



Ask Jerry

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

Dear Jerry: Neither side was vulnerable and I was going to open 2♠ with this hand but the player on my right opened 2♥. So, I overcalled 2♠ instead. Was that all right?

—T. D., Omaha, NE

Dear T. D.: Although it's tempting to bid, I'd pass. There's nothing wrong with temptation but yielding to it by coming into the auction is unlikely to produce a good result. Partner will expect a stronger hand.

The standard meaning of a two-level overcall in direct position is to show a hand with values. Bids should cater to the types of hand that come up most frequently, and stronger hands occur more often in this position at the table than the type of hand you want to describe.

Here's a useful phrase: "Don't preempt over an opponent's preempt." There shouldn't be two preemptive actions on the same deal by the opposing sides.

This is very general advice. Let's keep your hand the same but change the auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	<u>SOUTH</u>
4♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
		Pass	?

At this point, I would probably be lured into bidding 4♠ with your hand. Partner would know I don't have a strong hand since I didn't come in directly over 2♥.

I'm trying to avoid letting the opponents' weak 2♥ bid keep us out of a contract we might make. It's speculative, but a reasonable gamble.

So the advice should probably be: "Don't preempt over a preempt if you are in direct position with the preemptive bid on your right."

WEST	NORTH	EAST	<u>SOUTH</u>
2♥	Pass	Pass	?

When the 2♥ bid is on your left, it would be quite reasonable to come into the auction with 2♠ on this hand when you are in the balancing position.

You are counting on some strength from partner who is likely to have some values but a hand unsuitable for coming into the auction in the direct position. Perhaps something like this.

So you had good instincts to want to bid. You just had to wait a little longer!

—JH

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Dear Jerry: Could you clarify the difference between 'offensive' and 'defensive' values?

—W. A., Charlotte, NC

Dear W. A.: Offensive values are cards you expect to take tricks if your side is declaring...playing tricks. Defensive values are cards you expect to take tricks if your side is defending.

Compare these two hands:

1) ♠ 8 4 3	2) ♠ A J 3
♥ K Q J 10 9 8	♥ K 9 8 5 2
♦ 7 2	♦ Q 7 2
♣ 6 2	♣ 6 2

The first has excellent offensive values if your side is declaring with hearts as trumps. You are sure to get five winners, even if partner is short in hearts with no useful high cards.

It has little defensive value. Suppose the opponents are in a spade contract. If they have the ♥A, you may take no tricks. Even if they don't have a singleton heart, declarer may be able to discard any losers on other winners.

This is a good hand to make an offensive bid: a weak two-bid or a

weak jump overcall if the opponents open the bidding. You have lots of playing tricks but little or no defense.

The second hand has much less offensive value, even with hearts as the trump suit. You'll get a trick with the ♠A and at least one heart trick, but it's unclear that you'll get much more if partner doesn't have a good fit and some high cards.

On defense, the hand has good prospects. If the opponents get to 4♠, for example, you have a sure trick with the ♠A and may get a second trick with the ♠J. You might get a trick with the ♥K, and even the ♦Q may take a trick if declarer has to try a finesse in the suit.

The second hand is not a good opening bid, even at the one level. It would also not be a good overcall. Pass and await developments.

A hand's offensive strength can prompt you to bid with very few high-card points.

Suppose partner opens the bidding with a weak 2♥ bid and this is your hand. The suggested bid is 4♥!

Look at what happens if partner has the first hand. Partner takes five heart tricks and can trump two spades in your hand for a total of seven tricks on offense.

On defense, there are no tricks. The opponents have only three hearts, including the ♥A. They can make a grand slam! You'd rather play the hand than defend.

—JH ♠

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