BRIDGE AT SEA LIBRARY

Bridge Bidding: The Next Step · Acol edition



CHAPTER 4

Responding to an Overcall

Raises, the cue-bid raise, new suits and no-trumps after partner overcalls

Mike Smith

bridgescorer.com

1. Partner has overcalled

An overcall shows a good five-card suit and about 8–16 points (Book 1, Chapter 10). That is a wide range, and partner has not promised an opening hand. Your job is to tell partner quickly how much you have and whether you like their suit.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♥	1♠	Pass	?

2. With support for partner

With **three or more** cards in partner's suit, support it. How you raise shows your strength:

Your hand	Bid (after 1♥ – 1♠ – pass)
6–10, three or more trumps	Simple raise: 2♠
11 or more, three or more trumps	Cue bid the opponents' suit: 2♥ (a good raise)
Weak, four or more trumps	Jump raise: 3♠ (pre-emptive)
Weak with five trumps, or good shape	4♠

The **cue bid** (bidding the opponents' suit) is artificial: it says nothing about hearts. It means "I have a good raise of your suit, at least invitational". After it, the overcaller bids two of their suit with a minimum, and more with extra values.

The **jump raise** is the opposite: a weak hand with four trumps, made to take bidding space away from the opponents, who probably have the balance of the points.

♠ K 8 4 ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ Q 9 6 3 ♣ J 8 4	**6 points**, three spades: **2♠**.

♠ K J 5 ♥ 8 3 ♦ A Q 7 4 ♣ K 10 6 2	**13 points**, three spades: cue bid **2♥**. Partner will bid 2♠ with a minimum, and you will raise to game.

♠ Q 10 6 3 ♥ 6 ♦ J 9 7 4 2 ♣ 8 5 3	**3 points** but four trumps and a singleton: **3♠**, to make life hard for the opponents.

3. Without support

- **A new suit** shows a good five-card or longer suit and is **not forcing**. Don't introduce a poor suit: partner's suit is probably good.
- **no-trumps** needs a stopper in their suit: 1NT with about 8–11, 2NT with 12–14 (invitational), 3NT with 15 or more.
- **Pass** with a weak hand and no fit. Partner has not promised much, and a misfit is no place to bid on.

♠ 7 ♥ K J 4 ♦ A 10 5 2 ♣ Q 9 8 5 3	1♥ – 1♠ – pass – ?: no spade fit, but ♥K-J-4 stops hearts: **1NT**.

4. Summary

After partner overcalls	Bid
3+ trumps, 6–10	Simple raise
3+ trumps, 11+	Cue bid the opponents' suit
4+ trumps, weak	Jump raise (pre-emptive)
Good 5+ suit of your own	Bid it (not forcing)
Stopper in their suit	1NT (8–11), 2NT (12–14), 3NT (15+)
Weak, no fit	Pass

5. Test yourself

1. ♠ A 8 5
♥ K 9 2
♦ 7 6 3
♣ 9 8 5 2

1♦ – 1♥ (partner) – pass – ? What do you bid?

2. ♠ A 8 5
♥ K 9 2
♦ 7 6 3
♣ K Q 5 2

1♦ – 1♥ (partner) – pass – ? What do you bid?

3. ♠ 10 5 4
♥ Q 8 6 3
♦ 5
♣ J 9 7 4 2

1♦ – 1♥ (partner) – pass – ? What do you bid?

4. ♠ K Q J 10 6 3
♥ 5
♦ 8 4 2
♣ A 7 3

1♦ – 1♥ (partner) – pass – ? What do you bid?

5. ♠ K 7 3
♥ 6
♦ K J 10 4
♣ Q J 8 5 2

1♦ – 1♥ (partner) – pass – ? What do you bid?

6. ♠ J 4
♥ A Q 10 8 3
♦ 8 5 4
♣ K 7 3

You overcalled. 1♦ – 1♥ (you) – pass – 2♦ (partner) – pass – ? What do you bid?

Answers

1. 2♥. Three trumps and 7 points: a simple raise.

2. 2♦. The cue bid of the opponents' suit (diamonds, the suit they opened): three trumps and 12 points, a good raise.

3. 3♥. Four trumps and a singleton, but weak: the pre-emptive jump raise.

4. 1♠. A good six-card suit: show it. It is not forcing.

5. 1NT. ♦K-J-10-4 stops diamonds, 10 points, and no heart fit.

6. 2♥. Partner has a good raise, but you have a minimum overcall (10 points and only five hearts). Bid two of your suit and let partner decide.

Next: Chapter 5, Michaels and the Unusual 2NT. Free lessons and challenge hands to play: **bridgescorer.com/learn**

About this guide. There are many versions of Acol, and clubs, teachers and books do not all agree on every detail. This chapter describes one common, straightforward version for learners. We do not claim it is the only or the best way: if your teacher or club plays something different, follow them. What matters most is that you and your partner agree.

© 2026 Mike Smith, Bridge at Sea. You may print and share this chapter for personal and club teaching use.