

THE “DONT” CONVENTION

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Overcalling subsequent to an opponent’s opening bid of **1-NT** is oft times misunderstood and, therefore, not frequently utilized by most beginning bridge players. The novice player becomes afraid to bid owing to the strength expressed by his/her opponent’s **1-NT** opening bid, and is frightened, even intimidated, by the prospect of being set should he/she stoop to venture forth with any form of interference. Eventually the more experienced player, however, comes to realize that there is a legitimate need to find the inner fortitude to venture forth with such an overcall, and ultimately, the realization that the Partnership need have some understanding as to which convention they wish to adopt in order to best accomplish this form of overcall interference. As one gains experience with bidding it soon becomes evident that although one can use natural bids in these instances, it is usually far better to have some conventional understanding with your Partner.

The “DONT” Convention (**D**isturbing the **O**pponent’s **N**o **T**ump), is, today, oft times used with great success. It is simple in its set-up and makes available the capability of dealing with a hand as shown above, as you will soon see. The realities that exist which make the “DONT” Convention the success that it has become are as follows:

1. Two-suited hands occur more frequently than their One-suited counterparts. One needs the capacity to show these Two-suited circumstances.
2. The alternative; i.e., to remain silent and to defend against the opponent’s **1-NT**, is usually not a fruitful one.
3. Because this particular convention allows you to show Two-suited hands, one can disturb the opponent’s more frequently --- Fun! Fun! Fun!
4. Although this convention eliminates the double as a means of evidencing an equivalent or better hand, it is infrequently necessary to do so, and if seemingly appropriate, seldom productive, for the opponents then seek, and oft times, secure a better alternative contract.
5. **Points schmoits!** The key to successful interferences over an opponent’s **1-NT** opening bid is not points, rather vulnerability and distribution.
6. You are infrequently attempting to seek game. Rather you are venturing to enter the auction and, at the very least, trying to interfere with the opponent’s capacity to communicate successfully.
7. This Convention is used in both the direct seat, as well as in the balancing seat, although, as with all balancing bids, the HCP strength required is more relaxed.
8. With strong balanced hands, the type with which, beforehand, one doubled to show equivalence, pass, Pass, PASS!!!! You are more likely to get a better score in duplicate competition than if you would enter the auction as you had been accustomed to doing previously.

“DONT” Bids

With One-suited Hands (Usually 6-cards or better)

“**Double**” = A One-suited Club, Diamond, Heart, or Spade Hand

“**2S**” = A One-suited Spade hand with a weaker HCP holding than the “double” above

With A Two-suited Hand (5-4 or better) Bid the Cheaper of Your Two Suits

“**2C**” = A Club suit and a higher-ranking suit as well

“**2D**” = A Diamond suit and a higher-ranking one as well (Obviously a Major suit)

“**2H**” = Shows Hearts and Spades

Responses to the “DONT” Convention

- If Partner “Doubles”, puppet “2C” so that Partner can identify his/her suit.
If Partner overcalls “2C” or “2D” showing the lower-ranking of a Two-suited hand,
- Pass with 3 or more cards in Partner’s bid suit
 - Bid your own 6-card or better suit
- c. Otherwise, make the cheapest bid (alertable) asking Partner to bid his/her second suit.
If Partner overcalls “2H” showing both Majors, select your choice of the two.
If Partner overcalls “2S”, pass.

Guidelines for Use of the “DONT” Convention in the Direct (2nd) Seat

Since the main factor in deciding to make an overcall is the distributional feature of the hand, the point count becomes less important. The “*Rule of Eight*,” first published by Colchamiro in 2000 serves as a guideline for minimum values coupled with distribution, which if satisfied, implies a statistical likely success if one should decide to compete as opposed to defending when seated in the direct, 2nd seat.

- The Player first subtracts the number of “Losing Tricks” from the total number of cards contained in the two longest suits.**
- If the subtraction results in a number of 2 or more, then the Player should decide to compete and make an overcall.**
- If the subtracted number is less than 2, then the Player should not make an overcall, but rather defend.**
- The holding, when deciding to compete, should contain at least 6 high-card points. It is from this number of minimum values that the designation for this particular Rule is derived. A minimum of 6 high-card points plus the minimum difference of 2 equals the number 8, hence the “*Rule of Eight*.”**

AQ876 The total number of Losing Tricks here is 7. The total number of the cards in the
K63 two longest suits is 8. Subtract 7 from 8 and the number equals 1. The player, here,
84 according to the guidelines of the “*Rule of Eight*,” should not overcall.
K94 *The player holding this hand should actively defend.*

K8653 In this second example the number of Losing Tricks is again, 7. But, here, the
K8754 total number of the cards in the two longest suits equals 10. Subtracting 7 from 10,
86 the number equals 3. *The Player here, according to the guidelines of the*
4 *Rule of 8, should choose to compete and to overcall using “DONT.”*

Guidelines for Use of the “DONT” Convention in the Balancing (4th) Seat

We know the Opener has 15-17 high card points, but we also know that the Responder has 0-8 HCP's, should he/she have passed. We could summarize this by saying that the Opener, on average, has 16 HCP's and the Responder, on average, has 4 HCP's. So whenever the bidding comes around to you after (1-NT – Pass – Pass - ?), you know their side has 20 HCP's, on average, and your side also has 20 HCP's, on average. So your side has as much a right to the contract as they do!

Remember, the fewer points you have, the more Partner has, because your side will have 20 HCP's, on average; so if you have 5, Partner will have 15; if you have 9, he/she will have 11; if you have 13, he/she will have 7.

The “Balancing Rule of 2”

Partner probably has a balanced hand since he/she didn't bid himself/herself. So whenever we are faced with a balancing decision after a -NT opening bid, high card points are essentially irrelevant. The controlling factor is distribution. The 4th seat (balancing) Player should balance whenever he/she have at least *two shortness points*, defined as either a void, a singleton or two doubletons - *no matter what his/her high card point strength is*. Remember, the fewer points you have, the more Partner has, because your side will have, on average, 20 HCP's.

Suppose you, in 4th seat, hold the following:

- Q753** The bidding has gone 1-NT – Pass – Pass - ? Should you balance, with only 7 points?
9 Mel's Rule of 2 says an emphatic yes! Here's why! You hold 2 shortness points.
A95 Partner has 13 HCP's., and the finesses will, most likely, win because Partner's (13)
J8642 points lie over the No-Trump Opener.

However, if you were to hold:

- A74** Here, you should pass with this balanced hand. The finesses figure to lose
K962 since Partner will have only 7 points, on average, but you, here, do *not* have 2
K93 shortness points. Do not balance, here. Rather, do not compete, defend.
K98

In the pass out seat, balance if you have two or more shortness points, regardless of HCP and vulnerability! “There are lots of ways to die at duplicate.” You can "die" by being too bold, and you can also "die" by being too cautious. Luck usually favors the bold, however, so, vulnerable or not, holding the minority of your sides approximate 20 HCP's, or not, compete and balance if you satisfy the “*Balancing Rule of 2*.” Do not balance, and rather, defend, if you do not hold 2 shortness points.