

## Defence to TWO suited overcalls

It is thought nowadays that it is much more valuable to describe your holdings in the suits the overcaller **does not have**. One method that is popular and relatively easy to remember is the lower-lower treatment to 2 suited overcalls.

When an opponent overcalls to show 2 suits, you assume that these are 'their' suits and the other 2 suits (the suit partner opened and the unbid suit) are 'yours'.

### WHEN BOTH OF OVERCALLER'S SUITS ARE KNOWN

Common examples of this will include 2NT to show the lowest two suits and a minor suit cue bid to show the majors (Michaels style)

Using the **lower-lower** principle, if we cue bid the **lower** of the overcaller's suits we are showing the **lower** of the two suits our side has. If we cue bid the **higher** of the overcaller's suits we are showing the **higher** of the two suits our side has.

Thus, if we open a major and a 2NT overcall shows the minors, then a 3C cue bid will always show hearts and a 3D cue bid will always show spades. The length and strength you need for these cue bids depends on whether you are raising partner or showing the unbid suit.

The cue bid in support of partner shows a hand that would have raised to 3 or better (1H - 2NTovercall - 3C or 1S - 2NTovercall - 3D).

The cue bid showing the unbid suit (1H - 2NTovercall - 3D or 1S - 2NTovercall - 3C) promises 5+ in the unbid suit and game forcing values.

The same rules apply if we open a minor and the opposition cue bid our minor to show the majors. Thus, a 2H cue bid will always show clubs and a 2S cue bid will always show diamonds.

So 1C - 2C overcall - 2H and 1D - 2D overcall - 2S would show support for partner to at least the 3 level and 1C - 2C overcall - 2S and 1D - 2D overcall - 2H would show the unbid suit and game forcing values.

The meanings of other bids available to responder following a 2 suited overcall are as follows:

**Double** = 9/10 + points and willingness to make a penalty X of one of the oppositions suits or a hand that will be able to control the auction at a later date (usually with game going values).

**Simple raise of partner** = Good raise to 2 (even if at the 3 level!) (e.g. 1S - 2NTovercall - 3S)

**Raise to game in partner's suit** = Long trumps with good playing strength but less than limit raise values (e.g. 1S - 2NTovercall - 4S)

**Free bid of 4<sup>th</sup> suit** = 6+ suit, 7-10 points, non-forcing (i.e. weak 2 type hand)  
(e.g. 1S - 2NTovercall - 3H)

**Jump cue bid** = Splinter (e.g. 1S - 2NT overcall - 4C/4D or 1C - 2C overcall - 3H/3S)

**2NT (If available)** = Suggest, natural 10-12 points with stops.

**3NT** = Always to play

### **WHEN ONE OF OVERCALLER'S SUITS IS KNOWN**

The most common example that you will meet is a Michaels cue bid of a major to show the other major and an unidentified minor. In this case, only one cue bid is available (that of the known major) and this should always be used to show **at least** a good raise to 3 in partners.

e.g 1S - 2S overcall - 3H shows a good raise to at least 3S

1H - 2H overcall - 2S shows a good raise to at least 3H

Other bids are as follows:

**Jump bids to 4C/4D and 3S/4H (i.e. their major)** = Splinter, slam try-ish

**Bids of other 2 suits** = natural non forcing

**Raises of partner's suit** = non forcing e.g. 1H - 2H overcall - 3H is a good raise to 2

**Double** = 9/10 points + and looking to double or a non-supporting hand with GF values

**2NT/3NT** = Natural

The trickiest auctions are those where you have game forcing strength without a fit and without sure stoppers in all unbid suits. Usually 3NT is right and the best strategy is to start with a double. If RHO prefers the overcallers major he will bid it straight away, if not will usually ask for the minor. With this information you can then further describe your hand. If partner passes a bid by RHO then double by you is penalties, a pass by you over a bid by LHO is forcing, delayed cue bid of their major is asking for a stop, new suit is forcing.

With the above agreements you should be able to handle most 2 suited overcalls but you will still need good bidding judgement! Bear in mind these few simple guidelines and hopefully success will be yours:

- 1) The overcall has warned of wild distributions. Close games with an 8 card fit may be difficult so don't be over optimistic.
- 2) Always compete to the highest appropriate level when you have a fit with partner. Length is more important than strength.
- 3) Think about how the auction might progress after you have made a double and what bid you will make to describe your hand.

- 4) With scattered values and no fit for partner, consider going quietly and defending. Even with a modest trump holding, if you hold overcallers second suit a large penalty may be forthcoming.
- 5) Think vulnerability. If they are and you are not, do not let them off the hook if you are thinking about doubling.
- 6) Generally if they are in a doubled contract, it is usually correct to lead a trump or expect partner to lead one.