

BRIDGE – INTERMEDIATE LESSONS I – 20

Bidding Over an Opponent's Opening Pre-emptive Bid

Pressure and Uncertainty Created by an Opening Preempt

The bidding advantage definitely favors the pre-empting side. The preemptor holds a well-defined hand, and his/her Partner, as the “**Captain**,” has nearly perfect knowledge of their combined assets.

Entering the auction at the 3-level or higher is always a risky business. Over an Opponent's pre-empt you have little information to guide your way and not much room to explore. Because of these risks it always requires a few extra points to make a call directly over a preemptive bid, compared to what a similar call would have shown at the 1-level.

General Requirements for Bidding Over a Pre-empt

Overcalls: An overcall, in the direct (2nd) seat of a pre-emptive 2-level bid requires opening count and at least a good 5-card suit. An overcall of a 3-level pre-empt typically describes a hand with 15 or more high-card points and a good 6-card or longer suit (a few more points are necessary with only a 5-card suit). The Responder will raise Partner with three or more cards in support (perhaps even two), and as few as eight or nine high-card points.

Take-Out Doubles: A **Take-Out Double** of a 3-level pre-empt typically promises support for the un-bid suits and at least 16 points. The Responder answers according to the count:

- a) With 0-8 high-card points, simply choose an un-bid suit.
- b) With 9-12 high-card points, make a jump choice.
- c) With 13 or more high-card points, cue-bid the Opponent's suit.

Competitive Calls at the 4-Level or Higher: Competitive bids at this level imply even greater strength, not so much in terms of high-card points but rather in trick-taking capacity. *All competitive calls* after a pre-emptive opening bid are made under pressure. Thus, the values they promise might not always be identical with the values they deliver.

Game-Level Bids

A bid of **3-NT** over a 3-level pre-empt indicates a balanced or semi-balanced hand with stoppers in the Preemptor's suit and about 18-21 high-card points. Game-Level bids in a suit requires near Game in hand and a self sufficient suit which satisfies the “**Suit Quality Test**.”

If one of the Opponents pre-empts and the next two Players “*pass*,” it takes fewer points in balancing (4th) seat to make an overcall or a “*double*.” Since Partner might have “*passed*” with up to 15 points, the object is to protect your side's interests, sometimes with as little as 10 or 11 high-card points.