

TWO-SUITED BIDS: MICHAELS & UNUSUAL TWO NO TRUMP by Maritha

There are some bids that allow you to immediately show two suits (rather than having to bid first one suit and then the other). The most common of these are the Michaels Cue Bid and the Unusual Two No Trump.

The Michaels Cue Bid is used when the opponents open the bidding. If your right-hand opponent opens a minor and **you cue-bid the minor, you promise both majors**. (Thus, 1C on your right; 2C by you promises 5 hearts and 5 spades. Or, 1D on your right, 2D by you promises 5 hearts and 5 spades.) If your right-hand opponent opens a major and **you cue-bid the major, you promise 5 cards in the other major and 5 cards in an undisclosed minor**. (Thus, 1S on your right; 2S by you promises 5 hearts and either 5 clubs OR 5 diamonds. 1H on your right; 2H by you promises 5 spades and either 5 clubs OR 5 diamonds in your hand.) If partner wishes to know what your minor suit is, s/he inquires with a bid of 2NT and you show your minor suit at the 3 level. For safety reasons, you should have at least 5 cards in each suit when you make this bid. Some people will bid with 5-4 or even with 4-4, but it is increasingly dangerous. You can get doubled and go down bunches.

The Mini-Maxi Principle. Some people will bid Michaels with any point range. A more standard treatment is to play that a Michaels Cue Bid promises either a weak hand (7-10 HCP) OR a strong hand (16+ HCP). With an intermediate hand (11-15), you simply bid both suits (higher-ranking suit first).

Direct Seat Only. Most people play that the Michaels Cue Bid applies in the direct seat only (for example, 1C-2C). If you are in the balancing seat, (1C-P-P-?), you and your partner must decide whether Michaels applies or not. (Most people play that 2C would be natural in the balancing seat—clubs.)

Other Two-Suited Cue-Bids. Cue-bids (bidding opponent's suit) are artificial and forcing. In addition to Michaels, some people play "Top and Another" (thus, 1C-2C shows spades and another suit in the 2C bidder's hand. That could be 4-5 or 4-6 or 5-5 depending on partnership agreements). Some people play "Top and Bottom" (e.g., 1C-2C shows spades and diamonds, usually 5-5). Look at your opponents' convention card(s) or ask to be sure what they are playing!

The Unusual Two No Trump and the Two-Suited 4NT

An immediate jump to 2NT also shows a two-suited hand—the two lower unbid suits. Thus, 1S-2NT would show 5-5 in clubs and diamonds. 1D-2NT would show 5-5 in clubs and hearts. 1H-2NT would show 5-5 in clubs and diamonds. 1C-2NT would show 5-5 in diamonds and hearts. Most people play that an immediate jump to 4NT shows a two-suiter, but a MUCH stronger hand (e.g., void Kx AKJxx AQJxxx). Over a 4H or 4S preempt, 4NT shows TWO places to play, so partner bids the lowest 3-card suit s/he has. (If that is not it, you will bid one of your suits and partner will pass or correct.)

Variation: Some people play that the Unusual 2NT is **always** for the minors (rather than the two lowest unbid). Thus, even 1C-2NT is for clubs and diamonds and 1D-2NT is for clubs and diamonds. Discuss this with your partner!!

When you are a passed hand, you no longer have to jump to show both minors. Thus, pass by you, 1S on your left, pass by partner, pass on your right, you can play 1NT as showing both minors—if you and your partner choose to do so. (Some people will play that this shows hearts and a minor. And many people just play it as a "balancing" NT with 10-14 HCP and may or may not have a stopper in the suit the opponent bid.) Just agree and be consistent. In this situation, you can show both minors with length of only 4-4 (or more).

In balancing seat, you no longer have to jump to show both minors and you can be 4-4 now. If it goes 1H on your right; you pass; LHO bids 2H; partner passes & RHO passes, a 2NT bid by you says: "Partner, please bid a minor." (A reopening double would promise 3 or 4 spades—the unbid major—so you must use the 2NT bid when you have 2 or fewer spades but are 4-4 or 4-5 or 5-5 in the minors and do not wish to sell out to 2 hearts.)