

Advancing Suit Overcalls

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Transfer advances apply after our partner makes a suit overcall. As the “advancer,” the scheme described here allows us to

- distinguish between 3- and 4-card support for partner
- show a 5+ card suit of our own
- indicate a strong hand with a cue-bid.

A “chain” of advances was first discussed by Jeff Rubens in the 1981 Bridge World magazine. His scheme started with the cue-bid of opener’s suit and went up to the next level of intervenor’s suit. It did not distinguish between three- and four-card support—information that is important for competitive situations. Our methods improve on an approach available on the internet using both “No-double” and “Double” transfer advances. We are able to distinguish between three- and four-card support in overcaller’s suit, show new suits, and invite game. The cost of our approach is the loss of the negative meaning of double when the transfer chain starts with double, and the natural 1NT advance when the chain starts with 1NT.

First, review some terminology. If an opponent opens the bidding, her partner becomes the responder. If an opponent opens and I overcall, I am the intervenor and my partner becomes the advancer. The approach here applies when the opponents open with a suit bid, partner makes a natural (not artificial) overcall in a suit at the one- or two-level, and responder makes some call below three of partner’s suit.

We use two versions of transfer advances—the double version and the no-double version. Which version is used depends on responder’s call. In the double version, responder has bid a suit or notrump, so double is available to the advancer as part of the transfer chain. When responder passes or doubles, a double by advancer is not a legal call, so the no-double version applies.

Responder’s Call	Transfer Advance Version
Pass or X	No-double
Suit bid or NT	Double

In the no-double version, if partner has overcalled one of a suit, advancer has a chain of bids available starting with 1NT and ending with two of partner’s suit. If the overcall was at the two-level, the chain starts with 2NT and goes to three of the overcalled suit. The chain may be short, consisting of only 1NT, 2♣ and 2♦ if partner has overcalled diamonds, or even just 2NT and 3♣ if partner’s suit is clubs.

In the double version, double replaces the notrump bid at the lowest position in the chain. Again, the chain may be short, consisting of only X and 2s, or X and 3s, when s, our overcalled suit, is one suit higher than the opponent’s. In the double version, minimum notrump bids retain their normal meaning and are to play.

The following points apply in both the no-double and double versions:

- (i) The highest bid in the chain—2s (or 3s), where s is the overcalled suit—shows up to 11 support points and exactly three-card support for intervenor’s suit.
- (ii) The call just below 2s (or 3s)—whether 2s-1 (or 3s-1), 1NT (or 2NT) or X—is a constructive raise with four-card support and 9-11 support points. For memory purposes, the transfer to intervenor’s suit is a 4-card raise.

- (iii) A transfer to opener's suit is always a cue-bid showing either 12-14 points and 4-card support, or some 15+ hand. When the chain does not include a transfer to the opened suit, use the standard cue-bid outside the chain to show this raise.
- (iv) A transfer to an unbid suit is two-way. Normally, it shows at least a five-card suit, and intervenor will assume that. However, with exactly three-card support for partner's overcall, advancer may transfer to a suit with as few as four cards, planning to support partner's suit on his next call. In that case, the transfer is also lead-directing. With a doubleton in the overcalled suit, advancer will have a good five- or six-card suit. Lacking tolerance for intervenor's suit, advancer should be able to play in his suit at one level higher than the overcall.
- (v) A transfer to an unbid suit shows one of three ranges: up to about 11 support points, 12-14 HCP, or 15+. Advancer's rebid will clarify his holding.
- (vi) If advancer cue-bids by transferring to the opened suit and the overcaller accepts the transfer by bidding that suit, the acceptance creates a game-force and says that overcaller has a maximum or near-maximum overcall.
- (vii) If advancer transfers to an unbid suit and the next player bids or doubles, support doubles and redoubles apply but show a doubleton instead of three-card support.
- (viii) Bids outside the transfer chain are natural and forcing.
- (ix) Subsequent notrump bids by either partner are to play.
- (x) All bids in the transfer-advance chain require an alert.

The tables below present more detail.

No-double version: They open, partner overcalls 1s or 2s, responder passes or doubles

<p>(1♣) 1♠ (pass) ?</p>	<p>The transfer chain consists of 1NT, 2♣, 2♦, 2♥, 2♠. 1NT, a transfer to the opened suit (clubs), is a cue-bid showing 12-14 HCP with four-card spade support or any 15+ hand. 2♣ is a transfer to diamonds showing either five or more diamonds or a lead-directing three-card spade raise. 2♦ is a transfer to hearts. It may be two-way as above. 2♥ is 2s-1, a constructive spade raise showing 9-11 support points with four-card support. 2♠ is the 2s raise, showing up to 11 support points with exactly three-card spade support. With 12+ points and three-card spade support, transfer to an unbid suit, if available, and then raise or cue-bid. If there is no unbid suit, improvise.</p>
<p>(1♦) 1♥ (X) ?</p>	<p>1NT is a transfer to clubs. 2♣ is the cue-bid. 2♦ is 2s-1, the constructive raise. 2♥ is 2s, the three-card raise. 3♥ is preemptive. 1♠ is outside the chain, so is natural and forcing for one round. If advancer has exactly three-card heart support with his 1♠ bid, he will have a better hand than an immediate 2♥ raise would show.</p>
<p>(1♣) 1s (pass) <u>1NT</u></p>	<p>Transferring to their suit is always the cue-bid. It shows 12-14 support points and four-card support, or a 15+ hand. An ordinary cue-bid, when outside the chain, also shows this hand.</p>

(1♣) 1♠ (pass) 1NT (pass) ?	If overcaller accepts the transfer cue-bid by bidding 2♣, it shows a sound overcall, 13-15 HCP. A rebid of 2♠ shows less than 13 HCP. Advancer may then pass.
(1♦) 1♠ (X) ?	2♣ is the cue-bid. 1NT and 2♦ are transfers to clubs and hearts respectively. In either case, advancer has less than four-card spade support.
(1♣) 1♦ (pass) ?	1NT is the cue-bid, 2♣ is the constructive raise and 2♦ is the three-card raise. Subsequent notrump bids by either partner are to play. 1♥ and 1♠ are outside the chain and are forcing.
(1♦) 1♥ (pass) 1♠	Transfers don't start until 1NT, so 1♠ is outside the chain. Natural and a one-round force. Shows at least five spades and 11+ HCP, usually 11-14. Advancer may have three-card heart support.
(1♦) 1♥ (pass) 1NT (?) ?	If opener passes, overcaller accepts the transfer to clubs with doubleton or better support. If opener does not pass, support doubles/redoubles apply through 2♥. In that case, a support double confirms a doubleton club and raising shows at least three.
(1♣) 2♠ (pass) ?	The 2♠ overcall is less than invitational with a six-card suit, so all bids are adjusted.
(1♦) 2♣ (pass) 2♥	Forcing. Transfers don't start until 2NT. New-suit bids by advancer below 2NT (outside the chain) show very good hands. Overcaller assumes that advancer has at least five hearts and 12-14 HCP. The constructive raise in clubs is 2NT.
(1♠) 2♣ (pass) ?	Here is another case where the constructive raise (3s-1) is 2NT, and no transfers are available to unbid suits. 2♦ and 2♥ are natural and forcing for one round. 2♠ is the cue-bid. A raise to 3♣ shows three-card support.
(1♦) pass (1♥) 1♠ (pass) ?	The no-double version applies here also. 1NT shows clubs, 2♣ is the cue-bid and 2♥ is the constructive raise.
(1s) 1os (X) XX	Neutral redouble after their negative double. Advancer's redouble announces that, opposite a normal overcall, it's our hand. XX includes hands where advancer would normally bid 1NT but could not do that in the no-double scheme. We may be able to extract a penalty if intervenor's overcall was upper range, say 10-15 HCP, and we each have the suit bid/advertised on our right.
(1♦) 1♥ (pass) pass (X) pass (pass) XX	Not neutral. This is SOS. In this and other low-level situations where an opponent has trapped and then converted a takeout double to penalty, XX by us says "I think we are in trouble in this contract. I have some support for the unbid suits if you have another place to play." There is a good chance this won't end well, so use with discretion.

Double version: They open, partner overcalls 1s or 2s, responder bids

(1♦) 1♠ (2♣) ?	X is the transfer cue-bid of their opened suit showing 12-14 with four-card support for spades or any GF of 15+. 2♦ is a transfer to hearts. It may be a lead-directing three-card spade raise. 2♥ shows a 9- to 11-point constructive raise with four-card support (2s-1). 2♠ shows up to 11 points with three-card support (2s). Jump raises are preemptive.
(1♦) 1♥ (1NT) ?	X is a transfer to clubs. 2♣ is the cue-bid. 2♦ is the constructive four-card raise. 2♥ is the three-card raise.
(1♦) 1♥ (1♠) ?	On this auction, 1NT is normal and to play. X is a transfer to clubs. 2♣ is the cue-bid. 2♦ is the constructive four-card raise. 2♥ is the three-card raise.
(1♣) 1♦ (1♥) ?	As above, 1NT is normal and to play. X is a two-way transfer to spades, 1♠ is the cue-bid, 2♣ is the constructive four-card diamond raise, and 2♦ is the three-card raise.
(1♥) 2♦ (2♥) ?	X shows at least five spades. 2♠ shows clubs. 3♣ is a constructive diamond raise. 3♦ is a three-card diamond raise.
(1♦) 1♥ (3♦) ?	X is the constructive four-card raise. 3♥ is the three-card raise. In both cases, advancer should be strong enough to sustain the level. The only cue-bid (showing 12+ with four-card support) here is 4♦.
(1♦) pass (1♥) 1♠ (2♥) ?	The double version applies. X is the constructive raise and 2♠ is a three-card raise.
(1♦) 1♥ (4♦) X	Penalty. Any double of a bid above three of the overcalled suit is penalty.

Raising as advancer

Assume that the opponents have opened in a suit, partner has overcalled 1s or 2s and responder has made a call below 3s. The following table summarizes advancer's bids when advancer has at least three-card support for the overcaller.

Points Length	6-8	9-11	11+ - 14	15+
Three	Single raise	Single raise or transfer to an unbid suit, then support	Transfer to an unbid suit or bid a new suit, then support	Cue-bid. Or, transfer to an unbid suit or bid a new suit then cue-bid
Four or more	Jump raise	"2s-1" or "3s-1"	Start with a cue-bid	Start with a cue-bid