

# PROTECTIVE BIDDING - FOURTH SEAT BIDS

We are East and have the hand below. North opens 1♥. What are we going to bid?

East
♠ K 8 7
♥ 9 7 6
♦ A K 8 2
♣ K 7 4

- We can't overcall because we have no five card suit.
- We can't bid 1NT because we don't have the required points.
- We have the wrong shape for a takeout double.

So we must pass with this hand even though we have 14 points.

In a situation where there is an opening bid and two passes the fourth player needs to be aware that his partner may have had to pass with a hand up to about 14 points, like the one above.

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♥	Pass	Pass	?

In this auction, West must try and find a bid if at all possible. This is called 'protecting'... West has to try to keep the auction alive in case East has had to pass with a good hand. Besides, N/S probably have a *maximum* point count of 24 (North max 19, South max 5) so our side has at least 16 points.

A general guideline is to use "the principle of the transferred king". If we are in 4<sup>th</sup> seat after two passes we add an imaginary King to our hand and make the same overcall that we would do in second position. With this in mind the player in 2<sup>nd</sup> position requires a King more for his responses to the 4<sup>th</sup> seat overcall. You can see the effect of this in the table in Section 2 on Page 2.

## When not to protect

There is one exception when we *shouldn't* help the auction to continue. This is when it may let the opponents back in to find a better contract for their side!

We need to be wary of protecting when our hand meets the following conditions:

1. Length in opener's suit.
2. Shortness in an unbid major.
3. Minimum points.

W	N	E	S	<b>South</b>	South should note the warning signs. North didn't overcall or double but must be short in diamonds as we have four. When neither North nor East finds a bid, West must be strong... and where are the spades? If we overcall 1♥ it's quite likely that West will bid 1♠ or make a takeout double, either of which could lead to a better contract for East/West.
1♦	Pass	Pass	?	♠ 2	
				♥ K 9 5 3 2	
				♦ Q 9 7 4	
				♣ K 8 3	

We will now look at three types of overcall that fourth player might use after an opening bid and two passes:

1. Suit overcalls
2. Takeout doubles
3. No Trump overcalls

## 1. SUIT OVERCALLS

**At the one level:** 7+ With a 5 card suit it **doesn't** need the usual suit quality. Overcalling with a good 4 card suit is sometimes OK but it **does** need suit quality!

**At the two level:** 9+ Must be a 5 card suit but it **doesn't** need the usual suit quality.

BID	Points	Example
At the one level	7+	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass W:1♠
At the two level	9+	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass W:2♣
*Jump overcall	12-15 6+ card suit	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass W:2♠
Double then bid	16+	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass W:Dbl

\* Note that even if playing 'Weak Jump Overcalls' in direct overcall position, a jump overcall in 4<sup>th</sup> seat after two passes still shows an intermediate strength hand and not a weak hand.

Overcalls may be slightly weaker than the above if a 6+ card suit is held.

### Responding to 4<sup>th</sup> Seat Suit Overcalls

Responses to 4<sup>th</sup> seat overcalls are similar to those after direct overcalls, although No Trump responses require a point or two more.

Unassuming Cue Bids still apply and in response to a 4<sup>th</sup> seat overcall they promise support for the overcaller's suit. In response to a 4<sup>th</sup> seat overcall we need about 12+ points to use the Unassuming Cue Bid.

Direct raises are no longer pre-emptive, but still show a weaker hand than an Unassuming Cue Bid.

## 2. TAKEOUT DOUBLES

We need about a King less for a takeout double in 4<sup>th</sup> seat after two passes. There is no upper limit. We also double with some strong balanced hands as we will see in Section 3 on Page 3.

BID	Points	Example
Double	9+	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass E:Double

When the doubler's partner replies to the double he needs to remember that the doubler may have a King less than a direct takeout double. Therefore the responses to the double need about 3 points more. (The "principle of the transferred King").

For recap the responses to both a direct seat takeout double and 4<sup>th</sup> seat takeout double are shown below:

Responses to takeout double:		
Direct Seat Double	4 <sup>th</sup> Seat Double	
0-8	0-11	Bid longest suit or a four card major.
9-12	12-15	Jump bid - invitational
11+	14+	Jump to game in own long suit (6+)
13+	16+	Cue bid opener's suit if contract unclear. Game forcing
Balanced hand responses:		
6-9	9-12	1NT
11-12	14-15	2NT
13+	16+	3NT (2 stoppers needed for 3NT)

### 3. NO TRUMP OVERCALLS AND OTHER BALANCED HAND OVERCALLS

#### Balanced hands with 11-14 points

A direct overcall of 1NT shows about 15-18 points, but in fourth seat after two passes we can overcall 1NT with a weaker range of only 11-14 points. Why is this? Firstly we know partner must have some points but more importantly we know opener's partner has less than 6 points so won't be making a penalty double. Compare these two auctions:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♥		1NT	

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♥	Pass	Pass	1NT

In the first auction opener's partner has not yet bid and may have a good hand suitable for a penalty double. This is why we need a stronger hand for a direct 1NT overcall. In the second auction we know there is not the same danger.

Although a stopper in the opener's suit is desirable for a 1NT overcall in 4<sup>th</sup> seat, the 1NT overcall **can** be made without a stopper if it is the most practical bid. Often partner will have the stopper and even if he doesn't, the benefits of keeping the auction alive will more often outweigh the occasional times we find our side with no stopper.

Stayman and Transfers are played after a 4<sup>th</sup> seat 1NT overcall.

### Balanced hands with 15-17 points

If the 4<sup>th</sup> seat 1NT overcall only shows 11-14 points what do we do when we have 15-17 points? We must do something different and the way we show this kind of hand is with a takeout double followed by a No Trump bid.

### Balanced hands with 18-20 points

We show this with a \*2NT overcall. Stayman and Transfers are played if they are normally part of your system after a 2NT opening bid.

\* Note that even if playing 'The Unusual 2NT' convention in direct overcall position, a 2NT overcall in 4<sup>th</sup> seat after two passes still shows 18-20 and not a weak two suited hand.

## SUMMARY OF FOURTH SEAT BIDS WITH BALANCED HANDS

Note that by using this scheme of bids we can identify balanced hands within ranges of 3 or 4 points giving partner a clear picture of our hand.

Bid	Points	Stopper?	Example
1NT	11-14	No	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass W:1NT
Double then bid NT	15-17	Yes	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass W:Double
2NT	18-20	Yes	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass W:2NT
Double then jump bid NT	21+	Yes	N:1♥ E: Pass S: Pass W:Double

### PRACTICE

To see more 4<sup>th</sup> Seat Bids in action, try the following activities:

[Quizzes](#)

[Bidding Practice](#)

### OTHER PROTECTIVE BIDS

For the same reason that we should try to bid in 4<sup>th</sup> seat after an opening bid and two passes, we should also try and bid when the opponents have **found a fit** at the two level and there have been two passes.

North has a maximum of about 15 points and South has a maximum of 9 points = 24 points max. So our side has at least 16 points.

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	?		

It is rarely right to let the opponents play **in a fit** at the two level. We should make a takeout double or overcall. Partner will know we are weak as we did not originally bid over North's 1♥ opening. If their side has an eight card fit it is likely that our side has an eight card fit in another suit. If we bid, maybe we will go down one trick or maybe we will push them up to 3♥ which might go down. Both results will be better than passing and letting them make 2♥.