

More On OverCalling

We have already considered the topic of [OverCalls](#). Our goal here is to provide the details to help us refine both OverCalling and Advancing after Partner OverCalls. OverCalls first: If you are Overcalling at the 1-level you need a good suit or a strong hand or both. What do we mean by “good suit”? For the 1-level your OverCalled suit should have a $SQ=7$; for the 2-level $SQ=8$ should be used. ($SQ = \#$ of Cards in Suit + $\#$ of Honors, including Ten, in that suit).

If you are considering OverCalling at the 2-level there are additional considerations if both Opponents have bid: (a) Is their auction a 2-over-1? If so, how many points are left for Partner? Is the suit Safe? e.g. $1\clubsuit - P - 1\spadesuit - ?$ Either $2\diamondsuit$ or $2\heartsuit$, are safe as opposed to the less safe $2\clubsuit$ in the following $1\diamondsuit - P - 1\spadesuit - ?$ Why are $2\diamondsuit$ or $2\heartsuit$ safe and $2\clubsuit$ less so? In the first case both opponents “by-passed \diamondsuit 's and \heartsuit 's meaning they likely don't have length in those suits. In the second case, there is a possibility that Opener had \clubsuit 's and was ready to reverse. Unless your \clubsuit holding is 6+ you might be in for a rude surprise. You would have a strong hand with some strength in your suit sitting on your left.

Here's a suggestion from a very good Player and excellent teacher. Ray Depew recommends (a) Overcalling $1\diamondsuit$ whenever LHO Opens $1\clubsuit$ and you have $4\diamondsuit$'s and (b) when this occurs you treat Partners $1\diamondsuit$ as if he had Opened, that is ignore the $1\clubsuit$ Opening. Why? Because it opens up the opportunity for Partner to better describe his hand. $1\clubsuit - 1\diamondsuit - 1\heartsuit - ?$; $1\clubsuit$ shows 5 \spadesuit 's while X shows 4. And $1\clubsuit - 1\diamondsuit - 1\spadesuit - ?$; X promises 4 \heartsuit 's.

Now, let's look at the details, all the while taking note that HCP is not a Key factor.

1. **Level** – At the 1-level almost anything goes, especially when not vulnerable. It is relatively safe at this level – someone is likely to rescue you if you are in the wrong contract. The criteria for the 2-level are significantly different; still HCP are not crucial. Primarily you need a better suit since you may get stuck with the bid, perhaps even doubled.
2. **Suit Quality**
 - a) 1-Level
 - 5-Card suit ... have at least 2 Honors (i.e. $SQ=7$)
 - 6-Card suit ... can be very weak (maybe even $SQ=6$)
 - b) 2-Level
 - 5-Card suit ... avoid mediocre suits, suits should have 3 Honors (i.e. $SQ=8$)
 - 6-Card suit ... when Not Vulnerable suit can be weak, Vulnerable needs $SQ=8$
3. **Vulnerability** – Vulnerability is of minor concern at 1-level; however, at 2-level good players are careful about OverCalls when Vulnerability is unfavorable.
4. **Holding in Opponents Suit**
 - a) Be aggressive when short in Opponent suit and conservative with length. This is true whether RHO Opens at 1-level or preempts.
 - b) In competitive bidding: It is the hand with shortness in Opponents suit who must strive to take action
5. **Too Strong to Overcall:** Care must be taken. Some hands are indeed too strong (18+ PP) to Overcall but use the X only when you think you may miss game if there is danger you might miss Game if you are passed out; otherwise OverCall.
6. **OverCall in “Sandwich Seat with caution.**
7. **Use Care when OverCalling with 4-Card suit**
 - a) **4-Card OverCall:**
 - Should contain 3 Honors, i.e. $SQ=7$
 - If Vulnerable OverCall hand should resemble an Opening Bid
 - Use as method of last resort – no reasonable alternative

Advancer Response

1. No Fit (less than 3-Cards)

- a) **New Suit at 1-level:** Non-Forcing, Constructive shows a good suit and no-fit. Should meet SQ = 7 criteria or assuredly be longer than Overcaller's suit. OverCaller can (1) Pass, (2) support Advancer, (3) Rebid his suit.
- b) **New Suit at 2/3-level:** Non-Forcing, Constructive shows no-fit and a better suit than 1-level counterpart. Should meet SQ = 7 criteria or assuredly be longer than Overcaller's suit. OverCaller can (1) Pass, (2) support Advancer, (3) Rebid his suit.
- c) **Bid NoTrump:** Non-Forcing and shows a balanced hand with full stopper(s) in opponents suit(s) and partial stoppers in unbid suits. OverCaller can (1) Pass, (2) support Advancer, (3) Rebid his suit.
- d) **Jump bid New Suit or NoTrump:** Strongly Invitational but not forcing. Suit bid shows good (3 of top 4 Honors) 6-Card suit and 10+ HCP. OverCaller can (1) Pass, (2) Bid NoTrump, (3) Rebid his suit.
- e) **Cue Bid Openers suit:** Normally a fit showing bid with strong 10+ HCP hand; but if Advancer bids a new suit after cue bidding he is showing a very good suit and bid is absolutely forcing for 1 round.

2. Advancer's bids with a (3-Card) fit

- a) **Single-Raise:** usually shows 3-Card support and 7-10 PP. OverCaller bids accordingly.
- b) **Raise to 3-level:** Weak jump raise showing 4-Card support – not much more effectively a LOTT bid.
- c) **Raise to 4-level:** Weak jump raise showing 4-Card support – not much more effectively a LOTT bid.
- d) **Cue Bid Opponents suit: Shows (3-Card) limit-raise or better. If Opponents bid two suits: Cue bid of cheapest suit shows 3-Card support and Cue bid of non-cheapest suit shows at least 4-Card support.**