

Doubles and Overcalls

Just because the opposition open the bidding doesn't mean that the contract belongs to them. Even if it does you might get off to the best lead and put their contract down.

Once they open you have 4 options;

1. You can bid a new suit. This requires a 5 card suit and if you can bid it at the 1 level you only need 8 - 15 points, 10 - 15 at the 2 level.
2. You can double and NOT bid again. This requires an opening hand 12-15 pts, shortage in the opposition suit and at least 3 cards in the other suits.
3. You can double and bid your suit. This requires 15 pts and a 5 card suit.
4. You can bid NT which requires 15-17 pts and a stopper in the opposition suit. This is a hand that you would have opened 1NT if it were not for the pesky opposition.

Lets consider them all in more detail.

1. This is called an "Overcall". The primary purpose of the overcall is to tell partner which suit to play when they make the opening lead. The overcall is a defensive bid trying to get the defence off to a good start. This means that the suit that you overcall must be of good quality, AKJ43 for example not QT932. If you do not have the quality PASS otherwise partner will think you have option 3. You may be able to bid it later this tells partner not to lead it.
2. If you have 12-15 pts then you can double but you are not strong enough to bid again. This means that you must have the right shape because you are not going to bid again. You MUST be short in the oppositions suit no more than 2. You must also have at least 3 cards in every other suit. Partner is going to bid their longest suit but it may only have 4 cards. You are going to pass whatever partner bids so you had better have 3 or more in that suit otherwise the opposition will have more trumps than you.
3. You going to bid your suit to show the 15+ pts; this is a constructive bid. You are trying to win the contract. Your suit quality doesn't matter so much you would have opened this suit (96542) with 12 pts so why not bid it when you have 15 pts.
4. With 15 -17 pts and a balanced hand you can bid 1NT as normal but you must have a stopper in the oppositions suit. Eg the A, Kx, Qxx, or Jxxx or better.

Examples

The opposition opens 1 H what would you bid with

♠ A2			
♥ AQ2	PASS!		
♦ A642			
♣ 8543			
♠ AQ42			
♥ A2	Double		
♦ A62			
♣ 8543			
♠ AQT42			
♥ A2	1S		
♦ A62			
♣ 853			
♠ 8543			
♥ A2	2C		
♦ 962			
♣ AQ642			
♠ A2			
♥ AK2	1NT		
♦ A642			
♣ 8543			
♠ AQT42			
♥ AQ22	Double and then bid Spades		
♦ 5			
♣ K54			

You have the wrong shape to double and you do not have a 5 card suit. You would be happy to defend 4H though Now you have the right shape and you are hoping partner will bid spades. Partner should make a jump bid with 10+pts. Nice suit you really want the lead of a S. Looks like you are going to battle for a part score and spades win. You have a good 5 cards suit and 10 pts why not. Partner may be able to raise the suit and out pressure on the opponents. Balanced 15 pts with 2 stoppers. Why not?

Do not need to have shortage in Hs because you are going to name your suit. With a fit partner will go to game with 10 pts and invite with 8. You will accept invitation because you can now add 3 for singleton.