

RULES OF 8 and 2

Overcalling subsequent to an Opponent's opening bid of 1-NT is infrequently utilized by many beginning bridge players. The novice player becomes afraid to bid owing to the strength expressed by his/her opponent's 1-NT opening bid, and is frightened, even intimidated, by the prospect of being set should he/she stoop to venture forth with any form of interference. More and more Players, however, are coming to the realization that to overcall, when appropriate under certain conditions, is productive, and often quite enjoyable. Many different conventions for use under such circumstances are available and are commonly used. Among the most popular ones used today are "Capeletti," "Brozel," and "DONT." These conventions, and others, allow the potential overcaller to bid with both 1-suited and 2-suited hands, and to do so in both the direct (2nd) and the balancing (4th) seat. They allow a Partnership to compete, while at the same time disturb the potential bidding sequence of the opposition.

The question arises, however, as to what is the minimum suggested safe threshold of values necessary to allow one to interfere successfully without the likelihood for a disastrous outcome. The answer is the distributional features of the hand, not the point count, the latter of which is of much less importance. This suggested minimum threshold, however, differs depending upon whether the potential overcaller sits in the **direct** (2nd) seat or in the **balancing** (4th) seat, with respect to the 1-NT opening bid.

In the Direct (2nd) Seat – Use "The Rule of 8"

"*The Rule of 8*," first published by Mel Colchamiro in 2000, serves as a guideline for suggested minimum values and distribution, which if satisfied, predicts a likelihood of success should a Player opt to compete, as opposed to defend, when seated in the direct (2nd) seat.

1. The Player first subtracts the number of "Losing Tricks" from the total number of cards contained in the two longest suits.
2. If the remainder is 2 or more, then the Player should decide to compete and to make an overcall using the Partnership's preferred agreed-upon convention, assuming satisfaction of #4.
3. If, however, the remainder is fewer than 2, then the Player should not make an overcall, but rather opt to defend.
4. In addition, the actual holding of the potential overcaller, when deciding to compete, should contain at least 6 or more high-card points. It is from this minimum number of values that the designation for this particular Rule is derived; i.e., a minimum of 6 high-card points plus the minimum difference of 2 equals the number 8, hence "*The Rule of Eight*."

AQ876 The total number of Losing Tricks here is 7. The total number of the cards in the
K63 two longest suits is 8. Subtracting 7 from 8, the remainder is 1. According to
84 "*The Rule of Eight*" guidelines, the Player, here, should not overcall. *The Player*
K94 *holding this hand should actively defend.*

K8653 In this second example the number of Losing Tricks is again, 7. But, here, the
K8754 total number of the cards in the two longest suits is 10. Subtracting 7 from 10, the
86 remainder is now 3. *The Player, here, according to the guidelines of*
4 "*The Rule of 8*" *should choose to compete, to overcall, and not remain silent.*

Q9842, Q7652, 5, 32 ("Pass")

10 cards - 8 Losers = 2

2 + 4 HCP's = 6 (Insufficient to satisfy the "Rule of 8")

A7532, K743, K2, 74 (Using "DONT," bid "2H")

9 cards - 7 Losers = 2

2 + 10 = 12 (The "Rule of 8" is satisfied)

In the Balancing (4th) Seat – Use “The Rule of 2”

Assuming that the Opponents are using strong opening No-Trump bids, we know that the Opener holds **15-17** high-card points. We also know that Opener’s Responder holds **0-8** HCP’s, since he/she has passed. We could summarize this by saying that the Opener, on average, holds **16** HCP’s and his/her responding Partner, on average, holds **4** HCP’s. So whenever the bidding comes around to you after (**1-NT – Pass – Pass - ?**), you know that both sides hold approximately **20** high-card points and that your side has as much right to the contract as do your Opponents!

Also take into consideration the fact that the fewer high-card points you have, the more Partner has, because your side will have **20** HCP’s, on average; and so if you hold **5** HCP’s, then Partner will have approximately **15**; if you have **9**, he/she will have about **11**; and if you have **13**, he/she will have **7**. Partner probably has a balanced hand since he/she did not choose to bid. So whenever we are faced with a balancing decision after a 1-NoTrump opening bid, high card points are essentially irrelevant.

The controlling factor when faced with the decision of making an interference call or not, when seated in the balancing (4th) seat, is simply distribution. The 4th seat (balancing) Player should balance whenever he/she has at least **2 shortness points**, defined as either a void, a singleton or two doubletons - **no matter his/her high card point strength**. Remember, the fewer high-card points you hold, the more high-card points Partner has, because your side will have, on average, **20** HCP’s.

Suppose you, in 4th the seat, hold the following:

- Q753** The bidding has proceeded **1-NT – Pass – Pass - ?**
9 Should you balance, with only **7** HCP’s? The “**Rule of 2**” says **yes!** Here’s why!
A95 Partner has about **13** HCP’s., and many of the finesses will, most likely, win because
J8642 Partner’s **13** high-card points lie over the No-Trump Opener, and you, most importantly, hold **2** shortness points, and therefore, satisfy “**The Rule of 2.**”

However, if you, in the 4th seat, were to hold:

- A74** Although the finesses figure to lose since Partner holds, on average, only 7 points,
K962 you, here, do **not** have 2 shortness points with this evenly distributed holding.
K93 Do not balance and compete, here. Just “**Pass**” and choose to defend.
K98

In the pass-out (4th) seat, balance if you have two or more shortness points, regardless of HCP or vulnerability! There are lots of ways to lose at duplicate. You can lose by being too bold, but you can also lose by being too cautious. Luck usually favors the bold, however, so, **compete and balance if you satisfy the “Balancing Rule of 2.” Do not balance! Rather, defend, if you do not hold 2 shortness points.**

Using the “DONT” Convention

- Q842, A76, 5, J7532 (Bid “2C” showing Clubs and a higher-ranking suit)
Q742, A95, 743, J62 (Pass – Shortness points are, here, absent)
KJ8543, -, 853, 8763 (Bid “2S” showing a single 6-card or longer suit)
7, K852, Q8754, 762 (Bid “2D” showing Diamonds and a higher-ranking suit)
KJ5, A83, K76, AJ54 (Pass – Shortness points are, here, absent)
KQ85, A8542, 76, 85 (Bid “2H” showing Hearts and Spades)