OVERCALLING

Overcalling is not the same as opening

Your aims have changed

You still want to bid and make a contract when the hand belongs to you

but you also want to:-

put a spanner in the works;
suggest a defensive lead;
search for a profitable sacrifice.

1NT overcall

A 1NT overcall is not the same as an opening bid of 1NT.

It shows a more or less balanced hand of 15 to 18 points
with
good stops in the opponents' suit.

A hand which would open 1NT will hardly ever make any sort of overcall -

Just sit back and defend.

Jump suit overcalls

will be weak (up to about ten points) -

6-card at the two-level

7-card at the three-level

etc.

Lowest-level suit overcalls

will promise at least a five-card suit at the one-level.
At the two-level they should ideally be at least six-card.

If less than good opening values then the suit should be good quality - partner will almost certainly lead it.

Strength might be anything up to about 17 points.

Preemptive effect

One aim is to get in the way of the opponents.

1♠ over 1♣ might be relatively weak -
1♥ over 1♦ is likely to be near opening strength.

The take-out double

At a low level a double will never be for penalties -

it is an invitation to partner to make a bid in one of the other three suits.

Usually it will show a hand of near-opening strength or better with no more than 2 cards in the opponents' suit and at least 3 cards in each of the other suits.

With up to about 17 points you will double and then pass partner's response.

With 18 or more points you can show a strong overcall by doubling and then bidding again - such a hand might be almost any shape.

The take-out double may also be used later in the auction by any player to show values with no better bid available.