

Overcalls

Most of our bidding agreements are structured around us opening the bidding and responding while the opponents remain silent. However, whenever possible we should try not to let the opponents have a nice, quiet discussion between themselves about what their best contract is. Bidding once the opponents have opened is known as *overcalling* and the rules for overcalling are slightly different than the rules for opening the bidding.

An overcall shows 10-15 HCP and a good five card suit

We worry very little about suit quality when we open the bidding. However, when we decide to interfere in the opponents auction we should be a little more wary. It is not enough to just have a five card suit and an opening hand of our own. We should also have a “good” five card suit. One guideline of good is two of the top three honours or three of the top five. Consider the following hands and imagine our Right Hand Opponent has opened One Diamond.

♠ AKT83	♠ K4	♠ QT983	♠ 43
♥ KT4	♥ 9874	♥ KQ	♥ AKQJ
♦ 32	♦ 3	♦ K3	♦ 952
♣ JT43	♣ AKQ93	♣ 9843	♣ A542
Overcall One Spade	Overcall Two Clubs	Pass	Pass

We need to meet *all* the requirements; 10-15 HCPs, a good five card suit. Sometimes, even with a good hand, we will need to pass.

Responding to an overcall

Just as the rules for overcalling are a little looser than the rules for opening, so are the rules for responding to an overcall different than the rules for responding to an opener. In general, you should only bid on when your partner overcalls if you have a **good hand** or a **good fit**.

Introducing your own new suit should be *at least* as good as what the overcaller has promised. You *must* have a good five card suit of your own and should usually have six. Remember, as overcallers we are less concerned with constructively bidding to our best contract and more concerned with shouting over the opponents’ conversation.

In the hands below, imagine your Left Hand Opponent has opened One Diamond. Your partner has overcalled One Heart and your Right Hand Opponent has bid Two Diamonds. What should we bid next?

♠ J98	♠ KQ9	♠ AKQT32	♠ KQ7
♥ A543	♥ A2	♥ 3	♥ 53
♦ 6	♦ JT98	♦ 87	♦ AQ6
♣ J9842	♣ J532	♣ A864	♣ JT942
Bid Two Hearts	Pass	Bid Two Spades	Bid Two No Trumps

Sometimes things look awful but you still need to pass. Bidding on will show a good hand or a good fit. With a weak, misfitting hand, you should pass and hope to get out of trouble at a low level.

Remember: When the opponents have opened the bidding, it is highly unlikely that we can make a game contract. That changes our goals – we are trying to get in the way and to use up bidding room in their conversation. With luck they will wander too high or stop too low. They may even fail to find their best fit if we get active in their auction and take away some of the bids they would like to make.