

A PRE-EMPTIVE OPENING

An opening bid at the three level shows a weak hand with a good 7-card suit that has at least two honours.

The hand should be too weak to open at the one level – including hands you would open using the rule of twenty.

You should not have a side 4-card major suit because of the risk of missing a better contract.

You should have few defensive tricks.

You need 6 playing tricks if you are non-vulnerable and 7 playing tricks if you are vulnerable.

To assess your playing tricks, allocate partner one card in the trump suit and imagine the opposition's trump cards divide as expected: five missing cards will usually divide 3-2, four missing cards 3-1.

An opening bid at the 4 level shows a weak hand with a good 8-card suit: you have one more trick so you can pre-empt at one higher level.

An opening bid of 3NT shows a long solid minor suit with no more than a queen in the side suits. This is 'improver' level and is mentioned here just so you know it exists. Don't try to use it just yet!

To show a pre-empt overcall you need to bid a double jump over opener's bid. For example: 1♠ - 4♣ or 1♦ - 3♥

When the opposition open with a 3-level bid you know the type of hand they hold (see sidebar).

You know that a "pre-empt", as it is commonly known, is weaker in high cards than a 1-level opening bid.

It follows then that you and your partner may have more HCPs and more cards in the other suits than the opposition. So whenever possible you will want to compete with the 3-level opening by making a bid of your own.

Depending on the make-up of your hand and the HCPs that you have, the bids available to you are:

- Overcall with your own suit
- 3NT
- Double

Which you will use will depend on the make-up of your hand and the HCPs in your hand. This is explained below.

Overcall with your own suit if you have 12+HCPs and a good **6-card** suit. If you have 8 playing tricks in a major suit, just bid the game.

Bid 3NT if you have 16+ HCPs across the suits, a balanced hand and at least two stoppers in the opposition's suit.

Double (the X card) with 12+ HCPs and the other 3 suits. You should have at least 4 cards in any unbid major. You must have a shortage in the opposition's suit. By using the double card after a pre-emptive opening. You are saying "Partner I have no more than two cards in the opposition suit and at least 12 HCPs. Please bid one of the other 3 suits."

If your hand does not fit any of the descriptions above you must pass and wait and see what your partner does.

Homework: Red book pages 139-146