



Lesson 9 Competitive Bidding – The Overcall

Entering the bidding after the opponents make an opening bid.

There are three ways to make a competitive bid when the opponent's have opened the bidding:

1. An Overcall by bidding a new suit.
2. A weak jump overcall, by not only bidding a new suit, but jumping an extra level.
3. A takeout double, which is a convention to get your partner to bid. This will be covered in a future lesson.

The Overcall

An overcall is simply bidding a higher ranking suit (or notrump) at the same level, or a lower ranking suit at the next higher level. To make an overcall requires a 5+ card suit and 8-17 total points. A future lesson will cover what to do if you have 18 or more total points:

- When you have 8-10 total points, you can only overcall at the one level and you must have a good 5 card suit. Your bid is primarily lead directing for your partner, as you expect the opponents will get the bid.
- When you have 11-17 total points, you can have a weaker suit to overcall at the one level. When you have a stronger hand, there is a higher likelihood that the hand belongs to your partnership. You also have a strong enough hand to overcall at the two level in a lower ranking suit, but you should have a good 5+ card suit.
- Overcalling with 1NT shows 15-18 HCP with a stopper(s) in the opponent's suit. When you overcall with 1NT, you expect your side will play the hand, so both Stayman and Jacoby transfer conventions are used.

The following table summarizes the overcall bids:

1-level overcall	8 -17 total points plus a good 5+ card suit. The stronger your hand is, the weaker your suit can be.
2-level overcall	11-17 total points plus a good 5+ card suit
1 NT overcall	15 -18 – With a stopper in opener’s suit Stayman and Transfer conventions are on

Overcall Examples

For the following hands, your Right-Hand Opponent (RHO) has opened 1♦:

- ♠ 9 8 3 ♥ A Q J 9 3 ♦ 10 7 ♣ 9 7 6 Bid 1♥. (8 points minimum with a good suit)
- ♠ A Q J 6 2 ♥ 9 5 ♦ A 4 ♣ A 6 5 Bid 1♠. (16 points maximum with a good suit)
- ♠ 6 4 2 ♥ A 9 3 ♦ 8 2 ♣ K Q J 10 7 Bid 2♣. (11 points minimum with a good suit)
- ♠ Q 10 8 7 4 ♥ 9 7 5 ♦ A 4 ♣ K 7 5 Pass. (Poor suit, minimum hand)
- ♠ K 10 8 7 ♥ K 7 5 ♦ A J 4 ♣ K Q 5 Bid 1NT (16 HCP + good stoppers in ♦)
- ♠ 6 4 2 ♥ A 9 3 ♦ K Q J 9 2 ♣ 8 2 Pass. (11 point minimum but opponents’ suit)

Weak Jump Overcalls

A jump overcall is made with a hand that is weak in HCP, but has a 6+ card suit. It is primarily used to disrupt the opponent’s bidding by taking away their bidding space. When you have a weak hand, and the opponents have opened the bidding, it is likely that the hand belongs to the opponents. The Weak jump overcall makes it tougher for the opponents to find their best contract.

The requirements for a weak jump overcall:

- A good 6 card suit with two of the top three honors, or 3 of the top 5 honors
- 5-11 total points

Example weak Overcall

For the following hands, your Right Hand Opponent (RHO) has opened 1♦:

♠ K Q J 8 7 4 ♥ 9 7 5 ♦ T 4 ♣ Q 5 Bid 2♠. (Weak jump overcall)

♠ Q 7 4 ♥ 9 7 5 ♦ 4 ♣ K Q J T 8 5 Bid 3♣. (Weak jump overcall)

Advancing the Overcall (Advancer)

The partner of the overcaller is the advancer. They should bid as if partner has opened the bidding. When advancer has a small hand (6-10 total points) and a fit (3+ card support) they should bid to the level of total trump, using the Law of total tricks:

- 3-card support raise partner to the 2 - level
- 4-card support raise partner to the 3 – level
- 5-card support raise partner to the 4 – level

When advancer has a larger hand (11+ total points) and a fit, then they must make a forcing bid. They do this by cue bidding the opponent's suit. This bid forces partner to bid again. This cue bid is also rarely made with a game forcing hand and a strong suit of your own.

Lacking a fit, advancer can bid their own suit at the 1 or 2 level. These retain much the same meaning as if partner opened the bidding, except that you should have a 5+ card suit. When you bid a new suit you deny a fit with partner:

- New suit at the 1-level 6+ points and a 5+ card suit
- New suit at the 2-level 10+ points and a 5+ card suit

Advancer Examples:

You are in 4th seat and the auction has gone:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♦	1♥	pass	?

What is your bid?

♠ 6 4 2 ♥ A 9 3 ♦ K 9 8 2 ♣ 6 5 3

Bid 2♥ with the known 8 card fit

♠ 6 4 2 ♥ A 9 4 3 ♦ K 9 8 ♣ 6 5 3

Bid 3♥ with the known 9 card fit

♠ 6 4 ♥ A 9 8 7 3 ♦ K 9 8 ♣ 6 5 3

Bid 4♥ with the known 10 card fit

♠ 6 4 2 ♥ A J 8 ♦ A Q 9 8 2 ♣ 6 3

Cue bid 2♦. A fit plus 12 dummy points.

♠ K 4 2 ♥ A 9 8 3 ♦ A K J 2 ♣ 6 3

Cue bid 2♦, then raise ♥s inviting game.

♠ A K 9 4 2 ♥ Q 5 ♦ 9 8 7 2 ♣ 9 8

Bid 1♠. Denies a fit in hearts.

♠ Q T 9 4 2 ♥ Q 5 ♦ 9 8 7 2 ♣ 9 8

Pass. Not enough points to bid your suit.

Advancer NT Bids

When advancer bids notrump, they MUST have the opponent's suit adequately stopped:

RESPONDING TO PARTNER'S OVERCALL WITH NOTRUMP	
8-11 points	Bid 1NT
12-14 points	Jump to 2NT
15-16 points	Bid 3NT

Some examples:

You are in 4th seat and the auction has gone:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♣	1♠	pass	?

What is your bid?

♠ 7 3 ♥ A 9 5 ♦ K 10 8 2 ♣ Q J 9 5 Bid 1NT.

♠ Q 4 ♥ K 8 4 3 ♦ K 4 3 2 ♣ J 9 5 Pass. No stopper, no support, no 5 card suit

♠ 8 5 ♥ A K 9 ♦ K 10 8 2 ♣ Q J 9 5 Bid 2NT.

♠ 8 5 ♥ A K 9 ♦ K 10 8 2 ♣ K Q 9 5 Bid 3NT.