

RESPONDING TO AN OVERCALL WITHOUT SUPPORT

The first thing to remember when responding to an overcall is that you are NOT responding to an opening bid. Partner might have only 8 points. If you respond 1NT with a 6 count and partner has overcalled on an 8 count, you have 14 of the 40 points in the pack and your opponents with 26 points are likely to double and massacre your contract.

Given partner might only have 8 points instead of 12 points for an opening bid, your response when you don't have support for partner should be proportionately stronger than the usual 6 count response.

WITHOUT SUPPORT I GENERALLY DON'T RESPOND TO PARTNER'S OVERCALL UNLESS I HAVE (10)11+ POINTS.

(1♦) 1♥ (P) 1♠

The spade bid shows 4+ spades and (10)11+ points

By passing with weaker hands, you warn partner that game is very unlikely. If there are further rounds of bidding, all bids are non-forcing and can be passed.

(1♦) 1♥ (P) (P)

(2♦) (P) (P) 2♠

The spade bid would show 5+ spades and less than 9(10) points

THE OVERCALLER'S RESPONSE:

If the overcaller repeats their suit or raises responder's suit by 1, this shows a sub-opening hand (8-11).

Any other rebid by the overcaller shows an opening hand (12-15). A cuebid by anyone is a game force showing uncertainty where to play the hand.

(1♦) 1♥ (P) 1♠

(P) 2♠

The overcaller has 4 card spade support and 8-11 points

(1♦) 1♥ (P) 1♠

(P) 2♥

The overcaller doesn't like spades and has 8-11 points

(1♦) 1♥ (P) 1♠

(P) 1NT

The overcaller doesn't like spades and is 12-15 with a diamond stop.

EXERCISES:

Your left hand opponent opens 1♣. Partner overcalls 1♥. What do we bid on these hands?

♠ AQJ9 ♥ 76 ♦ 5432 ♣ 1098

Just pass.

♠ AQJ98 ♥ 76 ♦ 543 ♣ 1098

Still passing. You might get the spades in if there is another round of bidding.

♠ AQJ98 ♥ 76 ♦ KJ3 ♣ 1098

1♠. 11+ points and 4+ spades.

♠ AQ9 ♥ 76 ♦ K43 ♣ K9842

1NT. This is about 11-13 with a club stop, not the usual 6-10.

♠ AQ9 ♥ 76 ♦ KQ32 ♣ 9862

2♦. 11+ points and 4 diamonds.

Your right hand opponent opens 1♣. You overcall 1♥. Partner responds 1♠ and right hand opponent passes. What now?

♠ K765 ♥ AQ765 ♦ 54 ♣ 109

2♠. 8-11 points and 4 spades.

♠ K76 ♥ AQ765 ♦ 54 ♣ 1097

2♥. 8-11 points and I don't have 4 spades. You don't have to have 6 hearts.

♠ K76 ♥ AQ765 ♦ 54 ♣ K109

1NT. Opening hand, club stop and I don't have 4 spades

♠ K106 ♥ AQ1065 ♦ KQ4 ♣ 109

2♣. We have enough for game opposite partner's 11+ points but don't know which game.

♠ K7 ♥ AKQ765 ♦ 54 ♣ 1097

3♥. 12-13 with 6 hearts – not quite strong enough to force with a cuebid.