

Michaels Cue Bids and Unusual No Trump

A Michaels Cue Bid is a direct cue bid of the opponent's opening bid at the 2- and 4-level and it shows a two-suited hand with at least 5-5 in the two suits. Over a minor opening it shows both majors, at least 5-5 shape. The cue-bid of a major opening shows the unbid major plus either minor suit, again at least 5-5 shape.

Non-vulnerable, a Michaels Cue Bid can be made on any strength of hand – a weak hand will not bid again, a strong hand will make a strength-showing bid.

Vulnerable, a Michaels Cue Bid should be a reasonable hand or better, that is, not extremely weak. A hand with 5 or 6 losers would be the minimum.

You will find some players making a Michaels Cue Bid with 5-4 distribution. I do not recommend this.

Responding to partner's Michaels Cue Bid

(1♣) - 2♣ or (1♦) - 2♦

When your partner has shown 5-5 in the majors, most often you will just bid your longer major at the appropriate level. Generally this means bidding to the three-level with four-card support and the four-level with greater support. The cue bidder can then decide whether game is likely to make.

If you have a stronger hand with game interest, then you can use 2NT as an asking bid.

North	East	South	West	
1♣	2♣ <small>ALERT</small>	Pass	2♦ <small>ALERT</small>	Asks for partner's better major, does not imply extra values
			2♥	Heart preference over spades (typically 3♥)
			2♠	Spade preference over hearts (typically 3♠)
			2NT	Game try or stronger asking bid
			3♣	Game forcing, support for one major
			3♥	Pre-emptive, 4+ hearts

After 2♦ showing the majors, you lose the opportunity to ask for partner's better major and stay at the two-level. With weak or non-fitting hands, it is often best just to show your major suit preference even if you have doubleton support.

North	East	South	West	
1♦	2♦ <small>ALERT</small>	Pass	2♥	Heart (or no) preference over spades
			2♠	Spade preference over hearts
			2NT	Game try or stronger asking bid
			3♣	6+ clubs, non-forcing
			3♦	Game forcing, support for one major
			3♥	Pre-emptive, 4+ hearts
			3♠	Pre-emptive, 4+ spades
			3NT	Natural, to play
			4♥/4♠	To play

Continuations after a 2NT asking bid

North	East	South	West	
1♦	2♦ <small>ALERT</small>	Pass	2NT <small>ALERT</small>	Asking bid
Pass	3♣	good hand, longer hearts, game forcing		
	3♦	good hand, 5-5, game forcing		
	3♥	Minimum 5-5		
	3♠	good hand, longer spades, game forcing		

(1♥) - 2♥ or (1♠) - 2♠

When your partner has shown 5-5 in the unbid major and an undisclosed minor, for example, (1♥) - 2♥, showing 5 spades and a 5-card minor, then you can use the same philosophy when supporting the major. Any club bids, such as 3♣ or 4♣, are **pass or correct** bids: this bid asks your partner to pass with clubs or correct to diamonds and implies support for both minors, although it might really be that you have no tolerance for the unbid major.

You can use 2NT to ask for the minor suit with invitational hands in the major too..

North	East	South	West	Initial Response
1♠	2♠ ^{ALERT}	Pass	2NT ^{ALERT}	Game try or stronger
			3♣	Pass or correct (cue bidder passes with clubs or bids 3♦)
			3♦	Pass or correct (passes with diamonds or bids 4♣)
			3♥	Preference for hearts over a minor
			3♠	Game forcing
			3NT	Natural, to play
			4♣/4♦	Pass or correct
			4♥	Natural, to play

North	East	South	West	Continuation (for serious players)
1♠	2♠ ^{ALERT}	Pass	2NT ^{ALERT}	Asking bid
Pass	3♣	5-5 hearts and clubs, minimum strength		
	3♦	5-5 hearts and diamonds, minimum strength		
	3♥	5-5 hearts and clubs, extra values		
	3♠	5-5 hearts and diamonds, extra values		

It is important to make partnership agreements when the opponents double the cue bid.

Unusual No Trump Overcall (UNT)

A direct jump overcall of 2NT shows a hand with at least 5-5 shape in the two lower unbid suits. Even if the opponents open a Short Club I recommend that the UNT shows 5-5 in the red suits. Similarly, if the opponents open a Precision 1♦, which may not promise any diamonds, I recommend that the UNT shows hearts and clubs.

Non-vulnerable the UNT can be made on any strength of hand – a weak hand will not bid again, a strong hand will make a strength-showing bid.

Vulnerable the UNT should be a reasonable hand or better, that is, not extremely weak. A hand with 5 or 6 losers would be the minimum.

The response philosophy is the same as for the Michaels Cue Bid: support where you can. If the opponents double, look for safety!

Practising these conventions

The BBO partnership bidding table is an excellent place to test Michaels, Unusual No Trump and continuations. Ask Paul if you want to do this and he can provide a script that will generate hands for you to practise with.