

Overcalls

What is an Overcall

When an opponent has opened the auction with a bid, then either opponent may freely make a call “over” that bid, becoming competitive in the auction. The defender’s call is called an overcall:

opener	opponent
1♥	1♠

The opponent has made an overcall of 1 spade. Both sides are now competing in this auction.

Requirements for an Overcall

If you want to make an overcall, you need a suit that has 5 or more cards. You should have some honors in it.

at 1 level.....7 or more points
at 2 level.....10 or more points

AJ754 K6 8754 86

You may make an overcall of 1 spade

AJ754 K6 A754 K6

This hand also may overcall 1 spade

K6 K6 A754 AJ754

This hand may overcall 2 clubs

86 K6 8754 AJ754

This hand may NOT overcall 2 clubs

86 K6 875 AJ9754

This hand MAY overcall 2 clubs. Although it lacks 10 points, it has a 6 card suit, which relaxes the requirement for 10 points.

Suits Okay for Overcalling:

AJ754
KQ754
KJ754
K10754
A10754
QJ754
Q10754

Overcalling with a suit headed by the jack is a poor idea, unless you have an opening hand.

J9864 A2 AQJ6 Q7

You can overcall 1 spade with a poor suit if you have an opening hand

J9864 97 AQ96 97

Do not overcall 1 spade with a poor suit when you have less than an opening hand.

Advancing the Overcall

If your partner has overcalled, you will need to know how to react. Should you pass? Should you raise? Should you bid NT or a new suit?

Your first consideration is your point count. Here are the two divisions:

- you have less than 10 points
- you have 10 points or more

With Less Than 10 Points

With less than 10 points you have only 3 choices:

- With a fit, raise 1 level
- Without a fit, either
 - pass, or
 - bid 1NT if your points are in the opponent’s suit

With 10 Points or More

When you have 10 points or more, you need more information. Your partner may have overcalled with 7 points, or he could have overcalled with 17 points. When you had less than 10 points, partner's strength wasn't much of an issue. But when you have 10 or more, you may need to reach game.

With 10 plus point and a fit

If you have 10 or more points and a fit for partner's suit

BID THE OPPONENT'S SUIT

opp	pard	opp	you
1♥	1♠	P	2♥

Your bid of 2 Hearts TELLS partner that you have 10 or more points. Your bid ASKS partner if he has an opening hand. Your cue bid of the opponent's suit both TELLS and ASKS.

The overcaller's answers

You have asked the overcaller if he has an opening hand. The overcaller will now answer the question:

NO...overcaller rebids his suit
YES...overcaller bids a new suit
or notrump

opp	pard	opp	you
1♥	1♠	P	2♥
P	2♠		

The overcaller rebids his suit to answer that he does NOT have an opening hand.

opp	pard	opp	you
1♥	1♠	P	2♥
P	3♦		

The overcaller bids a new suit to signify that he DOES have an opening hand, plus he also has points in the diamond suit.

With 10 plus points and NO fit

When you have 10 or more points but no fit with partner's suit you may:

- bid a 5-card suit of your own
- bid 2NT or 3NT, depending on on your strength, to show a notrump hand with stoppers in the opponent's suit.
- just pass.

You bid a 5-card suit of your own usually only when you have a major suit. If partner has overcalled a minor suit, your bid of a major is a try to get a major suit score instead of a lower minor suit score. Partner should pass you if they have less than an opening hand and bid a new suit if they do have an opening hand. If pard rebids their own suit, they cannot stand yours, having less than two cards in your suit.

Your notrump bid shows points and stoppers in the opponent's suit. You are offering to play in notrump. Partner can pass you or raise you to show they like your idea. If they rebid their own suit, they have a weak hand and want you to pass. If they bid a NEW suit, they don't want to play notrump.

You pass when you don't have anything better to offer partner than their own suit. You don't have a fit, you don't have a 5 card suit of your own, and you don't have a notrump hand. Just pass and let partner play. Or, if the opponent's compete further, consider doubling them for penalties.