

Competitive Bidding—Part VII
(October 25, 2021)

Last week, we began looking at the **Simple Overcall**.

Simple Overcalls are made with hands that have only one suit that looks suitable as a trump suit. The bid is made at the cheapest level possible, usually at the one or two level. All other bids of the same suit are known as preemptive jump overcalls (see April 5th lesson). Other bids are available to show two-suited hands, i.e., the Unusual 2NT bid, Michael's Cuebids, etc. (We will look at these types of bids in a subsequent lesson.)

The main reasons for making a simple overcall are:

- To compete for the auction
- To obstruct the opponents' auction
- To tell partner what to lead
- To suggest a sacrifice

NOTE: The requirements for a two-level overcall differ from those needed to overcall at the one level. Overcalls at the one level range from 7-17-- see Simple Overcall section on your Convention card. Most people play 8-15 as the range for a simple overcall. Overcalls at the two level require a good five or six card suit and promise close to an opening hand. Usually such a hand is not the right shape or size to make an initial takeout double.

With more than 17, you need to first make a takeout double and then bid your suit or NT at some level. An overcall at the two level has a higher minimum than a one-level overcall. Do not, **REPEAT**, do not overcall at the two level with an 11-count and a so-so five-card suit.

Responding to Your Partner's Overcall

When your partner makes an overcall at the one level, you (the advancer) need to respond to that overcall, if possible. You know that your partner has a five- or six-card suit. The strength of your hand plus the number of cards (**Law of Total Tricks**) you hold in your partner's suit dictates your response. Below are some of the bids which you (the advancer) have available to you.

PASS

Simple Raise = 3-card constructive (8-10 total points)

Jump Raise = 4-card, good preempt

Simple Cue Bid = 3+ cards, game invitational (GI) or limit raise

Jump Cue Bid = 4+ cards, mixed raise

If the opponents bid two suits: A cue at the lower level = 3-card support, GI
A cue at the higher level = 4-card support, GI

NOTE: Here, the level bid is important; not, the rank of the two suits. I will illustrate in an example later in the lesson.

If you have no support for partner's suit: 1NT = 9-11
2NT = 12-14
3NT = 15-17

NOTE: Any notrump bid promises a stop(s) in the enemy suit.

When the advancer bids a new suit, this bid shows a 5-card suit or longer. The big issue: Is his bid a forcing bid?

If partner overcalls at the one-level, the advancer's
*One-level response is forcing for one round only
Two-level response is NF and is constructive

If partner overcalls at the two-level, the advancer's
*Two-level response is forcing for one round only
Three-level response is NF and is constructive

*Raise your partner's suit if you hold either Hx or xxx in his suit; otherwise, rebid your suit.

Definitions:

Law of Total Tricks:

This theory is a competitive bidding guideline. It states that on any given deal, the number of total trumps between your side and your opponents equals the number of total tricks both sides can make.

For example, if your side has nine hearts and your opponents have eight spades, there are 17 total tricks available. Thus, if you can make a contract of three hearts and your opponents bid three spades, they will go set one trick. If your side can make four hearts, then their three-spade contract will be down two tricks.

The **Law of Total Tricks** may help you in competitive bidding auctions if you have an accurate count on the number of trumps held by each side. NOTE: the Law usually works except when there are side-suit fits, which your side may not be able to calculate in the decision-making process of how high to compete.

Constructive Raises:

Overcaller	Advancer
1H/1S	2H/2S

The raise of a major suit is normally played as 6-10 total points. A **Constructive Raise** shows 8-10 total points. Both bids promise three-card support.

Preemptive Raises:

A **Preemptive Raise** always promises four or more cards in the overcaller's suit. It usually implies shortness somewhere in the hand.

Mixed Raises:

A **Mixed Raise** shows four plus card support and 7-9 high card points. Unlike a **Preemptive Raise**, a **Mixed Raise** promises one defensive trick should your side defend the hand. It is a supporting bid that shows 4+ cards in partner's suit and constructive values. It is stronger than a preemptive raise and weaker than a limit raise.

PRACTICE HANDS

1. West	North	East	South	
(1C)	1S	(P)	2S*	*Simple Raise

Your Hand: Jxx Kxx KQxx xxx

2. West	North	East	South	
(1C)	1S	(P)	3S*	*Jump Raise (Preempt)

Your Hand: Jxxx x Qxxx Kxxx

3.	West (1C)	North 1S	East (P)	South 2C*	*Simple Cue Bid
Your Hand:	Jxx	Ax	Kxxx	Qxxx	

4.	West (1C)	North 1S	East (P)	South 3C*	*Jump Cue Bid (Mixed Raise)
Your Hand:	Jxxx	xx	KQxx	Qxx	

5a.	West (1C)	North 1H	East (1S)	South 2C*	*Three-card limit raise
Your Hand:	xx	Qxx	KQxx	Axxx	

5b.	(1C)	1H	(1S)	2S*	*Four-card limit raise
Your Hand:	xx	QJxx	KQx	Kxxx	

5c.	(1D)	1H	(2C)	2D*	*Three-card limit raise
Your Hand:	xx	Qxx	KQxx	Axx	

5d.	(1D)	1H	(2C)	3C*	*Four-card limit raise*
Your Hand:	xx	QJxx	KQx	Kxxx	

6.	West 1(C)	North 1S	East (P)	South 1NT*	*9-11 HCP and club stopper
Your Hand:	Kx	QJx	Kxx	Qxxx	

MIXED RAISES

One popular method in competitive bidding is to employ a jump-cue by the advancer to show 4-card support, 7-9 HCP, and a hand a little too strong to make a preemptive raise. Although a mixed raise is sometimes called “semi-preemptive,” it differs from a standard preemptive raise in the location of your high cards.

Example 1a.	Opener (1D)	Overcaller 1H	Responder (P)	Advancer 3D
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Your Hand: 10x Q10xx xx KQxxx (Mixed Raise)

Example 1b.	Opener (1D)	Overcaller 1H	Responder (P)	Advancer 3H
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Your Hand: 10x KJ10x xx Qxxxx (Good Preempt)

Example 2.	East (1C)	South 1D	West (1S)	North 3C*
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K3
64
KJ64
J9765

J98742
AJ1032
85
VOID

Q1065
K95
A7
K1042

A
Q87
Q10932
AQ83

*Mixed Raise = 4 diamonds, 7-9 total points, and one defensive trick

NOTE: 2C = 3+ D and limit raise
2S = 4+ D and limit raise

Example 3. **West** **North** **East** **South**
 (1D) 1S (P) 4C* * = Splinter Bid
 4S

A9643
 K
 A10
 AQ94

 KQJ5
 QJ102
 J973
 7

*Probably should be alerted

NOTE: If the advancer bids a suit at the four level, he is making a splinter bid showing 4/5 card trump support and promising a singleton or void in the suit bid.

Example 4. **West** **North** **East** **South**
 (1C) 1H (P) 4H

986
 AKQ93
 65
 A93

 7642
 108764
 AK10
 4

Although both hands 3 and 4 have a singleton club, the splinter bid implies that you have a much stronger hand in example 3 than in example 4,

Next Week: Support Doubles/Redoubles

Preston sent the following hand:

His hand was: K10
 K9543
 AK82
 87

His partner opened 2NT (20/21 HCP)

You hold 13 HCP. You know your partner holds a minimum of 20 HCP. The minimum points held between the two hands is 33, which is sufficient for a small slam.

Holding a five-card heart suit, begin by bidding 3D (Jacoby Transfer bid showing 5+ hearts). His partner responded by bidding 4H, which shows four-card heart support. You really don't know if he holds 20 or 21 HCP. The important thing is to know about his four hearts. **You know his hand. You are now the CAPTAIN.**

What is your next bid? If you play Kickback, then a bid of 4S would be the key card ask. If you play Keycard Blackwood, then 4NT would be the key card ask. Whichever check system you use, you will discover that your partner holds 3 key cards, specifically the ace of spades, the ace of hearts and the ace of clubs. You hold the king of hearts and the ace of diamonds. Now it is a matter to find out about the queen of hearts and outside kings. The next bid you make which is not 5H asks for the queen and specific outside king. He should respond 6C which shows the queen of hearts and the king of clubs.

Now you as captain know you have all the key cards plus the queen of trumps. In addition, you know that your pard has the king of clubs, making for no club losers, no spade losers, and no heart losers. You know that partner has to have more than 18 HCP to have opened 2NT. The problem is does he have 2 or 3 more points and are those points a queen and 1 jack, 2 or 3 jacks, or just 1 queen.

I think I would take a chance and bid 7N. If the hand makes seven, either 7H or 7N will make. You want to be in 7N as it scores 10 points higher. Double Dummy says you can easily make 7NT, only because your partner holds the golden QJ10 of diamonds.

North	South
A8	K10
AQJ102	K9543
QJ10	AK82
AK6	87

