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Competitive Bidding – Overcalls, Doubles, & More

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Overcalls - Level

- 1-Level Overcalls - 7-18 points with a 5+card suit. With a longer suit, the maximum HCP is lower.
- 2-Level Overcalls (not jump overcalls) -- 12-18 points with a 5+card good suit. With a quality 6+card suit this overcall can be made with 10-11 HCP.
- Vs. Preempts -- Overcalling at higher levels requires more playing strength. This extra hand strength involves suit quality, HCP, and extra shape of hand. With fewer HCP we need compensating values.
- Sandwich Seat – if partner is a passed hand, we may make an overcall for a variety of reasons.
 - To try to win the contact, lead-directing, destruction.

Overcalls - Suit Quality

- The fewer HCP, the better suit quality needed. With only a good suit, and not good values, consider a preemptive jump overcall instead of a simple overcall.
- 1-level overcalls are extremely wide-ranging in suit quality (as well as HCP).
- Some players overcall 4-card suits at the 1-level with a good hand and good suit (at least an opening hand).
- 2-level overcalls should be a good 5+card suit (often 6+card suit). Partner will raise with 3-cards, violating the LOTT. Make overcalls with a 5-card suit at 2-level only with a good hand.
- Vulnerability also affects suit quality requirements: NV be aggressive; Vul have a decent suit.

Overcalls - Hand Strength (Buckets)

Just as we think of Opener's hand as belonging to *Buckets* (ranges of strength) we also think of different buckets for Overcaller's hand strength. At the 1-level Overcaller's possible hand strengths are:

- 7-9 points Subminimum Values
- 10-12 points Minimum Values
- 12-14 points Sound Values
- 15-18 points Extra Values

2-Level overcalls have either Sound or Extra Values (not Minimum or Sub-Minimum Values).

Purpose of Overcall

There are many different reasons that we might make an overcall. Some are:

- Try to win the contract, push the opponents a level higher, make a lead directing bid, tactics.



Advancer's Hand

We begin by looking at Advancer's hand when they have a fit for Interferer's suit – at least 3-card support. In this case, Advancer wants to show the strength of their hand as well as the size of their fit as quickly as possible. Below we discuss how Advancer proceeds after partner makes a 1-level overcall.

Advancer's Strength

- 0-5 points = Weak
- 6-9 points = Minimum
- 10-11 (or bad 12) points = Limit Raise
- 12-13 points = Strong Raise (more than a Limit Raise)
- 14+ points = Game Forcing Raise

Fit

We also want to show the size of our fit:

- 3-card support – 8+card fit
- 4-card support – 9+card fit
- 5+card support – 10+card fit

Advancer's Options Without a Fit for Interferer's Suit

Without a fit for partner's suit and with a stopper in the Opener's suit, Advancer can bid NT.

- 1NT shows 8-11 points.
- 2NT shows 12-13 points.
- 3NT shows 14+ points (with no slam interest).

These bids usually do not have a 5-card Major of their own.

With a long suit of their own, the way Advancer describes their hand depends on their agreements. Are new suits forcing or non-forcing constructive?

New Suits Forcing – Simpler Method

- With 10+ points and a 5+card suit Advancer can bid a new suit at the 2-level. This bid is forcing for 1-round.
- A new suit at the 1-level could be a good 4+card suit and only requires 8+ points. This bid is also forcing for 1-round.

New Suits Non-Forcing Constructive – More Active Method

- In this case, a new suit is non-forcing and can be made on a weaker hand.
- A new suit at the 2-level (non-jump) shows about 8-13 points and at least a 5-card suit. This is non-forcing.
- A new suit at the 1-level shows about 8-13 points but could still be made on a good 4+card suit.
- Some even play 1/1 and 2/2 Forcing with 2/1 NFC.



Fundamental Types of Doubles

- *Takeout Double (Interferer – The first opponent to enter the auction.)*
 - Values to get into the auction (about 12+ points – depending on level of double and shape of the hand), but still looking for a fit (or the best fit).
 - Compare a takeout double to an overcall.
- *Negative Double (Responder)*
 - Values to compete in the bidding (6+ points – more values depending on level of double), but still looking for a fit OR a “better fit” – Major suit fit over a minor suit fit.
 - Usually two places to play – Responder has a plan for how to handle the auction.
- *Responsive Double (Advancer – Partner of the Interferer.)*
 - Values to compete in the bidding (6+ points – more values depending on level of double), but still looking for a fit OR a “better fit” – Major suit fit over a minor suit fit.
 - Usually two places to play – Advancer has a plan for how to handle the auction.
 - Most players use Takeout, Negative, and Responsive Doubles through 4♥ interference.
- *Takeout Double or Support Double (Opener)*
 - Support Double by Opener
 - A conventional bid showing exactly 3-card support for Responder’s Major suit (if we had 4-card support we would raise directly). Helps find a 5-3 fit before the opponents take away our bidding space. Does not promise extra values.
 - Takeout Double by Opener
 - Extra Values (not a completely minimum opening bid) with shortness in the opponents’ suit. Opener wants to compete in the bidding, but not sure where.

Overcall vs. Double

Choose between making an overcall or a takeout double. Say the opponents open a minor and we are short in the opponent’s suit with a 5-card suit. (Say 5431 with a singleton in the opponent’s opening bid minor). How to compete in the bidding is not an easy.

- If we have subminimum values (7-9 HCP), our only option is to make an overcall. We do not have enough values to make a takeout double.
- If we have minimum values (10-12 HCP), we make our decision based on the quality of our 5-card suit. If our hand looks 1-suited (points are concentrated in our one long suit), we make an overcall. If our values are more scattered around, we make a takeout double.
 - With 5/3 in the Majors, we usually overcall our 5-card Major.
 - With 5/4 in the Majors, we overcall our 5-card Major if it is of decent quality. If our 4-card suit is strong and our 5-card suit is weak, we consider making a takeout double.
 - With a 5-card minor (4/3 Majors), we usually make a takeout double. Only consider overcalling a 5-card minor suit when it is extremely strong and both Majors are weak.
- If we have a sound or better hand (12+ HCP), then we plan to take multiple calls with our hand. In this case we start by making an overcall of our 5-card suit (to look for a fit there) and then make a takeout double later, to look for a fit in our other suit (particularly true with 5/4 in the Major suits).



Doubles and Fits

When we have found a fit!

- After we have found a fit, we have the option of just bidding our suit or even making a game try into a new suit. Thus, a double becomes less “takeout” and more of a “card-showing” double. A cooperative double with convertible values – good for either offense or defense. This asks partner for input in what to do.
- When no space for a game try we can make a *Maximal Double* to try for game.
- When we have found a fit and the opponents bid our side suit we do not double for penalty at a low level. This is because a double here asks for partner’s input and since they are likely to be short in the opponent’s suit then they will likely pull it. Instead, with length in the opponent’s suit it is best to pass (trap pass) and see if partner makes a cooperative double that you can leave in. (When the opponents are right where you want them then it is best to pass and leave them there).

High Level Doubles (Forcing Pass)

Direct Seat Actions in Strong Auctions: *Bid, Double, Pass - “Forcing Pass”*

Competitive Bidding Auctions

Traditional Auctions

- Positive Free Bids – New suits show values
 - New Suit Forcing
 - How Forcing depends upon the level of the freebid – 1L, 2L, 3L
- Negative Doubles – competitive values, but unlimited
 - I have enough values to take some action, but no other bid looks attractive
 - Looking for a fit or a better fit
 - Usually two places to play

Non-Traditional Auctions

- Strength Showing Doubles (and Redoubles) – “Good Hand”
 - Vs. Notrump – Value-showing doubles, penalty oriented
 - X after 1NT Overcalls
 - X after 1NT Responses
 - X after 2NT Responses
 - X after 1NT Advances
 - Vs. Double – Value-showing redoubles, setting up penalty doubles
 - XX after Takeout Double by Interferer
 - XX after Negative Double by Responder
- “Negative Free Bids” – New suits competitive, non-forcing
 - Responder’s Negative Freebids
 - Advancer’s Negative Freebids
 - Vs. Opponent’s Takeout Doubles – 2L not 1L.