.e.

(a) one level with good 7-9.

(b) two levels with 10-12 (limit raise) or cuebid if that is the agreed-upon method to show a limit raise or better (only three card support needed).

But keep in mind that a cuebid could have a different meaning.

(c) preemptively to game with lots of trump support and good distributional values but not much else.

But when you have a semi-fit (most likely two cards in partner's suit) and some values you need to show: (these bids usually show a stopper or two in opener's suit):

Bid NT as a constructive bid:

- (a) 1NT with about 8-10, balanced or semi-balanced, and two-card support (or perhaps three small).
- (b) 2NT with about 11-12 balanced or semi-balanced and two-card support (or perhaps three small).
- (c) 3NT if you think you can make it. (You likely have a source of tricks of your own)

Without a fit for partner's overcalled suit, decisions are often more difficult but the following are relatively standard in bidding practices:

- (a) Bid a new suit of five cards or longer as constructive but not forcing....usually without support for partner's suit (suit quality should be good)
- (b) Cuebid with a really good hand with or without support. This makes a new suit by you at your next opportunity forcing for one round. This is perhaps the hardest for a partnership to handle as most want to assume that a cuebid shows support, but this is the one case when it doesn't necessarily.
- (c) Pass without support and few values as trouble may be lurking. (DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SAVE PARTNER.)

After Partner overcalls at the two level (range is a GOOD suit and decent hand)

When you have a three card or greater fit:

Raise much as you would a one level overcall

- (a) One level with 6-9 points,
- (b) Cuebid with more than 9 HCP's as you should have game.
- (c) Bid game with a good hand if your RHO bids and you don't have room to cuebid or otherwise tell partner you have a good support hand.
- (d) Make a splinter bid (shows shortness in suit bid) to show good hand with at least four card support.

Pass without support and few values. (AGAIN, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SAVE PARTNER.)

With two card support (or perhaps even a singleton honor):

Bid NT as a constructive bid

- (a) at cheapest level with 8-10 and suits stopped
- (b) 3NT if you think you can make it.

Without much of a fit for partner's suit you can:

- (a) Bid a new suit (very constructive) with good suit of your own.
- (b) Pass!

When partner overcalls an opponent's weak two bid: (Partner should have sound values and not just a long suit....bids after a preempt show good hands and NEVER a preemptive hand.)

Raise much as you would had partner overcalled at the two level (see above)

Raise to game if you think it can be made.

Bid a new suit.....FORCING on partner.

Bid NT at the cheapest level to show interest in a NT game

Bid 3NT to show decent hand with good stoppers in weak-two suit

Pass

When partner overcalls a NT:

1. Play all systems on if RHO passes.
2. Raise to 2NT with 8-9.
3. Raise to 3NT with good 9+.
4. If your RHO bids 2C, use a double to show a Stayman bid.
5. Use a cuebid as Stayman if RHO bids something other than 2C.
6. Play transfers at the two level if RHO bids 2C.
7. If the opponents interfere so you can no longer transfer at the two level then you can bid your major suit at the two level as a non forcing bid..... or
8. If the opponents interfere and you have a game going hand with a five card or longer major bid it by jumping to the three level as a forcing bid.
9. Use Texas transfers at the four level even in competition.
10. Doubles of suits other than 2C are penalty doubles.
11. Consider learning the lebensohl convention to cover most types of interference. (Guaranteed to give you a headache at first.)

When partner overcalls preemptively:

1. Pass with no fit and few values. (Remember partner has bid some of your

values.)

2. Raise with a good fit as your side may have a good sacrifice.
3. Beware of bidding a new suit unless very good hand and suit.

\* This is a wide range but the overcaller should take into consideration just how unhappy he would be if his partner passed his one-level overcall. If he'd truly be unhappy perhaps he ought to start with a takeout double if holding a really good hand. Personally I find that I rarely have enough of a hand to double and then bid all by myself.

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