

THE “MICHAELS CUE-BID” AND THE “UNUSUAL 2-NO-TRUMP” CONVENTIONS Two- Suited Overcalls

A. Background: Two-suited hands are generally difficult to describe after the bidding has been opened by the Opponents, especially if the hand is very weak. Often, the Opponents bid too much, too soon, for both of the suits to be safely shown, or the bidding dies too soon for both suits to be introduced. The **Michaels Cue-Bid** and the **Unusual No-Trump** Conventions describe such two-suited hands by means of a simple *artificial cue-bid* overcall. They are both a defensive obstructive call, either in an attempt to pre-empt the Opponent’s bidding space or to lead to a profitable sacrifice against their eventual contract, or else as offensive weapons used to seek the best suit for a sought-after, makeable contract by the invoking Partnership. These two conventions serve as valuable weapons in one’s competitive bidding arsenal.

B. Definition: The Michaels Cue-bid uses a direct cue-bid of the Opponent’s suit as a two-suited take-out bid. It promises at least a 5-5 or better distribution in each of two suits (With a 6-4 distribution, one is best advised against invoking Michaels).

Michaels Cue-Bids

(Applicable in both the Direct {2nd} Seat or in the Balancing {4th} Seat)

1. **1C** **“2C”** = **BOTH MAJORS** (At least 5 Hearts and 5 Spades, or better)
2. **1D** **“2D”** = **BOTH MAJORS** (At least 5 Hearts and 5 Spades or better)
3. **1H** **“2H”** = **THE OTHER MAJOR + AN UNSPECIFIED MINOR**
(Either 5 Spades and 5 Clubs, or 5 Spades and 5 Diamonds, or better)
4. **1S** **“2S”** = **THE OTHER MAJOR + AN UNSPECIFIED MINOR**
(Either 5 Hearts and 5 Clubs, or 5 Hearts and 5 Diamonds, or better)

“The Unusual-2-NT” Convention

(Applicable ONLY in the Direct {2nd} Seat)

1C/1D/1H/1S **“2-NT”** = **THE TWO LOWER UN-BID SUITS**, 5-5 or better in length

Examples: **1C** **“2-NT”** = Diamonds and Hearts, 5-5 or longer

1D **“2-NT”** = Clubs and Hearts, 5-5 or longer

1H/1S **“2-NT”** = Clubs and Diamonds, 5-5 or longer

A 2-NT Overcall in the Balancing (4th) Seat is Natural

Background: **1B** Pass Pass **1-NT** = 10-14 HCP’s

1A Pass Pass **“Double”**
 Pass **1B** Pass **1-NT** = 15-17 HCP’s

1B Pass Pass **2-NT** = 18-20 HCP’s

C: Requirements for using Michaels Cue-bids or the “Unusual-2-NT”

1. **Distribution:** - At least a 5-card or better holding in each of two un-bid suits.
2. **Strength:** - The strength of the hand when these Conventions are used falls into one

of two types: (a) a hand that is very weak, 5-10 HCP's; else (b), a hand that that is very strong, 16 HCP's or more. When the hand is of moderate value, 11-15 HCP's, one should bid both suits oneself; i.e., not use either of these Conventions; rather bid the higher-ranking suit first, followed by a re-bid of the lower-ranking suit on the next bidding turn. In this way, Responder can differentiate the point count of Partner's holdings.

3. **Vulnerability and Level**: – When Vulnerable or at higher bidding levels, it is more desirable to have either greater strength, or a greater distributional holding, or both.

D. Responses To Michael's Cue-Bids: The Partner of the Michaels Cue-bid should, if at all possible, when the bidding permits, take a preference for one of the suits shown by the cue-bidder. Since Partner will have as few as five in each of his/her suits, a 3-card support is all that is necessary. A preference on a doubleton, however, will sometimes be necessary, unless responding Partner has a 6-card or longer fourth suit or his/her own.

Examples:

1C	"2C"	P	2H	(A preference for Hearts)
1D	"2D"	P	2S	(A preference for Spades)
1H	"2H"	P	2S	(A preference for Spades)
1S	"2S"	P	3H	(A preference for Hearts)
1H/1S	"2H"/"2S"	P	"2-NT"	(A preference for the as-yet-
P	3C/3D			un-specified Minor suit as opposed to the
Spade Suit) (The unspecified Minor is then revealed by the Michaels bidder)				
1S	"2-NT"	P	3C/3D	(A Minor suit preference is chosen)
1S	"2-NT"	P	3H	(Responder denies request to choose Clubs or Diamonds and, instead chooses his/her 6-card Heart suit.)

E. Re-bids By The Original Cue-Bidder:

- (a) (With 0-10 HCP's) – "**Pass**" the Chosen Suit by the Responder, and do not bid again unless requested by Partner to do so,
- (b) (With 16-18 HCP's) – Re-bid by Raising Partner's chosen selection from the two suits originally set forth by the cue-bidder.
- (c) (With 19{+} HCP's) – Cue-bid Opener's suit once again.

Examples : The Opponents have opened **1C** and you hold the following:

1. **QJ109X KXXXX XX X**
(Bid "**2C**" and then "**Pass**" Partner's **2H** or **2S** response)
2. **AK109X AQJXX KX X**
(Bid "**2C**" and then **3H** or **3S** over Partner's **2H** or **2S** response)
3. **AK109X AKQXX KX X**
(Bid "**2C**" and then "**3C**" over Partner's **2H** or **2S** response)
4. **AQ109X KJXXX AX X**
(Do **Not** Use Michaels with 11-15 HCP's. Bid **1S** and then re-bid **2H** at your next bidding opportunity)