

ENTERING THE BIDDING AFTER A WEAK TWO-BID

When the opponents open the bidding, you can enter the bidding with an overcall or a double.

- An overcall says that you have a good suit of your own (up to 16 points).
- A double says that you can support any of the un-bid suits.
- A double may occasionally say that you have 17 or more points and a good suit that you will show at your next turn to bid.

Overcalls over Weak Two-Bids

- An overcall by the player immediately to the **left** of the opening bidder is called a **direct overcall**
- An overcall by the player immediately to the **right** of the opening bidder is called a **balancing overcall** or a **re-opening overcall**.

A **direct overcall** at the two-level shows an **opening hand**. You may count one point for the fifth and each additional card in your suit. Do not count points for short suits. The suit must be of good quality. While we do not count points for 10's 9's and 8's, they are an important intangible factor in the quality of a suit.

Hands (a) and (b) would be a suitable overcall after a bid of 2♦ but not after 2♠ because you would have to bid at the three-level. In that case, you would have to pass and hope that your partner can re-open the bidding.

Hand (c) is not suitable for an overcall after any weak two bid because the suit is too shabby, especially if you are vulnerable. Once again, you would have to pass and hope that your partner can re-open the bidding.

(a)	(b)	(c)
♠ A 6	♠ A 6	♠ K 8 6 5 2
♥ A K J 9 8	♥ A Q J 9 8 6	♥ A 8
♦ 9 6	♦ 9 6	♦ J 7
♣ 10 8 5	♣ 10 8 5	♣ K Q 4 2

If the opponents open 2♠, you must now overcall at the three-level. A direct overcall at the **three-level** requires 15 points. Hands (d) and (e) would be suitable for an overcall over an opening bid of 2♠.

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Hand (f) is too strong for an overcall. With this hand you must double first and show your suit on the next round.

(d)	(e)	(f)
♠ 10 2	♠ A 6	♠ 3 2
♥ J 10 5	♥ A Q 10 9 8	♥ A K J 8 7
♦ A 6	♦ 9 5	♦ A Q 5
♣ A K Q 9 7 4	♣ K Q 4 2	♣ A 9 6

Responding to Partner's Overcall

The Rule of Eight

There is risk involved in entering the bidding at the two-level or three-level but the potential gain justifies the risk. Actually, there is a high probability that your partner has some points. If opener has about 9 points and if you have 15, there are still 16 points unaccounted for. You should expect partner to have about half of them. By the same token, your partner shouldn't get excited with 8 points because she knows that's what you expect her to have. With 10 or more points, she should make a move toward game..

Suppose that the opponent on your left has opened 2♥ and your partner has overcalled 2♠. What is the point range of your partner's hand? What would you bid on each of the following hands?

(l)	(m)	(n)
♠ Q 7 5	♠ A 10 8	♠ K 9 7
♥ 8 6 3	♥ 10 6 5	♥ 9 7 2
♦ K 10 4 3	♦ 10 9 4	♦ A K 10 8 6
♣ Q J 7	♣ A Q 6 2	♣ K 2

- (l) Pass. You have about what your partner expects. If partner had overcalled at the one level, you would raise to 2♠ on this hand. However, you are already at the two level and a different set of rules applies.
- (m) Bid 3♠. You have ten points and game is possible if partner has a maximum of 16 points. In that case, partner will raise to game.

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(n) Bid 4 ♠. You have an opening hand and a fit for partner's suit.

A **balancing overcall** occurs in a situation such as the following: 2♦ P P ? Since opener's partner has passed, you know that your partner has some values. Rather than allow the bidding to die, you can make a balancing overcall with a **king less** than a direct overcall. We sometimes use the expression "**borrow a king**". This is also called "protecting" your partner. It enables your partner to pass with questionable hands, knowing that you will strive to compete. You can bid 2♥ with ♠ A 6 ♥ A Q 10 9 8 ♦ 9 5 ♣ Q 10 4 2, a king less than hand (e).

Take-out Doubles

When you make a take-out double, you are usually short in opener's suit. Therefore you can count points for distribution – 1 for a doubleton, 3 for a singleton and 5 for a void. Hands (g) and (h) represent a minimum double of a 2♥ opening bid. Counting points for distribution, each hand is worth **13 support points**. The double strongly suggests spades and a point should be deducted if the spade suit has only three cards.

Hand (f) is a minimum double of a 2♠ opening bid. Partner will be obliged to respond at the three-level. **Fifteen support points** are required. You should have four cards in the heart suit and the quality of the spot cards is important.

(g)	(h)	(i)
♠ K Q 7 6	♠ A 10 8 5	♠ 9 7
♥ 8	♥ 10 6	♥ A K J 8
♦ K 10 4 3	♦ Q 9 4	♦ A 10 8 6
♣ Q 9 7 4	♣ A Q 6 2	♣ Q 9 6

Responding to Partner's Double

The **rule of eight** also applies here. Partner expects you to have about 8 points. Don't make a jump bid unless you have about 10 points. With an opening hand, jump to game.

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Re-opening Doubles

A **re-opening double** can be made with a **king less** than a double in the direct seat. Partner may have a good hand and you need to protect his interests. See hands (j) and (k) below.

(j)	♠ 9 7 6 ♥ A 9 3 ♦ 10 8 6 4 ♣ A K 8	
	♠ A Q J 2 ♥ J 7 6 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ 10 7 2	♠ K 10 5 4 ♥ 4 ♦ A J 7 2 ♣ J 6 5 4
	♠ 8 3 ♥ K Q 10 8 5 2 ♦ 9 5 ♣ Q 9 2	

West has a good hand but it is flat. The hand is not suitable for a double or overcall and so he passes. Sitting east, you hold just nine points plus a singleton. “Borrow a king” and you have 15 support points, more than enough for a takeout double. Now west must be careful not to overbid, because his partner may have stretched to keep the bidding open. He bids 3♠, leaving the final decision to you. You pass.

(k)	♠ Q J 9 7 6 ♥ 7 3 ♦ Q 10 8 6 4 ♣ A K	
	♠ A 8 2 ♥ A J 9 7 ♦ K 3 ♣ 10 8 7 2	♠ K 10 5 4 ♥ 4 ♦ A J 7 2 ♣ J 6 5 4
	♠ 8 3 ♥ K Q 10 8 5 2 ♦ 9 5 ♣ Q 9 2	

With a stack of hearts, west’s hand is unsuitable for a double or overcall and he passes. Once again, east must protect his partner by keeping the bidding open with a balancing double. This time, however, east converts the double to penalty by passing because he has an unpleasant surprise for south.

Bidding Practice

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