Overcalls and responses

Why overcall?

- Because you have a good hand and want to compete!

- Because you want to take up bidding space to make things more difficult for the opponents.

- Because you want to indicate a lead to partner should the hand on your left end up as declarer.

- Because you might want to sacrifice, conceding a penalty rather than letting the opponents end up declaring.

What does an overcall show?

A simple overcall shows:

- a good suit; and/or

- a good hand.

Playing strength is more important than HCP.

AQJxx 109xx x xxx	*This hand has few HCP but a good 5-card suit that will take some tricks. Also suggests a good lead to partner if the opponents take the contract.*
J10xxx AKx AKx Xx	*This hand a poorer suit but 15 HCP so you want to compete.*
KJX AJ10 Kxxx Qxx	*This hand has 14 HCP but no 5-card suit and no real source of tricks. Not right shape to double so must pass*
Xx AQJxx KJxx Kxx	*This hand has HCP and a good 5-card suit.*

Suit quality is also important - how many tricks can I count in this suit? Do I have good honours and intermediate cards?

'*Suit Quality test*' - number of cards in the suit plus the number of honours in the suit = the level at which you can bid. Hand 4 has a suit quality of 8 so can bid at the two level.

Always consider your vulnerability - can overcall with less if favourable vulnerability.

If overcalling at the two level you should have an opening hand and a good 5-card major or 6-card minor suit, particularly when vulnerable.

Be cautious where both opponents have bid!

Responding to partner's overcall with support

What is your method for responding to partner's overcall?

Raising partner's suit with a weak hand

With support for partner's suit and less than 10 points - make a 'pre-emptive' raise equal to the number of trumps held, even with few HCP.

Remember the law of total tricks!

The more cards you have in partner's suit the less suitable your hand is for defending.

Kxx	*Raise partner's spade overcall to 2S*
Qxxx	
Xx	
Xxxx	
Kxxx	*Bid 3S, shows four-card support and a weak hand*
Qxx	
Xx	
Xxxx	
Kxxxx	*With a 10-card fit and a weak hand bid 4S*
X	
Xx	
xxxxx	

Raising partner's suit with an invitational or better hand

With support for partner's suit and 10+ TP starts with a 'cue bid' of the opponent's suit.

(1D) 1H (P) 2D - says I have support for hearts and 10+ TP.

With a minimum hand, the overcaller rebids their suit at the cheapest level. With a limit raise (10-12) advancers passes.

With extra values, overcaller invites advancer to bid game or bids game where they have enough for game (15/16)

Where advancer has better than a limit raise (13-14TP) can invite partner to bid game by a cue bid followed by an invitational raise.

(1D) 1H (P) 2D
(P)   2H (P) 3H

Responding to partner's overcall without support

With a poor hand PASS!!!

Don't bid just because your partner has bid or you don't like partner's suit.

Do not try to rescue partner even if you have a void in their suit.

With some values (8+HCP) bid your own 5-card suit (remember partner could still have as much as 16/17 for their overcall so game maybe possible).

Bidding a new suit

A change of suit by advancer is FORCING for one round (unless advancer is a passed hand).

      (1D) 1H (P) 1S   *Shows 8+HCP and 5 spades*

With a minimum hand, overcaller rebids their suit, raises advancer's suit at the cheapest level or bids NT with a stopper in opener's suit.

Bidding no trumps

NT at the cheapest level by advancer shows a stopper in opener's suit, a balanced/semi-balanced hand and 8-10HCP, while a jump to 2NT by advancer shows 12-14HCP.

What if RHO bids?

At the one level, can just bid your suit or NT as you would have if responder had passed.

Need to be careful bidding a new suit at the three level with a weak hand, particularly if vulnerable.

You may be about to use a responsive double where you have the two unbid suits and a weakish hand.

      (1D) 1H (2D) x   *Shows values and spades and clubs*