



BRUSH UP YOUR BIDDING

Week 5



OVERCALLING

There are three ways that you can **overcall** after an opponent has opened the bidding. For example, if an opponent opens with 1♦ you can:

1. overcall a suit: e.g. bid 1♠
2. overcall in no trumps: e.g. bid 1NT
3. double your opponent's bid: i.e. bid "Double"

Overcalling
Making a bid after an opponent has opened the bidding

We will consider the first two types of overcall this week. Next week, we will look at doubles.

1. OVERCALLING A SUIT

You might want to bid your own suit for any or all of these reasons:

- to try to outbid the opponents and declare a successful contract of your own
- to put a spanner in your opponents' works, so that they end up in the wrong contract
- to tell partner you have a good suit and want her to lead it if the opponents win the contract

The requirements for **overcalling** a suit are very different from those for **opening the bidding**: you need a longer and stronger suit, but you don't need so many points.

To overcall at the 1 level, you need:

- 8-15 points*
- a good 5-card suit
at least one of the top 3 honours; two if you have only 8-10 points

To overcall at the 2 level, you need a stronger hand:

- 10-15 points*
- a very good 5-card suit, or a good 6-card suit
two of the top 3 honours in a 5-card suit, or one in a 6-card suit

Bid your suit at the 1 level if you can. Bid it at the 2 level only if the opponent's bid has prevented you from bidding at the 1 level.

Counting Length Points
For an overcall, you can only count LP if your suit is longer than required.
So if you want to overcall 1♠ with a 5-card suit, you can't count any LP. With a 6-card suit, you can count 1 LP.

♠ K Q 6 4 2	W	You	E	S
♥ 9 3	1♦	1♠		
♦ 8 4 3				
♣ K 10 7				

With 8 points and 2 top honours in a 5-card suit, you are just strong enough to overcall.

♠ A Q 7 3	W	You	E	S
♥ K 5 2	1♥	pass		
♦ K 7				
♣ Q 10 8 7				

You have 14 HCP, but no 5-card suit. Pass.

♠ 7 2	W	N	E	You
♥ K J 9 6 5 4	1♠	pass	pass	2♥
♦ A J				
♣ K Q 2				

You can't bid 1♥, but with 14 HCP and a good 6-card suit you are easily strong enough for 2♥.

Note how different overcalling is from opening the bidding – with the first of the above hands you can overcall but could not open, while with the second you could open but can't overcall.

* If you have more than 15 points, you should usually double first and then bid your suit. We'll look at this next week.

Responding to your partner's suit overcall

If you have at least 3 cards in partner's suit

Support your partner if you can – in a competitive auction, the first pair to find a fit often wins the contract. When your partner overcalls, you know that she has at least a 5-card suit and so you only need 3 cards to support her. Support her as if she had opened the bidding, according to your strength:

0-5 Pass

6-9 Bid 2 of her suit

but if partner overcalled at the 2 level, then you can't bid 2 yourself - so just pass

10-12 Bid 3 of her suit

13+ Bid game

♠ A J 9	W	N	E	You
♥ Q J 7 6 5	1♦	1♠	pass	4♠
♦ 8				
♣ A 7 3 2				

You can support ♠s, so don't bid your ♥s. With 12 HCP & 2 Shortage Points (SP), bid game.

♠ Q 7 3 2	W	N	E	You
♥ 9 8 5	1♣	1♥	1♠	2♥
♦ A 9 4				
♣ 8 6 3				

With 3 ♥s and 6 HCP, you are just strong enough to bid 2 of partner's suit.

♠ 7 2	W	You	E	S
♥ Q 7 4 2	1♠	pass	pass	2♥
♦ A 6 5 3	pass	pass		
♣ J 8 4				

With 7 HCP & 1 SP, you would raise 1♥ to 2♥ but are not strong enough to bid 3♥, so pass.

If you have less than 3 cards in partner's suit

You don't have a Golden Fit, so:

0-8 Pass

9+ If you have your own very good suit (5+ cards with 2 top honours)

Bid your suit.

This is not a forcing bid, so partner can pass. Jump if you have extra strength.

If you have a balanced hand with a good stop in the opponents' suit

Bid no trumps:

If partner overcalled at the 1 level (promising 8+ points):

9-12: 1NT 13-14: 2NT 15+: 3NT

If she overcalled at the 2 level (promising 10+ points)

9-10: pass 11-12: 2NT 13+: 3NT

If you don't have a very good suit and can't bid no trumps

Pass. You're unlikely to find a suitable contract, so bidding on will only make things worse.

♠ A Q J 8 3	W	N	E	You
♥ 9 3	1♦	1♥	pass	1♠
♦ A 3				
♣ 9 6 4 2				

You don't like partner's ♥s, but you have 11 HCP and a very good ♠ suit, so tell her about it.

♠ A 10 7 3	W	You	E	S
♥ K Q 2	1♥	pass	1♠	2♦
♦ 10 7	pass	2NT		
♣ Q 10 8 7				

You have 11 HCP and stops in both the enemy suits.

♠ Q 9 8	W	N	E	You
♥ A 7 2	1♥	1♠	pass	2♠
♦ Q 7 4				
♣ J 10 6 3				

You could bid 1NT, but it's much safer to play in your Golden Fit.

The overcaller's second bid

When your opponents have opened the bidding, it is unlikely that your pair will be strong enough to bid game and so you will usually pass after any response that your partner makes. But if you listen to her bid, work out how strong she is and conclude that your pair is strong enough for game, then keep going.

♠ A Q 8 4 2	W	You	E	S
♥ 6 3	1♥	1♠	pass	3♠
♦ A 9 4	pass	4♠		
♣ K J 5				

You have 15 points (including 1 LP) and partner has 10-12, so your pair has 25-27. Go for it!

2. OVERCALLING IN NO TRUMPS

If an opponent has made an opening suit bid, you can overcall 1NT if you have:

- no long suit to overcall
- 16-18 points*
- a reasonably balanced hand
- a stop in the opponent's suit (*preferably two stops*)

Note that you need a much stronger hand to **overcall** 1NT than to **open** 1NT. If you were to overcall with only 12 points, there would be a great danger that the opponents would be stronger than your pair and would double you and make you lose a lot of points. There is much less chance of this if you **overcall** 1NT only when you have 16+ points.

♠ K Q 2	W	N	E	You
♥ A J 4	1♠	1NT		
♦ K 10 9 6 5				
♣ A 3				

You have 17 HCP and a double spade stop in a balanced hand. Bid 1NT.

♠ J 6 2	W	N	E	You
♥ A 5	1♠	pass	pass	pass
♦ K 10 9 6				
♣ A K J 2				

16 HCP in a balanced hand, but J62 does not count as a spade stop. It's a shame with such a strong hand, but you have no long suit to overcall and so pass is best.

Responding to your partner's 1NT overcall

If your partner overcalls 1NT, you should respond just as if she has opened the bidding with 1NT (*Week 1*) but has 4 extra points – so you need 4 points fewer for your responses.

0-6 points

- If you have a 5+ card suit, make a weak take-out bid of 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠.
- Otherwise, pass.

7-8 points

- If you have a 4-card major suit, bid 2♣ (Stayman) and then 3♥ / 3♠ if you have found a fit, or else 2NT (all invitational).
- Otherwise, bid 2NT to invite partner to bid 3NT if she has 18+ points.

9+ points

- With a 6+ card major suit, bid 4♥ / 4♠.
- With a 5-card major suit, bid 3♥ / 3♠ (forcing) to ask partner to choose 3NT or 4♥ / 4♠.
- With a 4-card major suit, bid 2♣ and then 4♥ / 4♠ if you have found a fit, or else 3NT.
- With no long major suit (but perhaps a long minor suit), bid 3NT.

* If you have more than 18 points, you should double first and then bid no trumps. *We'll look at this next week.*

♠ 9 4	W	N	E	You
♥ K 7 3 2	1♦	1NT	pass	pass
♦ 8 6 5				
♣ Q 10 5 4				

You're not strong enough to bid 2♣. With no 5-card suit, just pass

♠ 9 4	W	You	E	S
♥ K 10 7 3 2	1♠	pass	pass	1NT
♦ 8 6 5	pass	2♥		
♣ Q 10 4				

With a 5-card suit and only 5 points, bid a weak take-out.

♠ 9 4	W	N	E	You
♥ K Q 10 7 2	1♠	1NT	pass	3♥
♦ 8 6 5				
♣ A 10 4				

Bid 3♥, showing 9+ pts & 5♥s, to ask partner to choose 4♥ or 3NT.

WHEN AN OPPONENT GETS IN THE WAY

When your partner bids and then your right-hand opponent also makes a bid, it can be difficult for you to decide what to do next – particularly when the opponent's bid prevents you from making the bid that you were planning to make. This can happen after either your pair or the opposing pair has opened the bidding.

Hand A

♠ A 7 6	W	N	E	You
♥ Q 10 6	1♦	1♥	2♦	?
♦ 8 3 2				
♣ 9 7 5 4				

Partner overcalled 1♥ and you were going to bid 2♥. Should you change your mind after East's 2♦?

Hand B

♠ 9 4	W	N	E	You
♥ K 8 6	1♠	2♦		?
♦ K J 9 5 3				
♣ J 7 2				

Partner opened 1♠ and you planned to respond 1NT, but now you can't. What should you do?

Whole books have been written about this, but on this course we'll use some simple guidelines.

If an opponent bids straight after your partner has bid:

- If you can still make the bid that you were going to make, then bid it anyway.
So with Hand A above, you should still bid 2♥.
- If the opponent has made a higher bid than the one that you were going to make, then:
 - If you haven't found a Golden Fit with your partner, then pass.
So with Hand B above, you should now pass.
 - If you have a Golden Fit, and you like the look of your hand, then 'give' yourself two extra points. If that is enough to allow you to make a higher bid, then do so; if not, then pass.
When you give yourself extra points in this way, you are taking a risk because you are bidding higher than your hand is strictly worth. However, it is not a big risk because even if you are defeated you will usually lose fewer points than you would have lost by allowing the opponents to declare their own contract with their suit as trumps.

♠ K 7 2	W	N	E	You
♥ 8 5	1♥	1♠	3♥	3♠
♦ A J 10 5 3				
♣ 10 6 4				

You have a Golden Fit in ♠s, 8 HCP & 1 SP. You would have bid 2♠ if East had not got in the way. You like your ♦s (5 cards with 3 honours), so give yourself 2 more points – now you have 11 and you can bid 3♠.

♠ K 7 2	W	N	E	You
♥ Q 5	1♥	1♠	3♥	pass
♦ J 8 5 3				
♣ Q 6 4 3				

This hand has the same points as the first one. But your ♥Q is likely to be felled by the opponents' ♥AK, and your ♦J and ♣Q are isolated. You don't like the look of this, so don't give yourself any extra points – just pass.

♠ K 5	You	N	E	S
♥ A Q 10 7 2	1♥	pass	2♥	2♠
♦ 8 4	3♥			
♣ A 9 6 3				

You have 13 HCP and 1 LP, so you would have passed East's 2♥ bid. But your ♠K looks likely to win a trick after S's 2♠ bid (she probably has ♠A), so you like your hand. Add a couple of points and try 3♥.

When an opponent overcalls 1NT

If your partner opens with a suit bid and the next opponent overcalls 1NT, then you can follow the same guidelines as above . . .

W	N	You	S
1♥	1NT	?	.

- If you can still make the bid that you were going to make, then bid it anyway.
- If the opponent has made a higher bid than the one that you were going to make, then:
 - If you haven't found a Golden Fit with your partner, pass.
 - If you have a Golden Fit, and you like the look of your hand, then 'give' yourself a couple of extra points. If that is enough to allow you to make a higher bid, then do so; if not, then pass.

. . . but now you have an extra option:

- If you have 10+ points without a Golden Fit and no better bid to make, then **double** your opponent, hoping to win plenty of penalty points.
The 1NT overcaller is now in trouble, because your pair is the stronger one (partner has 12+ points and you have 10+, so your pair has 22+). If either she or her partner has a 5-card suit, they should now bid it as a weak take-out to minimise their losses. If not, they must take their punishment.
- Otherwise, pass.

♠ 7 6 4	W	N	You	S
♥ K 10 6 3	1♥	1NT	2♥	.
♦ 8 2				
♣ 9 7 5 4				

You have 4 pts (3 HCP & 1 SP) in support of ♥s. After N's overcall, stretch this to 6 points and bid 2♥.

♠ 9 4	W	N	You	S
♥ Q 6	1♥	1NT	2♦	.
♦ A J 10 5 4 2				
♣ K 5 3				

You would have bid 2♦ if N had not overcalled. You can still bid it, so do so.

♠ A 8 7 3	W	N	You	S
♥ Q 6 2	1♥	1NT	dbl	.
♦ Q J 4				
♣ J 10 5				

You can't bid 1♠. With your 10 pts and partner's 12, you have enough to defeat 1NT. Double!

BIDDING PRACTICE - we will try these during the online lesson.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
North	♠ A 8 2 ♥ Q J 7 3 ♦ K 9 5 4 ♣ 8 6	♠ 8 ♥ A J 8 5 3 2 ♦ Q 5 4 ♣ K Q 7	♠ A 10 9 5 ♥ K Q 5 3 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ Q 4
South	♠ K Q 7 5 4 ♥ A 6 ♦ J 8 7 ♣ 9 3 2	♠ K 7 2 ♥ 10 6 ♦ K 7 6 3 ♣ 10 9 5 2	♠ K 8 3 ♥ 7 4 ♦ K J 10 ♣ A K 7 5 2
Dealer	East East opens 1♣ and does not bid again. West passes throughout.	East East opens 1♠ and does not bid again. West passes throughout.	East East opens 1♥ and does not bid again. West passes throughout.
Bidding	W N E S 1♣	W N E S 1♠	W N E S 1♥

	(4)	(5)	(6)
North	♠ Q J 8 4 3 ♥ 9 5 4 ♦ 7 2 ♣ J 6 5	♠ K Q 5 ♥ A 8 6 ♦ K 7 ♣ A J 9 8 4	♠ A Q 10 6 3 ♥ 9 3 ♦ Q J 7 ♣ 10 8 4
South	♠ K 7 5 ♥ A 8 2 ♦ A J 10 9 ♣ K Q 9	♠ 10 4 ♥ K Q 9 7 4 3 ♦ Q 4 2 ♣ Q 6	♠ 7 2 ♥ K Q 8 ♦ A 8 4 3 ♣ J 9 6 5
Dealer	West West opens 1♦ and does not bid again. East passes throughout.	West West opens 1♠ and does not bid again. East passes throughout.	West West opens 1♥ and does not bid again. East bids 2♥ if she can, then does not bid again.
Bidding	W N E S 1♦	W N E S 1♠	W N E S 1♥ (2♥)

QUIZ – try this after the online lesson.

1. You are North. West dealt and opened the bidding and now it is your turn to bid.

What will you bid?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
♠ 8	♠ K Q 2	♠ K Q J 9	♠ K Q J 9	♠ K Q 2
♥ K Q 8 7 3	♥ 8 3	♥ Q 7 6	♥ K Q 6	♥ 8 3
♦ A 10 6 5	♦ A J 10 7 5 4	♦ A J 6 5	♦ A Q 6 5	♦ J 10 8 7 5 4
♣ 9 4 2	♣ Q 9	♣ 9 3	♣ 9 3	♣ A Q
W You E S	W You E S	W You E S	W You E S	W You E S
1♣ ?	1NT ?	1♥ ?	1♠ ?	1♥ ?

2. You are South. Your partner has made a suit overcall and now it is your turn to bid.

What will you bid?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
♠ 10 4	♠ 8 3	♠ A J 10 7 5 2	♠ K 7 6	♠ Q 7 4
♥ J 6 5	♥ A 5 4	♥ 8 3	♥ 4	♥ K Q 10 4
♦ K 7 5 2	♦ K 7 6 2	♦ 9 4	♦ A K J 5 3	♦ K 8 3 2
♣ Q J 8 3	♣ Q J 9 5	♣ K Q 5	♣ 9 8 6 2	♣ 9 5
W N E You	W N E You	W N E You	W N E You	W N E You
1♠ 2♦ pass ?	1♥ 1♠ pass ?	1♦ 1♥ pass ?	1♥ 1♠ pass ?	1♥ 2♣ pass ?

3. You are South. Your partner has made a 1NT overcall and now it is your turn to bid.

What will you bid?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
♠ Q 7 2	♠ K J 7 2	♠ Q 10 9 7 2	♠ Q 10 9 7	♠ 10 8 3
♥ 10 3	♥ 10 3	♥ 10 3	♥ 10 3	♥ 5 4
♦ A 8 6 5	♦ A 8 5	♦ K 8 6 5	♦ K 8 6 5	♦ 8 7
♣ Q 10 9 4	♣ Q 10 9 4	♣ 7 4	♣ 9 7 4	♣ K J 10 9 5 2
W N E You	W N E You	W N E You	W N E You	W N E You
1♥ 1NT pass ?	1♦ 1NT pass ?	1♥ 1NT pass ?	1♥ 1NT pass ?	1♥ 1NT pass ?

4. You are South. West opened the bidding, your partner overcalled and now East has bid as well.

What will you bid?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
♠ K 5 3	♠ K 5 3	♠ K 5 3	♠ K 5	♠ K J 10 8
♥ 10 6 4	♥ 10 6 4	♥ 10 4	♥ 10 4	♥ 5
♦ 8 5 2	♦ 8 5 2	♦ 8 5 2	♦ 10 8 5 2	♦ Q 8 5 4
♣ K J 7 3	♣ K J 7 3	♣ K J 7 4 3	♣ K J 7 4 3	♣ 10 7 6 2
W N E You	W N E You	W N E You	W N E You	W N E You
1♥ 1♠ 2♥ ?	1♥ 1♠ 3♥ ?	1♥ 1♠ 3♥ ?	1♥ 1♠ 2♥ ?	1♥ 1NT 2♥ ?

5. You are South. Your pair opened the bidding, but your opponents have muddled the waters.

Now it is your turn.

What will you bid?

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
♠ K Q 7 4	♠ 8 2	♠ 8 2	♠ A 7 2	♠ K 3
♥ 8 2	♥ K Q 7 4	♥ K J 7 4	♥ K 10 4	♥ A Q 6 3 2
♦ J 9 5 3	♦ J 9 5 3	♦ 9 8 5 3	♦ J 9 5 3	♦ Q 8 4
♣ 10 6 5	♣ 10 6 5	♣ 10 6 5	♣ Q J 5	♣ Q 7 5
W N E You	W N E You	W N E You	W N E You	W N E You
1♥ 2♣ ?	1♥ 2♣ ?	1♥ 1NT ?	1♥ 1NT ?	1♥
				1♠ 2♥ 2♠ ?

Quiz Answers

1. (a) 1♥ You have 9 points and 5 hearts with two top honours.
(b) 2♦ You have 12 points and a 6-card suit with a top honour.
(c) pass You have 13 points but you don't have a 5-card suit to overcall and you are too weak to bid 1NT.
(d) 1NT You have 17 points and at least two stops in the opponent's suit. Don't worry about your weak clubs – you're not expected to have every suit stopped when you overcall no trumps.
(e) pass You have 12 points and a 6-card suit, but it is too weak – it has no top honours.

2. (a) pass You have 7 HCP in support of partner's ♦s - enough to bid 2♦, but not 3♦.
(b) 1NT You have 10 HCP, no support for partner's ♠s but a stop in ♥s - just right for 1NT.
(c) 1♠ You can't support partner's ♥s, but you have 10 HCP and a good suit of your own. Bid it.
(d) 4♠ You have a Golden Fit in spades and 13 points (11 HCP + 2 SP). That's enough to bid game.
(e) pass You can't support partner's ♣s. You have a good heart stop, but are too weak to bid 2NT.

3. (a) 2NT You have 8 HCP and partner has 16-18. Invite her to bid game if she is a maximum.
(b) 2♣ You have 10 HCP, so your pair has enough for game. Bid Stayman to find out if partner has 4 spades. If she has, then bid 4♠; if not, then bid 3NT.
(c) 2♠ You only have 5 HCP, so there is no chance of game. Bid a weak take-out.
(d) pass Again, there is no chance of game. You don't have a long suit, so you have nothing to say.
(e) 2♣ With only 4 HCP and 6 clubs, you want to make a weak take-out in clubs. The way to do this (see Week 2) is to bid Stayman and then follow up with 3♣, whatever partner replies.

4. (a) 2♠ You intended to bid 2♠ if East had passed. You can still bid it after her bid of 2♥, so do so.
(b) pass You can't bid 2♠ because West has bid 3♥. With 7 HCP + 0 SP, you are too weak for 3♠, even if you add a couple of points.
(c) 3♠ Now you have 7 HCP + 1 SP. You have a Golden Fit and nice clubs, so you can add 2 more points after East's interference. That makes 10 points – just enough to bid 3♠.
(d) pass You haven't found a Golden Fit, so don't add any points. With 7 HCP + 1 LP, just pass.
(e) pass With only 6 HCP, you would have passed if East had not bid. You haven't found a Golden Fit, so you can't add any after East's interference – pass is still the right bid.

5. (a) pass You would have bid 1♠ if East had not overcalled. You're not strong enough to bid anything else and you can't stretch your bid because you don't have a fit with partner.
(b) 2♥ You would have bid 2♥ if East had not overcalled and you still can, so do so.
(c) 2♥ You would have passed if East had not overcalled, but with a fit in ♥s and two trump honours you like your hand, so you can add 2 points and stretch to 2♥.
(d) dbl Partner has 12+ points and you have 11, so East is outnumbered. Make her pay!
(e) pass You have 13 HCP + 1 LP and a Golden Fit in hearts, so it's tempting to give yourself a couple of extra points and bid 3♥. But your hand does not look great – West probably has ♠A and so your ♠K will lose, while your 'lonely' ♦Q and ♣Q are uninspiring. So it's best not to stretch to 3♥, unless you're feeling very frisky.