



BY JERRY HELMS

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Ask Jerry

Dear Jerry,
My partner and I are facing some issues with cuebid support of our overcalls. Do you have any general advice, because we need help in every aspect.

Gordy

Hi Gordy,

As is the frequent case, it's all about partnership agreement. Since you ask, I will give you some of my preferences. Let's first establish a few basic agreements.

① If partner makes a simple overcall of an opening suit bid, a jump raise of his suit is preemptive. To show a limit raise or better, advancer cuebids the opponent's suit.

Now some auctions:

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♥

3♥ is a limit raise, or better, in spades. It shows three-card or longer support, and is at least 10–11 support points. Example:

♠K 4 3 ♥7 2 ♦A Q 7 4 ♣J 10 5 3.

Although I strongly prefer to have four-card or longer support for my limit raises, I must deal with what I'm dealt! This hand has 10 HCP, a ruffing value in hearts, and two quick tricks. Far too good for a simple raise.

West	North	East	South
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♠

3♠ shows four-card or longer support, generally less than 6 or 7 HCP, and if that much, not in outside aces or kings. Examples:

♠J 8 7 4 ♥6 2 ♦Q J 8 5 2 ♣Q 5.

This 7 HCP is a perfect 3♠ weak jump raise.

♠9 8 7 4 ♥6 2 ♦A 8 5 2 ♣K 6 5

Again 7 HCP, but with an outside ace and king, which represents defensive potential, this is not a preemptive hand. I would bid 2♠ and if the opponents bid 3♥, I would bid 3♠, competitively, following the Law of Total Tricks, expecting that my side has nine trumps.

② Following a cuebid advance, the weakest action intervener (overcaller) can take is to return to his original suit. Examples:

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	Pass	2♦
Dbl	?		

2♥ is the weakest action the overcaller can make. Because we are forced to play at least 2♥, pass would be some type of mild game invitation. Examples:

♠Q 5 2 ♥A K 8 6 5 ♦6 3 2 ♣8 3.

2♥. With a minimum overcall, intervener should bid 2♥ immediately after the double.

♠9 5 2 ♥A K 8 6 5 ♦6 2 ♣K Q 3.

Pass. Not enough for intervener to bid game over a minimum limit raise, but enough to be interested if advancer has a little extra.

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	Pass	2♠
3♣	?		

The 2♠ cuebid forced us to compete to the three level. The same principle

as above. The weakest thing intervener can do is to bid 3♥ immediately. Pass is encouraging, suggesting advancer bid game with anything more than a minimum limit raise. A balanced 12-count is certainly minimum for a two-level overcall, therefore I would suggest bidding 3♥. With any extra values, you would simply bid game, or make an invitational pass.

③ My personal preference: If two cuebids are available, the one that keeps us the lowest shows exactly three-card support, while the one that forces us the highest shows four-card or longer support. Neither cuebid makes any distinction as to values. Both are limit raises or better, with trump length the only distinction:

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	1♠	?

In this sequence, both 2♦ and 2♠ are available as cuebid advances. My strong preference is this type auction: 2♦ would show a limit raise or better with exactly three-card support. 2♠ would show a limit raise or better with four-card or longer support. There would be no difference in the values shown by the cuebid selected by intervener – only a difference in trump length.

There is more, much more, which impacts some of these decisions. Does your partnership play a new suit by advancer as forcing? I do not. Does your partnership have any built-in mixed raise advances? I do. Is 2NT ever used to show a limit raise in some competitive auctions? In some of mine, yes. ☺