

This series is based on *Grant Standard*, a set of conventions and agreements that are in popular use today, such as 15-17 INT openings, five-card majors, and weak two-bids. A summary chart of *Grant Standard* and the corresponding convention card can be found at www.AudreyGrant.com. The site also has *Grant Basic*, a simpler set of agreements.

Earlier articles in this series appeared in the *Bridge Bulletin* and can also be found under 'Articles' at www.AudreyGrant.com.

If our partner opens one-of-a-suit — 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠ — and the player on our right overcalls, the overcall has taken away some of our bidding room. As compensation, we have three new options:

- Passing with 6 or more points
- Cuebidding the opponent's suit
- Doubling (discussed in next issue)

These new possibilities can have an impact on the meaning of our other responses. Let's see how it all works.

Passing

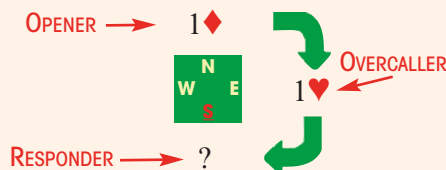
We would typically pass partner's opening bid with 0-5 points, so how does right-hand opponent's overcall have an impact on this response? It doesn't, when we have 0-5 points; we still pass. However, **we can now pass with 6 or more points if our hand is unsuitable for any other call.**

The reason we respond something when we have about 6 or more points is that we want to keep the auction going in case partner has a very strong hand. An opening bid of one-of-a suit can be made with anything from about 13–21 points. If we pass with 6 or more points, left-hand opponent might pass, ending the auction, and we could miss a game contract.

When our right-hand opponent overcalls, however, **partner is going to get another opportunity to bid even**

Responder's Actions When Right-Hand Opponent Overcalls

if we pass. So there's no pressure to 'keep the bidding open' when we have an unsuitable hand.



With this hand, we would pass partner's opening 1♦ bid whether or not our right-hand opponent bids. We're just too weak to respond anything.

With this hand, we would have responded 1NT if our right-hand opponent had passed. With 6 high-card points plus 1 length point, we would have to keep the bidding alive in case our side has a game. When East overcalls 1♥, however, we can simply pass. Partner will have the opportunity to show a strong hand if West also passes; so we won't miss a game.

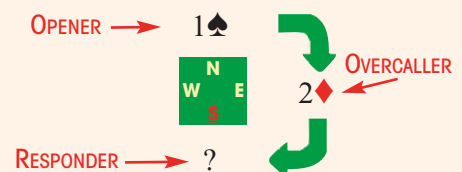
Although we have enough strength to respond 1NT, showing about 6–10 points, we don't want to freely suggest notrump with no strength in hearts, the suit the opponents will likely lead.

Contrast this hand with the previous one. It is the same strength, but we can describe the hand nicely with a 1NT response after the 1♥ overcall. **A notrump response after right-hand opponent's overcall promises at least one stopper in the opponent's suit.**

We can still make our natural response if the overcall hasn't interfered with it.

With this hand we would respond 1♠ whether or not East overcalls 1♥.

A new suit by responder is still forcing after an overcall — assuming responder is not a passed hand — and responder needs about 10 or more points to bid a new suit at the two level, and an even stronger hand to bid at the three level or higher. Again, this increases the frequency with which responder passes after an overcall.



With 10 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card club suit, we certainly would respond something if right-hand opponent had passed. The 2♦ overcall, however, has made it awkward to bid anything. We aren't strong enough to bid 3♣, which would virtually commit the partnership to a game contract, and we don't want to bid 2NT with no real stopper in diamonds.

We'll just have to pass for now. The good news is that the auction is far from over. Either left-hand opponent or partner may bid, giving us a later opportunity to show some values.

Still, we should stretch to make a natural bid in a competitive auction. We don't want the opponent's overcall to cut us out of the bidding.

With this hand, we should probably respond 2♥ after East's overcall. It's a bit of an overbid, but if we don't bid now, we may have difficulty catching up later ... if there is a later!

Note that our 2♥ bid, while forcing, isn't forcing to game — even if we're playing 2/1 Game Force. Partner will have to give us some leeway in competitive situations.

Cuebidding Overcaller's Suit

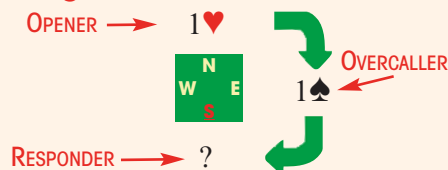
When an opponent overcalls in a suit, responder won't want to suggest that same suit as trumps. Holding length and strength in the suit, responder can always choose to defend for penalties. So, a bid of the opponent's suit has no natural meaning. Instead, it is used as an artificial forcing bid and is referred to as a *cuebid*.

The term 'cuebid' is applied in a different context when the partnership is bidding toward slam, but here it simply means a bid of the opponent's overcalled suit. The exact meaning of the cuebid has changed over time, but a popular modern agreement is:

RESPONDER'S CUEBID

A direct cuebid of the opponent's overcalled suit by responder shows a fit for opener's suit and invitational (10+) or better values.

In effect, responder's cuebid takes the place of both a limit raise and a forcing raise.



With 10 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton spade, we would make a limit raise to 3♥ if our right-hand opponent passes. After the overcall, however, we show this hand by cuebidding 2♠. A cuebid replaces the limit raise. Notice that the cuebid says nothing about our holding in spades.

With this hand, we would have made a forcing raise of hearts if our opponent had passed, either by using the artificial Jacoby 2NT response, or by simply starting with a new suit, 2♣, planning to show the support later. After the overcall, we replace the forcing raise with a cuebid of the opponent's suit, 2♠.

How does opener know whether we have a limit raise or a forcing raise?

Opener doesn't. Opener assumes we have a limit raise, and bids accordingly. Opener returns to the agreed suit at the three level with a hand that would reject an invitational — limit — raise. Opener jumps to game, or makes some forward-going bid, with a hand that would accept an invitational raise. With a forcing raise, it's up to responder to get to game if opener declines the 'invitation.'

Here are some examples of how the auction might go after a cuebid.

WEST	EAST
♠ J 7 3	♠ 9 5
♥ A Q 9 8 2	♥ K 10 7 3
♦ K Q 2	♦ A J 7 5
♣ 8 4	♣ Q 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

With a minimum opening, West rejects the invitation by 'signing off' in 3♥. With only a limit raise, East has no reason to bid again.

WEST	EAST
♠ 7 3	♠ 9 5
♥ A Q 9 8 2	♥ K 10 7 3
♦ K 2	♦ A J 7 5
♣ A J 7 4	♣ Q 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	2♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Here West accepts the invitation by jumping to game. Without interference, responder would have made a limit raise to 3♥, and opener would have bid 4♥.

WEST	EAST
♠ J 7 3	♠ 9 5
♥ A Q 9 8 2	♥ K J 7 5
♦ K Q 2	♦ A J 7 5
♣ 8 4	♣ K Q 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	2♠	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Here East cuebids with a forcing raise in hearts. West assumes it is only a limit raise, and signs off at the three level with a minimum hand. East now simply puts the partnership in game, knowing slam is unlikely since West has a minimum opening.

The cuebid can be used in a similar fashion at higher levels:

WEST	EAST
♠ 7 3	♠ 9 5
♥ A Q 9 8 2	♥ K J 7 3
♦ Q 2	♦ A J 7 5
♣ A J 7 4	♣ K Q 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	2♠	3♠	4♠
Double	Pass	Pass	Pass

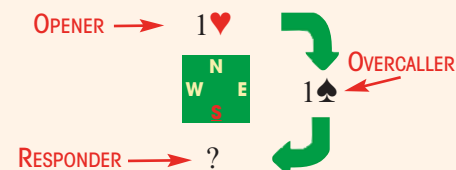
North makes a preemptive jump overcall of 2♠. East cuebids 3♠ to show heart support and the values for at least game, since the partnership can no longer stop in partscore. When South furthers the preempt, West confidently doubles for penalty. West has no interest in bidding higher, and knows East has some defensive strength. If East had simply jumped to 4♥, West would be unsure which side holds the balance of power.

The Impact of the Cuebid

Since the cuebid replaces the limit and forcing raises:

AFTER AN OPPONENT'S OVERCALL

- A jump raise of opener's suit is weak (preemptive).
- A bid of 2NT is natural and invitational.



With this hand we would simply raise to 2♥ if our right-hand opponent passed. After the overcall, we can make a weak jump raise to 3♥, to make the auction more difficult for the opponents. We have at least a nine-card heart fit, and they will likely want to compete in spades. Partner knows this is a preemptive raise, not a limit raise. With the values for a limit raise, we would cuebid 2♠.

With this hand, we can jump to 2NT, showing about 10-12 points and stoppers in spades. We don't need 2NT as an artificial raise of opener's major suit, since we have the cuebid available. ❖