

Last week we had a look at overcalls and take-out doubles, and all of the examples were average strength type hands. So this week let's see what we do with stronger hands balanced hands when RHO has opened the bidding: -

### The 1NT overcall.

Regardless of the strength of your opening 1NT bid (15-17 in our system) the 1NT overcall is always strong and 15-18 is the generally accepted range. It needs to be strong as RHO has advertised 12+ points and you will find yourself being doubled if you overcall 1NT in the direct seat with less than a decent 15 points. Also, a 1NT overcall should contain at least one solid stop in the suit opened as you expect that suit to be led.

Examples, in all of the examples RHO has opened with 1♥: -

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Hand 1   | Pass with hand 1. You have excellent ♥ stops but unfortunately insufficient values for a 1NT overcall. You have the values for a 2♣ overcall but that promises (at least) a five card suit.   |
| ♠ K7     |   |
| ♥ KJ93   |   |
| ♦ KJ2    |   |
| ♣ Q754   |   |
| Hand 2   | Bid 1NT with hand 2, perfect. Now some players might double with this hand because it contains a 4 card ♠ suit. With such a balanced hand and strength in the suit opened, that would be a poor bid. So one important point: -<br><i>A 1NT overcall does not deny a 4 card major.</i>   |
| ♠ KJ84   | And, incidentally, if your partner overcalls 1NT then Stayman and transfers by you still apply.   |
| ♥ KJ93   |   |
| ♦ KJ2    |   |
| ♣ A7     |   |
| Hand 3   | With hand 3 bid 1NT, but it's not perfect this time! (but is the best bid in my opinion). Now we all know not to open 1NT with a singleton but with a 1NT overcall it is sometimes necessary (but not with a singleton in the suit bid!). This hand is a classic example, what else can you do? You have 17 points and if you pass (the only other reasonably sensible option in my view) then it may easily get passed out with game your way. You cannot double with a singleton ♠ - if you double and partner replies 1♠ then a 1NT bid by you then shows a stronger hand (that's explained on the next page). |
| ♠ A      |   |
| ♥ KJ93   |   |
| ♦ KJ102  |   |
| ♣ AJ107  |   |
| Hand 4   | With hand 4 bid 1NT, it's far better to show the strength and balanced nature of the hand and the ♥ stops by bidding 1NT than to overcall 2♣.   |
| ♠ A9     |   |
| ♥ KJ9    |   |
| ♦ K102   |   |
| ♣ A10874 |   |
| Hand 5   | With hand 5 bid 1♠. Now this is the same hand but with the black suits reversed. I would much prefer to show my decent ♠ suit than to overcall 1NT  |
| ♠ A10874 |   |
| ♥ KJ9    |   |
| ♦ K102   |   |
| ♣ A9     |   |



## Answers

- Hand 9: 1NT. 15-18 with a ♥ stop. Note that a 1NT overcall does not guarantee a stop in every suit, but just in the suit opened.
- Hand 10: Pass. You cannot bid 1NT with no ♥ stop. You cannot make a take-out double with such a flat hand with just one 4 card suit and you cannot overcall 2♣ with just a 4 card suit.
- Hand 11: Pass. You have ♥'s nicely stopped but do not have the values (15-18) for a 1NT overcall.
- Hand 12: 2♣. You have the values for a 1NT overcall but no ♥ stop. 2♣ is fine here and it shows about 11-16 points
- Hand 13: Double. A take-out double. My style is to virtually guarantee a 4 card ♠ suit (or else a very strong hand) if I double 1♥. You cannot bid 1NT with no ♥ stop and cannot overcall a 4 card suit.
- Hand 14: 1♠. It's best to bid a 5 card major in preference to 1NT.
- Hand 15: Double. It's initially a take-out double but you show that it's really a very strong NT hand with your next bid. If partner responds 1♠ then you bid 1NT and if partner bids 2♣/♦ then you bid 2NT. If partner makes a jump response or bids 1NT then you bid 3NT.
- Hand 16: Pass. With a long strong holding in opener's suit it's usually best to pass. You cannot bid 2♥ as that is not natural and makes little sense anyway. It's strong enough for 1NT but NT will not play well opposite partner's ♥ shortage. Be happy to defend and on a good day the auction may develop such that a ♥ contract by them gets doubled for penalties.