

# Simple competitive bidding

*Note: in these articles, if there is not a full bidding diagram, then calls in brackets, like (1NT), are made by the opponents.*

My partnerships have some very simple rules for competitive bidding:

- Overcalls at the 1-level are essentially aggressive; those at the 2-level denote a strong suit and are therefore sounder.
- New suit is forcing over a 1-level and a 2-level overcall.
- A cue bid after an overcall shows support, for example (1♥) – 1♠ – (Pass) – 2♥ shows a good raise to 2♠ or higher.
- All raises are pre-emptive. Stronger raises must cue bid first.
- Fit jumps after an overcall and in competition:
  - (1♣) - 1♥ - (P) - 2♠ - I expect to see 5+ spades, 4+ hearts and values for at least 3♥.
  - 1♦ - (1♥) - 2♠ - I expect to see 5+ spades, 5+ diamonds and values for at least 3♦.
- Weak jump overcalls (strength and suit quality depend on vulnerability).
- A direct cue bid is a Michaels Cue Bid: over a minor it shows 5-5 in the majors, for example (1♣) - 2♣. Over a major it shows five cards in the other major and an undisclosed minor, for example (1♠) - 2♠.
  - It promises a fair 11+ points when vulnerable, with points concentrated in the two suits.
  - It can be weak when non-vulnerable.
  - It can be a lot stronger, in which case the hand will bid again.
- A 1NT overcall shows 15-17 HCP in second seat, for example (1♣) - 1NT, and in the fourth seat when the opponents have both bid and partner has passed, for example (1♣) - P - (1♠) - 1NT.
- A 2NT **jump** overcall is an unusual notrump: it shows 5-5 in the two lowest **unbid** suits. For example, (1♦) - 2NT shows 5-5 in hearts and clubs.
  - Conversely, a 2NT overcall of weak two bid shows 15-18 balanced
- Doubles are always takeout at low levels.
- I normally play inverted minor suit raises, for example where 1♣ - (P) - 2♣ is stronger than 1♣ - (Pass) - 3♣, but these **do not** apply in competition where minor raises will be pre-emptive.

- When the opponents double our one-level opening, a jump to two no trump shows a good raise and a jump raise is pre-emptive. For example,
  - 1♠ - (Dbl) - 2NT shows a good raise to 3♠ or stronger
  - 1♠ - (Dbl) - 3♠ is a weak, pre-emptive raise
- Generally it is better to show support immediately, whether by raising, making a UCB or jump fit, than going slow and showing a second suit. You should always be wary of the opponents making life difficult for you. For example:
  - 1♠ - (2♥) - 3♥ shows a good raise to 3♠ (or stronger), so the opener is better placed to make a decision after 1♠ - (2♥) - 3♥ - (4♥).