

Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to [jeryhelms@aol.com](mailto:jeryhelms@aol.com).

# Ask Jerry



**Dear Jerry:** What should I bid with this hand after my left-hand opponent opens 1♥ and partner overcalls 2♣?

♠ K 8 6 5 3  
♥ Q 8 7  
♦ Q 10 7 5 2  
♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	2♣	Pass	?

O. Harrison  
New York, NY

**Dear O.H.:** I've been known for the phrase: "Think of a reason to bid rather than an excuse to pass." So, my first instinct is to consider the advantages of bidding. Partner's two-level overcall has shown the equivalent of an opening bid, so our side may hold the majority of the points. Also, with no cards in partner's

suit, we might be able to find a better spot in spades or diamonds. In this case, however, I think there are more "excuses" to pass.

I like to make a distinction between opening bids and overcalls. A 1♣ opening bid shows a range of about 12–21 points and could be made on a three-card suit. A 2♣ overcall shows about 13–18 points and a good five-card or longer suit ... with the emphasis being on a *good* suit. If partner wanted us to choose the trump suit, partner could have made a takeout double.

So, our best contract is likely to be in clubs, even though we have a void! If we bid, we are suggesting

that we have a good suit of our own. We have only two poor five-card suits and there is no guarantee that partner has much help for either suit. This hand has another flaw. The ♥Q is unlikely to be of much value if our side declares the contract.

It's a matter of partnership style, but I like to play a new suit by advancer as non forcing. I wouldn't feel comfortable if I bid 2♠ on this hand, everyone passed, and partner put down a singleton spade alongside a good club suit.

As another consideration, the auction isn't over if I pass. West might bid 2♥ or double and the opponents might bid spades or diamonds. It's true we are likely to have the majority of strength, but we can get a plus by defending instead of playing the contract.

All in all, with no fit and high cards in the suit bid by the opponents, use that as an excuse to pass partner's overcall and await the outcome. We might finish with a plus, which should be an excellent result. —*JH*