

Overcalling After Your RHO Has Opened One-of-a-Suit

General Principles:

1. When your RHO opens, your side is at a considerable disadvantage.
2. When your RHO opens, HCP are no longer the key. Level, distribution, vulnerability, suit quality, and your holding in RHO's suit are the only important and relevant issues.
3. The rank of RHO's suit is very relevant, especially when considering a Take-Out Double, with a borderline hand.
4. Be aggressive, practical, imperfect, reasonable, but not suicidal.
5. Lacking a classic holding to enable a traditional overcall, search for a way to improvise.
6. The longer one waits to describe one's hand, the more difficult it becomes.

"Passing" Does Not Always Reflect a Weak Holding:

1. Unless you can overcall "1-NT", absent a 5-card suit of your own, and when holding 4- or more pieces of the Opponent's bid suit, your hand usually lacks the correct shape to either overcall or to make a Take-Out double. Try, if possible, to be flexible and aggressive.

When Your RHO Opens 1C:

1. It is permissible to overcall 1-NT without a Club stopper.
2. As long as you hold opening count and at least 4-3 in the Major suits, it is okay to "Double" with only 2-Diamonds.
3. When very short in Clubs, and especially when non-vulnerable, be very frisky!
4. If your long suit, 6-cards or more, be Clubs, you must wait until your second opportunity to overcall "2C"; doing so on your first turn would be a Michaels Cue-Bid. Or overcall "3C"

1-NT Overcalls:

1. The only overcall that is defined by HCP's is 1-NT. When non-vulnerable, expand your 1-NT overcall to 14-17 HCP's, and to 15-18 HCP's, if vulnerable! Doing so may keep the Opponents from bidding a Game-Level contract.
2. Be willing to overcall 1-NT without a stopper in RHO's opening Minor suit.
3. Sometimes a 1-NT overcall with a 5-card Major or a slightly unbalanced hand is sensible.
4. Upgrade hands with Aces, 5-card suits, Quality suits (4+ cards and 3+ honors), and nice Intermediaries (Tens and Nines). Downgrade ones with Queens and Jacks ("Quacks"), dubious doubletons such as QJ, QX, JX, KJ, or KQ, a singleton (K, Q or J), and hands with a 4-3-3-3 distribution.

Take-Out Doubles:

1. A Take-Out Double usually indicates a hand worth opening, but when you are short in the Opponent's bid suit, strive to take action, even when holding fewer than opening values.
2. Be more flexible after a "1C" or "1D" opening by RHO than over a "1H" or "1S" opening since, in the latter instance Partner may be forced to bid at the 2-level.
3. With a *moderate* hand that qualifies for either a Take-Out Double or a 1-level overcall in a Major, prefer the overcall. Doubling now and bidding later shows extra values.
4. A Take-Out Double of a Major does not always guarantee 4-cards in the alternate Major, absent a 5-card suit of your own and 16(+) HCP's, it could hold as few as 3-pieces.
5. An off-shape Take-Out Double with minimum count is asking for trouble. Never "Double" if short (2-pieces or fewer) in an un-bid Major.

Overcalls:

1. Be flexible as to what holding be necessary since overcalling (1) gets your side into the auction, (2) takes bidding space away from the Opponents, and (3) helps Partner should he/she have to make the opening lead.

2. With a marginal overcall, vulnerability is relevant. 5-3-3-2 hands do not play well in a suit contract. Overcalls do not promise or deny opening count.
3. Do not overcall at the 2-level with a weak 5-card suit.
4. Having all of your strength in your two longest suits is a big plus.
5. 6-4 hands are worth more than their apparent face value.
6. Overcalling 2C over 1D can be very effective because the Opponents' search for a Major suit fit must begin at the 2-level.

Michaels Cue-Bid 2-Suited Overcalls:

1. The keys to determining whether to make a Michaels Cue-Bid are: (1) suit quality, (2) shape, (3) vulnerability, and (4) bidding level.
2. A textbook "suit quality" signifies that each of the two suits contains at least 3 of the top 6-cards in the suit.
3. "Shape" matters! 5-5-3-0 is better than 5-5-2-1. 6-5 shape is always better than 5-5. 6-5-2-0 is better than 6-5-1-1.
4. "Vulnerability" also matters! When the vulnerability is favorable, be aggressive; when it is unfavorable, be discreet.
5. "Level" is very relevant in that requiring Partner to bid one of your suits at the 2-level is one thing, but at higher levels – be careful!
6. Avoid "Ambiguous" Michaels Cue-Bids of 1H - "2H", or 1S - "2S" whenever possible with minimum values. Bid your Major instead.

Unusual No-Trump Overcalls:

1. Because this bid shows the *two lower-ranking* suits, the overcaller can never show Spades. Michaels Cue-Bids and the Unusual No-Trump can never show a 2-suite in Spades and Diamonds, or Spades and Clubs if your Opponent opens 1C or 1D, respectively.

Jump Overcalls:

1. Most players treat this bid as a weak and pre-emptive. A weak jump overcall (WJO) is usually based upon a 6-card suit and 5-11 HCP's; i.e., the same holding as would be shown by a weak opening 2-bid.
2. A 3-level jump overcall, such as 1S – 3H, often necessitates a 7-card (+) suit, especially when vulnerable.
3. A jump overcall in one of the Minor suits (1C – 3C) or (1D – 3D) is a natural simple overcall with 11(+) HCP's and a 6-card (+) Minor suit holding. Note: Opener can hold as few as 2- or 3-pieces.
4. A jump overcall in one of the Major suits (1H – "3H") or (1S – "3S"), is very different since Opener holds no fewer than 5-pieces. These jump overcalls show either a very strong (18 {+}) HCP holding, else 8-9 winners and a running suit; and asks Partner (The "Advancer") to bid 3-NT with a stopper in Opener's Major.
5. A double or triple jump overcall, below game, is a pre-emptive bid based upon distribution and relative vulnerability.
6. A 3-NT overcall is a natural overcall based upon point count, a possible long running side suit, and at least one stopper in RHO's bid suit.
7. A 4 of a Major jump overcall shows a weak hand with an 8-card suit.
8. A 5 of a Minor jump overcall is also pre-emptive and tends to show a freakish hand; i.e., a 9-card or 10-card suit, or, possibly, an 8-4 hand.