

Responding to a Simple Major Overcall with Fit Bids

By Neil H. Timm

Fit bids are most often used when partner opens a major. What do you do when partner overcalls a major and you become the advancer?

What is your overcall agreement? The overcall range is often 7/8-15/16 HCP at the 1-level and 11/12-15/16 HCP at the 2-level, 13-15 at the 3-level and with 17+ one X's and bids since if partner has on average 10 points game is likely with a fit or NT.

I prefer to have 10-15/16 for a simple overcall since I like to X 3-level bids by the opponents when my partner overcalls with 10+ points. However, there are more factors than points! One must also consider suit length, vulnerability, and suit quality, among others per your agreement.

If the bidding goes: 1♣ - 1♥ - X - ? What do you next bid with a fit?

Commonly used fit bids are:

1. 2♣
2. 2♥/3♥/4♥
3. 1♠/2♦
4. XX (re-double)
5. 2NT* a 3-card limit raise or better
6. A splinter bid of 3♠*/4♣*/4♦*
7. 2♠*/3♦* Mixed limit raise
8. 3♣* preemptive mixed 6-9HCP

The cue bid (1) shows 10+ points in support of hearts and in (2) 2♥ shows 3- hearts with 6-9 HCP, 3♥ shows 4-hearts with 6-9 points, and 4♥ shows 6-9 with 5-hearts lacking the A/K or both in hearts and is preemptive if you do not play Rosencrantz XX. Playing Rosencrantz, the XX shows an A/K or both with 6+HCP and support (to confuse matters some play reverse Rosencrantz so be careful and always ask).

A new suit (3) is normally NF constructive and invitational without heart support.

Not playing Rosencrantz X or XX, a XX is normally penalty oriented with 12+ HCP and denies heart support (lack of fit). Some may use it with or without a fit if not playing Rosencrantz.

2NT* after a X normally show 3-card support (Truscott Jordan); however, some ensure 4-card support by agreement.

The splinter bid $3\spadesuit^*$ requires 4-card support with 12/13+ fit points and is game forcing with a singleton/void in spades; however, it says nothing about the other three suits. So, what do you do if the opponents bid $4\clubsuit/5\spadesuit$?

What about minor suit splinter bids? They again show 4-card support but say nothing about wasted values in spades. Shortness in clubs or diamonds may or may not help partner.

The mixed raise bids (7) shows a limit raise with 4-card support and a 5-card bid suit in spades/diamonds.

The 3-level club bid (8) is a preemptive raise in hearts with 4-hearts.

If the bidding now goes: $1\clubsuit - 1\heartsuit - 1\spadesuit - ?$ Now what do you bid with a fit?

Commonly used fit bids are:

1. $2\clubsuit$
2. $2-4\heartsuit$
3. $2\diamond$
4. XX (re-double)
5. $2NT^*$ 4-card limit raise
6. A splinter bid of $3\spadesuit^*/4\clubsuit^*/4\diamond^*$
7. $2\spadesuit^*/3\diamond^*$ Mixed raise with 5S/5D
8. $3\clubsuit^*$ preemptive mixed raise

What follows is a typical scenario of fit bids.

OPP PART OPP ADV

$1\clubsuit$	$1\spadesuit$	P	$2\clubsuit$ = forcing 10+ points
			$2\diamond/2\heartsuit$ NF constrictive with 5+ card suit
			$2\spadesuit$ = simple raise with 6-9 points
			$2NT^*$ = 10-12 limit raise with 4-card support
			$3\clubsuit^*$ = mixed raise with 6-9 with 4-spades
			$3\diamond^*/3\heartsuit^*$ = invitational 10-12 mixed raise with 5-cards
			$3\spadesuit$ = preemptive with 3-card support

4♣*/4♦*/4♥* = splinter bids 12+ and 4-card support

4♠ = preemptive with 4-card support

What have we learned? Overall Fit Bids show trump support with 2/3/4 cards with varying strength.

While fit bids are important to show support in a competitive auction, they must also be used with caution. Why? Because they are usually lead directing and it may be better to not bid so that partner makes a better lead.

Example:

N	S	E	W
	1♠	2♥	2♠

and you hold ♠53 ♥J76 ♦KQJ7 ♣8732

Do you bid 3♥? No! If they end up in 3/4♠ you want a diamond lead, do not show a fit, but bid 3♦!

Alternatively, the bidding goes

N	S	E	W
			1♥
1♠	2♦	?	

and you hold ♠K53 ♥9853 ♦Q72 ♣642

What is your bid? Clearly X*=Roz to show support with an A/K or if you do not play the convention bid 2♠ to show support.

The bidding continues:

N	S	E	W
			1♥
1♠	2♦	2♠	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Partner holds ♠QJxxx ♥Ax ♦xx ♣KQxx and may lead a club instead of a spade if you failed to bid!

Bidding on?

Once an overcall fit has been established, a pass over the opponent's next bid may be a forcing pass:

- (1) with a forcing raise, fit showing jump, splinter bid
- (2) if either opener/over caller showed a new suit
- (3) if partners last bid committed you to a level higher than that reached by the opponents

Then a forcing pass suggests that partner bids on; however, in (3) a direct bid of an agreed suit is the weakest bid.

Reference: Andrew Robson and Oliver Segal (1993, pp 83-116 & 237-270), "Partnership Bidding At Bridge" – The Contested Auction.