

Conventional Wisdom

Filling out the convention card — part 17



DIRECT: A direct 1NT overcall occurs when you bid directly over an opponent's opening one-level bid. For example:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
		1♥	1NT

Write the range of your 1NT overcall in the spaces provided.

SYSTEMS ON: When you overcall 1NT and LHO passes, do you still play Stayman and transfers? If so, check this box to indicate that the methods you play after a 1NT opening apply after an overcall as well.

CONV: If your 1NT overcall is conventional showing either an unbalanced hand, a single suit or a general takeout, write a brief description on the line provided and Alert the opponents.

ALERT All items in **RED** on the convention card must be Alerted and explained upon request.

NOTRUMP OVERCALLS If right-hand opponent opens one of a suit and you overcall 1NT, what does 1NT show? Most pairs define a 1NT overcall as showing the same type of hand as an opening strong 1NT bid, *i.e.*, a balanced hand with 15–17 high-card points. Many players increase the overcall range slightly to 16–18 HCP to provide extra protection since the overcall is somewhat dangerous — the opponents have already opened the bidding and left-hand opponent will know you're outgunned if he or she holds most of the remaining high cards. Another way to think about it is this: you're more likely to be doubled for penalty after a 1NT overcall than after a 1NT opening bid, so having extra values may be wise.

NOTRUMP OVERCALLS

Direct: _____ to _____ Systems on

Conv. _____

Balancing: _____ to _____

Jump to 2NT: Minors 2 Lowest

Conv. _____

BALANCING: A balancing 1NT bid occurs when you bid 1NT in the balancing or pass-out seat. For example:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♦	Pass	Pass	1NT

The range for this 1NT call is typically less than the range of a direct 1NT bid. Many players define a balancing 1NT bid as showing a balanced hand in the 12–15 HCP range. There are many variations possible, however, and some partnerships even go so far as to have slightly different ranges depending on whether the opening bid is a minor or a major.

NOTE: You should discuss with your partner whether your normal 1NT systems are “on” in this situation. (Do you still play Stayman and transfers, for example?)

Jump to 2NT: Many players have agreed that a 2NT jump overcall of an opponent's opening one-level bid is the so-called “unusual” 2NT showing a two-suited hand. The two suits are frequently the minors. For example:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
		1♥	2NT

After a major-suit opening by an opponent, 2NT promises a hand with a 5–5 or longer pattern in clubs and diamonds. You may even have this agreement if the opponent opens one of a minor.

If your 2NT jump overcall always shows the minors regardless of what suit the opponents open, check the Minors box.

Some pairs, however, prefer to define 1♣–(2NT) or 1♦–(2NT) as showing hearts and the

other minor, while 1♥–(2NT) or 1♠–(2NT) shows the minors. If you play this way, check the 2 Lowest box (since 2NT promises the two lowest unbid suits).

NOTE: A 2NT overcall of a two-level opening is not “unusual” or two-suited.

For example:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
		2♥ (weak)	2NT

Since 2NT is not a jump, in this sequence it merely shows a strong 1NT (15–18 HCP, balanced).

CONV: If your 2NT jump overcall shows something other than the hand types described above, write a brief description on the line provided and Alert the opponents.