

When They Overcall

When we open and the opponents overcall we need to bid differently.

Defence To Suit Overcalls

When partner opens and the opponents overcall in a suit, X is for takeout. I play these to 4♠ but you need to discuss this with a new partner as there is no standard.

After a minimum overcall if responder hold a sound penalty double say five cards in overcaller's suit and 11+ responder may pass. Opener is expected to reopen with a double whenever possible so that responder can pass with a sound penalty.

Bidding the opponent's suit shows at least an eight card fit and values for a raise to the next level. This is called the Unassuming Cue Bid (the explanation of which makes no sense). The advantage is that partner knows whether to compete or double the opponents if they compete.

S	W	N	Point Range	Length	Description
1♣	(1♦)	X*	6+		Both four card majors
		1♥♠ f	6+		
		1NT	6-10		No four card major and a diamond stop
		2♣	6-10	4-5	
		2♦*f	11+	4+	
		3♣	0-5	5	pre-empt
		4♣	0-5	6	pre-empt

S	W	N	Point Range	Length	Description
1♣	(1♥)	X*	6+		Four spades
		1♠ f	6+	5+	
		1NT	6-10		Denies four spades, heart stop
		2♣	6-10	4-5	
		2♦ f	11+	4+	New minor could be four card

S	W	N	Point Range	Length	Description
1♣	(1♠)	X*	6+		Four hearts
		1NT	6-10		Denies four hearts, spade stop

When the opponents make a minimum overcall at the two level X shows 8+ and a takeout shape including three cards in partner's suit. New suits at the two level are still 11+ and should show five cards in a major.

S	W	N	Point Range	Length	Description
1♠	(2♣)	X*	8+		Three spades
		2♦ f	11+	4+	New minor could be four card
		2♥	11+	5+	
		2♠	6-10	4	
		2NT	11-12		Stop in clubs
		3♣	11+		Four spades
		3♠	6-8	5	Pre-emptive
		3NT	13+		Stop in clubs
		4♠	0-8	6	Pre-emptive

When the opponents make a jump overcall X is takeout and shows 11+. You are forced to guess when the opponents make a jump overcall. When their overcall is weak you should game force with 11+ or just bid game. If they play intermediate jump overcalls say 11+ then you need genuine values to raise or bid.

S	W	N	Point Range	Length	Description
1♠	(3♣)	X*	11+		Takeout, three spades

		3♦ f	11+	4+	New minor could be four card
		3♥	11+	5+	
		3♠	8-10	4	
		3NT	11+		Stop in clubs
		4♣*	11+	4	Value raise to four, suggests penalties if they bid
		4♠	11+	5	distributional raise with shortage and fit points

Defence To Takeout X

XX shows 11+ at least two cards in each suit and no four card support for partner. Other bids are the same as without the X.

Defence To Michaels and UNT

X shows 11+ and denies four card support for partner. Bidding the opponent's specified suit shows a good raise to the next level. Direct raises are pre-emptive.

Penalty Doubles

Doubling for penalties is an area where players can get easily confused. To combat this problem I suggest using the following simple methods. This is compatible with Standard English but is a tighter agreement. I call this agreement “**Doubleton Doubles**” because partner is expected to pass with a doubleton.

When partner has shown points, X is penalties except when partner opened one of a suit. In order to make a penalty double a player is showing that our side has 22+ points and they are **asking partner to pass with a doubleton** or longer in the bid suit. With a singleton you would normally bid but may still pass without a decent option. With a void you should pull the double.

We should only double the opponents if they are playing above their TNT level. That is, if they are playing to make more tricks than they hold trumps. For instance if they are playing at the two level they should have fewer than 8 trumps. If you double the opponents with a fit that is larger than this they are likely to score well.

Following TNT you need the following length in their suit and a minimum of 22+ to double...

Level	Cards in their suit to X	Their fit if partner passes with 2+
1	5+	6-
2	4+	7-
3	3+	8-
4	2+	9-
5	1+	10-

When our side have advertised 22+ points, we should not pass out the opponents undoubled at any level. So X is penalties and **pass is takeout**. After a takeout pass X is still penalties and has the same meaning as an immediate X. When we pull with 22+ the opponents are unlikely to find a double and if they do we may make our contract.

The thing you need to agree with a new partner is that your penalty doubles should be passed with a doubleton but normally pulled with a singleton.

Doubles of NT Contracts

Doubles of NT contracts are penalties except a double of responder's 1NT bid which is takeout.

(1♠) Pass (1NT) X is exactly like a takeout of 1♠

Opener's Reopening Bids

After Minimum Overcalls

When responder passes opener must have 19+ to bid past the barrier (two of their opened suit) since responder could hold very little. Reverses and jumps are non-forcing but responder should bid on with 6+. 2NT shows 19-20 and a stop. Notice that responder would have already doubled with 8+ holding three card support.

With 1-2 card clubs opener should reopen with a double in case responder holds a hand long in overcaller's suit.

S	W	N	E	S	Point Range	Length	Description
1♥	(2♣)	Pass	(Pass)	Pass	12-18		Three or more clubs unsuitable for a takeout double, partner probably doesn't hold a penalty pass.
				X*	12+	1-2	Reopening double in case responder has a penalty X type hand.
				2♦	12-18	4+	Five hearts
				2♥	12-18	5+	
				2♠	19-20	4	
				2NT	19-20		Stop in clubs
				3♦	19-20	4+	
				3♥	19-20	6+	

After Jump overcalls

After a jump overcall opener should pass without a strong hand otherwise you will miss game. It's reasonable to assume responder holds 6+ so opener can bid game with 19-20.

S	W	N	E	S	Point Range	Length	Description
1♥	(3♣)	Pass	(Pass)	X*	17-20	0-2	Takeout
				3♦	17-20	4+	Five hearts
				3♥	17-18	6+	
				3♠	19-20	4	Reverse
				3NT	19-20		Stop in clubs
				4♥	19-20	6+	

When They Overcall A Weak Two

With a genuine raise to four bid the opponent's suit. This means you can penalty double any sacrifice. Since you have lots of bids with a strong hand X is penalties (doubleton double, see penalty doubles) asking partner to pass with a doubleton or bid with a singleton in their suit.

S	W	N	Point Range	Length	Description
2♥	(2♠)	Pass	0-15	0-2	When they bid, always raise with three card support.
		X	16+	4+	Penalties, opener should pass with two spades and bid 2NT with a singleton spade.
		2NT* f	16+		Same as without intervention.
		3♣♦ g	18+	5+	Denies heart support asking for a stop or a return to hearts with no side suit stop.
		3♥	0-15	3	TNT Specifically three hearts
		3♠*g	16+	2+	Good raise to four capable of doubling spades.
		4♣♦	0-10	7	Good seven card suit
		4♥	0-17	4	No slam interest

Dealing With a Takeout X Of A Weak Two

This is very common after a weak two. The danger is that they can pass the takeout double for penalties. For this reason new suits show a weak miss-fit and a good alternative suit. With most big hands redouble for penalties. The responses are as follows...

S	W	N	Point Range	Length	Description
2♥	(X)	Pass	0-15	0-2	Don't pass after a double with three card support.
		XX	16+	0+	Penalties. If the opponents pull the redouble then pass is takeout and X is penalties (see penalty doubles).
		2♠	0-15	6+	Heart singleton and six card spades.

		2NT	0-15		UNT 55 in the minors and at most one heart.
		3♣♦	0-15	6+	Heart singleton and probably a seven card suit.
		3♥	0-15	3	TNT Specifically three hearts
		4♥	0-17	4	No slam interest