
As many as ten factors may influence a player's decision to overcall. In roughly descending order of importance, they are:

- Suit length
- Strength
- Vulnerability
- Level
- Suit Quality
- Obstruction
- Opponents' skill
- Holding in opponent's suit
- Opponents' vulnerability
- Opponents' methods

—HENRY FRANCIS (EDITOR-IN-CHIEF),
THE OFFICIAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BRIDGE



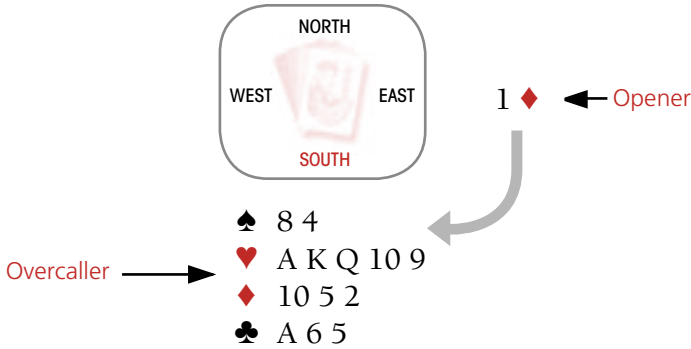
Overcalls and Advances

When both partnerships are bidding for the privilege of naming the trump suit or notrump, it is referred to as a *competitive auction*. One way to compete after the opponents open the bidding is to make a bid over an opponent's bid. This is referred to as an *overcall*.

An overcall and an opening bid have some similarities. You're making the first bid in the auction for your side and are trying to exchange enough information to choose the best contract. However, once both partnerships are competing for the privilege of naming the trump suit or notrump, the priorities for both sides can change. Let's take a closer look.

The Simple Overcall

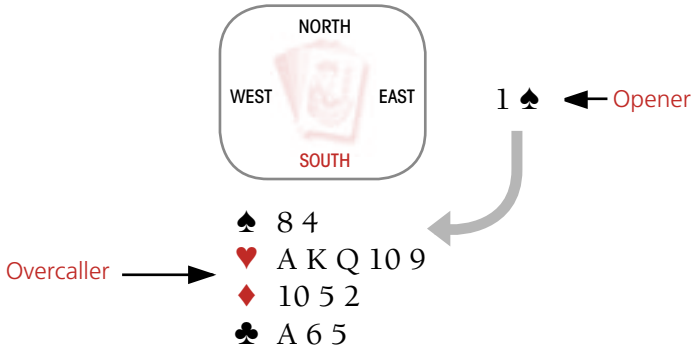
East opens the bidding 1♦. What should South do?



With 13 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card heart suit, South would have opened the bidding 1♥ if East had passed. South can still suggest hearts as a trump suit by making a 1♥ overcall.

Overcalling at the cheapest available level is a *simple overcall*. Here, South is making a simple overcall at the one level.

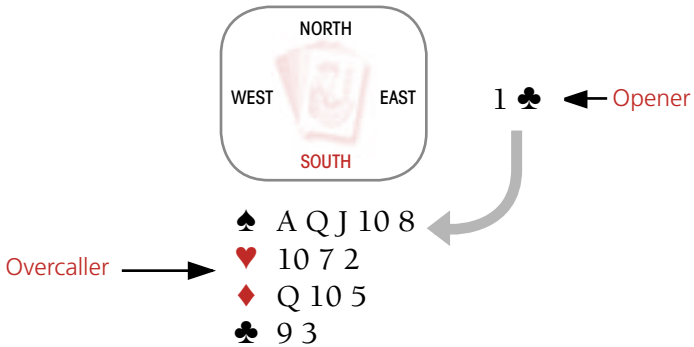
One difference between an overcall and an opening bid is that you can't always make an overcall at the one level. Suppose East had opened 1♠ instead of 1♦.



To suggest hearts as the trump suit, South would have to bid 2♥, a simple overcall at the *two level*.

Advantages and Risks of an Overcall

In competitive auctions, the goals change and this affects the requirements for making a bid. Consider South's call with this hand after East opens 1♣.



South would not open 1♠ with only 9 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card spade suit, but there are advantages to overcalling 1♠ with this hand:

- South wants to compete for the contract and prefers spades as trumps.
- A 1♠ overcall could interfere with the opponents' auction. Left to their own devices, the opponents usually settle into their best contract. The 1♠ overcall takes away room on the Bidding Ladder. For example, West can no longer respond 1♦ or 1♥. This may make it more difficult for the opponents to find their best trump fit and to stop at a comfortable level.
- If East-West win the auction, North-South will be defending. By overcalling 1♠, South may help the partnership find the best defense. If North has to make the opening lead, for example, South has suggested the spade suit.

There are also risks in overcalling:

- By overcalling, South gives information about the hand to the opponents as well as partner. This might help declarer make better decisions during the play if East-West win the auction.
- If South can't make 1♠, East-West will score points for defeating the contract. East has announced at least 13 points and West is in a good position to judge whether to bid higher or choose to defend and try to defeat the 1♠ contract. East-West could also double for penalties to increase the bonus the partnership receives if North-South can't make the contract.

Still, the advantages of overcalling tend to outweigh the risks, especially at the one level.

Guidelines for an Overcall

The guidelines for making an overcall try to balance the advantages and the risks. Here are some considerations¹⁰:

SUIT QUALITY

The longer and stronger your suit, the safer it is to overcall since you are less likely to be defeated by several tricks. Ideally, an overcall shows at least a five-card suit. If the suit is only five cards in length, it's safer to have two of the top three or three of the top five honors.

HAND VALUATION

When considering an overcall, the hand is valued the same way as for opening the bidding. Count high-card points—ace, 4; king, 3; queen, 2; jack, 1—and length points—1 point for a five-card suit; 2 points for a six-card suit; and so on.

LEVEL

The risk of overcalling at the one level is minimal compared to the advantages so, with a good suit, an overcall can be made with less

¹⁰Vulnerability is another consideration. You should be more cautious overcalling when vulnerable since the size of the penalty for being defeated is increased.

than the values for an opening bid. An overcall at the two level or higher, however, carries greater risk, so it tends to show a good suit and strength at least equivalent to that for opening the bidding.

The guidelines for making an overcall in a suit are:

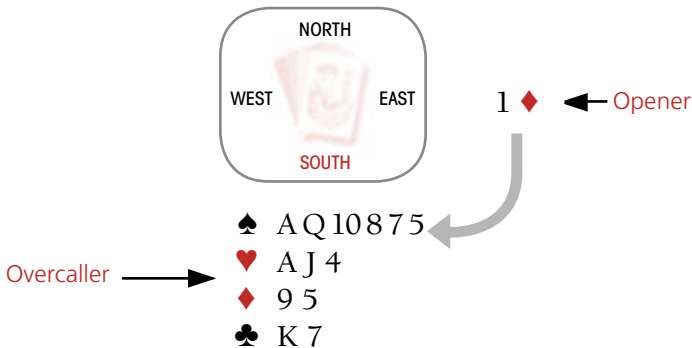
The Overcall

Distribution: • A good five-card suit or a six-card or longer suit.

Strength: • 7 to 17¹¹ high-card points at the one level.
• 13 to 17 points at the two level or higher.

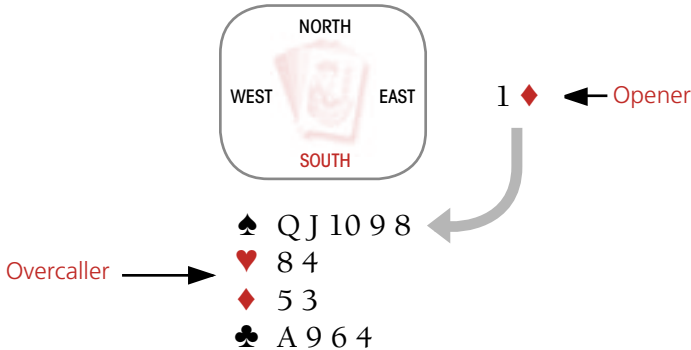
Examples

The following hands are suitable for an overcall by South after East opens 1♦.

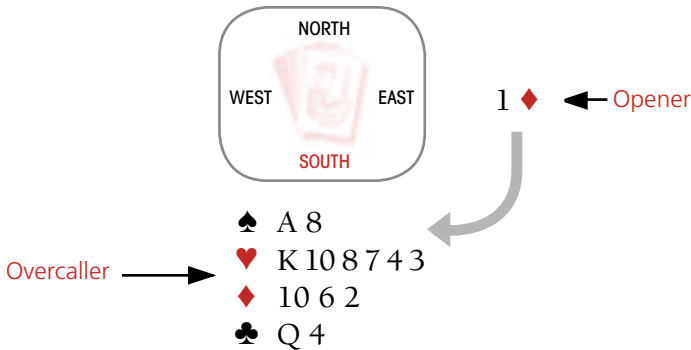


1♠. This is a very sound one-level overcall with 14 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card spade suit. South would open 1♠ as dealer. The overcall gets North-South into the auction.

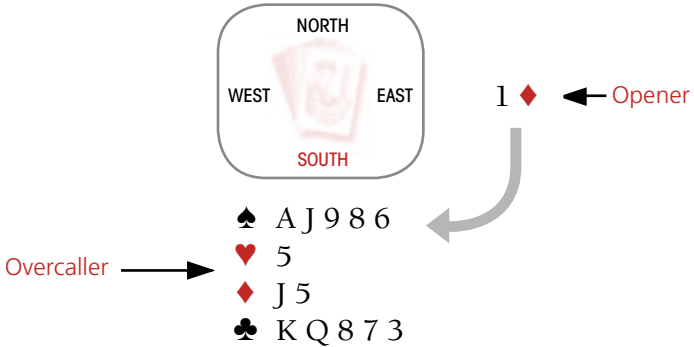
¹¹ The upper range for an overcall is lower than that for the opening bid, about 17 points instead of 21. Occasionally, you have a good suit and a hand with 18 or more points. You would be disappointed if partner passed your overcall, so you prefer to make a stronger bid. This is discussed in Chapter 3.



1♠. This is a minimum one-level overcall. There are only 7 high-card points and South would not open this hand. Still, there is a good five-card suit with three of the top five honors. South would take at least three spade tricks and the ♣A even if North has nothing. The risk in overcalling at the one level is minimal and South would like to compete, to interfere with the opponents, and to suggest a lead.

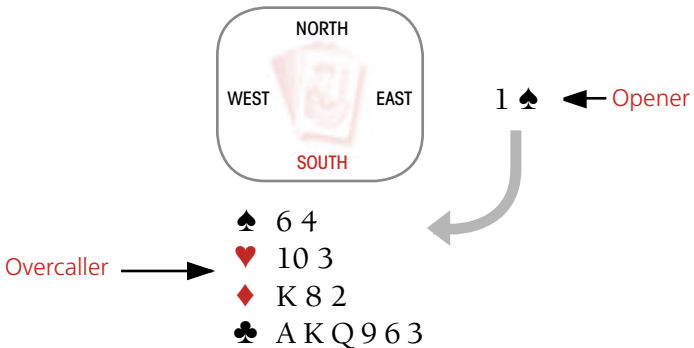


1♥. Although the hand is too weak to open the bidding if South were the dealer, there is enough strength for a one-level overcall. The sixth card in hearts makes up for not having three of the top five honors.



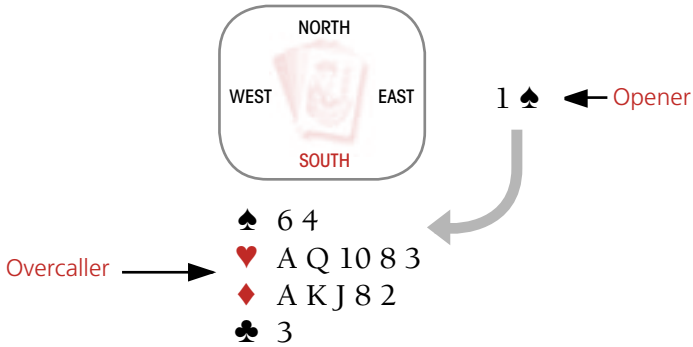
1♠. With two five-card suits, South overcalls the *higher-ranking*, the same choice as when opening the bidding. Although the spade suit does not have three of the top five honors, the second five-card suit provides compensation.

Simple overcalls at the two level or higher¹³ require a good suit and approximately the values for an opening bid or more. Here are hands suitable for a two-level overcall.



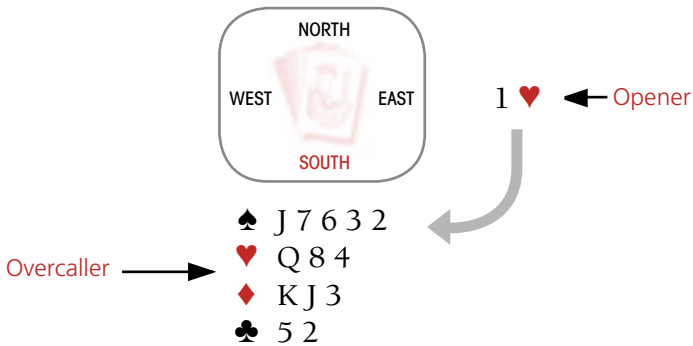
2♣. To overcall at the two level, South needs a good suit and about the same strength as for an opening bid. With 12 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit, this hand is strong enough to make a two-level overcall.

¹³See Practice Deal #30 for an example of an overcall at the three level.

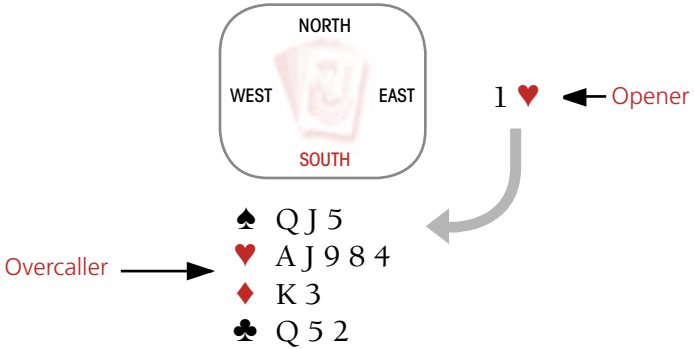


2♥. This is a good hand with enough strength to overcall at the two level. With a choice of suits to overcall, South chooses the higher-ranking.

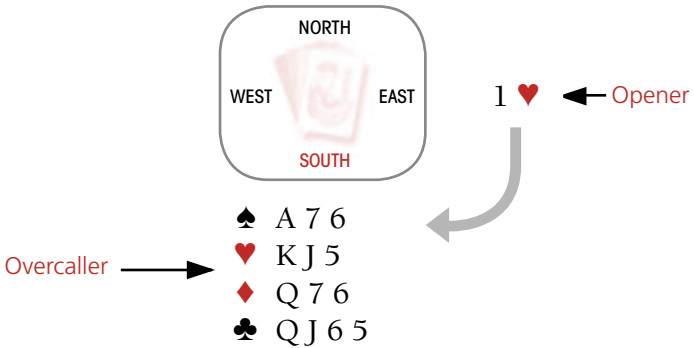
Here are examples of hands for South that are unsuitable for making an overcall after East opens 1♥.



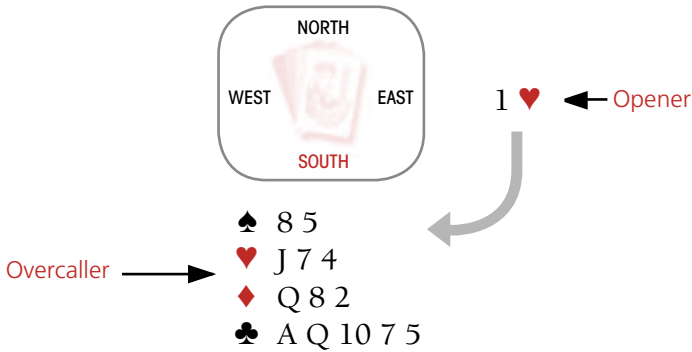
Pass. South has a five-card suit but, with a weak hand and a weak suit, there is little to be gained by overcalling. The risk of being defeated several tricks is substantial.



Pass. East picked the suit South likes best. South doesn't want to contest the auction in the same suit as East. Since South would be pleased to defend with hearts as trumps, there's no need to bid.



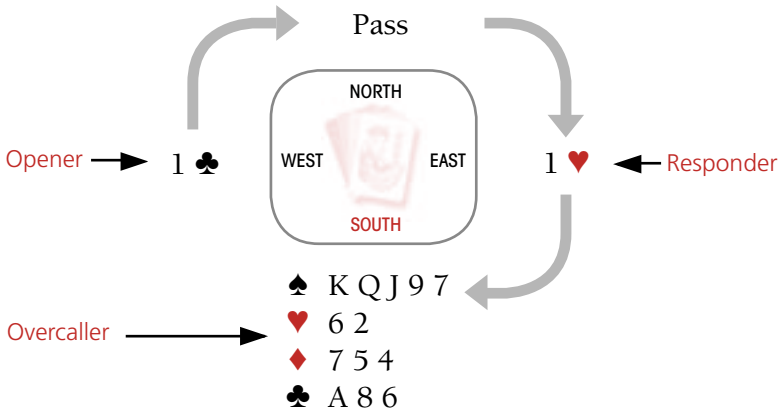
Pass. There is no five-card or longer suit to overcall. Even though South would open 1♣ with this hand, it's not necessary to overcall when an opponent opens the bidding. Passing can be a difficult call with 13 or more points, but it's a better choice than overcalling a weak four-card suit at the two level.



Pass. There is a reasonable five-card suit, but the hand isn't strong enough for a two-level overcall.

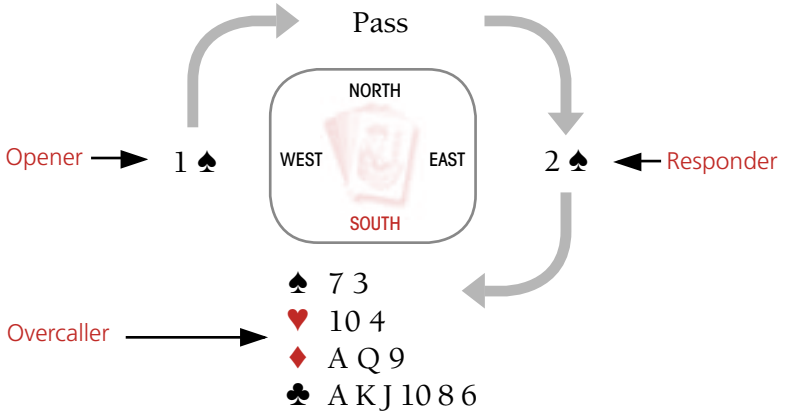
Making an Overcall After Both Opponents Have Bid

The overcall can be used after both opponents have bid. For example, suppose West opens 1♣, North passes, and East responds 1♥. It's South's call.



1♠. Now is the time to enter the auction. South has a good five-card suit and 10 high-card points. Although both opponents have bid, North-South may still be able to make a contract. South doesn't want to leave the auction entirely to the opponents.

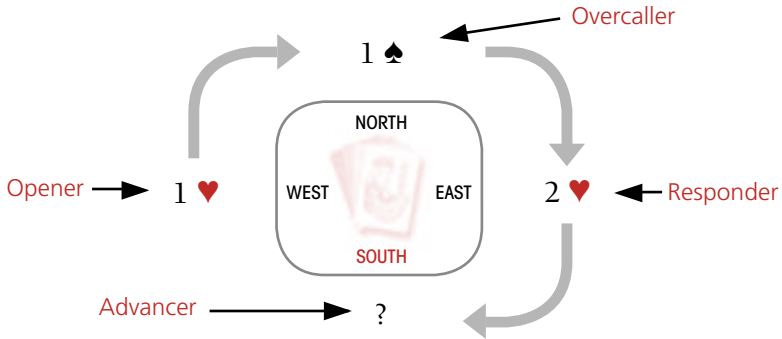
In this next example, West opens 1♠, North passes, and East raises to 2♠.



3♣. It's risky to come into the auction at the three level but, with a good six-card suit and a good hand, it's worth the chance. South doesn't want to let the opponents rest at a comfortable level in their chosen trump suit. Maybe South's 3♣ overcall will push East-West higher than they would like to be, or buy the contract.

Advancing a Simple Overcall

The partner of the opening bidder is the responder. The partner of the overcaller is referred to as the *advancer*.



The different names are a reminder that the guidelines for an overcall are not identical to those for an opening bid. Consequently, the guidelines for advancing an overcall are not the same as those for responding to an opening bid. Fortunately, there are good reasons for the differences.

Advancer's Priority – Supporting Partner's Suit

An overcall, in either a major or a minor suit, shows a good five-card or longer suit and is a strong suggestion that this be the trump suit. Advancer's priority, therefore, is to show support with three or more cards in the suit. With support, advancer can value the hand using *dummy points*: void – 5; singleton – 3; doubleton – 1.

In a competitive auction, the purpose of raising partner's suit is two-fold:

- **To try to reach your best contract.** If your side has the majority of the strength you want to explore the possibility of game.
- **To prevent the opponents from getting to their best contract.** If your side doesn't have the majority of strength, the opponents are likely to win the auction and could get a game or even a slam. You want to bid to try to make it difficult for them to

find their best contract. By taking away room on the Bidding Ladder, the opponents may misjudge and bid too much or too little. It may be worthwhile to deliberately overbid—bid more than you think you can make. The advantage is that the penalty the opponents receive for defeating your contract may be less than their score for bidding and making their own contract.

SUPPORTING WITH MINIMUM VALUES

With three-card support for partner's overcalled suit and about 6–9 points, advancer can make a single—non-jump—raise. However, with a hand suitable for preemptive action—an *unbalanced* hand with four-card or longer support—advancer can make a jump raise to try to take bidding room away from the opponents.

As a guideline in competitive auctions, it is usually safe to **raise to the level of the combined trumps held by the partnership**¹³. For example: if the partnership has eight combined trumps, compete to the two level—eight tricks; if the partnership has nine combined trumps, compete to the three level—nine tricks; if the partnership has ten combined trumps, compete to the four level—ten tricks.

Since the overcaller promises at least a five-card suit, advancer can apply this concept to help decide **HOW HIGH** to raise a one-level overcall with fewer than 10 points:

Advancing a One-Level Overcall with Support and 6-9 Points

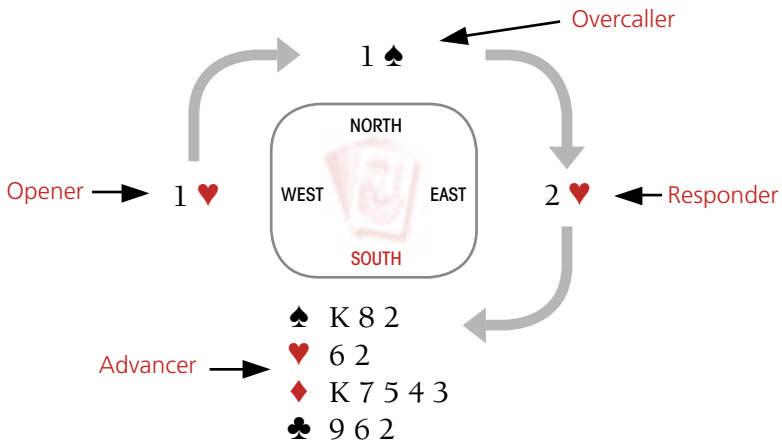
- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| • 3-card support | Raise to the two level. |
| • 4-card support | Raise to the three level. |
| • 5-card support | Raise to the game level. |

¹³ This is based on The Law of Total Tricks, a theory popularized by Larry Cohen.

The jump raise to the three level or higher is referred to as a *preemptive jump raise*. With fewer than 6 points, advancer can simply pass¹⁴.

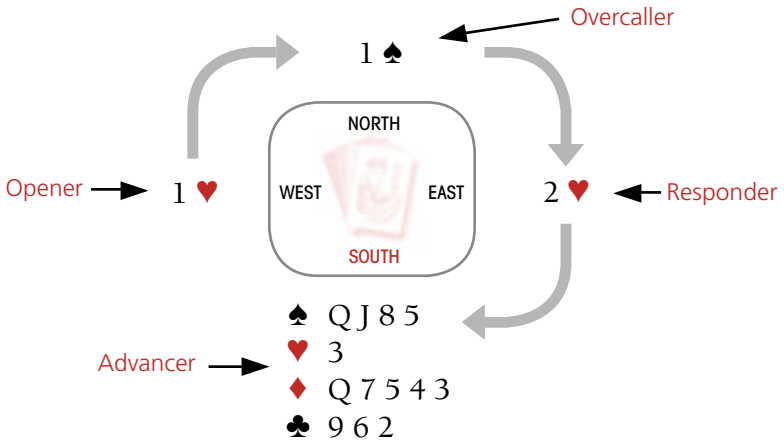
The above chart is a guideline and advancer can exercise judgment. For example, advancer could choose to raise only to the two level with four-card support if the hand is *balanced*, the high cards are not in the trump suit, or the partnership is vulnerable.

Here are examples of advancing an overcall with support and about 6-9 points. West opens 1♥, North overcalls 1♠, and East raises to 2♥. It's South's call.

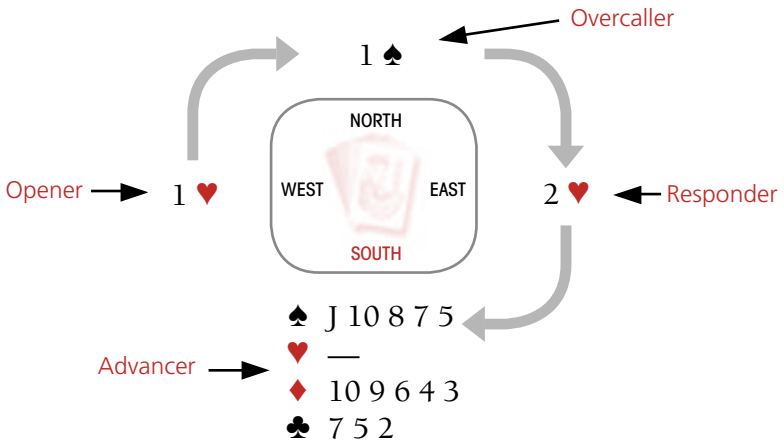


2♠. With three-card support for overcaller's spade suit and 7 points—6 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton heart—South raises to the two level. South would bid 2♠ whether or not East passes.

¹⁴6–9 points is only a guideline. Some players will make a preemptive raise with fewer than 6 points.



3♠. With four-card support for overcaller's spade suit and 8 points—5 high-card points plus 3 dummy points for the singleton heart—South makes a preemptive jump raise to the three level. If North has a minimum overcall and is defeated in this contract, it is likely that East-West can make a game contract and North-South have made a good sacrifice.

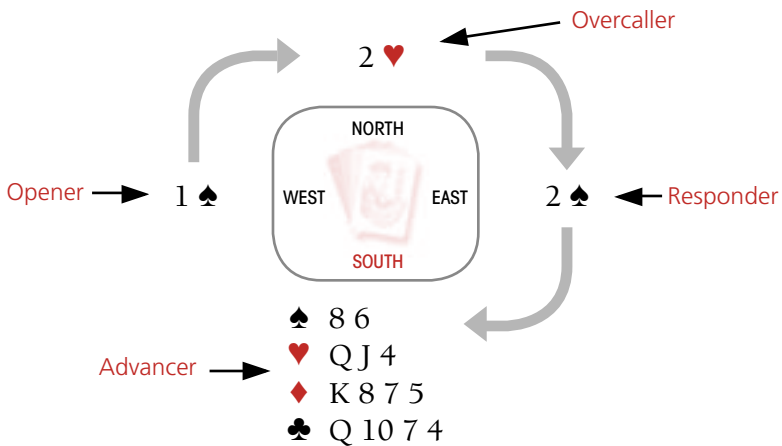


4♠. It may seem strange to jump to game with only a jack, but that's the recommended strategy for advancer with this type of hand. The hand is worth 6 points: 1 high-card point plus 5 dummy points for

the heart void. North is unlikely to make 4♠, but it is very probable that East-West can make at least a game and maybe a slam.

For a two-level overcall, partner usually has the equivalent of an opening bid or better. There is less bidding room for the advancer but the options with 6-9 points are similar to those after a one-level overcall: a single raise shows three-card or longer support; a jump raise is preemptive showing four-card or longer support.

For example, West opens 1♠, North overcalls 2♥, and East raises to 2♠. It's South's call as advancer.

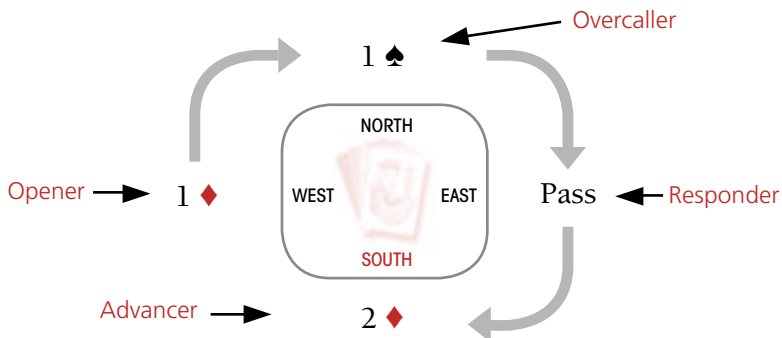


3♥. With 8 high-card points and three-card support for partner's heart suit, South has enough to raise, even though that will get the partnership to the three level. North has shown approximately the values for an opening bid or better by overcalling at the two level, so South wants to compete for the contract in the partnership's trump suit.

RAISING WITH 10+ POINTS—THE CUEBID

The situation is different when advancer has support and about 10 or more points. Your partnership could expect to make at least a partscore and maybe a game if partner has more than a minimum overcall. Rather than making it difficult for the opponents to reach their best spot, you're trying to reach your best contract.

A jump raise would describe a preemptive hand with 6-9 points and four-card support and might get the partnership too high. The solution is to make use of a bid that is available only in a competitive auction, the *cuebid*—a bid of the opponents' suit. For example, suppose West opens the bidding 1♦, North overcalls 1♠, and East passes. A bid of 2♦ by advancer, South, would be a cuebid.



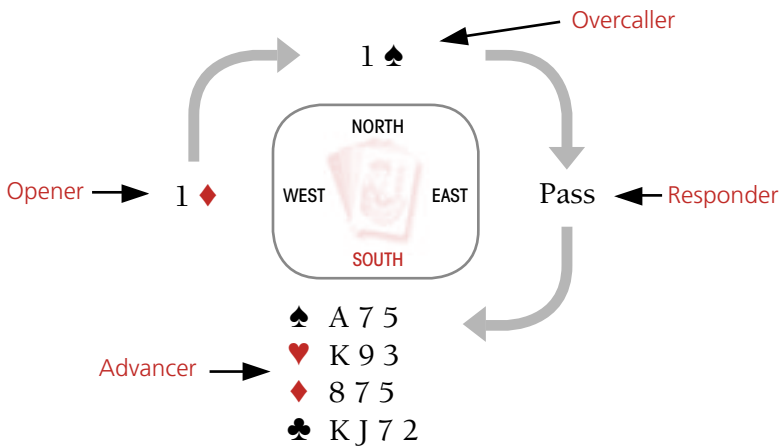
South's 2♦ bid is unlikely to be of much use in a natural sense. South would rarely want to play with diamonds as trumps once the opponents have bid diamonds. It is more practical to use a bid of the opponents' suit for other purposes. The cuebid becomes the tool for advancer to show a hand with support and interest in reaching a game contract, about 10 or more points.

**Advancing an Overcall
with Support and 10+ Points**

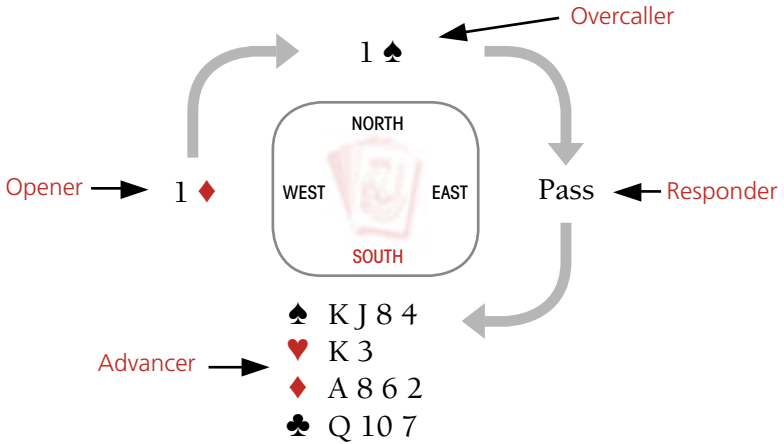
Cuebid the opponents' suit,
showing interest in reaching game.

The cuebid is forcing and the overcaller is expected to bid again if the opener passes. With a minimum, North, the overcaller, simply rebids the suit at the cheapest level. With more than a minimum, North makes some other descriptive bid such as a new suit or a jump in the overcalled suit. Advancer can then decide whether to stop in partscore or go for the game bonus.

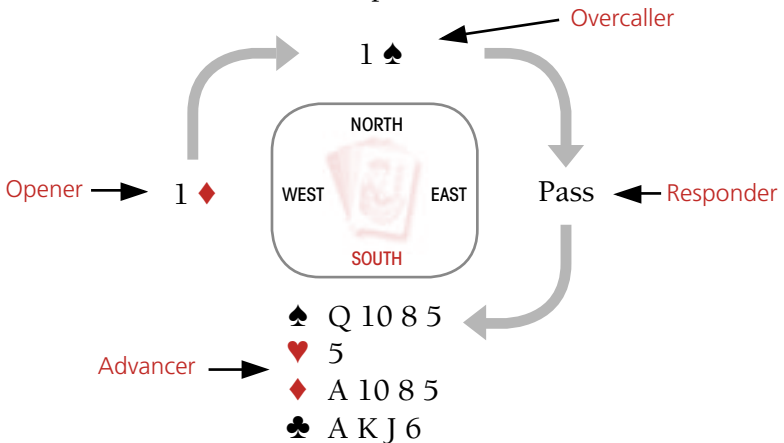
Here are examples of South advancing an overcall with support and 10+ points after West opens 1♦, North overcalls 1♠, and East passes.



2♦. With three-card support for spades and 11 high-card points, South is too strong for a simple raise to 2♠. By starting with a 2♦ cuebid of the opponents' suit, South shows interest in reaching game. If North rebids 2♠, showing no extra strength, South will pass and the partnership rests in partscore at the two level.



2♦. With four-card support for overcaller's suit and 14 points—13 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton heart—South shows interest in reaching game by starting with a 2♦ cuebid. If North rebids 2♠, South can make a further try by raising to 3♠. The partnership can still stop short of game if North has a bare minimum overcall of about 7-10 points.



2♦. With four-card spade support and 14 high-card points plus 3 dummy points for the singleton heart, South starts with a cuebid. Even if North makes a minimum rebid of 2♠, South has enough to jump to 4♠. Why not jump to 4♠ right away? That would be a preemptive raise, showing a weak hand.

Advancer's Second Choice – A New Suit

Without support for overcaller's suit, advancer can consider bidding a new suit. Since the overcall has already suggested a good five-card or longer suit as the trump suit for the partnership, advancer should introduce another suit only if it is likely to be an improvement. Advancer can use the following guideline:

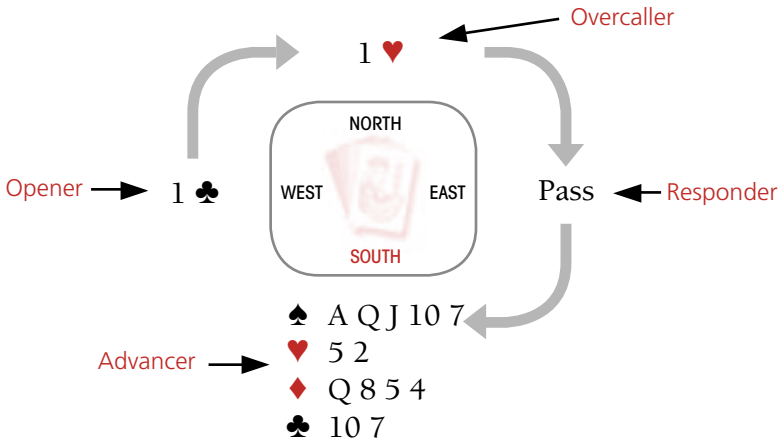
Guidelines for Advancing in a New Suit

- A good five-card suit or a six-card or longer suit.
- 6 or more points at the one level;
- 11 or more points at the two level.

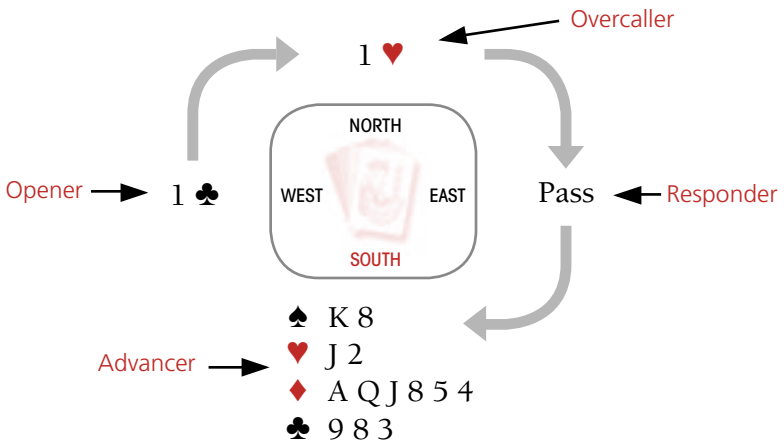
A new suit response to an opening bid is forcing. **An advance in a new suit is not forcing**¹⁵ since an overcall can be made with less than the values for an opening bid. The partnership doesn't want to get too high in a competitive auction when there isn't a good trump fit.

Here are examples of a new suit advance by South after West opens 1♣, North overcalls 1♥, and East passes.

¹⁵Some partnerships prefer a new suit advance to be forcing. Also, after a two-level or higher overcall, most partnerships would treat a new suit by advancer as forcing.



1♠. South doesn't have support for North's hearts but does have sufficient strength and a good enough suit to suggest spades at the one level. With a minimum overcall, North can pass South's change of suit to avoid getting too high¹⁶.

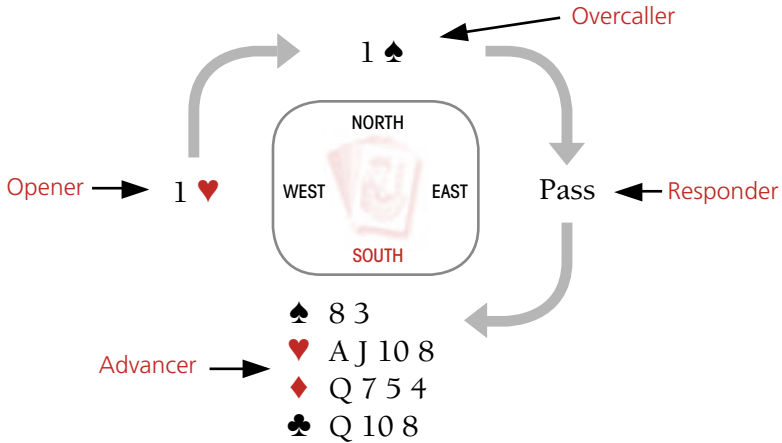


2♦. With 11 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit, South has enough to bid a new suit at the two level. North may pass with a minimum overcall but that should be fine. The partnership will be high enough.

¹⁶With a very strong hand where you would be disappointed if partner were to pass an advance in a new suit, you can start with a cuebid and then bid your suit.

Advancer's Third Choice – Notrump

With a balanced hand and some strength in the opponents' suit, advancer can bid notrump. For example:

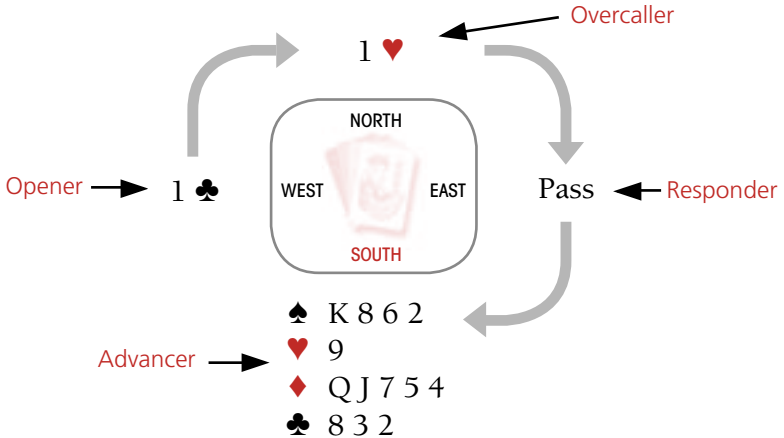


1NT. South doesn't have support for North's spades but does have 9 high-card points and some length and strength in hearts. South can suggest playing in notrump.

An advance of 1NT shows about 6–10 points; an advance of 2NT shows about 11–12 points. With 13 or more points, advancer will usually start with a cuebid.

Passing as Advancer

Advancer doesn't have to bid with no fit for partner's overcalled suit and no good suit to show.



Pass. South has enough to respond if North had opened the bidding, But it's unlikely there is enough combined strength for game and any attempt to "improve" the contract may get the partnership further into trouble.

Rebids by the Overcaller

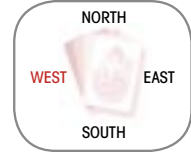
If advancer raises the overcalled suit, bids a new suit, or bids notrump, it's not forcing. The overcaller does not have to bid again. The overcaller can bid again with extra length in the overcalled suit or with a second suit to show. With extra values, the overcaller can move toward game or bid game.

If advancer cuebids, the overcaller must bid again. With nothing extra, the overcaller simply rebids the suit at the cheapest level. With more than minimum values, the overcaller can bid a new suit, jump in the overcalled suit, or bid notrump.

Rebids by the Overcaller after a Minimum Raise

The overcaller will usually pass advancer's simple raise. However, the overcaller may bid again with extra strength if it is possible there could be enough combined strength for game or if the opponents are also competing for the contract. For example, suppose you are West:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	PASS	2♠	1♥
?			PASS



♠ A Q 10 9 5 Pass. There isn't enough combined strength for West to consider going for the game bonus level. West has 11 points—10 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit—and East's raise is showing about 6-9 points.

♥ 8 5 4

♦ K 9 6

♣ J 5

♠ A K 10 7 5 3 3♠. This is a strong overcall and there may be enough combined strength for game. If East has 8 or 9 points, East could bid 4♠. With 6 or 7 points, East can decline the invitation by passing.

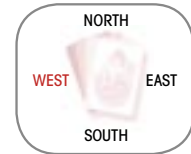
♥ Q 5

♦ A Q 6

♣ 9 4

In this next example, North-South compete to the three level in hearts:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2♥	2♠	1♥
?			3♥



♠ A K J 10 5 3 3♠. West has a choice of passing and defending against 3♥ or competing further. With a good six-card suit, competing to the three level seems reasonable.

♥ 6 5

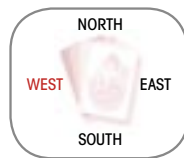
♦ A 9 6

♣ 9 4

Rebids by the Overcaller after a New Suit Advance

Advancer's new suit response is *invitational* but not forcing. With a minimum overcall, you can pass. With extra strength or *distribution*, you can bid again.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	PASS	1♠	1♦
?			PASS



♠ J 4 2
♥ K Q 10 9 5
♦ 9 6
♣ Q 8 2

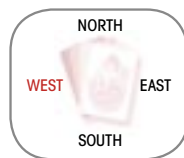
Pass. East's new suit advance isn't forcing. East hasn't shown support for hearts and, with a minimum overcall, West passes and leaves the partnership to play partscore in spades.

♠ 3
♥ A Q J 9 7 5
♦ 10 5 3
♣ A 4 2

2♥. West doesn't have to bid again but, with a good six-card suit, wants to repeat the suggestion that the partnership play with hearts as the trump suit.

In this next example, opener bids again over East's advance.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	PASS	1♠	1♦
?			2♦



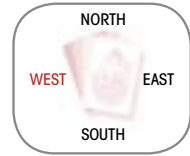
♠ A 10 4
♥ A J 10 7 5
♦ 5 4
♣ K 8 5

2♠. East didn't support West's hearts but West has support for East's spades. With more than a minimum overcall, West can compete further by raising spades.

Rebids by the Overcaller after a Notrump Advance

Advancer's response in notrump is not forcing. With a minimum hand, overcaller can pass. With extra strength or distribution, overcaller bids again.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	PASS	1NT	1♣
?			PASS



♠ K J 10 8 5
♥ A 9 3
♦ J 6 3
♣ 7 4

Pass. East didn't support West's spades and West has a minimum overcall. A partscore in notrump looks like the best spot.

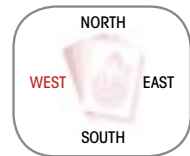
♠ A Q 10 5 2
♥ 6 3
♦ K J 10 7 5
♣ 8

2♦. East didn't support spades, the first suggested suit. With an unbalanced hand unsuitable for notrump, West shows the second suit. East might prefer diamonds to spades.

Overcaller's Rebid after a Cuebid

Advancer's cuebid is forcing, showing interest in reaching game and asking for more information about the overcaller's hand. With a minimum, the overcaller rebids as cheaply as possible.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	PASS	2♥	1♥
?			PASS

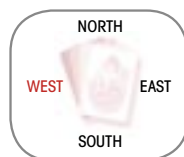


♠ K Q J 8 3
♥ J 9 5
♦ Q 7 2
♣ 9 4

2♠. With nothing extra for the overcall, West rebids spades as cheaply as possible after East's cuebid, even though it is only a five-card suit.

With a medium-strength hand, the overcaller makes a forward-going bid: a new suit or a jump in the original suit.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	PASS	2♣	1♣
?			PASS

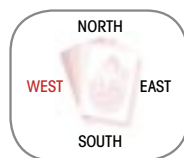


♠ 8 3
 ♥ A K J 9 5
 ♦ K Q 7 2
 ♣ 9 4

2♦. West has a sound one-level overcall and interest in reaching game after advancer shows a good hand. West describes the hand further by showing the second suit.

With a maximum-strength hand, the overcaller takes the partnership to game.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	PASS	2♦	1♦
?			PASS

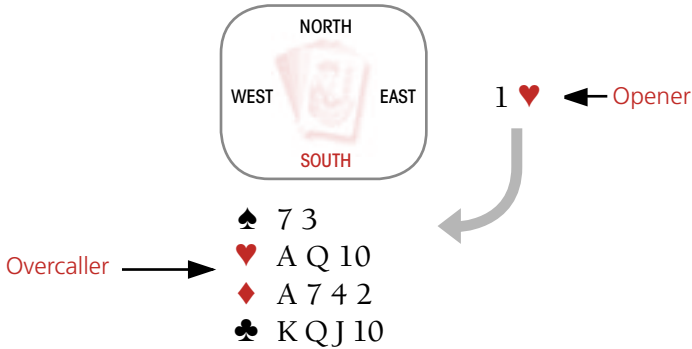


♠ A K J 10 8 7 4
 ♥ 8 3
 ♦ 6
 ♣ A Q 9

4♠. Since advancer has about 10 or more points and interest in reaching game, West is willing to go for the game bonus after the cuebid.

The Notrump Overcall

Consider South's call with this hand after East opens 1♥:

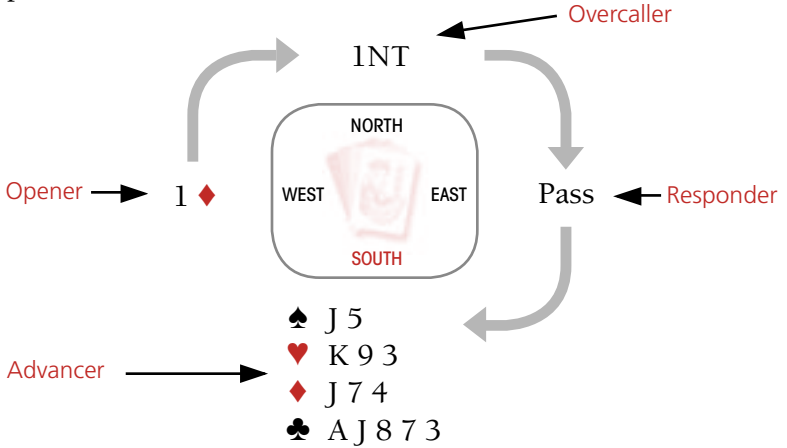


1NT. South would have opened 1NT if East had passed. An overcall of 1NT is similar to an opening bid of 1NT. It shows a balanced hand of about 15-17 points¹⁷.

The only consideration is that East's 1♥ opening showed a five-card or longer suit and West is likely to lead a heart against South's notrump contract. So, **South should have some strength in the opponents' suit to overcall 1NT.**

¹⁷ Since there is more risk in overcalling 1NT after an opponent has shown strength by opening the bidding, the range for a 1NT overcall is actually about 15-18 points. See Practice Deal #26 for an example of a 1NT overcall.

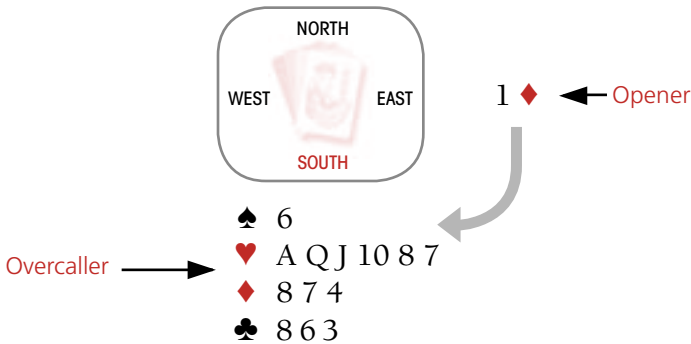
Since the 1NT overcall is similar to an opening bid of 1NT, advancer can bid in the same manner as responding to a 1NT opening bid. For example, suppose West opens 1♦, North overcalls 1NT, East passes, and it's South's call.



3NT. South has 10 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit. That's enough to take the partnership to game opposite North's 1NT overcall since the partnership has at least 26 combined points.

The Weak Jump Overcall

A *jump overcall*—bidding one or more levels higher than necessary—is similar to a preemptive opening bid. It shows a weak hand with a long suit¹⁸. Consider South's call with this hand after East opens 1♦:



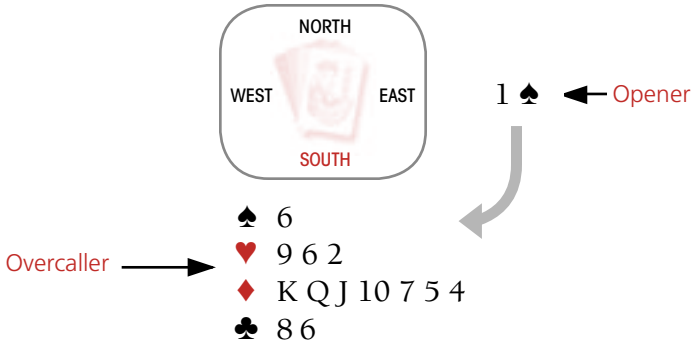
2♥. With a good six-card suit but a hand too weak to open at the one level, South would have opened 2♥, a weak two-bid, if East had passed. So, instead of making a simple overcall of 1♥, South can make a preemptive jump overcall of 2♥.

Like the weak two-bid, the advantage of the weak jump overcall is that it takes up room on the Bidding Ladder, making it more challenging for the opponents to find their best contract¹⁹. Since there is the risk of being doubled for penalty, the hand should be worth about five or six playing tricks.

¹⁸ Some partnerships use a jump overcall to show a hand too strong for a simple overcall, but the popular modern style is to use weak jump overcalls.

¹⁹ See Practice Deals #27 and #28 for examples of the effect of a weak jump overcall.

With a seven-card suit, a weak jump overcall can be made at the three level, similar to a three-level preemptive opening bid. For example, consider South's call with this hand after East opens 1♠.



3♦. With a good seven-card suit, South would have opened 3♦ if East had passed. South can make the same call after East opens 1♠ but it is now a weak jump overcall instead of a preemptive three-level opening bid.

As with any preemptive bid, South should be more cautious when vulnerable since the potential penalty is larger. With only six playing tricks, South might prefer to pass with this hand when vulnerable. South shouldn't make a simple overcall of 2♦ since North would expect South to hold a stronger hand for a simple two-level overcall—about the values for an opening bid.



SUMMARY

Requirements for a Simple Overcall

Distribution: A good five-card suit or a six-card or longer suit.

Strength: 7 or more high-card points at the one level.
13 or more points at the two level or higher.

Advancing an Overcall with Support

6–9 points: With 3-card support, raise to the cheapest level.
With 4-card support, raise to the three level.
With 5-card support, raise to the game level.

10+ points: Cuebid the opponents' suit, showing interest in reaching game.

Advancing in a New Suit

Distribution: A good five-card suit or a six-card longer suit.

Strength: 6 or more points at the one level;
11 or more points at the two level.
A new suit advance is not forcing²⁰.

Advancing in Notrump

6–10 points: Bid notrump at the cheapest level.

11–12 points: Jump in notrump.

13+ points: Cuebid then bid notrump.

Requirements for a 1NT Overcall

Distribution: Balanced hand.

Strength: 15–18 points (same strength in the opponent's suit).

Requirements for a Preemptive Jump Overcall

Distribution: A good six-card suit at the two level.

A good seven-card suit at the three level.

Strength: A weak hand.

²⁰ Some partnerships prefer to treat a new suit response as forcing.

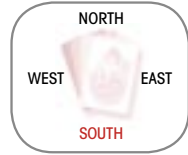
Answers to Quiz – Part I

- a) 1♠. With a good five-card spade suit and 12 high-card points, make a simple overcall at the one level.
- b) 2♦. With 13 high-card points and a good six-card diamond suit, this hand is strong enough for a simple overcall at the two level.
- c) 1♠. Although there are only 8 high-card points, with a good five-card spade suit that's enough to make a simple overcall at the one level.
- d) Pass. With 9 high-card points and a poor five-card suit which would have to be bid at the two level, this hand is unsuitable for an overcall.
- e) 2♦. With 14 high-card points plus 1 length point for each five-card suit, there is enough strength to make a simple overcall at the two level. With two five-card suits, bid the higher-ranking.
- f) Pass. East has a five-card or longer heart suit, so South doesn't want to compete in the same suit. South is happy to defend with hearts as the trump suit.
- g) 1NT. With a balanced hand and 16 high-card points, South would have opened 1NT if East had passed. After East opens, South can overcall 1NT to describe the hand. South has some strength in hearts, the opponents' suit, in case that suit is led against a notrump contract.
- h) 2♠ (1♠). Although South could overcall 1♠, a weak jump overcall to 2♠ is more descriptive. It shows a good six-card suit but a weak hand, similar to an opening weak two-bid.
- i) 3♣. A jump overcall to the three level is also preemptive, similar to an opening bid at the three level. If South were to make a simple overcall of 2♣, North would expect a stronger hand.
- j) Pass. South has a good five-card suit but not enough strength to make an overcall at the two level.
- k) 2♥. With both East and West bidding, it's a little risky to come into the auction at the two level, but South has a good five-card suit and a good hand. South would certainly like North to lead a heart if East-West buy the contract.
- l) 3♣. This time, South has to overcall at the three level. South has a good seven-card suit and North-South are non vulnerable, so it's not too risky.

Quiz – Part II

Both sides are vulnerable. West opens 1♦. North overcalls 1♥ and East passes. What call would South make, as advancer, with each of the following hands?

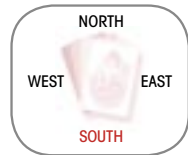
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	1♥	PASS	?



- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| a) ♠ J 9 7 4 3
♥ 4
♦ Q 8 2
♣ 10 7 6 3 | b) ♠ 7 3
♥ J 9 4
♦ J 8 4
♣ A J 7 5 3 | c) ♠ 5
♥ Q 10 8 5
♦ 8 6 5 3
♣ K 7 4 2 |
| d) ♠ 10 8 7 4 2
♥ K 9 8 6 3
♦ 8 7 3
♣ — | e) ♠ K 10 4
♥ K J 6
♦ Q 10
♣ J 9 7 4 3 | f) ♠ J 4
♥ A 10 8
♦ A 8 6 2
♣ K Q 7 5 |
| g) ♠ A Q J 8 7
♥ 6 3
♦ 8 6 4
♣ K 9 2 | h) ♠ Q 7 4 3
♥ 8 5
♦ A Q 10
♣ J 9 7 5 | i) ♠ Q J 7
♥ K 4
♦ K Q 10 5
♣ 10 9 7 3 |

North-South are vulnerable and East-West are non vulnerable. East opens 1♣, South overcalls 1♠, and West passes. North advances to 2♠ and East passes. What rebid would South make, as the overcaller, with the following hands?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	2♠	1♣	1♠
		PASS	?



- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| j) ♠ K Q 10 8 5
♥ 6 4 2
♦ A 7 5
♣ 6 4 | k) ♠ K J 10 7 5 3
♥ Q 4
♦ K Q 7
♣ A 5 | l) ♠ A J 8 7 6 3
♥ 4
♦ A K J
♣ K 8 4 |
|--|--|---|

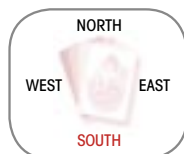
Answers to Quiz – Part II

- a) Pass. South doesn't like North's choice of trump suit but, with only 3 high-card points and 1 length point, South doesn't have enough strength to bid another suit or notrump.
- b) 2♥. With three-card support for hearts and 7 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton spade, South has enough to raise partner's suit.
- c) 3♥. South has 5 high-card points and 3 dummy points for the singleton. With a hand in the 6-9 point range and four-card support, South makes a preemptive raise to the three level.
- d) 4♥. There are 3 high-card points and 5 dummy points for the void in clubs. With five-card heart support, South makes a preemptive raise to the game level. If North can't make 4♥, it's likely the opponents can make something.
- e) 2♦. With support for partner and 10 high-card points plus 1 dummy point, South cuebids the opponents' suit. If North makes a minimum rebid of 2♥, South can pass. This avoids getting the partnership too high when North has a minimum one-level overcall.
- f) 2♦. With support for partner's suit and 14 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton spade, South starts with a 2♦ cuebid. If North makes a minimum rebid of 2♥, South can raise to 3♥ to invite partner to bid game.
- g) 1♠. With no fit for hearts but a good five-card spade suit and 10 high-card points, South can advance in a new suit. This is not forcing.
- h) 1NT. With 9 high-card points and strength in the opponents' suit, South has enough to advance to 1NT.
- i) 2NT. With 11 high-card points and strength in diamonds, South makes an invitational jump to 2NT.
- j) Pass. With 9 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit, South doesn't have much extra for the overcall. North's raise shows about 6-9 points, so South settles for partscore.
- k) 3♠. North has about 6-9 points and South has 15 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit. Game is possible if North has 8 or 9 points rather than 6 or 7. South invites North to continue to game by rebidding 3♠.
- l) 4♠. South has 16 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit. Even if North has only 7 points, there should be enough combined strength to go for the game bonus.

Quiz – Part III

Neither side is vulnerable. East opens 1♦, South overcalls 1♠, West passes, North advances to 2♦, and East passes. What does South bid?

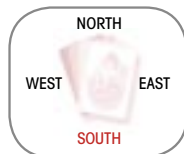
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	2♦	1♦ PASS	1♠ ?



- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| a) ♠ A J 10 8 5
♥ K 3
♦ 10 9 2
♣ J 7 3 | b) ♠ A K J 10 7 3
♥ K Q 4
♦ 8 4
♣ 7 3 | c) ♠ K J 10 7 5
♥ J 3
♦ 5
♣ A K J 7 5 |
|---|--|--|

Both sides are vulnerable. East opens 1♣, South overcalls 1♥, West passes, North advances to 1♠, and East passes. What is South's call?

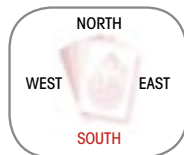
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	1♠	1♣ PASS	1♥ ?



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

East-West are vulnerable, North-South are non vulnerable. West opens 1♥, North overcalls 1♠, East passes and South cuebids 2♥ as advancer. West passes and North rebids 2♠. What rebid would South make?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥ PASS	1♠ 2♠	PASS PASS	2♥ ?



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

Answers to Quiz – Part III

- a) 2♠. North's 2♦ cuebid of the opponents' suit is forcing, showing 10 or more points. With nothing much extra for the overcall, South rebids spades at the cheapest level.
- b) 3♠. With 13 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit, South has extra strength for the one-level overcall. South can show the extra strength and the extra length in spades suit by rebidding the suit with a jump.
- c) 3♣. North's 2♦ cuebid is forcing. With a good hand for the overcall, South shows the second suit.
- d) Pass. A new suit by advancer is not forcing. With nothing extra, South passes and stops in partscore. North should have a good five-card or longer spade suit. Since North didn't raise hearts, it's likely that North has fewer than three hearts.
- e) 2♠. With more than a minimum for the overcall and support for North's spades, South raises to 2♠.
- f) 2♦. South doesn't like North's spades but has a good hand for the overcall. South bids the second suit, giving North a choice of hearts or diamonds.
- g) Pass. North has made a minimum rebid, showing nothing extra for the one-level overcall. Game is unlikely, so South settles for partscore.
- h) 3♠. With 14 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton diamond, South has enough to invite North to game even though North has promised nothing extra. If North has as much as 11 or 12 points, game should be reasonable. With less, North can pass.
- i) 4♠. Even opposite a minimum one-level overcall, there should be enough combined strength for game since South has four-card support and 17 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton heart. South didn't advance to 4♠ right away because that would show a weaker hand of about 6-9 points.

DEAL: 5

DEALER: NORTH

VUL: NONE

♠ K 9 3
♥ Q 9 4
♦ A 10 4
♣ 8 7 6 2



♠ 7 2
♥ A K 8 7 3
♦ 9 6 3
♣ K Q 5

♠ A Q J 10 5
♥ 10 2
♦ K Q 8
♣ 10 9 4

♠ 8 6 4
♥ J 6 5
♦ J 7 5 2
♣ A J 3

Suggested Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	1♠	2♥
2♠	PASS	PASS	PASS

North has 12 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit, enough to open the bidding. North opens 1♥.

East has 12 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit. If North had passed, East would open 1♠. After North's opening bid, East can compete for the contract by overcalling 1♠.

South, the responder, has three-card support for North's major suit and 7 high-card points. That's enough to raise to 2♥.

West, the advancer, has 9 high-card points and three-card support for East's suit. West can continue the partnership's competition for the contract by raising to 2♠.

North has already described the hand by opening the bidding and passes with nothing extra to show.

Since West's raise is limited to about 9 points, East knows the partnership only has enough combined strength for partscore. East passes.

South has nothing extra to show and also passes. The contract is 2♠ with East as the declarer.

Suggested Opening Lead

South, on declarer's left, makes the opening lead. With no touching high cards in partner's suit, **South leads low, the ♥5.**

Declarer's Plan

After South makes the opening lead and the West hand comes down as the dummy, East makes a plan. As declarer, **East's goal is to take at least 8 tricks** to make the 2♠ contract. East begins by counting the sure winners: five sure tricks in spades and three in diamonds. **That's a total of eight, exactly what is required.**

With enough tricks to make the contract, declarer's priority is to draw trumps after gaining the lead. Suppose North wins the first two tricks with the ♥A-K and the defenders then take three club tricks. Whatever the defenders lead next, declarer can win. East can then start taking spade winners until the defenders have no trumps remaining. This takes three rounds because the five missing trumps are divided 3-2.

Once the opponents' trumps are drawn, it is safe to take three diamond winners. On the actual deal, East could have taken the diamond winners before drawing trumps, but that would not have worked if either opponent had a singleton or doubleton diamond.

Comments

If East-West did not compete for the contract, North-South would play the contract in 2♥. By using the overcall to compete, East-West will either be left to play in the makeable 2♠ contract or push North-South to 3♥, which can be defeated two tricks.

DECLARER'S PLAN—THE ABC'S

Declarer: East Contract: 2♠

ASSESS THE SITUATION

Goal	8
Sure Tricks	8
Extra Tricks Needed	0

BROWSE DECLARER'S CHECKLIST

Not applicable

CONSIDER THE ORDER

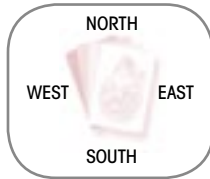
- Draw trumps.
- Take the tricks and run.

DEAL: 6

DEALER: EAST

VUL: N-S

♠ A 9 4
♥ A K 5 3
♦ 6 5 4
♣ Q J 7



♠ K 5 3
♥ 9 4
♦ Q J 10 9 7
♣ A K 5

♠ Q J 10 8 6
♥ 7 2
♦ 8 3 2
♣ 9 6 3

♠ 7 2
♥ Q J 10 8 6
♦ A K
♣ 10 8 4 2

Suggested Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3NT	PASS	1♦	1♥
		PASS	PASS

East has 13 high-card points plus 1 point for the five-card diamond suit. East opens in the minor suit, 1♦.

South has only 10 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card suit but, with a good five-card heart suit and three of the top five honors, South can overcall at the one level.

West, the responder, has a balanced hand with 14 high-card points. Since East has opened the bidding, West decides **How High**, game, knowing the partnership has at least 27 combined points. With strength in hearts, the opponents' suit, West decides **Where**, notrump. West jumps to 3NT.

North, East, and South all pass, and the contract is 3NT played by West.

Suggested Opening Lead

North is on lead against 3NT. Without any information from the auction, North would lead the ♠Q, top of the solid sequence. After South's overcall, however, **North leads the ♥7**, top of the doubleton in partner's suit.

Declarer's Plan

West's goal is to take at least nine tricks to make the 3NT contract. West begins by counting the sure winners: two spades, two hearts, and three clubs for a total of seven tricks. Two more tricks are required.

West browses Declarer's Checklist. Declarer can plan to promote three extra winners in the diamond suit by driving out the $\spadesuit A$ and $\spadesuit K$.

After winning the $\heartsuit K$, West leads to one of dummy's high diamonds to drive out the $\spadesuit K$. South wins and leads another heart, driving out West's $\heartsuit A$. Declarer can lead another high diamond to drive out the $\spadesuit A$ and establish dummy's remaining diamonds as winners.

Unfortunately for East-West, South can take enough heart winners to defeat the contract after winning the $\spadesuit A$. North-South win the race to promote winners in their long suit, thanks to North's opening lead of the $\heartsuit 7$, partner's suit.

Comments

If North had led the $\spadesuit Q$ instead of a heart, declarer could make the contract. Declarer wins either the $\spadesuit A$ or $\spadesuit K$ and plays a high diamond to drive out the $\spadesuit K$. South can lead another spade to drive out declarer's remaining high spade and establish North's remaining spades as winners. When declarer leads another high diamond, however, South wins the $\spadesuit A$ and has no spades to lead. Whatever South leads, declarer wins and takes the established diamond winners to make the contract with an *overtrick*.

The overcall is effective in getting the partnership off to the best opening lead and did not involve much risk. If East-West chose to defend against $1\heartsuit$, that contract can only be defeated one trick, for a small penalty. If East-West choose to play in a partscore contract in diamonds, South's overcall has kept them from getting to 3NT.

DECLARER'S PLAN—THE ABC'S

Declarer: West Contract: 3NT

ASSESS THE SITUATION

Goal	9
Sure Tricks	7
Extra Tricks Needed	2

BROWSE DECLARER'S CHECKLIST

Promotion:	3 in diamonds
Length	
The Finesse	

CONSIDER THE ORDER

- Develop the extra diamond tricks early.

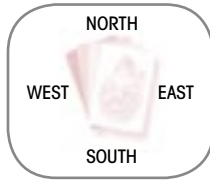
DEAL: 7

DEALER: SOUTH

VUL: E-W

♠ A Q 10 9 7
 ♥ 8 6 3
 ♦ K Q J
 ♣ 8 5

♠ 5
 ♥ A K J 7 5 2
 ♦ A 10 5
 ♣ A J 3



♠ 4 2
 ♥ Q 10 4
 ♦ 9 7 6 4 3
 ♣ K Q 7

♠ K J 8 6 3
 ♥ 9
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ 10 9 6 4 2

Suggested Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	2♥	PASS
PASS(?)	PASS	PASS	4♠

South passes. West opens 1♥ with 17 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit.

North, with a good five-card suit and 12 high-card points, overcalls 1♠.

East has three-card support for partner's hearts and 7 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton spade. That's enough to raise to 2♥.

South has only 4 high-card points but can add 3 dummy points for the singleton heart and 1 dummy point for the doubleton diamond. With five-card support for partner's overcalled suit and a hand in the 6-9 point range, South can make a preemptive raise to the four level, 4♠. This is a two-way bid. With the good distributional hand, it is likely the partnership can take a lot of tricks with spades as the trump suit. At the same time, the jump to 4♠ makes it difficult for East-West to find their best spot.

West has a challenging decision over North's 4♠ advance. West

planned to bid 4♥ but would now have to bid 5♥ to win the contract. That may be too high. West might prefer to defend, hoping to defeat 4♠²¹.

If West doesn't bid, North will become declarer in a 4♠ contract.

Suggested Opening Lead

East leads the ♥4, low from three or more cards with no touching honors in partner's suit.

Declarer's Plan

North's goal is to take at least ten tricks with spades as trumps. North counts five sure tricks in spades, but that's all. Five more tricks need to be developed.

North browses Declarer's Checklist. Two hearts can be trumped in dummy. Also, two tricks can be promoted in diamonds. That's not enough to make the contract, but it's the best declarer can do.

After West wins the first heart, the defenders may simply take their diamond and club winners. If not, North can draw trumps on gaining the lead, promote the diamond winners and ruff two hearts with dummy's spades.

Comments

Although North-South can't make 4♠, going down one trick is a good result. East-West can make 4♥. They have six heart tricks, a diamond trick, and three club tricks. The penalty for being defeated in 4♠ is less than the score value for 4♥.

There is little East-West can do. If they bid 5♥, they will be defeated one trick. South's preemptive jump raise is effective.

²¹ West might make a penalty double of 4♠ to increase the score for defeating the contract.

DECLARER'S PLAN—THE ABC'S

Declarer: North Contract: 4♠

ASSESS THE SITUATION

Goal	10
Sure Tricks	5
Extra Tricks Needed	5

BROWSE DECLARER'S CHECKLIST

Promotion:	2 in diamonds
Length	0
The Finesse	0
Trumping in Dummy	2 in hearts

CONSIDER THE ORDER

- Draw trumps.
- Develop the extra diamond tricks early.
- Keep two trumps in dummy to ruff hearts.

DEAL: 8

DEALER: WEST

VUL: BOTH

♠ 4 2
 ♥ 10 8 4
 ♦ K Q J 6 2
 ♣ A K 4

♠ A K 10 8 6
 ♥ Q 5 3
 ♦ A 10 7
 ♣ 10 6



♠ J 9 7 5
 ♥ 9
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ J 9 7 5 3 2

♠ Q 3
 ♥ A K J 7 6 2
 ♦ 8 5 4
 ♣ Q 8

Suggested Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	1♠	PASS	2♥
PASS	3♥	PASS	4♥
PASS	PASS	PASS	

West has 13 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card diamond suit. Although the hand is balanced, it isn't strong enough to open 1NT. West opens 1♦, the long suit.

North has 13 high-card points plus 1 point for the five-card spade suit, for a total of 14. With a good five-card suit, North overcalls 1♠.

East, with only 2 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit, doesn't have enough to respond and passes.

South doesn't have three-card support for North's spades but does have 12 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card heart suit. That's enough to advance in a new suit at the two level. The 2♥ bid is forward going, but not forcing. North can pass with a minimum overcall.

West doesn't have enough to bid again and passes.

North has three-card support for South's hearts and more than a minimum for the overcall. North raises to 3♥ to show the support and interest in reaching game.

After East passes, South has enough to continue to game with the knowledge that the partnership has a fit in hearts and North has more than the minimum strength for an overcall. South's 4♥ bid is followed by three passes, ending the auction.

Suggested Opening Lead

West could lead the ♦K, top of the solid sequence, or the ♣A, top of the touching honors in that suit, against South's 4♥ contract.

Declarer's Plan

South is declarer and the goal is to take ten tricks with hearts as trumps. South counts three sure tricks in spades, six in hearts, and one in diamonds. That's a total of ten tricks, exactly what is required.

West may take the first two club tricks and then lead the ♦K, or lead the ♦K initially. In either case, after winning the ♦A, declarer's priority is to draw trumps since there are enough tricks to make the contract. It will then be safe to take the spade winners.

Since the spade suit is unevenly divided between the two hands, declarer starts with the ♠Q, high card from the short side first. The ♠2 is then played to dummy's ♠A and ♠K and declarer has ten tricks. On the third round of spades, declarer discards a diamond from the South hand.

Comments

If declarer tries to take the spade tricks before drawing trumps, West will trump the third round of spades. West can then take a diamond winner to go with the two club tricks to defeat the contract.

DECLARER'S PLAN—THE ABC'S

Declarer: South Contract: 4♥

ASSESS THE SITUATION

Goal	10
Sure Tricks	10
Extra Tricks Needed	0

BROWSE DECLARER'S CHECKLIST

Not applicable

CONSIDER THE ORDER

- Draw trumps first.
- High card from the short side first in spades.