

COMMON-SENSE HAND EVALUATION

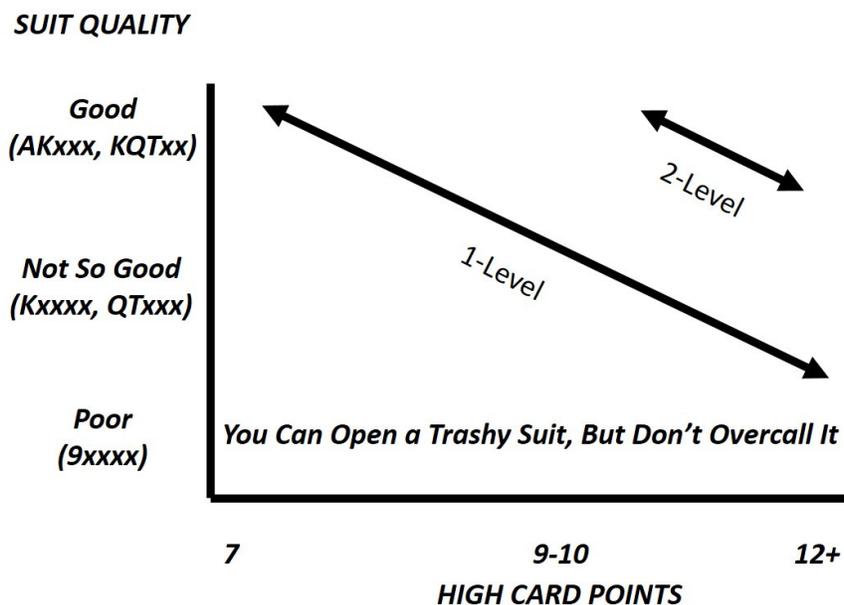
Lesson 2, Overcalls, 16 May 2019

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This week we'll focus on being a reliable partner by going over standards for direct overcalls of one or two of a suit. *Strong NT overcalls, weak jump overcalls, two-suited overcalls, and balancing are special cases. We'll save them for another day.*

STANDARDS:

- It is important to be a reliable partner when opening, but even more so when overcalling
- **Key point: You will overcall hands you won't open, and you will open hands you won't overcall—the requirements are different**
- What do you need to overcall? This is very much a matter of taste
 - Old style is always to have a good suit of five or more cards
 - Modern style is flexible and allows strength to compensate for deficiency in the suit:



- This compensatory relationship between suit and strength only exists at the 1-level; a 2-level overcall always requires a good suit and:
 - A minimum of about 12 HCP, esp. when vulnerable, or
 - 6+ cards, shortness, and an outside A or K for minimum of 10 HCP (too much for a weak jump overcall)
- Before overcalling, ask yourself: If partner is on lead, do I want this suit led even if partner has Kxx? If the answer is "No," you probably should not overcall
- What is the upper strength of an overcall? Again, a matter of taste
 - Old style is to double and bid with 16+ HCP, so an overcall is limited to 15 HCP
 - Modern players bid; a plan of two calls to show your hand is vulnerable to preemption and partner is entitled to take action based on your double

- Instead of a HCP-limited overcall, limit the double and bid; you need a strong hand and excellent suit, i.e., can play at the 3-level opposite a stiff in dummy
 - If your hand is not that good, you should consider an overcall
 - If your suit is spades, you can always correct a heart bid by partner, but if your suit is hearts, correcting partner's spade bid puts you up a level. Therefore, if you plan to double and bid hearts, you need at least three decent spades
 - Personally, I regard very few hands as too strong to overcall and mark my card for overcall strength "7 to +"
- Should a direct overcall be made on a 4-card suit? This is more than a matter of taste
 - Most experts say "no," at least for non-experts
 - My favorites say "yes" with restrictions:
 - Only at the 1-level, **never** at the 2-level
 - Suit must be headed by at least AKJ
 - Hand strength must be that of a full opening bid (12+ HCP)
 - Partner is entitled to respond as if you overcalled the usual 5-card suit
 - 4-3 ("Moysean") fits require special attention to retaining control of the hand, hence the requirement for added strength. ***If 4-3 fits scare you, do not overcall 4-card suits!***
- When both opponents bid and your partner passed, the hand probably belongs to the opponents, so your goals are to be safe and to give useful info to partner
 - If you can overcall at the 1-level, don't do it with a bad suit
 - 2-level overcalls are best when made with a decent, long suit and distributional values
 - Of particular interest are your cards in enemy suits
 - Two or three low cards in suits not raised equal losers
 - Three or four cards in a raised suit mean partner is probably short
 - Holdings like AQ or Kx are pluses in RHO's suit, but not in LHO's
 - Exercise caution when vulnerable—have your values (and then some)

Questions? E-mail me at bobbyd72@aol.com