



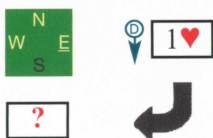
Ask Jerry

Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions.
Send your questions to askjerry@jerryhelms.com.

Dear Jerry: How many points do you need to overcall at the two level?

—S. H., Charlottesville, VA

Dear S. H.: There is no fixed rule regarding how many points you need to overcall at the two level, but the guideline is that you need a good suit and approximately the values for an opening bid or more. The better the suit, the less high-card strength you need.



This hand would definitely be worth an overcall of 2♦. You would have opened the bidding 1♦. You have a good six-card suit, and your hand is worth 11 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit.

This hand has only 9 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit. Yet most players would still consider this hand worth an overcall of 2♦ since the suit is so good. If you are not vulnerable, you might also consider a preemptive jump overcall of 3♦.

This hand has 12 high-card points plus 1 length point for the five-card diamond suit. So you would open the bidding 1♦. It would be risky to overcall 2♦, however, after your right-hand opponent opens 1♥. The suit is not nearly strong enough.

So it is not the strength of the hand that determines whether to overcall at the two level. It is more the quality of the suit.

Dear Jerry: The opponent on my right opened 1NT and his partner bid 2♥. This was announced as a 'transfer,' but opener then jumped to 3NT. We were surprised. Doesn't opener have to bid 2♠? Should we have called the director?

—L. S., Vancouver, BC

Dear L. S.: After announcing 'transfer,' the 1NT opener is under no obligation to bid 2♠. Opener is free to bid 3NT, even if it might be a poor bid since responder could hold a weak hand with only five spades.

You should only call the director if responder holds a hand with fewer than five spades. If responder doesn't hold at least five spades, then some explanation would be required as to how opener knew responder didn't hold five spades. The director could also be called if opener held, say, a singleton spade, and the partnership had perhaps bid in this fashion before—so that responder has some previous knowledge of opener's habits.

Also, after a transfer response to 1NT, some experienced partnerships allow opener to do something other than simply accept the transfer. Typically, this shows a 'super accept' of responder's suit—usually four-card support and a maximum.

With this hand, for example, opener has 17 high-card points and four-card support for spades. If responder transfers to spades, opener might jump to 4♠ to show a great hand for spades—in case responder was on the borderline between signing off and inviting game or was considering whether to try for slam.

No experienced player would jump to 3NT over a transfer bid—in case responder has a weak hand—but even if it's illogical, it isn't illegal.

Dear Jerry: Playing rubber bridge, do you let the opponents know before or after the play that you have honors?

—E. S., Norfolk, VA

Dear E. S.: While you can announce honors at the end of the auction and before play commences, you do not have to. It may not be to your advantage to announce honors during the play. It may give information that might help the defenders defeat the contract. So you can wait until the end of play before announcing that you held honors.

RUBBER BRIDGE BONUS FOR HONORS

- 100 points for four of the top five honors in the trump suit.
- 150 points for all five honors or all four aces in a notrump contract.

In fact, the laws allow the score to be corrected, provided all four players agree there was an error, any time before the rubber is completed and the total scores have been agreed.

One challenge you may encounter is 'proving' you held honors after the play is complete. This is not a problem with experienced players that can recollect the cards played, or if the tricks are kept 'duplicate style' so that each player's hand can be reconstructed at the end of the deal. However, it is traditional to accept the claim of honors unless an opponent can clearly claim that they were not held—stating something like "I held both the ♠A and ♠10, so you could not have held 100 honors. —JH♦

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