

Dealing with Overcalls: Part 3

Reopening Bids & Trap Passes

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1 The Situation: Partner opens 1 of a suit. RHO overcalls.

1.1 Responder has many calls available:

1.1.1 Cue bid to show invitational or better values.

1.1.2 Raise to show length in partner's suit.

1.1.3 Negative double.

1.1.4 With sufficient length and strength: new suit.

1.1.5 With sufficient strength and stopper(s): notrump.

1.2 Often the only suitable response is to pass. The two bidders have already claimed more than half the deck. Passing is in no way shameful.

2 If responder passes and the next hand also passes:

2.1 Opener is now in the balancing seat and must stretch to avoid selling out to the overcaller. Only with a very boring minimum hand should opener pass.

2.2 Bidding in this situation is called “**reopening**.”

2.2.1 With a monster, cue bid.

2.2.2 With extra trump raise to the two-level. Partner probably has 2 or fewer.

2.2.3 If you have a good side suit, bid it.

2.2.4 If you have good stoppers in the opponent's suit, consider bidding notrump, but be careful.

2.2.5 If nothing else seems appropriate, double for takeout to indicate that you would prefer anything to the opponent's proposed contract.

3 When opener makes a reopening double, responder will usually bid.

“Takeout doubles are meant to be taken out.”

3.1 Raise with two pieces or bid a side suit. Notrump is sometimes a possibility. Be conservative; remember that partner is stretching.

3.2 Passing may be appropriate if your hand meets the **Rule of 9**. If you do this, your original pass is called a “**Trap Pass**.”

3.2.1 Add the number of pieces in the opponent's suit + the number of honors (tens included) in that suit + the level at which the opponent bid. If the result is 9 or more, you can pass.

3.2.2 Notice that there is no mention of overall strength in the formula.

3.2.3 Example: overcall is 2♣; you have ♣K Q 10 8 4. The calculation is 5 pieces + 3 honors + level 2 = 10 → OK to pass.

3.2.4 Be wary of vulnerability and type of scoring.

Next week: Ask Ken Leopold.