



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(45) Around the Table: Advancer

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Level: 1

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General

When partner takes some action as the Interferer then we need to know how to describe our hand as his partner, the Advancer. Partner can make an *overcall in a suit*, an *overcall in notrump*, or a *takeout double*. We will examine how we advance partner's bid in each of these situations.

Partner Makes a Notrump Overcall

This is the easy one. We just pretend like partner opened the bidding with 1NT and play "Systems On": Stayman, Transfers, etc... All our bids as Advancer mean the same thing as if partner had opened 1NT and we were the Responder.

Partner Makes a Takeout Double

This is an important topic to discuss with your partner, but a discussion that most partnerships forget to have for many years. The question that you need to ask partner is "What do my bids mean in response to your takeout double?"

First, let's talk about what you should expect from partner's takeout double. Partner should have about an opening bid and at least 3-card support for all three of the other suits. If that is partner's minimum possible hand, we need to figure out how high our side wants to get and what our fit is likely to be. Here is how we do it!

Showing Your Values

When partner makes a takeout double, the first thing that we need to do is show partner our longest suit. We do so by bidding it! The second piece of information that we want to communicate to partner is the strength of our hand. Here is how we do this:

- Bidding cheaply with a bad hand (0 to 8- pts),
- Jumping with a decent hand (8+ to 11 pts),
- Cuebidding the opponents' suit with an opening hand (12+ pts).
- Non-Jump Bids of Notrump show a decent hand (8+ to 11) and a stopper in the opponent's suit.
- Jump Bids of Notrump show an opening hand (12+) and a stopper in the opponent's suit.

Note: When you as Advancer are 4333 with 4 cards in the Opener's suit and fewer than 8 HCP, you have a real problem. The answer is that you bid your cheapest 3-card suit at the lowest level possible.

Meaning of Advancer's Bids

1♣	X	P	___?
• 1♦			4+c♦, 0 to 8- pts
• 1♥			4+c♥, 0 to 8- pts
• 1♠			4+c♠, 0 to 8- pts
• 1NT			8 to 11 pts, ♣ stopper
• 2♣			Cuebid, 12+ pts, Game Forcing
• 2♦			4+c♦, 8 to 11 pts
• 2♥			4+c♥, 8 to 11 pts
• 2♠			4+c♠, 8 to 11 pts
• 2NT			12 pts, ♣ stopper

Notice that jumps do not show additional length in a suit (they can still be a 4-card suit.) Jumps show additional values. We figure out if we have a 5-3 or 4-4 fit after we figure out how high we should bid – based on our combined values. This is a bit of a different approach than when we open the bidding. When we open the bidding, we first find our fit and then figure out how high to bid. In this situation, we show our values first, and figure out our fit (or size of our fit) later.

Partner Makes a Suit Overcall

When partner makes a simple overcall, they have a wide variety of values and shapes possible. Since the Overcaller's hand is so poorly defined then it does not make much sense for the Advancer to be the Captain of the auction in the same way that the Responder is when partner opens the bidding. Instead, these overcall-advance auctions are highly cooperative auctions where you are both striving to describe your hand so that partner can be better informed and more involved in the decision-making process.

New Suits by Advancer

- New Suit at the 1-level shows 4+card suit and 8+ points. It is forcing for 1-round.
- New Suit at the 2-level shows 5+card suit and 10+ points and is forcing for 1-round.

Notrump by Advancer

Notrump bids by Advancer deny a fit for Overcaller's suit (0-2 card support) and promise a bit more in values than bidding Notrump as Responder. These Notrump bids show extra values since the Overcaller has not promised an opening hand with his 1-level overcall.

Opposite a 1-level overcall:

- 1NT = bad 8 to 11 points
- 2NT = 12-13 points
- 3NT = 14-15 points

Raising Partner's Suit

When partner makes an overcall the most important thing we can do is to raise – "Support with support!" Knowing how to raise an overcall (what our options are) is an important discussion to have with partner. We will want to have lots of "gadgets" to raise partner in a variety of ways. We will discuss these here.

Before we talk about the different ways to raise partner let's take a moment to consider partner's overcall. If partner makes an overcall at the 2-level (showing 12-18 points) we will raise it in a similar fashion as if he had overcalled at the 1-level (showing 7-18 points.) Our raise will get us a level higher, but the fact that partner has promised more values for his overcall compensates for being at this level. So we will raise partner in a similar way whether he overcalls at the 1-level or 2-level.

Advancer's Hand

With support, Advancer will want to show the strength of his hand and the size of the fit. We will want to try to accomplish this in one call if possible.

Strength of Advancer's Hand

We want to define Advancer's strength. We do so in the usual way with buckets:

- 0-5 points = Weak

- 6-9 points = Minimum
- 10-11 points = Limit Raise
- 12-13 points = +Raise (more than a Limit Raise)
- 14+ points = Game Forcing Raise

Advancer's Fit for Overcaller

We also want to show the size of our fit:

- 3-card support
- 4-card support
- 5-card support (or more)

Weak Raises (0-5 points)

With a weak hand we use the Law of Total Tricks – we compete to the size of our fit. If we have bids that allow us to compete we do so. With an 8-card fit we try to compete to the 2-level, with a 9-card fit we try to compete to the 3-level, and with a 10-card fit we try to compete to the 4-level.

- Pass with 3-card support and a weak hand.
- Jump Raise (usually to the 3-level) with 4-card support and a weak hand.
- Jump to the 4-level with 5-card support and a weak hand.

Minimum Raises (6-9 points)

With a minimum hand we want to support partner and let him know we have some values.

- Simple Raise = Raise partner's overcall one level.
- If partner has overcalled at the 1-level, we can make a jump cuebid showing a *mixed raise* – 4-card support and 6-9 points.

Limit Raises or Better (10+ points)

When we have 10+ points and 3+card support for partner we start with a cuebid of the opponent's suit.

The shorthand for this is Q=LR+.

- If we have 10-11 points we start with a cuebid and when the Overcaller tries to sign off (by rebidding his suit) we pass.
- If we have 12-13 points we start with a cuebid and make one more try for game by raising again.
- If we have 14+ points we start with a cuebid and then we force to game.
- If we have 14+ points, 4+card support, and shortness, we want to force to game and try for slam. We can show our shortness by *splintering* – a double jump shift.

Choice of Games

When we have a hand that might want to play 3NT instead of playing in the 4M game in partner's suit then we want to engineer an auction that gives partner a choice between these two contracts. First, we support partner by cuebidding the opponent's suit, then we bid 3NT to offer this as a choice of games. Overcaller can then choose between 3NT and 4M.

Advancer's Doubles - "Responsive Double"

Advancer also has a double available as a tool. The most useful kind of double for Advancer is when the opponents (Opener and Responder) have bid and raised a suit and partner (the Interferer) has done something in the middle. In this case, a double (called a Responsive Double) asks partner to further compete in the bidding. It asks him to further describe his hand, as Advancer's hand usually contains the other two suits. This is similar to a negative double by the Responder. It is one of the most effective tools to compete in the bidding!

Conclusion

As the Advancer we enter the race (auction) in last place, all other players having had a chance to describe their hand. At this point it is vital that we describe our hand as quickly and completely as possible, catching up to the others that will have a chance to make their second call before us. As Advancer, try to describe your hand in one bid.