

When the opponents open 1 no-trump

Four actions are possible after an opponent has opened 1NT.

- Pass with no long suit and up to 14 hcp over a weak NT, and 16 over a strong NT
- Double with no-trump shape and at least 1 hcp greater than the maximum specified for the NT opening bid.
- Overcall with a 5- card suit and suitable strength and suit texture.
- Make a 'conventional bid' showing 2 or more suits and suitable strength. A hand with a single suit of 5 cards occurs in 15% of hands; a single suit of 6 cards occurs in 9% of all hands. However, a hand containing 5-4 suits occurs in 23% of hands.

Natural overcalls over 1NT

- These show a 5 card suit (or longer).
- The strength varies with the vulnerability and position. 4th in hand the bid can be weaker than normal over a weak NT opening.
- The advantage over a conventional bid is that any of the 4 suits can be bid.

Conventional overcalls over 1 NT

The majority of conventions used consist of bids to show 2 suited hands(5-4) together with natural bids to show a single-suited hand of at least 5 cards (usually a major suit). Conventional bids are always alertable and usually regarded as forcing for 1 round. Generally the strength will be at least that of an opening hand with good 'texture' when vulnerable but may be weaker at favourable vulnerability.

A summary of the major conventions used is given in the table.

Convention	2♣ means	2♦ means	2♥/♠ means	2NT means
Astro	5 cards in♥ + 4 card suit	5 cards in ♠ +4 card suit	5 cards in the suit	Both minors
Astpro	4 cards in ♥ + 5 card suit	4 cards in ♠ + 5 card suit	5 cards in the suit	Both minors
Cansino	♣ and playable in 2 other suits	Both majors	5 cards in the suit	
Landy	5-4 in majors	5 cards in ♦	5 cards in the suit	Both minors
Ripstra	Both majors and ♣	Both majors and ♦	5 cards in the suit	Both minors

We recommend using a convention because it enables 8 card fits in a suit to be found. One of the most versatile is Astpro (a member of the Astro family of defences. *Note: there are several similar names and varieties-Astpro, Aspbro or Apstro*) so this convention is illustrated in detail. It is commonly used against weak no trumps, but can be employed against any 1NT range.

Astpro

The basic structure of the Astpro convention for overcalling is as follows:

- 2♣ says 'Partner I have hearts and another suit'.
- 2♦ says 'Partner I have spades and another suit'.
- 2♥or ♠ says 'Partner I have a 5 card suit but no other 4-card suit'.

With 5-4 in the majors, **we show the shorter suit**. So with 5 spades and 4 hearts, we overcall 2♣ whereas with 5 hearts and 4 spades, we overcall 2♦.

With 5-5 in the majors, we can choose, but it is usually better to bid 2♣.

Responding to Astpro

The general principles, even at match-point scoring, are as follows:

- We want to play in our best fit, *even if this is a minor*.
- A 5-2 fit is preferred to a 4-3 fit.

So the responses are as follows:

- To support the anchor suit, we require 4 card support. The only exception is when we have 3 card support and a side-suit singleton as a ruffing value. Otherwise we normally bid the suit 'in between' i.e. the next suit up from the overcalled suit. If responder does not like the anchor suit at all (e.g. has a singleton, or a doubleton and at least 4 cards in both minors), he can use 2NT to inquire for a minor.
- With a 6 card suit we may bid it instead of the 'anchor' or 'in-between' suit, or pass etc. using our judgment.

Bidding after a response in the 'in-between suit'

The player who overcalled with an Astpro bid now bids his 5 card suit, even if this is the 'anchor' suit, but if his 5 card suit is the in-between suit, he passes.

With a major-minor 5-5 he bids the major. With 5-5 in the majors, having bid 2♣ at first, he now bids 2♠. There is a risk of a 5-2 fit with a 5-3 fit in the other major, but any other sequence means that one suit is left unmentioned. We will never play in a 5-2 instead of 5-4 fit (but might play in 5-3 on the occasions that partner bids the anchor suit on 3 cards with 4 in the other major and 5-1 in the minors).

Example hands: (Opponent opens 1NT)

As overcaller

(1) ♠ K10xx ♥ AQxxx ♦ xx ♣ xx - We overcall 2♦. We pass a 2♥ or 2♠ response from partner.

(2) ♠ K10xxx ♥ AQxx ♦ xx ♣ xx - We overcall 2♣. We pass a 2♥ response.

If partner bids 2♦ we bid 2♠.

(3) ♠ xx ♥ AQJx ♦ xx ♣ KJ10xx - We overcall 2♣. If partner bids 2♦ we now bid 3♣. Note as we are likely to go to the 3-level, we must be slightly better this time.

You should note particularly that the main strength is concentrated in the 'anchor' suit and the 2nd suit, and not scattered throughout the hand.

As responder to an Astpro overcall

(4) ♠ Qxx ♥ Kxxx ♦ xx ♣ J10xx - If partner overcalls 2♣ we support with 2♥.

If partner overcalls 2♦ we do not support with 2♠ but bid 2♥.

(5) ♠ Qxx ♥ Kxxxx: ♦ x ♣ J10xx - This time it is different. If partner overcalls with 2♦ we do support the spades and bid 2♠. If partner bids 2♣ we can show our 5 card support by bidding 3♥.

(6) ♠ x ♥ K10xx ♦ Qxxx ♣ QJxx - If partner overcalls 2♦ we bid 2♥. If partner continues with 2♠, we bid 2NT, asking for correction to his minor.

(7) ♠ Qxx ♥ x ♦ Axxxx ♣ Kxxx - If partner overcalls 2♣, we bid 2♦ and if partner bids 2♥, we bid 2NT asking for partner's minor. If partner overcalls 2♦ we support spades with 2♠.

If opener's partner intervenes after an Astpro overcall

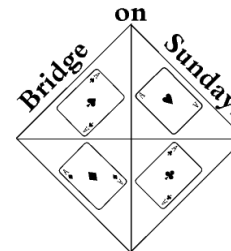
With 4-card support for the anchor major, we simply bid it if possible at the 2-level or bid it at the 3-level if strong enough. Double can be for take-out, asking partner to bid his other suit, or for penalties (by partnership agreement).

Defence to opponent's conventional overcall of partner's 1NT

- Bid at the 2 level with a 5 card suit and a 'weakness take-out' (or at 3 level with a 6 card suit and a strong hand unsuitable for doubling).
- Double the conventional bid to show a lead. Double for penalties with suitable strength if the bid is converted by overcaller to an actual suit.

Acknowledgement: Most of the details and examples of Astpro came from an excellent article by Neil Morgenstern.

Bridge on Sundays



Defence to a 1NT opening