

TWO SUITED OVERCALLS

When an opponent opens with one of a suit and you hold two five card suits — which suit do you bid first? Ideally you would like to show both suits with one bid; in that way your partner has a clearer picture of your hand at his first turn to bid.

There are several types of overcall available for this task, but they currently do have a use. On the grounds of frequency the 2NT overcall (showing a balanced 20-22) and the immediate cue-bid in opponent's suit (showing a game-forcing hand) could be utilised for 'two suited' duty. The hand types they currently show can easily be placed within the 'take-out double' structure.

The Unusual 2NT Overcall

Common to most two-suited conventions the jump to 2NT over an opponent's opening one bid can be used to show 5-5 or better in the lowest ranking unbid suits.

i.e. 1C — 2NT = D+H ; 1D — 2NT = C+H ; 1H or 1S — 2NT = C+D

Michaels Cue-bids

Complementary to the unusual 2NT is the immediate cue-bid of the opponent's suit to show:

1. The majors if the opponent's suit is a minor.
2. The other major and an unspecified minor if the opponent's suit is a major.

i.e. 1C — 2C = H+S ; 1D — 2D = H+S ; 1H — 2H = S + a minor ; 1S — 2S = H + a minor

e.g.s

KQ10xx
AJ9xx
xx
x

Over a 1C or 1D opening: cue-bid to show a major two—suiter.

xx
x
AQxxx
AKxxx

Over a 1H or 1S opening: bid 2NT to show a minor two-suiter.

Jx
AQJxx
KJ10xxx
Void

Over a 1S opening: bid 2S to show hearts and a minor. (The other major and an unspecified minor)

Over a 1C opening: bid 2NT to show hearts and diamonds. (The two lowest ranking unbid suits)

(Note that over a minor suit opening you cannot show spades and a minor).

The strength shown by these bids is limited to less than game forcing — with which you double first and then cue-bid. Obviously vulnerability is a major factor; if none vulnerable versus vulnerable then your hand might be quite weak, vulnerable versus none vulnerable would show opening bid values in high cards or distribution greater than 5-5.

It is important that your two suits be of reasonable quality

e.g. AQJxx
KQxxx
xx
x

is an excellent two-suited overcalling hand.

QJxxx
Qxxxx
Kx
A

is poor for a two-suited overcall. Too much outside defensive strength with weak long suits. Overcall 1S initially, intending to introduce hearts next if appropriate.

Responding to a Two Suited Overcall

Where you know both partner's suits (or you have support for the one that is known) then you support to an appropriate level.

e.g. 1H—2NT—P—? and you hold:

Jxxxx
KQxx
x
Jxx

Bid 3C. It is very likely that you are already too high. Do not pass — 3C will be a better spot than 2NT most of the time (and the opponents may bid again)

x
xxxxx
xxx
AJxx

Bid 5C. This should have a very good chance of making — and if it doesn't then the opponents can probably make 4S!

If partner has **cue-bid in a major** and you judge that playing in partner's minor is likely to be best, then several options are open to you:

1. Bid 3C — partner will pass if his suit is clubs or convert to 3D. You may then pass or convert to partner's major if you like his minor even less.
2. Bid 3D — here you wish to play in diamonds if partner has them, and if not then in his major. Both these responses are similar to the simple preference to one of partner's known suits — you are not very keen on going further.
3. Bid 2NT — this asks partner to show which minor he has and it suggests that invitational values or better are held. Overcaller will bid 3C or 3D as natural and minimum.

If partner has **cue-bid in a minor** then:

1. A bid in the other minor at the cheapest level is natural, with a 6 card or longer suit, and a misfit for the majors.
2. A bid of 2NT is forcing, showing at least invitational values, and asks for more information.

If advancer is interested in a slam then (if no other bids are appropriate) he can cue-bid the opponent's suit.

e.g. 1C — 2C — P — 3C

KQx

AJxx

xxx

Axx

12 tricks are pretty certain — provided there are not two quick diamond losers. You hope to set up an auction in which partner can show (or deny) a diamond control.

Basically the 2NT and cue-bid responses by advancer are constructive; minor suit bids are looking for a safe haven to play; raises of one of overcaller's known suits are competitive.

Another popular way of showing two-suiters is known as CRO

Pronounced as 'crow'. The letters stand for: Colour, Rank and Odd

A cue-bid of their suit shows two suits of the same colour.

e.g.s 1C – 2C = red suits; 1D – 2D = black suits
1H – 2H = black suits; 1S – 2S = red suits.

A bid of 2NT shows two suits of the same rank, excluding the enemy suit.

e.g.s 1C (1D) – 2NT = the major suits; 1H (1S) – 2NT = the minor suits

A bid of 3C shows an odd two-suiter.

e.g.s 1C – 3C = diamonds + spades; 1D – 3C = clubs + hearts
1H – 3C = diamonds + spades; 1S – 3C = clubs + hearts.

This has the advantage of showing both suits immediately. It has the disadvantages that on two occasions the 'showing' bid (3C) is also natural, but if you specify the strength of such hands in a reasonably narrow range then this is not a big drawback. You also lose the intermediate jump overcall of 3C (which can be inconvenient when one of the partnership forgets!)

In the following examples the first bid is Michaels and the second CRO.

1. Right hand opponent opens 1H

(a)	Kl09xx x Jx AQJxx	(b)	J1098x AQ K Q10xxx	(c)	AQl0xx xx KJ9xx x	(d)	A xx QJ10xx KQxxx
	Bid 2H Bid 2NT		Pass Pass		Bid 2H Bid 3C		Bid 2NT Bid 2NT

2. R.H.O. opens 1C

(a)	Kl0xxx AQxxxx x x	(b)	AQJ10x Q KQl0xx xx	(c)	xx Jl0xxxx AQJxx Void	(d)	Jxxxx xx Ql0xxx x
	Bid 2C Bid 2NT		Bid 1S Bid 3C		Bid 2NT Bid 2C		Bid at your peril!

3. 1S - 2NT - P - ?

(a)	Kxx Qxxx Jxxx xx	(b)	Axxx Kxxx QJ xxx	(c)	Ax Kxxxx KQxx Qx	(d)	xxxx KQJxxxx x x
	Bid 3D (C+D) Bid 3D (C+D)		Bid 3C Bid 3C		Bid 5D Bid 5D		Bid 3H Bid 3H

4. 1H - 2H - P - ?

(a)	Qxx Jxx Jxxx Axx	(b)	KJxx xx Axxx Kxx	(c)	xx QJxxx Kxx Jxx	(d)	xxx KQxxx Qxx Jx
	Bid 2S Bid 3D (3H?)		Bid 3S Bid 3D		Bid 3C Bid 3C		Bid 2S Bid 2S

5. 1C - 2C - P - ?

(a)	Jx Qxx KJxx Q10xx	(b)	Jx Kx J10xx Qxxxx	(c)	Qxxx Ax Qxxxx Ax	(d)	Kx x AKJ10xx AQxx	(e)	Q10xx Axx K10xx xx
	Bid 2H Bid 3H		Bid 2H Bid 2D		Bid 4S Bid 3C		Bid 3NT Bid 4NT		Bid 3S Bid 4H

Another Two-suited Method is Guestem.

Over a diamond, heart or spade opening:

Cue-bid shows the extreme suits (C+S, C+S, C+H respectively)

2NT shows the lower-ranking suits (C+H, C+D, C+D respectively)

3C shows the higher-ranking suits (H+S, D+S, D+H respectively)

Over a 1C opening:

2C is natural, 2D shows H+S, 2NT shows D+H (lowest), 3C shows D+S (highest)

Again you lose the intermediate jump overall of 3C.

Whichever method you choose it should improve your bidding and add to the fun!