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: $1 - 1 \vee - X - ?$ 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 $3 \bigstar^*/4 \bigstar^*/4 \bigstar^*$
- 7. $2 \bigstar^{*/3} \bigstar^{*}$ Mixed limit raise
- 8. 3****** preemptive mixed 6-9HCP

The cue bid (1) shows 10+ points in support of hearts and in (2) $2 \checkmark$ shows 3- hearts with 6-9 HCP, $3 \checkmark$ shows 4-hearts with 6-9 points, and $4 \checkmark$ 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^{*} 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 $4^{*}/5^{*}?$

What about minor suit splinter bids? They again show 4-card support but say nothing about waisted 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 - 1 - 1 - ? Now what do you bid with a fit?

Commonly used fit bids are:

- 1. 2*
- 2. 2-4♥
- 3. 2♦
- 4. XX (re-double)
- 5. 2NT* 4-card limit raise
- 6. A splinter bid of $3 \bigstar^*/4 \bigstar^*/4 \bigstar^*$
- 7. $2 \star^{*}/3 \star^{*}$ Mixed raise with 5S/5D
- 8. 3****** preemptive mixed raise

What follows is a typical scenario of fit bids.

OPP	PART	OPP	ADV	
1*	1	Р	2 = forcing 10+ points	
			2♦/2♥ NF constrictive with 5+ card suit	
			$2 \bigstar$ = simple raise with 6-9 points	
			$2NT^* = 10-12$ limit raise with 4-card support	
			3 * * = mixed raise with 6-9 with 4-spades	
			$3 \diamond */3 \heartsuit * =$ invitational 10-12 mixed raise with 5-cards	
			$3 \bigstar$ = preemptive with 3-card support	

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

 $4 \bigstar$ = preemptive with 4-card support

What have we learned? Overcall 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.

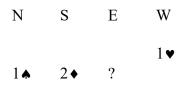
Example:

Ν	S	Е	W
	1 🛦	2♥	2

and you hold **▲**53 **♥**J76 **♦**KQJ7 **♣**8732

Do you bid $3 \checkmark$? No! If they end up in $3/4 \bigstar$ you want a diamond lead, do not show a fit, but bid $3 \blacklozenge$!

Alternatively, the bidding goes



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 $2 \bigstar$ to show support.

The bidding continues:

Ν	S	Е	W
			1 ♥
1 🛦	2♦	2	2NT
Р	3NT	Р	Р
Р			

Partner holds AQJxxx 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.