

Two Suited Overcalls

As overcaller when we have two long suits (at least 5+ in each) we don't often get the opportunity to bid both of them naturally especially with weak hands.

1. Michaels Cue Bid is a direct cue bid of the opener's suit and shows a 2-suited hand (at least 5-5). A 2C or 2D cue bid shows both majors. A 2H or 2S cue bid shows the other major and an unspecified minor.

2. The Unusual Two No Trump Bid is an overcall of 2NT of a *1-level suit bid* which shows the lowest two unbid suits. (at least 5-5)

Important: Both the Unusual No Trump and the Michaels Cue Bid must only be bid with 5-5 or better hands, never with 6-4 or 5-4. This is not something you should 'bend' the rules on.

The normal strength required is just 6-10 HCP* with some suit quality in both suits although both Michaels and the Unusual 2NT can also be used with 16+ hands (not covered today) but not 11-15 HCP where an overcall of the better suit is recommended.

Most of your points should be in the two 5+ card suits. The idea behind it is that when you bid Michaels or the Unusual 2NT your partner pretty much knows what sort of hand you've got. i.e. Usually you have two 5-card suits and only 6-10 HCP.

*However note that you can bid two-suited overcalls with as few as 5 or even 4 HCP with a 6-5 hand.

The general approach when responding to a two-suited overcall with a weak hand, (which is of course forcing with no intervening bid), is to raise to the level of fit when overcaller's suit is known (as you would for an ordinary overcall) or give a preference to one of the overcaller's suits. Usually the overcaller will not bid again. You can pass when weak if there is an intervening bid from the opposition. With stronger hands other bids are available...!

Michaels Cue Bids

A Michaels Cue Bid is a direct cue bid of the opener's suit and shows a 2-suited hand (at least 5-5). A 2C or 2D cue bid shows both majors. A 2H or 2S cue bid shows the other major and an unspecified minor.

- 2♠ over their 1♠ shows 5+♥ and a 5+ minor
- 2♥ over their 1♥ shows 5+♠ and a 5+ minor
- 2♦ over their 1♦ shows at least 5-5 in the majors
- 2♣ over their 1♣ shows at least 5-5 in the majors

The cue bid needs to be alerted

Responding to the Michaels Cue Bid

1. Give preference:

If overcaller shows both majors:

With 3-card support for either of overcaller's suits give preference to one of the suits.

(Sometimes you may have to give preference with only 2 cards.) If overcaller shows a major and a minor:

Bid major with 3-card support. With 2-card support you can still bid major if you have no minor suit interest

2. Raise to the Level of the Fit

With 4+ card support for overcaller's known suit, responder can raise to the level of the fit with *almost any hand*. If spades is your suit and you're not vulnerable you might even consider bidding 4S with a weak hand and just 4 spades. This is one more than the level of the fit but it messes your opponents up no end.

(When vulnerable without a singleton or void or not vulnerable with 4333 shape, best to raise to one less than the level of fit.)

3. Ask 'Which Minor?' – the 2NT enquiry

The 2NT enquiry response can be used after a major suit cue bid to find out which minor the overcaller holds. You use this when you have length in one or both of the minors. It doesn't promise any points but you might use it if you're very short in the known major. As an artificial bid 2NT needs to be alerted.

Responding to the Michaels Cue Bid Summary

1. Give preference (weak with 3 or less of each suit)
2. Raise to the Level of the Fit (with 4+ of one of suits)
3. Ask 'Which Minor?' – the 2NT enquiry

Other bids are rare and include bidding your own 7+ suit with a total misfit for partner's suits. The only forcing bid you have apart from the 2NT enquiry is to cue bid the opener's suit asking for more information. (Now you've both cue bid opener's suit!) This invites game. (The overcaller will only bid again after a non-forcing response if they have the 16+ Michaels)

The Unusual 2 No Trump

The Unusual Two No Trump Bid is an overcall of 2NT of a *1-level suit bid* which shows the lowest two unbid suits. (at least 5-5) As before most of your points should be in these two suits.

Some pairs only use it to show the minors (over an opening of 1♥ or 1♠) and it does need to be used with caution over an opening of 1♣ or 1♦ (when you are showing hearts and the other minor)

The unusual 2NT must be made over a 1-level bid. If the opposition opened a weak 2♠ for example a 2NT overcall would show 16-18 HCP and a stopper in spades.

Also after an opening bid and two passes 2NT is not the unusual 2NT. Instead it shows a natural strong balanced hand 19-21 HCP with a stopper in opener's suit.

Unusual 2NT

- 2NT over their 1♠ shows at least 5-5 in the minors
- 2NT over their 1♥ shows at least 5-5 in the minors
- (2NT over their 1♦ shows 5+clubs and 5+hearts)
- (2NT over their 1♣ shows 5+diamonds and 5+hearts)

The cue bid needs to be alerted

Responding to the Unusual 2NT

1. Give preference

With 3 or 4 card support for either of overcaller's suits give preference to one of the suits. Sometimes you may have to give preference with only 2 cards

2. Raise to the Level of the Fit

With 5+ card support for overcaller's known suit, responder can raise to the level of the fit with *almost any hand*. (When vulnerable without a singleton or void or not vulnerable with 4333 shape, best to raise to one less than the level of fit.)

Responding to the Unusual 2NT Summary

1. Give preference (weak with 4 or less of each suit)
2. Raise to the Level of the Fit (with 5+ of one of suits)

Other bids are rare and include bidding your own 7+ suit with a total misfit for partner's suits. The only forcing bid you have is to cue bid the opener's suit asking for more information. This invites game.

(The overcaller will only bid again after a non-forcing response if they have the 16+ Unusual 2NT)