

COMPETITIVE BIDDING

LAST REVISED ON MARCH 26, 2018
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Effective defense starts with the bidding. As a defender you must:

- ✓ Understand your opponents bidding system.
- ✓ Listen carefully to your opponents bids.
- ✓ Try to enter the bidding auction with a competitive bid.

MAKING A COMPETITIVE OVERCALL

The first contract bid by your partnership after one of your opponents has opened the bidding is a competitive bid called an *overcall*. There are several reasons to make an overcall:

✓ **To buy and make a contract.**

Your partnership might be able to bid and make a part score or game.

✓ **To make a sacrifice.**

Going down one or two tricks may give your partnership a better score than letting opponents have the contract.

✓ **To interfere with opponents bidding.**

An overcall makes it harder for opponents to find their best contract. It might also drive opponents into a higher level contract that your partnership can set.

✓ **To suggest an opening lead.**

An overcall suggests a suit for your partner to lead if your partnership does not win the contract.

There are also several reasons not to make an overcall:

✓ **You might buy a contract you can not make.**

This can be painful, especially if you are doubled and/or are vulnerable.

✓ **You give information about your hand to your opponents.**

Remember that your opponents are (or should be) also listening to your bids. Your overcall may help declarer to make the contract.

***Vulnerable:** A partnership that is vulnerable earns a higher bonus if declarer makes the contract but the penalties are also higher if the defenders defeat the contract.*

***Unfavorable vulnerability:** Your partnership is vulnerable if it wins the contract but your opponents are not vulnerable if they win the contract.*

SIMPLE OVERCALLS AND RESPONSES

A *Simple Overcall* is a bid at the **cheapest possible level** after one of your opponents has opened the bidding. The example on the right illustrates a simple suit overcall.

• **Requirements for a Suit Overcall**

- ✓ 9-18 *declarer points* for a one-level overcall;
11-18 declarer points for a two-level overcall or when vulnerability is unfavorable.
- ✓ A good five card or longer suit.

• **Requirements for a 1NT Overcall**

- ✓ 15-17 high card points.
- ✓ Strength in opponents suit with at least one stopper.
- ✓ A balanced hand.

SOUTH - YOU			
♠ K Q T 9 5			
♥ K 6 4			
♦ 8 3			
♣ 9 6 2			
East	South	West	North
1♦	1♠		

Bidding Auction: 1♥ → ??
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Overcall 2♣ with:</i> ♠QJ8 ♥K86 ♦53 ♣KQJ86</p> <p>13 DecPs (12H+1L). Good five-card suit. Strong enough to overcall at two-level.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Pass with:</i> ♠JT8 ♥986 ♦53 ♣KQJ86</p> <p>8 DecPs (7H+1L). Good five-card suit but too weak to overcall at two-level.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Overcall 1♠ with:</i> ♠AJT75 ♥T86 ♦K53 ♣86</p> <p>9 DecPs (8H+1L). Good five-card suit. Strong enough to overcall at one-level.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Overcall 1NT with:</i> ♠QT7 ♥KQ6 ♦AJ96 ♣AT4</p> <p>16 HCP. Balanced hand with stoppers in opener's heart suit.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Overcall 2♦ with:</i> ♠74 ♥6 ♦AQ985 ♣AQJ62</p> <p>15 DecPs (13H+2L). Good five-card suit. Strong enough to overcall at two-level. Bid higher ranking of two five-card suits.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Pass with:</i> ♠J8532 ♥KQ6 ♦86 ♣K54</p> <p>10 DecPs (9H+1L). Strong enough to overcall at one-level but spade suit is poor and 5 HCP in opener's suit.</p>

ADVANCING A SIMPLE SUIT OVERCALL

The *overcaller's* partner is called the *advancer*. Since a suit overcall promises at least five cards in the suit, the first priority of an advancer is to show three card support which gives the partnership an eight card trump fit. Because an advancer with trump support can expect to be the dummy, a supporting advancer can evaluate the hand using *dummy points* (high card plus short suit).

Advancer's choices with support are:

- **Raise partner's suit (*not forcing*):**
 - ✓ 6-10 dummy points.
 - ✓ At least three cards in overcaller's suit. Jump raise with four or more cards in overcaller's suit.
- **Cuebid opponent's suit (*forcing*):**
 - ✓ 11+ dummy points
 - ✓ At least three cards in overcaller's suit.

SOUTH - YOU			
♠ K 7 3			
♥ 9 4			
♦ K 8 6 4 2			
♣ 9 6 2			
West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠

Advancer's choices without support are:

- **Overcall a new suit (*not forcing*).**
 - ✓ 6+ declarer points at the one level; 11+ declarer points at the two level.
 - ✓ A good five card or longer suit.
 - ✓ Less than three cards in overcaller's suit.
- **Bid no trump (*not forcing*).**
 - ✓ 6+ high card points at the one level; 11+ high card points at the two level.
 - ✓ Strength in opponent's suit with at least one stopper.
 - ✓ Less than three cards in overcaller's suit.

Bidding Auction: 1♣ → 1♥ → Pass → ??
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advance to 2♥ with:</i> ♠J83 ♥J75 ♦AJ942 ♣83</p> <p>8 DumPs (7H+1S). Three-card heart support.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Overcall 2♦ with:</i> ♠KJ83 ♥75 ♦AQJ92 ♣3</p> <p>12 DecPs (11H+1L). No heart support. Good five-card suit. Strong enough to advance to two-level.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cuebid 2♣ with:</i> ♠A83 ♥KJ8 ♦KJ62 ♣986</p> <p>12 DumPs (12H). Three-card heart support. Cuebid opener's suit to show more than minimal strength and advance partner's overcall.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advance to 1NT with:</i> ♠Q752 ♥62 ♦J984 ♣AQT</p> <p>9 HCP. No heart support. Stopper in opener's club suit.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advance to 3♥ with:</i> ♠9742 ♥K984 ♦QT98 ♣6</p> <p>8 DumPs. (5H+3S). Four-card heart support. Jump raise to show four-card support.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Advance to 4♥ with:</i> ♠AQ32 ♥K984 ♦KQT9 ♣6</p> <p>17 DumPs. (14H+3S). Four-card heart support. Partnership has at least 26 points with at least a nine-card heart fit. Jump to game.</p>

ADVANCING A NO TRUMP OVERCALL

Because a no trump overcall is the equivalent of a no trump opening bid, the advancer can follow the guidelines for responding to no trump opening bids including the use of the *Stayman* and *Jacoby* transfer conventions.

OVERCALLER'S REBIDS

With minimal values, the overcaller can pass unless the advancer cue bid an opponent's suit which forces overcaller to rebid overcaller's suit at the lowest level.

With more than minimal values, the overcaller can revalue the hand and raise the suit, bid a new suit, or bid no trump.

OVERCALL EXAMPLE 1					OVERCALL EXAMPLE 2				
SOUTH - YOU	East	South	West	North	SOUTH - YOU	South	West	North	East
♠ A Q J T 5	1♣	1♠	2♣	2♠	♠ 7	Pass	1♠	2♥	2♠
♥ 8 7 2	Pass	Pass	3♣	Pass	♥ Q J 9 6	3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
♦ Q T 3	Pass	Pass			♦ Q 8 6 3				
♣ 8 2					♣ T 9 5 4				

OVERCALL EXAMPLE 1

- **East (opener):** Opens 1♣ to describe a hand with 13-21 declarer points, no five card or longer major and fewer diamonds than clubs.
- **South (overcaller):** Has 10 declarer points (9 HCPs + 1 ♠ LSP) with a five-card spade suit. South overcalls 1♠.
- **West (responder):** Responds ♣2, a weak response to East's opening bid, to describe a hand with 6-10 dummy points and at least five clubs.
- **North (advancer):** Bids 2♠ to advance South's overcall. This bid describes a hand with 6-10 dummy points and at least three spades.
- **East:** Passes to indicate a minimal opening hand.
- **South:** Knows that a game is not possible so there is no point in raising the bid.
- **West:** Rebids 3♣ to try, successfully, to steal the contract.

OVERCALL EXAMPLE 2

- **West (opener):** Opens 1♠ to describe a hand with 13-21 declarer points and at least five spades.
- **North (overcaller):** Overcalls 2♥ to describe a hand with 11-18 declarer points and at least five hearts.
- **East (responder):** Responds a weak 2♠ to describe a hand with 6-10 dummy points and at least three spades.
- **South (advancer):** Has 8 dummy points (5 HCPs + 3 ♠ SSPs) and four hearts, enough to raise North's overcall to the three level.

MAKING A COMPETITIVE DOUBLE

A **double** is an auction call that increases the scoring value of tricks. A double may be a:

- **Penalty double:** A natural double that is intended to increase the penalty bonus if defenders defeat declarer's contract.
- **Conventional double:** An artificial double that initiates a convention.

Since it usually does not make any sense to double for penalty when the bidding is at a low level, most partnerships use low level doubles as artificial bids that are used to compete for the contract. A **takeout double** is one of the conventional doubles.

The example on the right illustrates a classic **takeout double**.

A double is for takeout if:

- ✓ you double an opponent's opening suit bid **or**
- ✓ you double your right hand opponent's response to your left hand opponent's opening suit bid

Because the doubler will be the dummy if the partnership wins the contract, doubler can count dummy points (high card plus short suit) to determine the strength of the hand.

SOUTH - YOU			
♠ J 8 6 5			
♥ A Q J 9			
♦ 8			
♣ K 9 4 2			
North	East	South	West
Pass	1♦	Dbl	

Requirements for a Takeout Double

- ✓ 13 or more dummy points.
- ✓ No more than three cards in an opponent's suit but a doubleton, singleton or void is preferred.
- ✓ At least three-card support in each of the three unbid suits. If opponents have bid two suits, at least four-card support in each of the two unbid suits.

Bidding Auction: 1♦ → ??

Pass with: ♠A875 ♥K976 ♦83 ♣QT4

9 HCP. At least three-card support for unbid suits but too weak to do a takeout double.

Double with: ♠K84 ♥AQJT ♦63 ♣K82

14 DumPs (13H+1S). At least three-card support for unbid suits.

Overcall 1♥ with: ♠K84 ♥AQJT7 ♦63 ♣K82

14 DecPs 13H+1L). Shape is suitable for a takeout double but overcall is more descriptive.

Pass with: ♠KJ84 ♥5 ♦KQ73 ♣A652

13 HCP. No support for hearts and not short in opener's diamonds.

Bidding Auction: 1♣ → Pass → 1♥ → ??

Double with: ♠AQJ4 ♥72 ♦KQT9 ♣T87

13 DumPs (12H+1S). Four-card support in each of the unbid suits.

ADVANCING A TAKEOUT DOUBLE

The *doubler's* partner is called the *advancer*. ***If advancer's right hand opponent passes, the double is forcing and the advancer can not pass, even if the advancer has zero points!***

Since the advancer will be the first to declare the suit, advancer's choices are based on declarer point strength:

- Bust (0-5) → Bid at the cheapest possible level if right hand opponent passed. Pass if right hand opponent bid.
- Minimum (6-10) → Bid at the cheapest possible level.
- Medium (11-12) → Jump bid to show invitational strength.
- Maximum (13+) → Bid a game with an eight card trump fit or cuebid opponent's suit to force doubler to bid a four card suit.

The advancer should choose the longest unbid suit since that should be partnerships longest combined suit. With a choice of unbid suits, a major suit is preferred over a minor suit even if it is somewhat weaker. Without a four-card or longer unbid suit, advancer can bid no trump with strength in opponent's suit.

Bidding Auction: 1♦ → Dbl → Pass → ??
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cheap advance to 1♠ with: ♠A584 ♥763 ♦93 ♣KJ75</i></p> 8 DecPs (8H). Major suit preferred over a minor suit. Cheapest four-card suit bid is 1♠.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Jump advance to 2NT with: ♠A53 ♥972 ♦KQ94 ♣Q76</i></p> 11 HCP. Balanced hand. Stopper in opener's suit. Jump bid shows invitational strength.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Forced advance to 1♥ with: ♠7432 ♥8652 ♦6 ♣J976</i></p> 1 DecPs (1H). Forced bid (right hand opponent passed). Bid lower ranking four-card suit.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cuebid 2♦ with: ♠KQ75 ♥AQJ3 ♦94 ♣J84</i></p> 13 DecPs (13H). Partnership should bid major suit game. Cuebid shows maximum strength and forces partner to bid a four-card suit.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Jump advance to 4♠ game with: ♠KQJ985 ♥A3 ♦63 ♣J74</i></p> 13 DecPs (11H+2L). Double promised at least 13 points and at least three spades. Partnership has at least 26 points and at least a nine-card spade fit.
Bidding Auction: 1♥ → Dbl → 2♥ → ??
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Pass with: ♠J7632 ♥T9 ♦987 ♣J63</i></p> 2 DecPs (2H). Too weak to bid and can pass (right hand opponent bid).

REBIDS BY TAKEOUT DOUBLER

The takeout doubler now knows the approximate strength and longest suit in the advancer's hand. If advancer cuebid opponent's suit, the doubler must bid again and should bid the best four card suit. Otherwise, doubler's rebid should be based on the partnership's combined strength and trump fit.

TAKEOUT OR PENALTY?

Your partnership must agree on which doubles are takeout doubles and which doubles are penalty doubles. We suggest the following agreement:

- An immediate double of an opponent's opening bid (or immediate response) is a takeout double for any opening bid (or response) through **3♠**.

Otherwise, the double is for penalty.

TAKEOUT DOUBLE EXAMPLE 1					TAKEOUT DOUBLE EXAMPLE 2				
SOUTH - YOU	North	East	South	West	SOUTH - YOU	North	East	South	West
♠ A K 9 5	Pass	1♦	Dbl	1NT	♠ Q 4 3	Pass	1♥	Pass	2♥
♥ J 9 6 4	2♠	3♦	3♠	Pass	♥ K Q 8 5	Pass	Pass	Pass	
♦ 9 4	Pass	Pass			♦ K J 4				
♣ A Q 6					♣ Q 7 5				

TAKEOUT EXAMPLE 1

- **East (opener):** Opens **1♦** to describe a hand with 13-21 declarer points, no five-card or longer major and at least three but usually four diamonds.
- **South (doubler):** Has 15 dummy points (14 HCPs + 1 ♦ SSP) and at least three cards in the three unbid suits. South makes a takeout double.
- **West (responder):** Bids **1NT**, a weak response to East's opening bid, to describe a hand with 6-10 dummy points, no four card or longer major and less than four diamonds.
- **North (advancer):** Since West bid, North is no longer forced to bid. But North bids **2♠** to describe a hand with 6-9 declarer points and at least a four card spade suit.
- **East:** Rebids **3♦** to describe a hand with more than four diamonds and more than minimal strength.
- **South:** Knows that the partnership has at least an eight-card spade fit but no enough points to risk a game bid. South raises the spades to steal the contract from the opponents.

TAKEOUT EXAMPLE 2

- **East (opener):** Opens **1♥** to describe a hand with 13-21 declarer points and at least five hearts.
- **South:** Has 13 dummy points (all HCPs) and three cards in each of the unbid suits. But South is not short in opponents heart suit and South's partner is a passed hand. South decides not to make a takeout double.

RESPONDING AFTER AN OVERCALL

If the opening bid is overcalled, opener's partner is still the responder and, if the overcall did not prevent a normal response to the opening bid, responder can make the normal response.

Bidding Auction: **1♣** → **1♥** → ??

Respond 2♣ with: ♠J74 ♥86 ♦K43 ♣AT983

Normal response is **2♣** to deny a four card major and support clubs.

Respond 1♠ with: ♠KJ74 ♥86 ♦A43 ♣T983

Normal response is a new suit forcing **1♠** to show the four-card spade suit. *Some partnerships consider a new suit after an overcall to also be an "overcall" which requires five cards in the new suit.*

Respond 1NT with: ♠KJ7 ♥A86 ♦T43 ♣T983

Normal response is **1NT** to deny a four-card major and deny five card club support. The stopper in hearts allows the normal response.

Bidding Auction: **1♠** → **2♦** → ??

Respond 3♠ with: ♠QT82 ♥94 ♦A763 ♣KQ3

You have 12 **DumPs** (11H+1L) and four-card spade support. Normal response is a limit raise to **3♠**.

If the overcall does interfere with the normal response, responder may need to adjust the response or, in some cases, pass instead of making a response.

Bidding Auction: **1♣** → **1♥** → ??

Respond 1NT with: ♠976 ♥J842 ♦KQ7 ♣QT7

Normal response is **1♥** but can't make the normal response. With 8 **HCPs** adjust response to **1NT**.

Bidding Auction: **1♦** → **2♣** → ??

Pass with: ♠853 ♥KQ83 ♦K76 ♣854

Normal response is **1♥** but can't make the normal response. The hand is too weak to respond at the two-level.