

Responding To Overcalls or Weak Jump Overcalls

When our partner overcalls, makes a weak jump overcall or pre-empts, it is important to remember that we are NOT the opening side. All of the rules we usually follow: "Respond with 6+ points, only bid at the two level with 11+ points, do we have the 25+ Total Points required for game...." Do not apply.

We are not trying to have a quiet, constructive conversation to the best contract – that's what THEY are trying to do. Our goal as the overcalling side is usually to shout over their conversation and hope to disrupt it.

There are only two reasons to bid opposite an overcall, a weak jump overcall or any pre-emptive bid.

We only bid with a GOOD HAND or a GOOD FIT.

Why? Imagine our Left Hand Opponent opens One Club, our partner bids One Heart (or Two Hearts) and we hold:

♠ KQT652
♥ 3
♦ 874
♣ 732

Two Hearts is likely going to be a terrible contract. We think Spades is likely to be better. But this is NOT a good hand and it is NOT a good fit. So with this hand we have to pass! If you respond to this with One Spade (or Two Spades) then your partner will nearly always repeat their Hearts. All that's happened is that you've made a bad situation worse!

Now imagine the same auction. LHO opens One Club, our partner bids One Heart (or Two Hearts) and we hold:

♠ AK8532
♥ 2
♦ KQJ2
♣ KJ

This is a rare situation where our opponents have opened but it is likely to be OUR game contract. The only question is whether we should try to make Four Spades or Three No Trumps.
We can bid our Spades now and it is FORCING. Partner will say whether she likes our Spades or whether we should try game in Three No Trumps.

If a bid is going to be strong some of the time, it has to be strong all of the time. We can't bid Two Spades with five points one week and with seventeen points the next!

In the following examples, let's imagine our Left Hand Opponent has opened One Heart. Our Partner makes an overcall, or a weak jump overcall as shown and our Right Hand Opponent passes. What should we bid?

Bid With A Good Hand

Pd Bids One Spade	Pd Bids Two Spades	Pd Bids Two Clubs	Pd Bids One No Trump
♠ 32	♠ AJ	♠ AKQ93	♠ AT76
♥ AKT4	♥ 4	♥ A5	♥ K4
♦ KQ87	♦ KQJ93	♦ 9843	♦ QJT7
♣ AJ2	♣ AJ62	♣ KQ	♣ 952

Bid With A Good Fit (8 cards at the 2-level, 9 cards at the 3-level, 10 cards at the 4-level)

Pd Bids One Spade	Pd Bids Two Spades	Pd Bids Three Diamonds	Pd Bids Two Clubs
♠ KJ84	♠ Q85	♠ 4	♠ 86
♥ 3	♥ KJ54	♥ 985	♥ 3
♦ 873	♦ 3	♦ QT9873	♦ K9873
♣ J9862	♣ J9754	♣ J65	♣ AT984