

Conventional Wisdom

Filling out the convention card — part 13

Say your right-hand opponent opens the bidding at the one level and you make a one-level overcall in a suit (for example, 1♣ by RHO, 1♥ by you); what kind of hand do you promise for this action? This section of the convention card deals with “one over one” overcalls and the responses to these competitive bids.

1 level

Use the spaces provided to describe the strength of your one-level overcalls. Write in the minimum and maximum number of HCP. A commonly used range is 6 to 17 HCP (but others are possible, of course). With less you'd pass, and with more you'd double first and then bid again to show a very strong hand. Note the word 'usually' on the card. Your HCP range is meant to give the opponents a general idea of your overcall philosophy, but the range isn't carved in stone.

Often 4 cards

Most overcalls promise at least five cards in the suit. Rarely, an opportunity for a four-card overcall comes along. For example, RHO opens 1♣ and you hold ♠A K Q J ♥6 ♦8 7 4 3 ♣7 4 3 2. A takeout double is inappropriate because of the singleton heart, but a 1♠ overcall is a standout, even though the suit is only four cards in length. If you make a habit of overcalling four-card suits, however, check the box so that the opponents know about this, too.

SIMPLE OVERCALL

1 level _____ to _____ HCP (usually)
often 4 cards very light style

Responses

New Suit: Forcing NFConst NF
Jump Raise: Forcing Inv. Weak

Very light style

Many players would venture a 1♥ overcall on a hand such as ♠9 2 ♥K Q J 9 5 ♦8 7 6 5 ♣8 2 despite its minimum high-card strength. Indeed, if your range is 6 to 17 HCP, this would be an example of rock-bottom minimum. If you like to risk even lighter overcalls on a regular basis, check the box marked “very light style.”

Jump raise

What does partner's jump in this auction mean?

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	1♥	Pass	3♥

Is it forcing? Invitational? Preemptive? Check the appropriate box.

Responses

New Suit

Say the auction begins

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	1♥	Pass	2♥
Pass	?		

Partner's raise is, of course, not forcing since your overcall could be made on a weak hand. But what if partner bids a new suit instead, say, 2♣? Are you required to bid again? Put another way, is partner's bid forcing? If so, check the “Forcing” box. If it's non-forcing, check that box instead. If partner usually expects you to bid again except in cases where your overcall is a minimum and the hands are misfitting, check the “NFConst” box (non-forcing, constructive).

Note that there is a line in **RED** at the bottom of this box. You may use this line to describe any other treatment that you and your partner agree upon. A good one to discuss is this: what does a jump cuebid mean? For example:

RHO	You	LHO	Partner
1♦	1♥	Pass	3♦

The non-jump cuebid (2♦) is typically played as a general force by most players, but what about the jump cuebid (3♦)? Things such as this can be described on the **RED** line and they must be Alerted.

ALERT