

BRIDGE - BEGINNER'S LESSONS I - 06

Competitive Bidding

Competitive bidding between Opponents is all part of the game of bridge. This interchange of information between the Partnerships may consume levels of bidding otherwise needed by the Opponents and, thus, effect their subsequent action. There are both advantages and disadvantages to competitive bidding. They include the following:

Advantages of Competitive Bidding

1. Despite the fact that the Opponents having opened the bidding, your Partnership may have a preponderance of the high-card points such that your team may be capable of making a part-score, or even a game.
2. Even if your side doesn't have the strength for game, you still may be able to interfere with your Opponents' exchange of information thereby making it difficult, or even impossible, for them to arrive at their best contract.
3. If your Opponents become the declaring team, the information imparted from your competitive bidding may assist your side in the defense, including the best opening lead.

Disadvantages of Competitive Bidding

1. If you are bidding to interfere with the Opponents, and inadvertently bid beyond your side's capacity, you might end up playing in an un-makeable contract.
2. At the same time you are giving your Partner information about your hand, you are also giving information to you Opponents, as well, thereby inadvertently assisting them in making their specified contract should your team wind up on defense.

1. The Overcall - An Overcall is the simplest form of a competitive auction. It occurs subsequent to the Opponents opening the bidding. It can be made at the 1-level, the 2-level, or even higher. It can be made in any of the four suits, or in No-Trump.

A. Requirements for a Simple Overcall in a Suit:

1. A 5-Card or longer suit - Regardless of whether it is a Major suit or a Minor Suit (One must usually refrain from overcalling with a 4-card suit except in the balancing {4th} seat.)
2. 8 or more HCP's if the Overcall is able to be made at the 1-level (assuming the overcall suit is higher-ranking than the Opponent's suit) else 10 HCP's or more if necessary to be made at the 2-level (if the overcall suit is lower-ranking than the Opponent's bid suit). If a choice of suits of equal length is present, however, an Overcaller should bid the higher-ranking suit first so that the lower-ranking suit can be made as a re-bid at the Overcaller's next turn, thereby allowing Overcaller's Partner to select his/her choice at the cheapest bidding-level possible). Requirements are reduced in 4th seat.

B. Requirements for a 1-NT Overcall in the Direct (2nd) Seat:

1. 15-17 HCP's (Equivalent to the Point Count for a 1-NT opening bid)
2. An Evenly Balanced Hand (No Voids, No Singletons, and, at most, 1 Doubleton)
3. At least one **STOPPER** (A Controlling Honor Card) in the Opponent's bid suit

2. A Takeout “Double” in the Direct (2nd) Seat : - A **Request for Partner to Bid a Suit of his/her own Choice** other than the one already bid by the Opponents. (High-Card Point Count requirements are reduced in the balancing {4th} seat.)

The Requirements for a Take-Out Double:

a. The "Take-Out Double" is made by either member of the opposing team other than the Opening team.

Examples: (1H Dbl.) (or) (1S P P Dbl.)

b. The Partner of the one who doubles must ***not*** have previously bid; i.e., must have previously passed, or not yet had the opportunity of bidding.

Examples: (1H P 3H Dbl.) (or) (1H Dbl.)

c. A Take-Out Double in the direct (2nd) seat ***guarantees*** an equivalent or better hand in comparison to that shown by the Opponent’s opening bid. It is like opening the bidding for your side after the Opponents have already opened, but asking Partner to choose his/her best suit.

Examples: (1D Dbl. = 13+ HCP's or more)

(or)

(1NT Dbl. = 15-17+ HCP's or more)

d. The Take-Out Double is usually used at bidding levels at, or below, 4H

Examples: (1S P 3S Dbl. = (a Take-Out Double)) vs.
(4S Dbl. = (a Penalty Double))

e. The Partner who makes a Take-Out Double should ideally have **SUPPORT** (4-pieces) or at least **TOLERANCE** (3-pieces) for each of the un-bid suits, but particularly for the other Major suit if the Opponents have opened one of the Majors, and support for both Major suits if the Opponents have opened a Minor Suit (unless the doubler is strong enough to take independent action at a later time). **To ensure this requirement, the Player making any Take-Out double should have *fewer* than three (3) pieces of Opener’s bid suit, and, as a result, the ability to tolerate any of the suits from which Partner is likely to choose.**

f. Following Partner’s response, the Partner who doubles re-bids according to the strength of his/her hand. A “Pass” implies minimum count for the original “Double”. Raising Responder’s choice of suits or bidding a new suit implies extra values (without a jump = 16-18 HCP’s, with a jump = 19-21 HCP’s).

COMPETITIVE BIDDING

1. When both sides are bidding the auction is said to be “competitive”.
2. Following an Opponent’s opening bid, there are two basic ways to enter the auction, with an overcall, which simply suggests an alternative contract in an alternative denomination (suit or NT), or a take-out double, which asks Partner to choose the trump suit.

3. What an Overcall Shows:

In a Suit

- a) Strength: 8-15 high-card points at the one-level, 10-15 high-card points at the two-level in the **direct** (2nd seat). These point requirements are reduced in the **balancing** (4th) seat.
- b) Shape: A 5-card or longer suit of “reasonable” quality in the direct (2nd) seat, and a 4-card or longer suit in the balancing (4th) seat.
- c) *It tends to suggest little or no interest in any other suit* - generally discourages Partner from bidding them except with a very good suit of his/her own.

In No-Trump

(Similar to an Opening Bid of 1-NT)

- a) Strength: 15-17 high-card points.
- b) Shape: An evenly-balanced hand; i.e., the absence of either a singleton or a void, and no more than one doubleton.

(One Additional Feature)

- c) Control: At least one “Stopper” in the suit bid by Opener.

4. What a Take-Out “Double” Shows:

- a) Strength: 13-21 high card points (HCP’s) in the direct {2nd} seat (opening count or better), clarified as to the higher or lower extent by subsequent bidding. This requirement is reduced in the balancing (4th) seat to slightly fewer high-card points.
- b) Shape: Generally, potential support (three or more cards) in all of the remaining un-bid suits, unless the Player is strong enough to take independent action later in the auction.
- c) *The double forces Partner to respond*, even with a very weak hand.
- d) Following Partner’s response, the Player who doubles re-bids according to the strength of his/her hand. A “Pass” implies minimum count for the double. Raising Partner’s suit or bidding a new suit promises extra values: without a jump = 16-18 points, with a jump = 19-21 points.

OUTLINE FOR BEGINNERS' LESSON SIX

COMPETITIVE BIDDING

A. Start with a review of the previous lesson, asking for questions, if any, along the way.

B. Explain the nature of competitive bids, define the terms *overcall* and *takeout double*, and give an overview of what they try to accomplish.

1. An overcall tells: it tells partner about a long, strong suit in your hand that you can recommend for trumps. Typically, it is a one-shot affair that suggests little or no interest in the other suits.
2. A takeout double asks: it asks partner to help select the trump suit. It promises a good hand, normally with support for the unbid suits but no clear preference among them. Note: as the takeout double is an unnatural bid, your students will need a very gentle introduction to the concept.

C. Discuss the basic conditions for an overcall.

1. Size: ordinarily 10-15 high-card points at the one level, 12-15 at the two-level. *
2. Shape: a 5-card or longer suit, usually with excellent quality both for playing and lead-directional purposes. Be sure to stress the importance of the length and quality requirements.
3. Give them plenty of examples to demonstrate what constitutes a proper and an improper overcall. Toward this end, use hands with variable quality in the long suit (e.g., AKQxx, KJxxx, or Qxxxx), with 10 or 15 HCP, and when the opening bid is IC or IS.
4. Since an overcall is a limited bid, the overcaller generally does not bid again. Obviously, there are some exceptions (e.g., partner raises, the suit has six cards, or the hand contains a second long suit), but you will confuse the class by going into too much detail at this point.

* While you may or may not agree with these point-count limits, the object is to keep it simple for beginners. They can seek their own technical perfection later.

D. Discuss the basic conditions for a takeout double.

Size: 13-21 points, i.e., the normal range for a one-level opener. Subsequent calls by the doubler indicate the count more precisely, as 13-15, 15-18, or 19-21.

2. Shape: ideally four cards in each unbid suit, but three or more will normally suffice. Without support for one or more of the unbid suits a takeout double is generally inappropriate, unless the hand is strong enough (usually 16 or more HCP) to bid again later. Note: despite the possibility of an off-shaped double, it is very important that you stress the common case, i.e., having support for the unbid suits, especially when the doubler has only 13-15 points.
3. For all practical purposes a takeout double is forcing on the responder, who might have to bid even with zero points (assuming, of course, there is no intervening bid).
4. Re-bids by the doubler depend on the strength of the hand.
 - a) With 13-15 points the doubler must realize that the responder might have a very weak hand. A pass is in order, unless the responder shows some strength.
 - b) With 16-18 points the doubler is allowed to raise partner's suit one level or to introduce a new suit of his/her own with five or more cards. The latter approach promises an overcall-type hand that was simply too strong for an overcall to start.
 - c) With 19-21 points the doubler can re-bid with a jump.
5. Again, be prepared to offer several examples. Try different hand patterns (such as 4-1-4-4, 4-2-3-4, or 4-1-3-5), different point counts, and different opening bids (e.g., 1H or 1C). Be sure to explain why in some cases it is better to double with a 5-card suit rather than overcall (right hand-pattern, weak 5-card suit, more than 15 HCP, etc.).

PRACTICE HANDS FOR THE FOLLOW-UP SESSION

BEGINNERS' LESSON SIX

1. Competitive auctions are very difficult *for* beginners. Be prepared to offer assistance, even before you “correct” their final contract. Whenever possible, however, give them the opportunity to make their own bids (and mistakes).
2. With both sides in the auction there will be that much more to discuss about the bidding. Don't get bogged down in details, or the class will run too long.

HAND - 11

	876			
	Q54			
	7654			
	1098			
A32		K54	Dealer:	North
AK32		J10987	Declarer:	East
2		K103	Contract:	4H
KQJ32		54	Lead:	SQ
	QJ109			
	6			
	AQJ98			
	A76			

- a) The recommended auction is:

P --- P—1D -- X
P— IH—P— 3H
P -- 4H

Bids to explain: why West says X and not 2C (right shape for X, too strong for 2C), why South's re-bid is pass (minimum hand, no response from partner), why West re-bids 3H (to show 19-21 total points).

- b) Discuss the reasons for leading top-of-the-sequence (it is safe, attacking, and informative). Show them why the DA would have been a costly lead.
- c) With a possible loser in each suit, declarer needs to dispose of one of them. The best play is to win the SK, cash the HAK, and lose the CK to the CA. Later, on the high clubs declarer can discard a spade loser (and then some diamonds).

HAND – 12

	A1098			
	5432			
	32			
	Q32			
43		2	Dealer:	East
A10987		KQ6	Declarer:	South
87		K654	Contract:	4S
J1098		AK765	Lead:	CJ
	KQJ765			
	J			
	AQJ109			
	4			

a) The recommended auction is:

1C— IS—2C—2S
3C—4S

Bids to explain: IS (rather than X or 2D), the raise to 2C, and the jump to 4S (based on playing strength).

b) Declarer can make ii tricks by avoiding a diamond loser. Use the dummy's trumps as entries to finesse twice in diamonds. Then, cash the DA and ruff the fourth one to set up the long card as a winner.