

5 Overcall "Two-Suited Distribution Cuebid" Systems

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Communicating to partner via an Overcall bid that your hand is *two-Suited* is especially challenging because (1) some of the bidding space has already been eaten by your Opponent's opening bid, and (2) normally without using "cuebids" showing 2 Suits will require you to make 2 bids.

"Cuebids" can be used to address this situation. "**2-Suited Distribution Cuebids**" are always **DIRECT Overcall** bids with no interference, and only when Partner has not bid a Suit, but can either be made in the "direct" seat (e.g., RHO: 1C, You: 2C!) or in the "balancing" seat (e.g., LHO: 1D, Partner: PASS, RHO: PASS, You: 2D!). Normally Cuebids show at least 5-4 distributions Not Vulnerable, and at least 5-5 Vulnerable. Cuebids are bids of Suits you definitely do not want to play, and are "forcing" to Partner who is **required** to bid in response to the "artificial" (and therefore Alertable!) Cuebid, unless there is an intervening bid, for at least 1 Round!

Why "2-Suited Distribution Cuebids" Are So Important

"2-Suited Distribution Cuebids" are so important because when you hold a 2-Suited Hand the probability of finding an 8+ card "fit" with Partner go up *massively*. If your 2 "long" suits are 4-4 the probability of an 8-card "fit" is **60%**, 5-3 **66%**, 5-4 **74%**, and 5-5 a whopping **84%**!¹

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¹Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see: "**A Comprehensive List of 8 Different Categories of Bridge Probabilities, and How These May Help Guide Your Bidding and Play**":
https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_probs.pdf

1. "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall Showing 2 Minors

A direct 2NT! Overcall of an Opponent's bid of either 1H or 1S says, "I have a hand that is 2-Suited in the Minors." This can be useful to try to deny Opponents a game or part score in a Major either by (1) earning a part score in the Minor, or (2) making a sacrifice bid in a Minor to deny Opponents a better score. The 2NT! Overcall, like other Cuebids, is "*forcing*", and requires that, unless there is an intervening bid by Opponents, the Partner of the player bidding an "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall **must** bid his *longest and strongest* Minor! Because the "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall bid is "artificial", the bid must be Alerted!

A very, very, very, very important special convention for you to know if your Opponents make an "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall bid is the "3D! Overcall Cuebid". This convention is discussed within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" in "Convention #20: Support Cuebids".

2. "Michaels Cuebid" Overcall

A Cuebid system developed by Michael Michaels can be used as a direct Overcall bid over any opening by Opponents, as follows:

1C, 2C!: Says, "I have both Majors."

1D, 2D!: Says, "I have both Majors."

1H, 2H!: Says, "I have Spades and an undisclosed Minor."

1S, 2S!: Says, "I have Hearts and an undisclosed Minor."

3. "Top and Bottom" Cuebid Overcall

One drawback of Michaels' Cuebid is that the Responder to the cuebid Overcall does not know from the cuebid which Minor the Overcaller has (although if the Responder holds one longer Minor, the presumption by Responder may be that the Overcaller probably holds the other Minor). "Top and Bottom" Cuebidding is an alternative that can be used instead of Michaels. Here are the possibilities:

1C, 2C!: "I have the 'top' Suit, Spades, and the 'bottom' remaining Suit, Diamonds."

1D, 2D!: "I have Spades and Clubs."

1H, 2H!: "I have Spades and Clubs."

1S, 2S!: "I have Hearts and Clubs."

4. Modified "Top and Bottom" Cuebid Overcalls

Top Boards are more likely to be made by successfully making contracts that earn more points per trick. That means players generally prefer to play in a Major, or in No Trump. Thus, the most important two-Suited distribution to show your Partner is a two-Suited hand with both Hearts and Spades.

Michaels' Cuebids do not specify which Minor is held when a Minor is being shown. "Top to Bottom" Cuebids cannot show a hand that is two-Suited in the Majors. To quote "The Bridgeguys" website, "**In order to overcome this [second] disadvantage, many partnerships have come to the understanding that the Michaels' Cuebid should be used to show both Major Suits if the opening has been in a Minor Suit and restrict Top and Bottom Cuebids to an opening by the opponent in either Major Suit.**"

Here are the possibilities under this System:

1C, 2C!: Says, "I have both Majors."

1D, 2D!: Says, "I have both Majors."

1H, 2H!: Says, "I have Spades and Clubs."

1S, 2S!: Says, "I have Hearts and Clubs."

Of course, this system does not admit the possibility of showing a Major along with Diamonds.

5. Final Variation on "Top to Bottom" Cuebids

A final variation of "Top to Bottom" Cuebids allows bidder to show all combinations of two-Suited hands. However, this cuebid system is *complex*, and thus is used by relatively few players. The SIX POSSIBLE combinations are you holding (1) S and C, (2) S and D, (3) S and H, (4) H and C, (5) H and D, and (6) D and C.

This cuebid system does **not** allow the use of the "Unusual 2NT!" bid by your Partnership, since 2NT! now means something else!

1. 1C, 2C!: Says, "I have Spades ("top") and Diamonds ("bottom" unbid).

2. 1D, 2D!: Says, "I have Spades and Clubs."

3. 1**H**, 2**H!**: Says, "I have Spades and Clubs."
4. 1**S**, 2**S!**: Says, "I have Hearts and Clubs."
5. **ANY** Opening, 2**NT!**: Says, "I have BOTH the **TWO LOWEST unbid** Suits.
 EXAMPLE: 1**D**, 2**NT!**: "I have Hearts and Clubs."
 EXAMPLE: 1**C**, 2**NT!**: "I have Hearts and Diamonds."
6. **ANY** Opening, 3**C!**: Says, "I have BOTH the **TWO HIGHEST unbid** Suits.
 EXAMPLE: 1**S**, 3**C!**: "I have BOTH Hearts and Diamonds."
 EXAMPLE: 1**C**, 3**C!**: "I have BOTH Spades and Hearts."