

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-level contract.
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 resulting in penalty points for the opposition.
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 Opener's bid 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 Opener'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). These requirements are reduced in the 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 **Standard American 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 “Take-Out 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 its equivalent)

(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 Player 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-an-alternate-Major, 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 as a re-bid following Partner’s response. **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*” then re-bids according to the strength of his/her hand. A “*Pass*” implies no additional high-card point (HCP) count other than the 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 No-Trump), or a Take-Out Double,” which asks Partner to assist in choosing 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 the Opener.

4. What a “Take-Out Double” Shows:

- a) Strength: 13-21 high card points (HCP’s) in the direct {2nd} seat (opening count, its equivalent, 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 Doubler is strong enough to take independent action later in the auction as a re-bid.
- 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 *Take-Out Double*, and give an overview of what they try to accomplish.

1. An overcall **tells!** It informs 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 Take-Out Double **asks!** It requests that Partner help to select the Trump suit. It promises a good hand, normally with support for the remaining un-bid suits but no clear preference among them. **Note:** as the Take-Out 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 8-15 high-card points at the one level, 10-15 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 Take-Out 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 un-bid suit, but three or more will normally suffice. Without support for one or more of the un-bid suits a Take-Out 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 un-bid suits, especially when the Doubler has only 13-15 points.
3. For all practical purposes a Take-Out Double is forcing upon the Responder, who might have to bid even with zero points (assuming, of course, there is no intervening bid). (Note: The responder always retains the option to “*Pass*” Partner’s Take-Out Double, converting it to a Penalty Double.
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).

Declarer can make 11 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.