

# Pay Attention to Your Advance

Contract: 1 ♥

Vul: None

Lead: J ♣

North

♠ A 9 8 6 4  
♥ 7  
♦ 10 7 6 4 2  
♣ 5 3

West

♠ Q J  
♥ J 6 3 2  
♦ K 9 8  
♣ J 10 9 4

East

♠ 10 5 2  
♥ Q 10 9  
♦ A Q 5  
♣ K Q 8 7

South

♠ K 7 3  
♥ A K 8 5 4  
♦ J 3  
♣ A 6 2

The Bidding:	West	North	East	South
			1 ♣	1 ♥
	All Pass			

Result: Down 2, -100 for North-South

South was very discouraged over the result of this deal. Her simple overcall was made with high hopes of a possible game since she had full opening hand and lots of aces and kings. After West passed, North looked at her 4 points and gave up. She was afraid that a spade bid would get the partnership too high and was hoping that the opponents would keep bidding. By passing, she reasoned, her partner would know she wasn't strong enough to compete. Unfortunately the bidding died and South was doomed.

Now let's talk about a very important agreement every partnership should clarify. When your partner has overcalled and you have no support for the suit; nor do you have a hand of 10 or more points, you

can try to improve the contract by bidding a new suit. That change of suit is NOT forcing. Unlike the change of suit by responder, the change of suit by advancer (partner of overcaller) is not forcing and is made with a minimum hand, showing your own 5-card or longer suit. Many players agree to make this advance non-forcing over **1 and 2 level** overcalls. Advances of a **3-level** overcall should be forcing. So on this hand, I would bid 1♠ (non-forcing). If partner has a good supporting hand and wants to raise spades, that's up to her.

What if North had a stronger hand? For example, ♠A Q X X X ♥X ♦K Q J X X ♣X X. She wouldn't want to bid 1♠ now because this could be passed. The only forcing bid for the advancer is a cue bid, 2♣. The cue bid says, "I'm interested in a game and have 10 or more points." Since this is the only way to make a forcing bid, it doesn't promise support for hearts. Of course, the cue bid is forcing and if the overcaller's original bid was made with less than a full opening hand, she will rebid her suit at the cheapest level. If she bids anything else she is showing a full opening hand.

Let's envision a bidding sequence with the non-forcing advance in mind:

West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

South will raise spades since she has found a fit (North's advance promises at least 5 spades) and holds 16 points. North, of course, has no desire to proceed further and passes.

Depending on how many times the opponents lead spades, North can take 8, 9 or 10 tricks by setting up the diamonds and hearts for ruffs. All of these part scores (+110, +140 and +170) beat -100 South received by playing the contract in 1♥.

**Make sure you can escape doomed contracts set by the overcaller by improving the contract on a non-forcing basis. Advancing a 1 or 2 level overcall shows a minimum hand with a suit you think will play better than the suit partner named. It can be passed. If you don't want your bid passed, cue bid the opponents suit. That shows an invitational hand or better.**