

Defending Against the Weak Two Openings (1)

There is no doubt that an opponent's weak two opening is very disruptive. It takes away a lot of bidding space. All of the one level has gone along with a lot of the two level. What can we do about it?

The good news is that we know the opponent has a weak hand with not much in the way of defensive values. Most likely that we can make a decent contract and we can expect partner to have some decent values.

We will start off with Overcalls.

Overcalls

Overcalls of a weak two are very similar to the overcalls of opponent's one level bid. You need at least 10 HCP to overcall at the two level. If you are forced to overcall at the three level, you will need a hand strong enough for a normal opening bid. When overcalling a one level opening bid, suit quality is important. There is the suit quality test.

Add the length of the suit to the number of honours in the suit. The total should be equal to or greater than the number of tricks you are proposing to make.

When overcalling a weak two bid, suit quality is not quite so important. After all, we hope to be playing the contract and partner will not be on lead. So, the suit quality rule can be relaxed - especially with stronger hands.

Do not be tempted to overcall with a six card suit and eight or less HCP. It is a mistake to bid "weak over weak". Overcalls will usually have six or seven losers at the two level and six losers at the three level. As we will see later, you can make at take-out double with five or less losers (18 or more HCP).

Some examples.

Let's say your left hand opponent opened 2♥.

Your Hand
♠ K Q J 6 4 2
♥ 9 3
♦ A 5 2
♣ 7 4

A good six card suit with a suit quality of nine. Ten high card points. Seven losers. Overcall 2♠.

Your Hand
♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ 7 4

Only a five card suit this time but the suit quality is eight. Ten high card points and seven losers again. Overcall 2♠.

Your Hand
♠ K J T 6 4 2
♥ 9 3
♦ A 5 2
♣ 7 4

With only 8 HCP, pass. Do not bid "weak over weak".

Your Hand
♠ K 6
♥ 4 2
♦ A Q J 9 5 2
♣ K 8 4

An opening hand with a good six-card diamond suit. 13 HCP and six losers. Overcall 3♦.

Your Hand
♠ K 6
♥ Q 2
♦ A 9 8 7 5 2
♣ K J 4

Despite the opening hand, do not overcall. The diamond suit is too weak and there are seven losers.

Bidding after Partner's Overcall with Support

Assuming partner has shown a five card suit, three cards are required for support. Assess your strength either by counting points (not forgetting distributional points) or by counting losers.

If partner's has bid at the two level, it shows 10+ HCP and 6 or 7 losers.

0 to 9 points (9 or more losers)	Pass
10 to 12 points (8 losers)	Raise partner's suit
13 to 15 points (7 losers)	Jump in partner's suit
16 or more points (6 or less losers)	Bid the opponent's suit

If partner has bid at the three level, it shows 12+ HCP and 6 losers.

0 to 9 points (9 or more losers)	Pass
10 to 12 points (8 losers)	Raise partner's suit
13 to 15 points (7 losers)	Raise to game
16 or more points (6 or less losers)	Bid the opponent's suit

Examples

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ 7 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2♠.

With just 8 points (9 losers), East should pass.

♠ 9 5 3
♥ T 4 2
♦ J 7
♣ A Q 6 3 2

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ 7 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2♠.

With 11 points (8 losers), East should bid 3♠.

♠ 9 5 3
♥ J 4 2
♦ K 7
♣ A Q 6 3 2

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ 7 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2♠.

With 14 points (7 losers), East should bid 4♠.

♠ A 5 3
♥ T 4 2
♦ K 7
♣ A Q 6 3 2

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ 7 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2♠.

With 18 points (6 losers), East should bid 3♥. West is minimum and so bids 4♠.

♠ A 5 3
♥ A 4 2
♦ K 7
♣ A Q 6 3 2

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ K 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2♠.

With 18 points (6 losers), East should bid 3♥. West has 6 losers and investigates slam. The partnership ends up in 6♠.

♠ A 5 3
♥ A 4 2
♦ K 7
♣ A Q 6 3 2

Bidding after Partner's Overcall with No Support

With two or less cards in partner's suit, the choices are to pass, bid your own five card or longer suit or bid no trumps. A no trump bid requires a stopper in the opponent's suit.

If partner has overcalled at the two level, it shows at least 10 HCP.

9 or more HCP	Bid your own suit at the two level. (Forcing)
11 or more HCP	Bid your own suit at the three level. (No jump. Forcing)
12 to 13 HCP	Bid 2NT
14 or more HCP	Bid 3NT

If partner has overcalled at the three level, it shows at least 12 HCP.

11 or more HCP	Bid your own suit at the three level. (Forcing)
13 or more HCP	Bid your own suit at the four level. (No jump. Forcing unless it is a game contract.)
12 or more HCP	Bid 3NT

Examples

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ 7 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2♠.

East bids 3♣, West bids 3♦ and East gives delayed (two card) support for spades. 3♠ is a reasonable final contract.

♠ T 5
♥ T 4 2
♦ K 9 7
♣ A K J 3 2

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ 7 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2♠.

East bids 2NT and West passes.

♠ T 5
♥ A Q 2
♦ K 9 7
♣ A T 3 2

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A T 5 2
♣ 7 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 2♠.

East bids 3NT and West passes.

♠ T 5
♥ A Q 2
♦ K Q 7
♣ A T 3 2

♠ Q T 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A K T 9 5 2
♣ K 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 3♦.

East bids 3♠ and West raises to game.

♠ A J 9 5 2
♥ T 4 2
♦ 8 7
♣ A Q 2

♠ Q T 4
♥ 9 3
♦ A K T 9 5 2
♣ K 4

South opens 2♥ and West overcalls 3♦.

East bids 3NT.

♠ J 9 5 2
♥ A Q 2
♦ J 7
♣ A 7 2

Example 1

	North	
	♠ A K 8 5 4 2 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ T 3 ♣ 4 3	
West		East
♠ J 6 ♥ A Q 9 2 ♦ K J 8 6 ♣ K J 7		♠ T 9 ♥ K 8 ♦ A 9 7 2 ♣ A Q 9 8 6
	South	
	♠ Q 7 3 ♥ J T 7 4 ♦ Q 5 4 ♣ T 5 2	

West	North	East	South
	2♠	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	3♠ ⁽²⁾
5♣ ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass	Pass

1. 5+ clubs. Suit quality is only seven but it is good enough in conjunction with the six loser hand.
2. Pre-emptive
3. Club support with seven losers

After the defence takes the first two spade tricks, declarer gains the lead and draws trumps. Next, declarer plays the heart suit to see if the jack and ten will fall. They don't - so declarer trumps the fourth heart and takes the diamond finesse. When that wins, the contract is home.

Example 2

	North	
	♠ J 8 4 ♥ A 4 3 ♦ A 5 ♣ K T 4 3 2	
West		East
♠ K 7 3 ♥ J T ♦ Q J 8 4 3 ♣ 8 7 6		♠ 6 2 ♥ K Q 9 8 6 5 ♦ T 6 ♣ Q J 5
	South	
	♠ A Q T 9 5 ♥ 7 2 ♦ K 9 7 2 ♣ A 9	

West	North	East	South
		2♥	2♠ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	3♠ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽³⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. 5+ spades, six or seven losers
2. Spade support and eight losers
3. Maximum

There are two routes to success. One way is to ruff diamonds in dummy before drawing trumps. If that route is chosen, ruff with the jack and eight to reduce the possibility of being over ruffed.

The other method is to establish the long club suit. Take the spade finesse. When that loses, regain the lead. Cash the ace and king of clubs and ruff a club in dummy. Draw the rest of the trumps and cash the club winners.

Example 3

	North	
	♠ 7 6 ♥ Q J T 4 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ K 5 4 2	
West		East
♠ T 9 ♥ K 8 ♦ A T 7 2 ♣ A Q 9 8 6		♠ A J 3 ♥ A 9 7 2 ♦ Q J 8 ♣ J T 7
	South	
	♠ K Q 8 5 4 2 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ K 9 6 ♣ 3	

West	North	East	South
			2♠
3♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3NT ⁽²⁾	All Pass

1. 5+ clubs and 12+ HCP (six losers)
2. 13 HCP and a good spade stopper

Declarer has an easy time – even easier if getting the most likely spade lead. The diamond finesse works and the club finesse fails. Declarer has every chance of making eleven tricks.

Example 4

	North	
	♠ A J T 7 5 ♥ K 9 ♦ Q T 3 ♣ K 6 3	
West		East
♠ 2 ♥ A Q J T 4 3 ♦ J 6 ♣ 9 8 5 4		♠ K Q 6 4 3 ♥ 5 2 ♦ 5 2 ♣ Q J T 7
	South	
	♠ 9 8 ♥ 8 7 6 ♦ A K 9 8 7 4 ♣ A 2	

West	North	East	South
2♥	2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♦ ⁽²⁾
Pass	3NT ⁽³⁾	All Pass	

1. 5+ spades and 10+ HCP (six losers)
2. No spade support, 5+ diamonds 11+ HCP
3. The heart stopper is flimsy and some players would prefer 5♦.

In no trumps, declarer has an easy ten tricks.

Playing diamonds, declarer can get the eleventh trick by ruffing a heart in dummy.