

Bidding Basics

Responding after an opponent's overcall



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After an opposing 1♠ overcall

Our partner has opened with either 1♣, 1♦ or 1♥. RHO has overcalled 1♠. As responder, we can pass with a bad hand (or a penalty/trap pass), bid notrump naturally, or bid a new suit at the two-plus level showing five or more cards and 10 or more HCP. Also covered in the list below are negative doubles and various raises of opener's suit.

Pass = Zero to about 7 or 8, or possibly a hand that wants to penalize 1♠. More on that at the end. Pass with:

♠765 ♥Q64 ♦6542 ♣Q43
♠KQ10876 ♥A2 ♦86 ♣932.

Double = Negative. At least 7–8 points. Notice that opener will have to rebid either 1NT or at the two level, so you don't want to come in with a lousy 6-count. What is promised in the unbid suits? If the opening was 1♥, you will typically have both minors. If the opening was a minor, you will almost always have – but not guarantee – four-plus hearts. The negative double can be made with a very strong hand. For example, after 1♣–(1♠) you would double with either of these hands:

♠A63 ♥Q762 ♦A762 ♣74
♠63 ♥AKJ9 ♦A74 ♣AK74.

After 1♥–(1♠), double with:

♠762 ♥63 ♦A762 ♣KQJ9.

1NT = 6–10 balanced with spades stopped. If a minor was opened, you are denying four or more hearts, and denying fewer than three hearts if one heart was opened. Respond 1NT with:

♠KJ74 ♥63 ♦KJ9 ♣10762.

2♣ = If the opening bid was 1♣, then this is a raise in the 6–10-point range, usually with five-plus clubs, and denies four hearts. If the opening was 1♦ or

1♥, then this shows five-plus clubs and 10-plus points and is forcing for one round. Respond 2♣ after 1♣–(1♠) with:

♠A9 ♥762 ♦Q74 ♣J10762.

Respond 2♣ after 1♥–(1♠) with:

♠63 ♥Q9 ♦A74 ♣AQ8642.

2♦ = If the opening bid was 1♦, then this is a 6–10-point raise (usually with four-plus diamonds) and denies four hearts. If the opening bid was 1♣ or 1♥, then this shows five-plus diamonds and 10-plus points and is forcing for one round. Respond 2♦ after 1♦–(1♠) with:

♠762 ♥63 ♦AQJ9 ♣8642.

Respond 2♦ after 1♥–(1♠) with:

♠74 ♥63 ♦KJ10762 ♣AKJ.

2♥ = If the opening bid was 1♥, then this shows 6–10 with three-plus hearts. If 1♣/1♦ was opened, then 2♥ shows five-plus hearts and 10-plus points. Respond 2♥ after 1♥–(1♠) with:

♠762 ♥KQ9 ♦74 ♣Q8642.

Respond 2♥ after 1♣/♦–(1♠) with:

♠A9 ♥KQ10762 ♦A63 ♣74.

2♠ = Limit raise or better in the suit opened. Bid 2♠ after 1♦–(1♠) with:

♠74 ♥A63 ♦AQ74 ♣A762.

Bid 2♠ after 1♥–(1♠) with:

♠63 ♥AQ9 ♦A762 ♣J762.

2NT = Same as 1NT but 11–12 (invitational). Respond 2NT with:

♠KJ9 ♥K2 ♦Q1074 ♣Q1074.

Raise to 3 level = Requires partnership agreement. In modern bridge, this would be preemptive because the cuebid is available to show a limit raise or better. The responder should have at

least five for a minor-suit raise and four for a heart raise. For example, after 1♥–(1♠) raise to 3♥ with these two hands:

♠9 ♥Q762 ♦Q963 ♣Q862
♠63 ♥KQ102 ♦87642 ♣74.

3 of a new suit = Weak, but don't make such a bid without partnership agreement.

3NT = Same as 2NT but with 13–15. Respond 3NT with:

♠AQ9 ♥K2 ♦KJ74 ♣J1074.

Trap Pass = With a desire to penalize 1♠, you can pass and hope that it comes back to partner (opener) and that he doubles for takeout. You can then leave in the double, converting it to penalty. This is most likely to happen if the 1♠ overcaller was vulnerable. You could pass and hope for a penalty with, say:

♠KJ1082 ♥A9 ♦762 ♣A74.

After they overcall 1NT

There are no negative doubles when they overcall 1NT. Double is for penalty. Examples of a double after 1♣–(1NT):

♠KJ2 ♥Q76 ♦Q762 ♣J109,
♠A2 ♥KQJ109 ♦J32 ♣432.

A bid in a new suit is natural (typically at least a decent six-card suit) and nonforcing. With a good hand, you'd start with a double. For example, after 1♥–(1NT), bid 2♦ with:

♠762 ♥9 ♦KQ10762 ♣Q74.

Bid 2♠ with:

♠QJ10976 ♥2 ♦Q1042 ♣86.

A raise is natural, a jump raise is preemptive. Raise to 2♠ after 1♠–(1NT) with:

♠Q104 ♥2 ♦A9652 ♣8654.

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Be wary of raising with a lousy hand and poor trump. Don't raise 1♠ to 2♠ with:

♠542 ♥QJ54 ♦QJ3 ♣654.

There are other more complex possibilities, such as redefining 2NT as well as using artificial two-suited bids, but this is a KISS series and we'll leave it at that. 😊

Bidding Basics Quiz

What is your action after partner's 1♣-(1♠) holding:

- 1) ♠A2 ♥10765 ♦A2 ♣AQ1032
- 2) ♠542 ♥AK2 ♦A2 ♣Q10765
- 3) ♠KQ8 ♥K32 ♦Q832 ♣KJ3

What is your action after partner's 1♥-(1♠) holding:

- 4) ♠863 ♥KJ2 ♦Q5432 ♣K2
- 5) ♠54 ♥AQ2 ♦A765 ♣K765
- 6) ♠AQ10 ♥J3 ♦K1076 ♣J987

What is your action after partner's 1♠-(1NT) holding:

- 7) ♠4 ♥KQ2 ♦Q10876 ♣A876
- 8) ♠65 ♥KQJ876 ♦2 ♣10765

Bidding Basics Quiz Answers

1) Double. Look for a 4-4 heart fit to start. You can always look for a club game or slam later.

2) 2♠. Limit raise or better in clubs.

3) 3NT. Spades stopped, enough for game. Denies four hearts.

4) 2♥. At the top of your range.

5) 2♠. Limit raise or better in hearts (you will drive to at least game).

6) 2NT. More descriptive than a negative double.

7) Double. They are in big trouble.

8) 2♥. Natural, good suit, nonforcing.