

Direct One Notrump Overcall Structure

[Premise]

After the opponents make a one level suit opening, and we overcall 1NT directly, before responder can bid, then there is a strong advantage in arranging for advancer to play many of the suit contracts, when holding game invitational values or stronger. This advantage accrues from having the opener lead from strength, through strength in dummy, to weakness in responder, and into more strength with advancer. The opener may sometimes make the wrong guess on lead, or will find themselves endplayed at trick one. The scheme does not apply after a two notrump overcall of a two level suit opening, since that often finds the opener leading from shortness through strength in dummy to strength with responder, which can then set up ruffs for the defense. For the one level openings, even if opener leads from shortness, there may be no entries with responder in which to provide a play of the suit again to get a ruff.

Note that the structure is based partly on the ideas presented in “A Three Puppet Script” of Bill Schramm in Bridge World (September 2003).

[Direct Notrump Overcall Strength]

The direct 1NT overcall is a powerful weapon. By showing significant values over the opening bidder, it establishes the defensive side as the prime contenders to get the contract and make it. Opener's values are compromised both by being under the 1NT bidder, and by having provided knowledge of those values. Thus one wants to aggressively make direct 1NT overcalls. Also when the opponents open a major suit, if holding a strong balanced hand and one doubles first, then one might have to rebid 2NT to show hand type. Thus over a major suit opening, it is preferable to be able to make a 1NT overcall instead of doubling. Over minor suit openings, the 1NT overcall can have a preemptive effect, blocking the opponents from a major suit fit. Thus one wants to be able to make these overcalls aggressively, especially when not vulnerable.

The structure provided below offers multiple GI sequences if the opponents have opened a five card major. This permits the 1NT overcall of a major suit opening to be played with a little wider range than normal. Using a 4 point range allows the overcall to be made more often, and then reduces the times a hand must be less effectively doubled or passed. Also by playing a wider range, it is sometimes harder for the opponents to place cards when defending against our notrump contract.

Thus the ETM recommended ranges are:

When not vulnerable over a minor suit opening: 17+-20).	14-17 (now double then 1NT shows
When vulnerable over a minor suit opening: shows 18+-21).	15/16-18 (now double then 1NT
Over a major suit opening: shows 19+-22).	15/16-19 (double then cheapest NT

For each of the top ranges (e.g. 17 of 14-17), if holding a five card suit then 1NT is not overcalled as the hand has too much playing strength.

[After Our Direct Notrump Overcall]

After their one level suit opening and our direct (before responder bids) one notrump overcall:

- 2♣: Puppet to 2♦ (1NT overcaller must bid 2♦), then:
 - Pass: Signoff in ♦s.
 - 2♥: GI with 4♥s, may have 4♠s, and if opening bid shows 5+♠s, this is not a good GI. However if the opening bid showed 5+♥s then this just shows a good GI without 5♠s. The 1NT overcaller can pass if 2♥ is natural, or over either type (GI with 4♠s, or if opening bid 5+♥s then good GI without 5♠s), the 1NT overcaller can now bid:
 - 2♠: Denies values to accept GI, and denies 4♠s (or ♥ fit).
 - 2NT: Denies values to accept GI and shows 4♠s. However if the opening bid showed 5+♠s, then this does not show or deny 4♠s (and thus 2♠ does not need to be bid).
 - 3♦: Artificial, denies 4♠s (or ♥ fit) and has values to accept GI. Now 3♠ shows 5♠s and is GF.
 - 3♥: If 2♥ shows 4♥s & GI values, this is a return GI.
 - 3NT: Values to accept GI, and 4♠s. However if the opening bid showed 5+♠s, then this does not show or deny 4♠s (and thus 3♦ does not need to be bid).
 - 4♥: To play.
 - 2♠: GI with 4♠s, and if opening bid shows 5+♥s, this is not a good GI. However if the opening bid showed 5+♠s, then this shows a good GI with 4♥s, and overcaller can now bid 3♦ to transfer to ♥s (so advancer plays ♥ contract).
- 2NT: Puppet to 3♣ (overcaller must bid 3♣) then:
 - Pass: Signoff in ♣s.
 - 3♦: Both majors, 4-4 with distribution or slam try values. Opener can now bid 4♣=you bid 4♥, or 4♦=you bid 4♠.
 - 3♥: GF, 4♥s.
 - 3♠: GF, 4♠s.
 - 3NT: 4-4 in majors, flat, GF. As over 3♦.
- 3X: Natural with 5+♥s and GF – still on if they opened 1♥ to expose a psyche. If nobody has bid ♥s yet, cheapest ♦ bid transfers to ♥s.

- 2♦: Puppet to 2♥ (overcaller must bid 2♥), then:
 Pass: Signoff in ♥s.
- 2♠: GI with 5♠s. However if the opening bid shows 5+♠s, then this just denies 4+♥s and shows a good GI.
- 2NT: GI without 4 in an unbid major. If opening bid showed a five card major, this is not a good GI.
- 3X: Natural with 5+♠s and GF – still on if they opened 1♠ to expose a possible psyche.
- 2♥: GI with 5+♥s and not a good GI if opening bid shows 5+♠s. If opening bid showed 5+♥s, this shows a good GI with 5+♠s and now 3♥ by overcaller is a transfer to ♠s, so advancer plays the contract. When 2♥ shows 5+♥s, overcaller should bid 2♠ with 4+♠ to check for ♠ fit.
- 2♠: To play. However if the opening bid showed 5+♠s, then this shows 5+♥s and a good GI, and now 3♦ by overcaller transfers to 3♥ (so advancer can play ♥ contract, not overcaller).
- 2NT: Asks for a weak doubleton minor. After 2NT:
 3m: Weak doubleton in **m**. Now:
 Pass: To play, often a GI hand with 6 in **m**.
 3♦: Natural, GF.
 3♥, 3♠: Singleton/void in major bid, length in both minors.
 3NT: To play.
 4♣: Natural, GF.
- 3♥: No weak doubleton minor, and now:
 3♠: Artificial, GF, both minors.
 3NT: To play.
 4♣, 4♦: Natural, long suit, 4 or longer in other minor, GF.
- 3♣: GF with ♣s, may have a four card major with a longer ♣ suit.
- 3♦: GF with ♦s, may have a four card major with a longer ♦ suit.
- 3♥: GI, both majors, 5-5+. 4♦ by overcaller asks advancer to bid 4♠, to play.
- 3♠: GF, both majors, 5-5+. 4♦ by overcaller asks advancer to bid 4♥, to play.
- 3NT: To play.
- 4♣: Transfer to ♥s, so overcaller plays 4♥.
- 4♦: Transfer to ♠s, so overcaller plays 4♠.
- 4♥,4♠: To play, even if opener's suit.
- 4NT: Natural, slam invite.

[1NT Overall Structure with 5♠s & 4♥s GI]

When advancer holds 5♠s & 4♥s GI the 1NT overall structure does not provide a two level bid for this hand type. The sequence advancer uses is: 1NT-2♣—2♦-2♥. This can be 4-4+ in the majors. Now if opener bids ♥s or NT the bidding is easy, especially since the NT bids show 4♠s. The two unusual sequences are:

1NT-2♣—2♦-2♥—2♠: This denies 4♠s and the ability to accept a GI, so advancer passes.

1NT-2♣—2♦-2♥—3♦: This denies 4♠s but accepts a GI, so advancer bids 3♠ to show 5♠s.

[GI with a Long Minor]

Note the GI sequence with a long minor: bid 2NT, and if overcaller doesn't show a weak doubleton minor just bid 3NT – in these cases the long minor will often provide the source of tricks necessary to make 3NT. If overcaller shows a weak doubleton in the long minor, just play there, as the minor will often not run, with the opponents holding up to prevent suit establishment. Note that 2NT hides which suit is the long minor, to help avoid a lead of the other minor.

[Notes on GI Sequences When the Opponents have opened a major]

Note the following GI sequences when 1NT overcalls a 1♥ opening (that shows 5+♥s):

Bad GI: 1NT-2NT(not 4♠s), 1NT-2♣—2♦-2♠(4♠s), 1NT-2♦—2♥-2♠(5+♠s).

Good GI: 1NT-2♣—2♦-2♥(may have 4♠s), 1NT-2♥(5+♠s).

Note the following GI sequences when 1NT overcalls a 1♠ opening (that shows 5+♠s):

Bad GI: 1NT-2NT(not 4♥s), 1NT-2♣—2♦-2♥(4♥s), 1NT-2♥(5+♥s).

Good GI: 1NT-2♦—2♥-2♠(not 4♥s), 1NT-2♣—2♦-2♠(4♥s), 1NT-2♠(5+♥s).

[After Double of Our Natural Notrump Overcall]

Play your usual Rescue system (if don't have one, get one – see ETM methods). If Rescue methods include system on, then continue to play the 1NT overcall structure. If there is a run out sequence that shows long ♦s at the 2 level, then since one can just bid 2♣ puppet to 2♦ to play there, use whatever the 2♦ run out sequence was to instead show a weak takeout bid short in opener's suit.

Examples – Assume redouble is normally used to show long ♣s or long ♦s weak hand. Now with system on and 1NT overcall structure used:

1♣=1NT=Double=2♣: Still a puppet to 2♦, to play in 2♦ sometimes.

1♣=1NT=Double=Redouble: Acts as a puppet to 2♣, often with long ♣ (even if ♣ opening).

1♣=1NT=Double=Redouble—P=2♣=P=P: To play in ♣s.

1♣=1NT=Double=Redouble—P=2♣=P=2♦: Weak takeout of ♣s – overcaller passes or bids 2♥ or 2♠.

1♦=1NT=Double=Redouble—P=2♣=P=2♦: Weak takeout of ♦s – overcaller bids 2♥ or 2♠ or 3♣.

1♥=1NT=Double=Redouble—P=2♣=P=2♦: Weak takeout of ♥s.

If the partnership doesn't already have an agreement, it is suggested that if a double is passed back to the 1NT overcaller, and if advancer's pass doesn't force a redouble by overcaller, then a redouble by the 1NT shows two playable suits; advancer initially assumes clubs and higher, but if advancer bids clubs and overcaller bids again then the two suits do not include clubs. Only play this after explicit agreement by partner (i.e. not just we will play everything in these notes).