

Learning Points – Overcalling Their 1NT opening Bid

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Bidding Level: Basic

When newcomers hear Right Hand Opponent (RHO) open 1NT, there is a temptation to run and hide. 15-17 (or 16-18) HCP sounds like a lot of power. Good Bridge strategy proves that if we have enough distribution we can improve our score by removing the opponents from 1NT and forcing them to find a fit at a slightly higher level. We benefit because: 1) we remove them from the high scoring 7-trick contract 1NT; 2) we interfere with well balanced tools for constructive bidding; and 3) we find a fit at a low level that enables us to survive a potential penalty double, and perhaps even improve our score (and often our defense)!

Mel Colchamiro proposes a way for you to decide when to overcall their 15-17 NT. He calls it his Rule of 8.

Overcall 1NT (15-17) when:

The # of cards in your 2 longest suits **minus** the # of losers (Losing Trick Count) is **2 or more**
-AND-
You have at **least 6 HCP** (in the 2 longer suits).

Use this simple loser count: For every suit 3 or more cards long, count 1 loser for each missing A, K, or Q. Ignore Js and lower cards. Never count more losers than the number of cards held in the suit. A void counts as zero losers. A singleton is 1 loser unless it is the Ace (then zero losers). A doubleton is 2 losers unless it is the Ax or KX (1 loser each) or AK (zero losers). Note Qx or QJ are 2 losers. KQ is one loser.

Your Hand	HCP	Loser Count	#Cards in 2 longest suits	Rule of 8
♠ A96 ♥K42 ♦873 ♣K732	10	2♠+2♥+3♦+2♣ = 9 Losers	7	NO - 7-9 = -2
♠ 96 ♥K42 ♦73 ♣ AK8732	10	2♠+2♥+2♦+1♣ = 7 Losers	9	Yes - 9-7=2 and 10 HCP
♠ AK6 ♥942 ♦KJ3 ♣K732	14	1♠+3♥+2♦+2♣ = 8 Losers	7	NO - 7-8 = -1
♠ AK6 ♥9 ♦KJ432 ♣K732	14	1♠+1♥+2♦+2♣ = 6 Losers	9	Yes - 9-6=3 and 14 HCP
♠ A6 ♥K92 ♦KJ43 ♣K732	14	1♠+2♥+2♦+2♣ = 7 Losers	8	NO - 8-7=1
♠ 62 ♥4 ♦ AQ9873 ♣9732	6	2♠+1♥+1♦+3♣ = 7 Losers	10	Yes - 10-7=3 and 7 HCP
♠ 62 ♥4 ♦ A10987432 ♣97	4	2♠+1♥+2♦+2♣ = 7 Losers	10	NO - 10-7=3 but only 4 HCP. Consider a Preempt.

Observations when overcalling 1NT (15-17):

- In general we need 5-4 in 2 suits or better to overcall. We do NOT need an opening hand. The idea is to disturb the opponents while landing safely ourselves. Having 2 places to play makes this possible.
- 4-4 and 5-3 shapes do not have enough distribution to afford overcalling. Better to pass until you reach the power required for a penalty action. Not all approaches provide a penalty action.
- Why 6 HCP? That represents two winners in the target suits for your side and provides insurance against major losses should opponents double.
- The right 6 HCP are a better overcall than a sound but balanced 14 HCP!
- DO NOT apply this rule to weak 1NT openings (11-14 HCP). These do require stronger hands for overcalls, approaching an opening hand.
- Do not apply this rule to 2N openings.

Methods

Over 50 [defensive methods](#) have been documented for use over opponent's 1NT opening. In general, a 12-14 1 NT range requires a stronger hand to overcall, typically an opening + hand (13+ HCP). The same goes when defending a 10-12 HCP 1NT opening bid.

You have to choose whether to do the same thing in direct seat or balancing seat, and whether the range of their 1NT opening bid should impact your use of "Double".

In general Modified Capelletti, DONT, and Meckwell are common. Here is an outline of the approaches:

	Mod. Capelletti	DONT	Meckwell
Dbl	Penalty. Either equal to or above range. Might be Brozel type (6+card 1-loser suit with outside entry).	One suited hand. Advancer bids 2C (artificial alert) if possible, or a 6+ card suit of their own.	One suited minor or both majors
2♣	Maj& Minor 2-suiter or one minor suit	♣ and Higher Suit	♣ and Higher Suit
2♦	Both Majors	♦ and Higher Suit	♦ and Higher Suit
2♥	♥s	Majors	♥s
2♠	♠s	♠s	♠s
2N	Minors	Minors	Minors

Balancing Seat

After 1N (15-17) – P – P we expect to hold 19.5-20 HCP. The stronger balancer's hand is the less inclined s/he should be to balance. The weaker balancer's hand is, the more count partner will have.

Mel Colchamiro says balance with a suit (using your agreed conventions) whenever you have 2 or more shortness points (doubleton = 1, singleton = 2, and void = 3).

The Balancing double should be a general ask to find a safe 2-level contract, using the same general principles.